Special education in the Philippines

Special education refers to the arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings, and other interventions designed to address the needs of students with learning differences, mental health issues, physical and developmental disabilities, and giftedness. Provision of special education is inferred from two provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Article II, Section 17 provides that the state must give priority to education, while Article XIV, Section 1 guarantees that this education be accessible to all: appropriate steps must be taken.

Chapter II of Title II of the Magna Carta for Disable Persons, RA 7277, introduced some rules on special education in the Philippines. Sec. 12 mandates that the "State shall take into consideration the special requirements of disabled persons in the formulation of educational policies and programs." On the other hand, learning institutions are encouraged "to take into account the special needs of disabled persons with respect to the use of school facilities, class schedules, physical education requirements, and other pertinent consideration." Specifically, learning institutions are encouraged to provide "auxiliary services that will facilitate the learning process for disabled persons."

Sec. 14 of RA 7277 provides that the State "shall establish, maintain and support complete, adequate and integrated system of special education for the visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally retarded persons and other types of exceptional children in all regions of the country."

However, AFAIK, there is still no comprehensive law which mandates special education in the Philippines. There are two pending Senate bills: SB No. 517, the Special Education Act of 2007, introduced by Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, and SB No. 2020, the Special Education Act of 2008, introduced by Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago. Both are still pending on the Committee Level.

Sen. Estrada's bill proposes the establishment of special education centers in strategic places to be able to provide accessible services for children with special needs. It mandates that there should be at least one Special Education Center for each school division, and at least three SpEd Centers for school divisions with Children with Special Needs (CSN). Furthermore, it mandates that the State shall institutionalize an adequate and relevant educational program for every child with special needs (Sec. 2). The bill seeks to empower the parents of CSN, by providing them with information about the full continuum of services and possible placement options (Sec. 3, para. d). It further seeks to empower the teachers and other caregivers by providing them with the capability to identify, refer and intervene with developmental disorders and disabilities (Sec. 3, para. e). (I hate the word "prevent" which is actually used in the bill.) But perhaps, the most lofty ideal as identified by the bill is to "effectuate significant and positive changes in community attitudes towards disability and the need to provide special education, care and other needs of children with special needs. (Sec. 3, para. g)."
The putative Special Education Act of 2007 identifies ten groups of Children with Special Needs (CSNs) (Sec. 4, para. f):
1. gifted children and fast learners
2. mentally handicapped/mentally retarded
3. visually impaired
4. hearing impaired
5. children with behavior problems
6. orthopedically handicapped
7. children with special health problems
8. children with learning disabilities (perceptual handicap, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia)
9. speech impaired
10. persons with autism

Sen. Santiago's bill is substantially the same as Sen. Estrada's.

However, these two bills just legislates something which DepEd had apparently been doing as early as 1997. In DepEd Order No. 27, s. 1997, all divisions where required to organize at least one SPED Center to cater to children with special needs. DepEd also has **Special Education Division** under its Bureau of Elementary Education.

The ultimate goal of special education in the public schools, according to the Special Education Division of DepEd, is the integration or mainstreaming of learners with special needs into the regular school system and eventually in the community, following the principles of The Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Education.

Out of 84.4 million Filipinos, approximately 5.486 million (13%) are individuals with special needs. Around 4.8% are provided with appropriate educational services, but the 95.2% of those with exceptionalities are unserved.

In 1995 to 1996 about 80,000 special needs children enrolled. 156,270 by school year 2004 to 2005: 77,152 were mentally gifted and 79,118 were children with disabilities:

40,260 learning disabilities
11,597 hearing impaired
2,670 visually impaired
12,456 intellectually disabled
5,112 behavior issues
760 orthopedically disabled
5,172 children with autism
912 speech defectives
142 chronically ill
32 children with cerebral palsy
A very comprehensive review of the state of special education in the Philippines, in 1988, can be found in Pascual and Gregorio's "A Case Study on Special Education in the Philippines".

List of attachments:
* **Pascual and Gregorio's "A Case Study on Special Education in the Philippines"**
* **DECS Order No. 14, s. 1993 - Regional Special Education Council**
* **DECS Order No. 1, s. 1997 - Organization of A Regional SPED Unit and Designation of Regional Supervisor in-charge of Special Education**
* **DECS Order No. 26, s. 1997 - Institutionalizing of SPED Programs in All Schools**
* **DECS Order No. 11, s. 2000 - Recognized Special Education (SPED) Centers in the Philippines**
* **Complete text of The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education**
* **Special Education Provisions in the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons**
A guide to alternative learning system and home schooling programs in the Philippines.

Having my wife as a public school mobile teacher, I have learned a lot about one’s need for an education and how it affects the well being of an individual especially in the early stages of their development.

There is no doubt that education is the most basic requirement to succeed in life. This is why most developing countries list education as their top priority in as far as government service is concerned.

Our understanding of acquiring education is usually through formal school where learning takes place in classrooms through teacher and pupil discussion. But there are alternative approaches that parents or an individual can consider aside from formal school depending on what type of situation they find themselves in.

First of which are programs for out-of-school youths. Many of today’s youths go through the pressure of progressing through the educational pipeline oftentimes unable to handle these challenges due to family problems or financial difficulties. As a result they often drop out of formal school. Out-of-youth programs are aimed at integrating these drop-outs back into formal school.

Alternative Learning System
In the Philippines, such program is called the Alternative Learning System or ALS. Teachers that are involved in this program are called “Mobile Teachers” for reasons that they often go about teaching in rural and depressed areas where a majority of their clientele can be found. Included in this program are unemployed adults, industry based undergraduate workers, members of cultural minorities, persons with disabilities/physically challenged, inmates, rebels and soldiers. Learning usually takes place in barangay halls or community learning centers.

The process of integration starts with the students attending a 10 month learning and review session conducted by the Mobile Teacher. After completion, performance are assessed in preparation for the Accreditation and Equivalency Test (or A&E) that will be given to these students. Passers of either the Elementary or Secondary Level gets a certificate which bears the signature of the Secretary of the Department of Education. This allows a passer to be
integrated into formal education and also gives them the chance to enroll for a college degree or in technical and vocational courses.
For more information on Alternative Learning System go to:
http://balsontheweb.wikispaces.com/

**Home Schooling**

Another method one can consider is through home schooling. Home schooling are usually considered by parents who opt to teach their kids on a one on one basis for various reason. Home schooling though is not that simple and a lot of parents should consider several things before making the decision. Having the patience to teach ones child is on top of the list as kids don’t usually behave well when their parents are the one’s teaching them.

Another is socialization. School proper offers more activity for a child to engage in to socialize with others. Nevertheless, many parents still consider this method.

Home schooling in the Philippines is something new. For accreditation purposes, a home schooling clientele must go to the DepEd office for validation or they may choose to enroll in a recognized school of the Department of Education. Many universities and catholic organizations are now offering programs for home schooling.

For more list of homeschooling programs in the Philippines go to:
http://en.wikipilipinas.org/index.php?title=Homeschooling_and_open_universities_in_the_Philippines#Homeschooling_programs_in_the_Philippines

The need for education is a basic right for every individual to succeed in life regardless of what status they belong to in society.