

The Contribution of Cluster Resource Centers for Inclusion: The Case of Atse Sertse Dingil Cluster Primary School, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the contributions of cluster resource centers in the implementation of inclusive education of children with special educational needs, and more specifically visually impaired children in Atse Sertse Dingil Cluster Primary School. A qualitative approach with case study design was used to elicit the required information from the principal, itinerant teacher, regional advisor and regular teachers. The study involved seven participants. The data collected through semi-structured interview guide and document review was analyzed thematically. Findings indicate that participants have varied levels of understanding and use of resource centers for inclusion. The resource center did not address the diverse needs of children with special educational needs and teachers adequately. The result showed that the resource center plays a vital role in professional development of teachers in implementing inclusive education even if much focus was given to knowledge development of teachers. It also confirmed that the regional advisor and itinerant teacher in collaboration with the principal of the school tried to mobilize the community for the education of children with special educational needs through organizing dialogues and workshops though there was limitation. The study revealed that the resource center did not function adequately in supporting the education of children with special educational needs because of financial, attitudinal, materials and trained manpower related barriers. Therefore, such measures as allocation of sufficient funds, awareness raising trainings on issues of inclusion such as skill trainings and collaborative work among stakeholders need to be taken by the school and the education office.

Key words: Inclusion, Professional Development, Resource Center

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Inclusion describes the practice of educating children with special educational needs (SENs) in regular classrooms at regular schools. It aims to provide them with necessary service provisions for the purpose of maximizing children's potential across the nation (Rafferty, Boettcher, & Griffin, 2001). UNESCO (1994) suggests that among the various modes of educational deliveries for persons with disabilities, inclusive education (IE) is found to be ethically acceptable, pedagogically sound, psychologically worthy and cost-effective in compared with special school provisions. It is also considered to be the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all through making resources available to all learners.

Following the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) formulated at Jomtien Conference in 1990, education ministries and donors made a new commitment to enhance quality education for all with required support provisions.

Since then, resource centers (RCs) were taken as important ingredients of educational reform across all nations in general and developing nations in particular. In establishing resource centers, teachers are considered as primary agents for educational change and reform. The purpose of establishing resource centers in cluster schools is to support the teachers and learners in the nearby schools effectively and efficiently (Giordano, 2008).

Resource centers are commonly organized with the purpose to build a structure or share a building space with cluster schools to support the learning of children with different needs. In RCs, a support person or resource person, or, itinerant teachers take responsibilities in organizing meetings, activities, workshops, discussions, visit schools; organize resource materials and others for the success of education quality for all. Thus, most of the time, the resource person is supposed to perform pedagogical activities than administrative tasks to improve quality of teaching and learning by addressing the diverse needs of all learners (Giordano, 2008).

Regarding to the contributions of RCs, a study conducted by Govender (2005) in schools stated that 86.5%

of the respondents felt their school resource centers are not functioning at its optimum level; while only 13.5% indicated that their schools' resource center is contributing at its optimum level. Furthermore, the study reported that high number of participants felt that their schools' resource person was not contributing at an optimal level. Unfortunately, the study participants reported that they did not know why such valuable facilities are located in schools.

In Ethiopia, based on the Education and Training policy of 1994, the Ministry of Education has developed a comprehensive SNE Program Strategy in 2006, which aimed to the establish RCs. Accordingly, nine RCs were established as a pilot project with a technical support of the Finland government, which in turn has led to the preparation of guidelines for establishing and managing RCs. The strategy was revised in 2012 with the purpose of establishing additional resource centers across the regions. By the end of education strategy development program V (2019/20), 800 resource centers are expected to be established and staffed by itinerant teachers who will assist schools. The intention was not only to support children with SENs, but also to 'give support to teachers in cluster, satellite and neighboring schools' (MoE, 2015).

It is recognized that for a successful implementation of IE, cluster RC schools with specific materials, assistive devices and professional staff play significant role for the successful inclusion of children with special educational needs (MoE, 2012). However, to the knowledge of the researchers, there has been no research conducted on the contribution of RCs for inclusion. Therefore, this study was designed to deal with the issue in a better detail by focusing on Atse Sertse Dingil cluster resource center, Bahir Dar City Administration.

Statement of the Problem

Knamiller (1999) examined the success of resource centers to enhance quality of education for all learners. The result indicates that the resource centers were not as such effective in improving the quality of education in regular schools. Besides, CERID (2004) investigated teachers' and principals' understanding on the function of resource centers from the perspective of Education for All. What was remarked by the author was that resource centers did not function to their optimal level. Similarly, some studies have been conducted in Ethiopia related to inclusion without giving due emphasis to the contributions of resource centers in the implementation of inclusive education. For instance, Mahder (2013) dealt with the benefits of inclusive education in primary schools. The result indicates that children received social, physical and psychological benefits from inclusion. Besides, Kassie (2013) examined teacher's belief, instructional practices and attitude towards inclusion. Misrak (2006) examined the challenge and opportunities of inclusion. However, these studies did not focus on the contribution of resource centers for inclusion. Therefore, this research examined the contribution of resource centers for inclusion in Atse Sertse Dingil cluster primary school, Bahir Dar City Administration.

Research Questions

1. How does Atse Sertse Dingil cluster resource center contribute for inclusion?
2. What are the factors affecting the use of resource centers for inclusion in the study area?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Resource Centers

For any educational reform and successful education of learners with diverse abilities, resource centers play significant role in many countries around the world (Ekanem, 2015). Resource centers are quite important for carrying out various activities and programs in improving access, participation and quality of education for all learners in primary schools. The basic aim of establishing resource centers is to enhance professional competence of teachers, supplement the learning achievement of children and school communities; and offer access to resource materials for enhancing the quality of education for all learners despite all difficulties (Ekanem, 2015). Besides, resource centers are part of the education system and they serve as centers for planning and coordinating the implementation of educational programs and reforms across the World. They particularly serve as training centers by providing facilities and resource persons or itinerant teachers for professional development purposes. Variety of professional development trainings are given to school teachers, principals and other education officials to enhance their knowledge of teaching and learning dynamics and to address the diverse needs of all learners. Thus, teachers and other education officials are supposed to take all types of trainings that help them to facilitate the teaching learning process (Govender, 2005). Further, resource centers in collaboration with stakeholders organize meetings for teachers, principals, supervisors and others to find solutions for problems that the center encounters. The resource center also gives support for satellite schools to improve the teaching and learning process (Govender, 2005). The resource person or itinerant teacher is expected to visit and supervise both the satellite schools at least once a month to discuss on issues related to teaching and learning including curriculum, teacher's guide, text books, reference materials and others for the success of learners (Khaniya, 1997).

Some International Practices of the RCs

According to Santwona Memorial Academy Pvt. Ltd. (2011), Great Britain pioneers in initiating the practice of resource center in the 1960. This resource center was aimed at providing support for teachers and educational officials in their professional development; developing their skills for managing the center, responding to diversity, designing and distribution of curriculum, and providing in-service training to improve the quality of education. The resource center was responsible for the management of activities and education offices were expected to allocate the necessary budget so that the center functions at optimal level and become effective. However, because of the ill-defined roles of the

resource centers and financial constraints, it was difficult for the centers to function properly (Knamiller, 1999).

The other experienced country in the practice of resource center is Philippines. Resource centers were named as special needs resource centers and aimed at providing support for the education of children with diverse abilities in inclusive classrooms (Quijano, n.d.). In addition, the resource centers were providing support for teachers in cluster and satellite schools. The supports offered include: facilitating trainings, co-teaching and creating linkage with different stakeholders in order to include children with special educational needs in inclusive settings (Quijano, n.d.). This could help learners to be successful in their academic achievement.

In Nepal, the experience of resource center practice was started with the implementation of education for rural community. This was a pilot project intended to enhance the quality of primary education through conducting careful supervision, organizing trainings for teachers and providing appropriate services for learners by clustering 6 to 10 schools under one cluster resource center (Santwona Memorial Academy Pvt. Ltd., 2011). In Nepal, the fundamental functions of resource centers were: assisting and supervising teaching and learning activities at least once in a month, organizing discussions with satellite schools at least once in a month, participating in and coordinating different co-curricular activities for all satellite and cluster schools, collecting and disseminating teaching materials and supplies to the schools, organizing workshops and dialogues (Santwona Memorial Academy Pvt. Ltd., 2011).

In South Africa, where special schools are being converted to RCs since 2001, Special School Resource Centers as they are referred to, become support centers for learners with diverse needs. Resource centers were aimed at supporting students together with support teams and by so doing they were able to enhance the quality of education for all learners. The resource centers were supposed to give support for students who encountered learning related challenges. Hence, the center tried to address the needs of all learners that can facilitate the inclusion of children with special educational needs including children with visual impairment (Department of Education, 2005).

Resource Centre Practice in Ethiopia

As part of the implementation of the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Program Strategy (MoE, 2012), the Finnish Government through a project entitled “Special Needs Education Program in Ethiopia” offered technical assistance for strengthen the existing RCs and establishing more RCs, which could support a number of satellite schools within their communities. The ultimate objectives of the RCs are to: provide necessary teaching expertise to support the learning of all children, including those with special needs in both special school and mainstream environments; provide necessary specialist support to enhance the psychosocial and medical needs of all children, so that their learning capacities are enhanced; provide necessary equipment, materials and assistive devices (hearing aids, crutch, etc.) to enhance the learning capacities of children with special needs; provide

support to neighboring schools and teachers to include all children. For example, as an itinerant teacher at Kokebe Tsi-bah resource center, the first author observed that resource centers play an important role in supporting the learning of children with SENs and support the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. These kinds of practice are also implemented across the World such as in Kenya and Finland. The Ethiopian model seems unique since intensive support is given by the Itinerant teachers who serve as a learning support teacher in each cluster resource centers.

Factors Affecting RCs in Implementing Inclusive Education

Scholars like Mosha (2015) argue that scarcity of resource materials is one of the many factors that delimit the full function of the resource center. This makes the resource center inefficient in addressing the needs of all learners in the regular schools. What has been discussed was that teachers were not in a position to use the resource center to support their teaching and learning process since resource materials were not available many times. Furthermore, lack of trained personnel in the area was a challenge to use the resource materials effectively and efficiently. Mosha (2015) also reported that teachers RCs were very much underutilized. It was reported that teachers used only 10 percent of their time to use the resource center for their purpose. And, teachers were unwilling to use the resource materials because they were troubled to be held financially responsible in case of loss or damage of materials.

The other basic factor explained by teachers and principals of the schools in Zanzibar was lack of finance to run the center effectively and efficiently. It makes the center to be difficult to provide technology support and tools, adequate support employees, and professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their profession. Thus, when resource centers faced with shrinking finance, improving quality education and providing training is not considered a priority. Scarcity of finance make limited the power of fulfilling the resource materials in order to accommodate the needs of all learners (Mosha, 2016).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative research approach was chosen because it gave a clear understanding of the participants’ views and experiences and it captured participants’ perceptions as they occurred in their actual world (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). To answer the research questions, qualitative approach with case study design was employed. In this study, a single cluster resource center (Atse Sertse Dingil cluster primary school found in Bahir Dar City Administration, Ethiopia) was selected to obtain in-depth information. Relevant and concise data were collected from a small study sample. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to interact with the participants in their natural settings.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Considering the experiences that Atse Sertse Dingil primary school had in resource center practice, the researchers selected the school purposively. The study involved 7 (seven) participants. These were one principal, one itinerant teacher, one regional advisor for inclusive education and four teachers and public primary schools. The researcher selected the respondents purposively because the researcher believed that the participants are assumed to provide an in depth information on the issue under study.

Methods of Data Collection

To answer the research question of the study, a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix) was used based on comprehensive review of related literature. The interview schedule with parents of children with SENs was arranged through the facilitation of special needs education teachers in the respective schools. Tape recorded face-to-face interviews which took approximately 20 to 30 minutes were conducted. The interview data was recorded using mobile recorder. Besides, during the site visit to cluster RC, document reviews were used as another method of gathering the data. In the document review, data related to RC activities was collected and used as data sources for this study. The 2018 G.C. annual reports of schools and daily recordings of the itinerant teacher were reviewed. Document review was used to collect data related with records on professional development trainings and list of students who received support from the center.

Dependably and credibility

To ensure the dependability of the interviews, interview items were organized to have the same structure, sequence of words and questions for each respondent. Also, the probes were the same for all interviewees to elicit further information. Furthermore, all the transcripts were crosschecked to ensure there will not be apparent mistakes. Lastly, the data was crosschecked by professional in the area. Furthermore, to establish the credibility, the interview items were given to experts in the field (professionals in special needs and inclusive education) for their review, since face or content or wording of the survey was determined by expert judgment. Additionally, a summary of responses was read to the interviewees to get their consent on individual responses after every interview.

Method of Data Analysis

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Then, thematic analysis method was used since thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research. This type of analysis considered (1) organizing and transcribing the data (2) reading the data through all the data to get a general sense of its meaning (3) coding the data (4) combining similar codes to form themes and categories (5) interpreting the data coming from the participants. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed

verbatim. Thus, considering the above procedures, both the interview and document review data were analyzed thematically. The two themes in this research were: Contributions of the resource center for inclusion and factors affecting the use of resource centers for inclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Contribution of the Resource Centre for Inclusion

The contribution of resource centers in improving the practice of inclusive education was the first objective of this study. It aimed at examining the contributions/impacts of the resource center for inclusion of children with special educational needs. This objective was examined under the following sub-sections.

Participants' understanding and use of resource centre for inclusion

For effective use of resource centers for inclusion of children with SENs, the staff and education professionals need to have good understanding and use of resource centers in realizing successes of children's schooling. The result indicated that participants have varied level of understanding and use of resource center for inclusion of children with special educational needs.

One of the teachers reported that:

I understand that a resource center is a class that receive and support children with different types of disabilities particularly blind children and I remember I attended training at the center last year about inclusive education and resource center. However, I did not use the resource materials found in the resource center so far since I believe that the resource materials need to be used by teachers of blind students in the special class.

Another special needs education teacher explained that:

I understand that resource center is a room having different resource material like Braille books, sign language books, slate and stylus, white cane, learning kits, talking calculators, computers, JAWS and other materials that can support children with different disability and facilitate the learning of children with different problems. I believe that in the learning of children with special educational needs, resource center plays significant role and would encourage children's schooling in an inclusive setting. As a teacher I used the resource materials stated above for my teaching and learning process most of the time since I took trainings on different teaching materials.

Besides, the principal of the school reported that:

In my view resource center is a room stored with different learning materials that give support for blind and KG students only to develop the education of children which is facilitated by the itinerant teacher. To my observation, some teachers and students use the resource center materials to facilitate the education of children. However, most of the teachers were not aware of the resource center and mostly I see the center was not used by students and teachers efficiently and effectively.

The researchers argue that participant's experienced varied level of understanding about resource centers. Similar to this study, in the research by Govender (2005) participants believe that school resource centers are perceived as traditional storehouses of information sources such as books and other printed materials. Furthermore, the participants were asked, "To what extent resource centers are used by the teachers for effective practice of inclusion?" The participants suggested that though participants took trainings on inclusive education and resource center importance, teachers did not use for their teaching and learning process effectively. One teacher contended that "though I know the existence of the resource center, I could not use it because I do not have any resource available to my subject Math". This finding is similar with a study by Govender (2005) who reported that participants did not use the resource centers to support the teaching learning process efficiently and effectively. It is apparent that school principals and managers are not aware of the function of RCs and they did not budget required finance.

Furthermore, the other teacher said that:

I did not use the resource materials found in the resource center since I cannot manipulate the materials for my purpose.

One more teacher said the following about the use of resource center for inclusion:

Even though we are untrained and some of us have few understanding about resource centers, we did not completely stop using the center in supporting children.

Regarding to the use of the resource center for inclusion, the regional advisor reported that:

Because of the existence of the resource center in the school, there were improvements in practicing inclusive education. To my information, students with special educational needs used the center as a library in the school.

The role of the RC in addressing teachers and students needs

The participants were asked to what extent the resource center addressed the needs of children with special educational needs and teachers. The interviewee briefly pointed the role of RC to address the needs of children with SENs and teachers in the following way:

Many times we see the resource center as it is closed since only one itinerant teacher is in charge of the center and we could not have any resource material from the resource center when we need. As we have seen, the focus of the center was providing training for teachers and parents.

One teacher also stated that

I believe that the resource center could not address their needs properly since their focus is on children with visual impairment. Furthermore, we spoke to the itinerant teacher on how to support students but she did not avail herself in the resource center many times. Because of this currently, the center does not address our interest and rather we decided to use the school pedagogical

center since we find some science and mathematics as well as language resource materials. There can be no justifiable reason for the school resource center being closed for most part of the school day.

Besides, two teachers specifically said:

The resource center exists symbolically since I have seen it many times closed. Even, I don't know the job description of the itinerant teacher. Another teacher stated that the itinerant teacher is always busy and I cannot use the center when I need to use it for my purpose. Therefore, the resource center did not fulfill the needs of children with special educational needs.

Moreover, the teacher participants were asked; does the itinerant teacher supports and supervises you in the classroom?" Regarding this, teachers explained that as the itinerant teacher did not assist the teachers in the classroom. One teacher stated as:

I have been here teaching social studies for many years for my students including children with visual impairment. However, I did not experience any support from anyone in the classroom and supervision was there by not the Itinerant teacher rather by the cluster supervisor and vice principal of the school.

On the contrary, the itinerant teacher and the regional advisor agreed that the resource center tried to address teachers and students' needs regarding to the teaching and learning process since the RC provided different teaching materials such as learning kits, computers, Braille and sign language books as well as enabling teachers to use different resources from the center through organizing trainings and discussions. But, most of the teachers were not in a position to use the resource center for their sake since they assume the resource center is meant for children with disabilities especially for blind students. Inconsistently, a study by Hengelezi (2016) reported, the majority of respondents agreed that RCs addressed teachers and students' needs as most of them said that resource centers provided books for teaching and learning as well as for enabling teachers to prepare materials which were cost effective.

Contribution of the RC in professional development of teachers for inclusive education practices

This section examined the contributions of resource center for teacher's professional development to implement inclusive education as well as producing teachers with skills of applying resource materials. Participants recognized that as there were short term professional development trainings to practice inclusive education through trainings, discussions, and dialogues that address majorly the knowledge gap of teachers in relation with classroom management, inclusive education, assessment and method of teaching.

One teacher explained:

Though there are trainings given to the school community, the focus was addressing the knowledge gap of teachers and others. For instance, I am a teacher in grade five. However, I could not have any skill related to Braille and sign language to support students with

disabilities in my school. I took trainings mostly on inclusive education, assessment, teaching method and classroom management.

Similarly, other staff reported that:

There were trainings given by the itinerant teacher and other responsible bodies but the training focused on theoretical aspects. This would not support me to implement inclusive education properly since there was lack of trainings on skills in the area. For example, I, as a mathematics teacher, don't have any skill in Braille and sign language areas. Also, as a teacher "I don't think so... for me as I am a qualified teacher I have to support all learners since the resource center and itinerant teacher were not in a position to meet teachers' minds on skills expected to implement inclusive education in regular schools.

Further, the regional advisor stated that the resource center contributed to teachers' professional development for successful education children with SENs in regular classroom. Specifically, the advisor said that,

Trainings organized by the government and other non-governmental organizations make teachers more effective in implementing inclusive education to increase student's achievement by organizing trainings on different issues though it was not enough. This is done through dialogues/meetings and workshops as the resource center provides discussions, workshops for different topics like special needs/inclusive education, method of teaching, assessment and other issue.

However, their views were different from national guideline for establishing and managing inclusive education resource/support centers, 2015 in Ethiopia which states that the introduction of RCs in Ethiopia played big part in practicing inclusion through professional developments by making teacher with necessary skills, knowledge and attitude. In this line, Tyler (2003) asserts that good training enables participants to gain new knowledge and skills as well as the attitudes to support learners regardless of their difficulty.

The role of the RC in awareness raising and community mobilization for the education of children with special educational needs

Here, participants were asked: "do you think that resource centers play a role in awareness raising and community mobilization for educational access of children with SENs?" In response to this the itinerant teacher and the regional advisor explained that with the support of education officials they tried to create awareness and mobilize the community for the educational access of children with SENs in the regular schools. More specifically, the itinerant teacher asserted that:

As I am a responsible person for the educational access of children with SENs, I used members of parent student-teacher association for the purpose. They engage in campaigning during September each year. But, what happened was teachers were not participating in the campaign since they assumed it is the responsibility of special needs education teachers to let children with SENs access to inclusive education.

Besides, the regional advisor and itinerant teacher stated that the RC uses to conduct an admission campaign for educational access of marginalized groups through: community discussion, visit to the particular community and visit to children with special educational needs and their parents. In this regard, the itinerant teacher reported that,

Since I am responsible for many tasks, I could not conduct an admission campaign effectively to create access to education of children with special educational needs. Instead, I plan trainings for the school community to create awareness for the educational access of children with special educational needs.

The school principal stated that:

I and the itinerant teacher sometimes try to convey message to the community on the education of children with special educational needs at different government and other social meetings and give information about the education of children and disability issue.

Factors Affecting the Use of RC for Inclusive Education

Allocation of funds

During the interview, principals, the itinerant teacher and teachers revealed that allocation of insufficient fund was one of the main factors that deter the full function of the resource center for effective practice of inclusive education. In relation to this, the Itinerant teacher said:

Due to lack of funding, the resource center is unable to support the satellite schools and visit of parents of children with special educational needs. I tell you the truth that the total budget for the resource centers for a year was 1000 Ethiopian birr.

The result is consistent with CERES (1995) who stated that the most common obstacle mentioned by teachers and administrators facing RC was a lack of funding which touches every level of education and makes it particularly difficult to provide resource materials for learners.

Learning and teaching materials in the centre

The interviewees also revealed that there was scarcity of learning resources that could address the needs of all children. However, there were teaching materials for blind learners though teachers did not utilize it for the intended purpose.

One of the participants said,

There are no enough resource materials that can accommodate the needs of all learners such as mathematical and science resource materials. There are only materials for students with disabilities particularly for blind learners. Further, there are only resource materials for children with visual impairment but we cannot use teaching materials for language and math since there is only learning kits that can serve for pre-schoolers.

Although interviewees revealed scarcity of materials at the RC was among the factors affected the implementation of RCs activities, only some of the teachers tried to use those

resources for their teaching and learning. The itinerant teacher said,

It is true that the center doesn't have sufficient materials to fulfill its duties...however, only insignificant number of teachers used the available resources for their teaching learning". What is the serious problem in the resource center is that students took resource materials from the center and sold for their own purpose.

Likewise, authors like Mirambo (2007) identify that inadequacy of materials for running the resource center determines the use of the center to improve the quality of education for all.

Training and trained manpower

Training and trained manpower on the area of inclusive education contributes for the educational success of children with special educational needs. In this regard, the interviewees said that there was lack of trained manpower in basic skills such as Braille, Sign Language and others. The itinerant teacher reported that:

As far as I am assigned as an Itinerant teacher, my effective work was organizing and delivering trainings for teachers and the school community. The school principal and I prepared project proposals to secure funds from different NGOs and government offices. As a result, I provide trainings for teachers about inclusive education and other issues.

Participants were also asked: "Does the government give long term trainings that help you to implement inclusive education"? Regarding to this the Itinerant teacher confirmed that:

There are only few teachers who have long term training on inclusive education at diploma and degree level who automatically assigned to teach in the special class.

Attitudinal problems

In addition to many other requirements, implementation of effective inclusive education in the cluster resource centers immensely requires positive attitudes towards inclusion of children with special educational needs. However, negative attitudes are still persisting among factors that limit the use of resource center for inclusion. In relation with this, one staff member said,

For the education of children with special educational needs, teachers who are trained in inclusive education and special needs education are the only responsible one and if you ask me to help them I cannot manage all learners according to their interest.

Other teacher added:

I believe that children with special educational needs need to be supported by only trained teachers on special needs education in special class. Placing children with SENs in special class with the support of special needs expert is the means to address the diverse needs of children.

This study is consistent with what has been studied by Dahl (2015) which revealed that teachers and students' attitude and awareness matters the use of RCs for inclusion.

CONCLUSION

Findings showed that participants have varied level of understanding and use of resource centers for inclusion of children with special educational needs. The results revealed that the itinerant teacher and special needs education teacher perceived the resource center positively. However, regular teachers and principals seem to have low level of understanding about resource centers and its use for inclusion. Furthermore, though resource center is tried its best to address students and teacher needs for inclusion purpose, the actual practice was not significantly addressing the needs of children and teacher since the resource center was not functioning effectively.

The results showed that the resource center served a lot for teacher's professional development in equipping teachers with knowledge and skills to practice inclusive education. Professional development trainings were focusing on knowledge development of teachers on issues related with special needs/inclusive education, assessment, methods of teaching, curriculum adaptation and others. However, professional development trainings did not address skill development of teachers such as sign language, Braille and other trainings for effective practice of inclusive education. Besides, the resource centers play a role in creating awareness rising and community mobilization for educational access of children. Basically, the Itinerant teacher in collaboration with parent student-teacher association tried their best to mobilize the community for educational access of children with special educational needs. Generally speaking, the resource center did not contribute to its optimal level because of financial, attitudinal, trained manpower and resource center related barriers in the study area. Based on our findings, we would like to propose the following recommendations:

- One factor that influences the use of resource center for inclusion was financial problem. Thus, the regional government and the city administration should allocate reasonable funds to the center to necessitate purchase of learning resource materials.
- There is a need for explicit policy on the use of resource center and guidelines on how to use the center for inclusion.
- The result of the study revealed that teachers' professional development focused on knowledge than skill development. Therefore, the resource center needs to focus on providing capacity building trainings including skill trainings for teachers.
- Finally, large scale research is recommended on issues of resource centers and their effect on the education of children with special educational needs.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. Sex
2. Education level
3. Responsibility
4. What do you know about resource center?
5. What are the roles of resource centers in addressing teachers and student's needs?
6. What are the roles provided by resource centers in improving teachers' effectiveness?
7. What are the contributions of the resource centers in professional development of teachers for inclusive education practices?
8. What are the roles of resource centers in awareness raising and community mobilization for the education of children with Special Educational Needs?
9. What are the factors affecting the use of resource centers for inclusion?

Thank you for your Cooperation