

# A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEPED ORDER NO. 23, S. 2022: CHILD FIND POLICY FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

*This systematic review analyzes the implementation of DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022 (Child Find Policy) in advancing inclusive education for learners with disabilities in the Philippines, with emphasis on community-based identification, screening and assessment, enrollment, and ongoing monitoring, as well as the role of Special Needs Education (SNED) in delivering individualized support. Using a qualitative systematic review design and thematic synthesis of policy and research literature, the study finds that Child Find initiatives improve awareness and visibility of learners with disabilities, strengthen identification and documentation through data systems, and support better provision of educational interventions through SNED. However, implementation varies across regions due to barriers such as limited access to trained specialists and assessment tools, insufficient SNED funding and materials, uneven teacher readiness, and gaps in stakeholder coordination, as well as stigma and low awareness in some communities. The review concludes that while the policy provides a strong inclusive framework, sustained capacity building, resource allocation, monitoring, and collaboration are necessary to ensure equitable access for all learners with disabilities.*

**Keyword:** *Child Find Policy, Inclusive Education, Learners with Disabilities, Special Needs Education (SNED), Screening and Assessment*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education remains a central goal of the Philippine educational system, emphasizing equal access to quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities. In line with this, DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022, also known as the Child Find Policy, was introduced to strengthen the identification, assessment, and inclusion of learners with disabilities in basic education. The policy highlights the importance of early identification and intervention, ensuring that children with disabilities are not excluded from educational opportunities. It promotes collaboration among schools, families, local government units, and other stakeholders to effectively locate and support these learners. Complementing this policy is the implementation of Special Needs Education (SNED), formerly known as Special Education (SPED), which serves as a key mechanism in delivering appropriate educational services and interventions for identified learners. Despite the existence of

inclusive education policies, many learners with disabilities remain unidentified and underserved, which underscores the need for systematic implementation and evaluation of such policies.

### **1.1. Description of the Problem/Concern and Intervention**

A significant concern in the Philippine education system is the under-identification and limited participation of learners with disabilities in formal schooling. Many children remain out of school due to lack of awareness, inadequate screening processes, insufficient resources, and social stigma associated with disabilities. In response to this issue, DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022 introduces the Child Find Policy as an intervention. This policy includes strategies such as community-based identification, awareness campaigns, early screening using appropriate tools, and the use of data management systems to monitor learners. A major intervention that supports this policy is the strengthening of SNED programs, which provide specialized instruction, individualized educational

planning, and support services tailored to the needs of learners with disabilities. Together, these interventions aim to ensure that all children with disabilities are identified, assessed, and provided with appropriate educational support within an inclusive learning environment.

### **1.2. How the Intervention Might Work**

The Child Find Policy operates through a structured and systematic process that begins with advocacy and awareness initiatives to promote understanding and acceptance of disabilities within communities. This is followed by the active identification of learners through community mapping, coordination with local stakeholders, and home visits. Once identified, learners undergo screening and assessment to determine their specific needs and appropriate educational placement. Through SNED programs, learners receive specialized support, including individualized instruction, accommodations, and interventions designed to address their unique learning needs. The final stage involves enrollment in suitable educational programs and continuous monitoring of their progress. Through this process, the policy aims to ensure early detection, proper intervention, and sustained support for learners with disabilities.

### **1.3. Why It Is Important to Conduct the Review**

Conducting a systematic review of the Child Find Policy is essential to evaluate its effectiveness and identify gaps in its implementation. Such a review provides evidence-based insights into how the policy is being carried out across different contexts and highlights the challenges faced by educators and stakeholders. It also helps in determining whether the policy achieves its intended outcomes, particularly in increasing access to education for learners with disabilities. Furthermore, the findings of the review can guide policymakers, school leaders, and practitioners in improving strategies and strengthening inclusive education practices, including the effective implementation of SNED programs.

### **1.4. Nature of the Review Study**

This study employs a systematic review approach, which involves the comprehensive collection, evaluation, and synthesis of existing research and related literature on the implementation of the Child Find Policy and SNED interventions. The method ensures a rigorous and unbiased analysis

of available evidence to provide a clear understanding of the policy's effectiveness and challenges.

### **1.5. Aim & Objectives of the Review**

The primary aim of this review is to analyze existing literature and evidence regarding the implementation of DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022, focusing on its effectiveness in identifying learners with disabilities and promoting inclusive education through SNED support systems.

This study specifically aims to examine the implementation of the Child Find Policy in identifying learners with disabilities, analyze the effectiveness of screening and assessment processes under the policy, identify the challenges encountered by schools and stakeholders in implementing the policy and SNED programs, and determine the overall impact of the Child Find Policy and SNED interventions on access to inclusive education.

### **1.6. Methods**

This study utilizes a systematic review design, employing a qualitative approach to synthesize findings from various sources. Relevant data are collected from academic journals, government reports, policy documents, and other credible publications related to inclusive education and SNED practices. Inclusion criteria focus on studies that discuss the implementation of inclusive education policies, particularly those related to the Child Find process and SNED interventions. Data are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and insights.

### **1.7. Search Strategies/ Included Studies**

The search for relevant literature is conducted using databases such as Google Scholar and official government websites. Keywords used in the search include "Child Find Policy Philippines," "DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022," "inclusive education," "learners with disabilities," and "SNED or SPED implementation." These keywords help ensure that the gathered studies are directly relevant to the research topic.

The review includes selected studies and policy-related literature that focus on inclusive education, SNED (formerly SPED) implementation, and child identification and assessment processes within the Philippine context. These include the policy document *Department of Education (2022)*

on DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022, which outlines the Child Find Policy and its implementation framework. It also incorporates earlier policy guidelines such as *Department of Education (2015)* on the provision of SPED services in the K to 12 programs. Legislative frameworks such as *Republic Act No. 10533 (2013)* and *Republic Act No. 7277 (1992)* are included to provide legal bases for inclusive education and support for persons with disabilities.

In addition, the review considers international and empirical studies that inform inclusive education practices, including *UNESCO (2020)* on global inclusive education systems, *United Nations (2006)* on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as scholarly works such as *Ainscow (2020)* and *Florian (2019)*, which discuss inclusive education frameworks and the role of special education. Methodological guidance from *Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014)* is also included to support the analysis of qualitative data. These studies were selected based on their relevance to inclusive education and SNED implementation, while studies not directly related to education or lacking empirical evidence were excluded to ensure the quality and reliability of the review.

### 1.8. Synthesis

The synthesis of findings reveals several key themes in the implementation of DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022 or the Child Find Policy. In terms of identification and access, the policy has improved the visibility of learners with disabilities through community-based initiatives such as barangay coordination, school mapping, and advocacy campaigns. These efforts have contributed to increased awareness among parents and communities, resulting in higher identification and enrollment rates of learners with disabilities. Regarding screening and assessment, the use of standardized tools and initial evaluation processes has enabled schools to better determine the needs of learners. However, findings indicate that access to trained specialists and assessment resources remains limited in some areas, affecting the consistency and accuracy of evaluations. In terms of stakeholder collaboration, the policy has strengthened partnerships among schools, local government units, parents, and other agencies. This collaboration has enhanced the implementation of Child Find activities, particularly in locating out-of-school children with

disabilities. Nonetheless, coordination gaps still exist, especially in resource-sharing and referral systems.

The implementation of Special Needs Education (SNED), formerly known as SPED, has been identified as a critical support mechanism under the policy. Findings show that SNED programs provide essential interventions such as individualized instruction, curriculum adaptations, and specialized support services. However, challenges such as insufficient trained teachers, limited instructional materials, and inadequate funding continue to affect the quality and reach of SNED services.

Finally, barriers to implementation include lack of awareness in remote communities, social stigma, insufficient funding, and uneven policy execution across regions. These challenges highlight the need for stronger monitoring, capacity building, and resource allocation. Overall, the synthesis indicates that while the Child Find Policy and SNED interventions have made significant progress in promoting inclusive education, sustained efforts are necessary to address existing gaps and ensure equitable access for all learners with disabilities.

## 2. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results suggest that while the Child Find Policy provides a strong framework for inclusive education, its effectiveness largely depends on the availability of adequate resources, the competence of teachers in SNED, and the level of stakeholder engagement across all stages of implementation. Although the policy is consistent with global principles of inclusion, the findings indicate that it still faces practical constraints within the Philippine context, requiring ongoing refinement in processes, tools, and service delivery to better respond to local needs. Moreover, the implementation of Child Find appears to be most successful where schools have established clear internal coordination mechanisms, reliable referral pathways, and sufficient instructional support to translate policy directives into day-to-day practices.

Further, the findings show that successful implementation is strongly influenced by school readiness—particularly in relation to training opportunities for SNED educators, the availability of instructional materials and learner accommodations, and access to assessment

services and specialists needed to ensure accurate identification and appropriate educational placement. Schools that possess stronger SNED support systems tend to achieve better outcomes such as timelier learner identification, improved documentation and tracking, higher enrollment, and increased retention of learners with disabilities. In contrast, disparities across regions suggest that implementation remains uneven, which can lead to gaps in service delivery and may compromise the equitable access of learners to inclusive educational opportunities.

In addition, sustained community awareness and active parental involvement are repeatedly emphasized as key enabling factors, since low awareness, misconceptions, and stigma can delay identification and referral, especially in remote communities. When families are engaged and informed, learners are more likely to enter the process early and remain connected to services through follow-through and monitoring. The findings also highlight that collaboration among schools, local government units, parents, and partner agencies is necessary to ensure continuity of support from identification to assessment and eventually to instructional intervention. Without strong coordination, learners may experience fragmented services, incomplete follow-up, or limited access to needed interventions, particularly when referral systems are weak, or resource-sharing is inconsistent.

The review underscores the importance of capacity building and continuous monitoring mechanisms to strengthen implementation and ensure policy objectives are fully achieved. Beyond initial training, ongoing professional development, technical assistance, and regular evaluation of Child Find activities and SNED service quality are needed to address emerging challenges and improve consistency across regions. Strengthening data management, improving the accessibility of assessment tools and support personnel, and ensuring adequate funding and materials are also crucial. Ultimately, the findings suggest that the Child Find Policy's impact on inclusive education will be sustained only if policy implementation is supported by sufficient human and material resources, consistent training and guidance for educators, and strong partnerships that keep learners with disabilities included, supported, and progressing in school.

In conclusion, the findings of this review indicate that DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022 plays a significant role in advancing inclusive education in the Philippines by improving the identification and support of learners with disabilities. The integration of SNED, formerly known as SPED, serves as a critical intervention in ensuring that these learners receive appropriate and responsive educational services. However, for the policy to achieve its full potential, there is a need for sustained efforts in strengthening implementation, providing adequate resources, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Ultimately, the success of the Child Find Policy lies in its ability to ensure that no learner with disability is left behind in accessing quality education.

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