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# Developing Inclusive Education Support Models for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam

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## To cite this article:

Hai Nguyen Xuan, Thao Do Thi, Ngoc Tran Thi Bich, Hang Le Thi Thuy. Developing Inclusive Education Support Models for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam. *International Journal of Elementary Education*. Vol. 12, No. 2, 2023, pp. 43-52.

doi: 10.11648/j.ijeedu.20231202.13

**Received:** September 8, 2022; **Accepted:** September 26, 2022; **Published:** July 11, 2023

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**Abstract:** To move a support system for children with disabilities forward in Vietnam, it is important for Vietnamese educators to consider acquiring knowledge from analyzing both successful international inclusive education practices as well as lessons from their own inclusive education experiences. In this article, the authors present the process through which Vietnam has learned from international experiences and its own practices with regard to implementing support models in inclusive schools. In the first part of the article, the authors present an overview of studies of how support models in inclusive schools have been organized in some representative international countries. The authors then present an analysis of initial research findings from the implementation of support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools in Vietnam. Drawing from insights of these analyses, in the final part of the article, the authors suggest that the support chamber become the preferred mode of support for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools in Vietnam as it is particularly appropriate to Vietnam's educational context. Suggested goals, roles and responsibilities, physical arrangement, and regulations for the support chamber are presented. The contribution of this paper rests on the potential for appropriating international initiatives for implementing support models for inclusive education schools in Vietnam and to serve the aim of enhancing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities internationally.

**Keywords:** Children with Disabilities, Inclusive Education, International Special Education, Support Models, Vietnam

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## 1. Introduction

All citizens have a right to access an equal opportunity for education and to get public benefit to generate knowledge important for their future careers. While this is true for all students in general education classrooms, it is also true for children with disabilities. Inclusive education has emerged on the front line of educational agendas of many countries around the world, including Vietnam, as the vehicle necessary for children with disabilities to realize these educational rights [1].

The government of Vietnam has demonstrated its strong commitment to supporting children with disabilities through

inclusive education. In 1991 Vietnam was the first country in Asia and the second one in the world to sign the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which included the rights of children with disabilities. Vietnam is also a country actively working to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was issued in December 2006 by the United Nations and ratified by the Vietnam Assembly in January 2014. Since then, the Vietnamese government has signed and clarified many other international conventions and treaties and approved a variety of national and ministerial regulations on educating people with disabilities. In practice, however, for inclusive education to move forward, expertise and resources must continue to be developed,

allocated, and employed effectively. Even though most (94.2%) students identified as having a disability receive their education in an inclusive school, a significant percentage of elementary school-age (11.7%) and upper secondary age (66.4%) students with disabilities and students with autism have not been participating in inclusive schools [2]. No doubt, a system of support needs to be established and expanded to address the needs of these children with disabilities at the elementary and upper secondary school levels.

In thinking about establishing and expanding a support system for children with disabilities, it is important for a developing country like Vietnam to consider learning from the experiences in international implementation of inclusive education practices and from analyzing its own inclusive education implementation practices [1]. In this article, the authors present the process through which Vietnam has learned from international experiences and its own practices in the process of implementing inclusive education support models for children with disabilities. In the first part, the authors present an overview of studies of how support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools have been provided in some representative international countries, including models from the United States, Australia, Japan, and South Africa. The authors then present an analysis of initial research findings about the implementation of support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools in Vietnam. Drawing from the authors' insights about the international implementation of support models, the analysis of respective research results in Vietnam, and thinking about ways to move inclusive education forward in Vietnam, the authors posit that the establishment of support centers is essential to successful inclusive education in Vietnam. The article concludes with recommended goals, roles and responsibilities, physical arrangement, and regulations for support chambers. The contribution of the paper rests on the potential for appropriating international initiatives of implementing support models to inclusive education schools in Vietnam and to serve the aim of enhancing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities internationally.

*Defining Term: "Children with Disabilities"*

Children<sup>1</sup> with disabilities have restricted life, working, and learning activities caused by deficiencies in one or many parts of the body or by impairments exhibited in the forms of disabilities [3]. Forms of disabilities include physical disabilities; hearing, speech or language disabilities; visual disabilities; mental disabilities; intellectual disabilities; and other disabilities (e.g., children with autism spectrum disorder, children with epilepsy, children with behavior problems, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder – AD/HD). Over the past two decades, special education services in Vietnam have been driven by two approaches, namely, segregated special education and inclusive education. Of these two, inclusive education is prevalent and is founded on the assumption that students with disabilities should

be fully integrated into regular classrooms and have access to the general education classroom similar to peers without disabilities in general education classrooms.

## 2. Support Models for Children With Disabilities in Inclusive Education Schools: An Overview

Inclusive education research shows that children with disabilities can benefit from inclusive environments if the schools are operated within inclusive values, principles, and activities shared by all school stakeholders such as teachers, parents, policy makers, community developers, health care officers, etc [4]. Being part of an inclusive environment means children with disabilities have opportunities to access the school support services – the supports that help enable children with disabilities' to maximize their strengths so that they can effectively participate in school and community activities. To ensure children with disabilities are given these opportunities, there needs to be a strong partnership among all stakeholders. Only when concerned stakeholders work together collaboratively, do children with disabilities receive access to the full expertise and resources appropriate to facilitate their learning and living development [4, 6].

As for positive impacts from inclusive environments, specific benefits that children with disabilities can receive include opportunities for them to (1) interact and communicate with their peers; (2) have positive behavioral models of learning and other activities; (3) learn from one another mutually; (4) be accepted to be members of cooperative teams; (5) create positive awareness and attitudes about non-disabled peers [5]. When these benefits combine for the development of children with disabilities, they help establish a full range of prerequisites on all issues related to school support for children with disabilities so that they can be included into interactive activities with others in classrooms, schools, families, and communities.

Inclusive environments cannot be a reality without the establishment of support models that help facilitate collaboration among school stakeholders and mobilize resources to promote the development of children with disabilities. The process in which those models are implemented are usually situated in the broad context of the countries where inclusive education takes place. The following sections describe inclusive education support models and how they facilitate the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in the United States, Australia, South Africa, Japan, and Hongkong.

### 2.1. Support Model 1: In-Class Instructional Modification

This model exists throughout many states in the United States. The model is developed in line with the belief that children with disabilities can learn as well as their peers without disabilities do in general education classrooms if teachers make any necessary instructional, assessment and content modifications to support the development of children

<sup>1</sup> Children are defined as those under the age of sixteen and children with disabilities are listed as one among fourteen groups of students with disadvantaged backgrounds in Vietnam.

with disabilities' cognitive abilities and participatory skills. It is also assumed that children with disabilities learn best if the modification is compatible with choices that the families of children with disabilities make with regard to the specific services provided to their child [7]. In a broader sense, built-in instructional modifications create opportunities for children with disabilities to learn subject content and attend to class interactive activities as equally as other students do in regular classrooms. Ultimately, the model helps children with disabilities access school-wide support services.

As the model is applied to classroom practices, teachers can make the learning of children with disabilities easier through (1) making curriculum modification in ways that are compatible with children with disabilities' abilities and needs (2) making instructional materials (texts, tools, and special equipment) fully accessible for children with disabilities (3) differentiating instruction and ways of support so that children with disabilities can demonstrate what they have learned from modified instruction and curriculum [8].

Regarding the institutional conditions for this model to be implemented, it is assumed that the support services need to consider mobilizing collaborative capacities and individual responsibilities from various stakeholders to ensure that the model can operate in a consistent and continuous way. People involved in operating the model need to be knowledgeable not only about children with disabilities but also processes for determining appropriate support services for each group of children with disabilities.

## **2.2. Support Model 2: Learning Support Teams for Children with Disabilities**

The "children with disabilities learning support" model is research-based and widely recognized in Australia [9]. It is considered a successful model to facilitate inclusive education in Australia. It is founded based on the assumption that every student with disabilities needs additional support to access the full range of educational opportunities and achieve learning requirements. The Children with Disabilities Learning Support Guideline is disseminated widely to all schools in each state to make sure that every student in every school who needs learning support will receive the right support [9]. The policy component integrated in the model identifies the key problems of each student group including those of children with disabilities so that the school can accommodate students with disabilities properly.

The model facilitates education in an inclusive environment in two ways. First, teachers are supported to address challenges in their classroom, especially issues related to the diverse learning needs of students in regular classrooms. Second, schools are provided with special education specialists who work on-site or in-mobility in line with the partners, such as school healthcare staff, parents and friends of children with disabilities, volunteers, and social workers to support students experiencing difficulties in learning. The children with disabilities benefit from the model not only because the model creates opportunities for children with disabilities to better participate in the classroom

learning process and school activities, but also helps them in their long-term development.

## **2.3. Support Model 3: Diversified Class Placements**

Diversified class placement or the establishment of a continuum of placements from less to more restrictive is a model theoretically designed to support children with disabilities to be included to the maximum extent possible in inclusive environments in the United States [10]. It is operated under the legal requirements of two federal laws: The 2004 Individual With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and currently, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is currently known as the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act.

The assumption underlying the model is that children with disabilities benefit most from inclusive education and succeed in their schooling if they learn in the class setting that is most like the setting for other students in regular classrooms. Specifically, in regular classrooms where children with disabilities are included, children with disabilities learn with typical peers, are taught by highly qualified teachers who deliver core academic instruction, and recognized by their abilities, not disabilities. The general idea of the model is to design a system of support for children with disabilities in mainstream education settings. The model offers six types of class placements (presented below) from most to least inclusive. In all settings data about the progressive development of children with disabilities on standardized assessments is collected on a continuous basis in each of those placements.

In a typical continuum of placements model, there are at least four settings ranging from less to more restrictive and the two placements most supportive of inclusive education are described below:

### **2.3.1. Inclusion Classes**

Inclusion classes are general education classes designed to support students with and without disabilities. These classes may have an inclusion specialist who provides in-class support for children with disabilities through co-teaching with a classroom teacher and/or consultation and collaborative planning with the classroom teacher [11]. Some students with disabilities may receive pre-teaching or re-teaching support from a special education teacher in addition to the consultative and co-teaching support. The inclusion specialist might be a special education teacher, speech/language pathologist, or other specialist who combines their access facilitation skills with the content mastery of the classroom teacher to support all of the students assigned to the classroom.

### **2.3.2. Resource Classes or Content Mastery Classes**

This placement is for another group of students with disabilities attending mainstream education schools. The aim is to support children with disabilities with content mastery. Children with disabilities are placed in resource classes corresponding to their skills and knowledge of the content

being taught along with peers who are of a similar age. For example, one group of children with disabilities, who need math assistance, may come to the resource class at that time with other children with disabilities who need similar pre- or re-teaching of math concepts or processes. Another group of children with disabilities may come to the resource class(es) to learn other content that the rest of their classmates have learned. The classes are usually taught by a special education specialist who usually provides lessons in core academic subjects and provides accommodations for children with disabilities to assist them in catching up to their typical peers. For part of their day, students attending resource classes might return to their inclusive classrooms and join and learn along side other students who are learning common knowledge and gaining skills [10].

### **2.3.3. Separate Classes/Self-Contained Special Education Classes**

This placement is utilized in some schools for students with severe intellectual and physical disabilities or students with multiple disabilities who need high levels of specialized services, especially the medical support coming from physical and occupational therapists. These students have opportunities for learning with special education teachers (usually, each class is assigned one primary teacher and at least one or two teaching assistants). Students with disabilities may also have opportunities to communicate with typical peers who are brought to the special class (reverse mainstreaming) [10]. It should be noted that in some schools similar students are included and receive any necessary supports in inclusive rather than separate educational environments [12].

### **2.3.4. Homebound Setting/ Resources**

This placement often is used for students who have extensive support needs and who may not have sufficient stamina to attend general education schools. In this setting, a special education teacher comes to the home for a specified amount of time each week to deliver instruction on core academic subjects such as Math, Reading, Science, and Social Sciences. Home instruction may also be used for a period of time to support a student with serious behavior problems or for a child with a disability whose parents disagree with school personnel about the appropriate school placement for their child [10].

### **2.3.5. Transitional Class**

A class for children who are not successful in the high school classroom due to emotional behavioral problems. Children can learn in this class when facing stressful problems/situations, then move back to an inclusive classroom, or attend a combination of both [10].

## **2.4. Support Model 4: Diversifying Support Schools**

This model is utilized mainly in Japan as a support system focusing on early intervention services to meet the diversified needs of children with disabilities and their parents. The system is established based on the belief that if early

intervention facilities provide support services for students with disabilities based on the collaborative work with schools, the educational system will create no distance between the learning opportunities and achievements of children with and without disabilities. Accordingly, the early intervention services are arranged into four educational settings (1) inclusive kindergarten (2) inclusive pre-schools; (3) inclusive day-care centers (4) local day-care programs and special education pre-schools [10].

The early intervention services aim to achieve three key goals (1) to prioritize the early intervention of children with disabilities; (2) to conduct medical therapy and educational activities; (3) to ensure the key roles of education in pre and elementary schools. The main activities include (1) education and care (2) counselling and development (3) continuous guidance (4) local support (5) protection and health care (6) nutrition and (7) parental support [13].

## **2.5. Support Model 5: Special Education Schools as Resource Centers**

This model is found mainly in South Africa. The development of the model was the result of the South African Government's desire to transform the purpose of special education schools into becoming resource centers. The underlying assumption is children with learning difficulties do not only locate within individual learners but also between learners, within the site of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context [14]. Locating children with learning difficulties in this broad perception means there needs a system functioning as both special education schools as well as a support service from inclusive schools/centers to prevent children with disabilities from learning breakdowns or being excluded from the general education system. Such a system can address, even prevent children with disabilities from learning breakdowns which is only seen when children with disabilities drop out of the system or when they are excluded from the schools [14]. Accordingly, a research-based model that focuses on transforming special education schools into a system of resource centers infused with personnel who possessed the knowledge of and skill in implementing inclusive education practices was developed. As a result, special education schools which previously had focused on caring, intervening, and medicating children with disabilities were merged into resource centers tasked with evaluating the needs of children with disabilities, mentoring teachers in general schools to implement school plans, and providing consultative special education expertise. Multi-disciplinary teams of professionals and support staff collaborate in planning with resource teachers to provide the support services for all children with disabilities in local school settings.

In sum, the overview above shows much emphasis has been given to developing support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools in international inclusive education practices and that a support model is important for high quality inclusive education. The overview

also shows there exists some variations of support systemd between countries in the process of implementing support models. For example, in the United States, there is a support model based upon legislation supportive of inclusive education and at the same time there is a support model for school activity modification and diversified class placements. At the same time, there is a model that establishes learning support groups in Australia [9] and another functioning as a resource center in Japan [13].

Given these varieties, however, there is also commonality across these countries. Specifically, within the implementation process of support models, special education specialists, teachers and related others share a common understanding of the purposes of inclusive education and work together to deliver a differentiated curriculum with flexible teaching and class arrangements with any necessary accommodations and modifications. In order to implement successful inclusive practices, collaborative involvement of school administrators, mainstream teachers, resource teachers, education assistants, students and parents are essential and most importantly, this initiative needs to be supported by national policies and legislation. Because the implementation of support models presented above are considered recognized international practices in the field of inclusive education, their common and various experiences are considered important practical resources to help inform inclusive education practices in other countries such as those of Vietnam.

### **3. An Overview of Research Initiatives on Implementing Support Models in Inclusive Education Practices in Vietnam**

Alongside the international endeavor toward the improvement of quality inclusive education, Vietnamese researchers have studied multiple practical initiatives concerning the implementation of support models for children with disabilities in Vietnam. Emphasis has been given to examining the variables of an effective inclusive environment, the characteristics of school-level support models that optimize expertise and resources available in the education system to bring benefits to children with disabilities in inclusive education schools, and how out-of-school support models influence inclusive education activities inside schools. All of these research initiatives are conducted within the specific educational context of Vietnam. What follows are brief descriptions of these research initiatives.

#### **3.1. Research on Variables Supportive of Inclusive Environmens in Vietnam**

The concept of inclusive education has been well articulated in Vietnam. As such, inclusive education is perceived as a mode of education for children with disabilities in which children with disabilities join regular

classrooms with their peers in the schools of their residence. Inclusive education is characterized by the following key principles (1) Education for *all* regardless of gender, ethnicity of origin, socioeconomic conditions, and social class; (2) children with disabilities enroll in mainstream education schools that they would attend if they did not have a disability; (3) Acceptance of diversity and respect for individuals who have different strenghts, learning preferences, and goals; (4) children with disabilities receive accommodations and modifications to curriculum content, instruction, and assessment compatible with their abilities and support needs [13].

A research has also asserted that inclusive environments have an important impact on the development of children with disabilities, namely, they (1) eradicate children with disabilities' inferiority complex such as feeling unworthy, insecure, and incomplete, (2) develop children with disabilities' communication skills regarding language abilities and communication behaviors, (3) develop children with disabilities who are independent thinkers, and (4) children with disabilities in inclusive environments acquire more knowledge and skills [10].

Inclusive classrooms and schools create opportunities for all children to have mutual learning and develop appropriate behaviors. Inclusive environments help children with disabilities develop their intellectual, language, communication, and social skills. Children with disabilities are also accepted as members of the classroom, school, as well as allowed to interact with their peers. Above all, children with disabilities have opportunities to access curriculum and instruction compatible with their abilities and needs [10].

#### **3.2. Research on the Implementation of Inclusive Education Support Chambers in Schools**

In 2006, international organizations such as CRS/USAID (Catholic Relief Services/USAID), SCA (Save the Children Alliance), UNICEF, CBM (Christoffel-Blindenmission/Christian Blind Mission e.V, Germany) provided human resources and technical assistance for Vietnamese educators to pilot the idea of "inclusive education support chambers for children with disabilities in schools" to support extra lessons and functional activities as well as mobilizing the participation of parents and other stakeholders in education for children with disabilities within schools. At the beginning, pilot activities were undertaken in Ninh Binh and Quang Nam provinces and then expanded to others such as Bac Kan, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh, Binh Dinh, Dong Nai. By 2012, the idea became a reality, that is, support chambers were designated and installed in inclusive education schools in 63 provinces throughout the country, and they made a strong impact on lower secondary schools. At a culminating point, the implementation of support chambers and their impact are a point of reference informing the formulation of national policies concerning the improvement of inclusive education quality at the school level. One illustration is that the implementation and impact

of support chambers has been infused into setting up national standards for school development in Vietnam.

With the strong and widespread implementation, the support chambers became a center for the implementation of support models for children with disabilities in schools. Some research has confirmed the contribution of inclusive education support chambers, especially in terms of (1) supporting children with disabilities to participate in schools' inclusive education activities (2) facilitating the development of children with disabilities and other children in-need of support with respect to their learning, counselling, and construction of life and social skills as well as the growth of individual competencies (3) accommodating peer relationships between children with disabilities and other students (4) establishing a shared platform among teachers and administrators to discuss professional issues and develop educational strategies to support children with disabilities (5) establishing the partnership between schools, families, and community, and (6) organizing social activities related to inclusive education for children with disabilities [9].

That said, the support chambers for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools have promoted inclusive environment throughout the nation as they proved their effectiveness in practice. Specifically, support chambers help to create (1) a support system in terms of technical assistance which contributes to enhancing the quality of inclusive education for children with disabilities (2) a good place to forward professional discussion about interventions and supports for children with disabilities (3) a facilitating mechanism for teachers and school administrators to exchange ideas and practices about education and supporting children with disabilities (4) and further the partnership between local support centers and the provincial support center for inclusive education.

To assess the impact of support chambers throughout the country, a research-based project has asserted that the chambers' specific purpose parallels with features of support models presented in international inclusive education practices [13]. For example, the support chambers for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools need to take a lead in (1) supporting the implementation of early intervention plans/individualized education plans, annual school strategic plans about teaching and educating children with disabilities with a special focus on modifying and accommodating curriculum content, instruction and other related components integrated in the inclusive education process; (2) supporting the development, utilization, and maintenance of instructional materials and resources serving the learning needs of children with disabilities; (3) establishing an eco-friendly environment for inclusive education for children with disabilities within the large-scale scope of inclusive education practices in Vietnam [13].

#### *Individualized Teaching and Direct Support*

Classroom-Level Individualized Teaching is an instructional practice existing in inclusive education schools located in some metropolitan areas of Vietnam such as Ha Noi, Da Nang, and Hochiminh City. Individualized teaching

is the way in which a special education teacher delivers a separate lesson for one or two children with disabilities (e.g., supporting correct pronunciation, behavioral intervention and therapy, improved cognitive abilities). The overall aim is to help enable children with disabilities to participate in common class activities when they are ready and comfortable to return to the general education classes.

Within the practice of individualized teaching, there is what is called "*direct support*"—a teaching arrangement in which special education teachers directly attend a particular session of mainstream classes in order to assist children with disabilities to participate in common activities in the inclusive class. This assistance mainly includes preparing children with disabilities to be ready for all class activities without any inferiority complex such as feeling insecure or incomplete. The assistance also includes intervention, support, and instruction for children with disabilities to participate in learning activities as well as providing modeling to general education classroom teachers.

These two teaching arrangements usually become available by parental request, meaning they are available when parents want their children to have extra learning activities to prepare them for catching up with other students in the general education classroom. These arrangements are also established in the school plan if the school wants children with disabilities to acquire complementary knowledge and skills that they are unable to access at the time they are in general education classrooms.

Although both individualized teaching and direct support practices currently are not based on research findings, they share some goals with those of inclusive education support models for children with disabilities in other countries, especially those related to curriculum and instructional modification and accommodation. Thus, they are both considered a recognized practice within the process of developing and implementing support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools in Vietnam.

## **4. Research on Implementing Support Models Outside of Schools**

The inclusive education support services in schools are less than optimal if they are implemented without collaboration and coordination with support systems outside the school setting. Resources and capacities conducive to inclusive schools requires on-going support from an inclusive environment established in the external spaces surrounding inclusive education school activities. Recent research has highlighted the practice of establishing Support Centers for Inclusive Education Development as a vehicle to facilitate collaboration and coordination between support services in schools and support systems outside the school system [15].

To pave the way for the introduction of support centers, a research was carried out that identified the important roles a center plays in helping inclusive education development at district and provincial levels. The findings pointed out

several reasons underlying the necessity of support centers at the local schools. The findings also identified two key functions of the support center including one that focuses on supporting the implementation of support models established in inclusive education schools thus this will create a systematic support network, linking a support center with an inclusive school in ensuring the effective participation of children with disabilities in the inclusion system in schools [16]. These findings have been adopted by Vietnamese policy makers and eventually included in the Provision of 2010 Law on Disability.

Hang L. T. T., suggests that to better understand the functions of support centers in the field of inclusive education, there is need for conceptual clarity of its overarching purpose as a “support model for inclusive education.” She states: “The Support model for inclusive education is a set of inherent elements operating together to create one or more system of support toward all-inclusive education activities to ensure that every child with a disability can maximize their potential and abilities to be included in the lives of communities, societies, and future careers” [13].

Driven by this conceptual schema, Hang L. T. T. proposed a comprehensive framework for support centers outside the schools which is characterized by 5 essential factors (1) supportive of policy for inclusive education (2) supportive of administration/governance/management for inclusive education (3) support center for inclusive education is established as a support system outside of schools (4) supportive of school for inclusive education; (5) supportive of communities for inclusive education. This framework is expected to provide guidance for inclusive education practices in preschools and elementary schools and as a starting point for furthering in-depth research on inclusive education support models for children with disabilities in inclusive schools [13].

Research entitled, *materializing the establishment and implementation of support centers for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools* [15] outlined specific guidance for organizing and implementing support centers at preschool and elementary school levels. Specific professional development activities designed to assist caregivers who work for the support centers have been outlined. It is expected that this specific guidance helps support the development of children with disabilities in inclusive education preschool and elementary schools across provinces and districts nationwide.

These research findings were incorporated into circulars regulating requirements and procedures to restructure the support centers for inclusive education development issued by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2012. Accordingly, the support centers for inclusive education development have been established in accordance with the following mandates:

- 1) Mission: Connecting people with disabilities with counselling to suggest appropriate educational services; Conducting early intervention strategies to suggest

appropriate educational services; Conducting psychological, healthcare, educational, and career orientation counselling to suggest appropriate educational services; Supporting people with disabilities in-house, in-community, and at-work; Providing instructional materials, curriculum content, and learning equipment appropriate to the specific needs of children and youth with disabilities.

- 2) Action: Early identification and support for children with disabilities through early intervention; Offering educational counselling for people with disabilities; Supporting people with disabilities; Providing curriculum content, instruction, and learning materials supportive of people with disabilities.

As a result of these mandates, currently there are 28 support centers for inclusive education development established and implemented throughout Vietnam.

In sum, there are multiple implications concerning the process of expanding the establishment of support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools in Vietnam. First, not far different from what is going on in the international inclusive education practices, many children with disabilities in Vietnam entering inclusive education schools not only need educational support and healthcare, but they also need the involvement of all school stakeholders such as the those providing medical services, early intervention, and rehabilitation. Thus, there is a rationale for appropriating existing ideas of support models to the educational context of Vietnam. The appropriation needs to promote a model that is located inside the school while it can enable multidisciplinary collaboration from various stakeholders and resources (including ones from communities outside schools) to serve the aim of providing effective inclusive education services for children with disabilities. Second, the appropriation needs to consider supportive policies and regulations to underpin any inclusive practices in Vietnam. That is, any aspect concerning refreshment and update of current ideas about support models for children with disabilities in Vietnam should be in line with legal and policy mandates in the education system in Vietnam. Third, while having the ideas appropriated, there still needs to be continuity of learning from international experiences about the success and barriers inherent in the process of implementing existing support models. No matter whether that learning is complete or on-going, it needs to be undertaken within insights deriving from the analysis of international practices and Vietnam’s research-based reference to improve the quality of support systems for children with disabilities in Vietnam.

## 5. Toward the Inclusion of Support Chambers as a Preferred Support Model for Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools in Vietnam

As with all insights from analyzing international practices

and Vietnam's research initiatives about the implementation process of support models for inclusive education, the Vietnam government's commitment to inclusive education and any progress that has been made thus far in inclusive education schools while considering opportunities for expanding the ideas of support models countrywide, Vietnam's inclusive education Ministry of Education and Training as well as local administrative units have and will continue to lead the way.

### **5.1. The assumption That Underlies the Support Chambers in School**

Inclusive education support rooms and inclusive education support activities in educational institutions, including the establishment of support chambers in schools has been in place since 2018 [17].

The support chamber is a center for providing support for inclusive education activities for children with disabilities in the school and a place where all students in the school (including children with disabilities) are gathered to benefit from teaching and counseling activities to develop their learning ability and social, life, and career orientation skills. Additionally, the support center provides care, and opportunities to develop peer networks among students and professionals. And it provides a collaborative environment where teachers and students with and without disabilities construct their development plans with a specific aim to support children with disabilities. The chamber is also a place for building collaborative partnerships between schools, community, and families to gain consensus about plans to support the development of children with disabilities and to also organize meetings to discuss and share information about social issues related to inclusive education for children with disabilities.

### **5.2. The Specific Goals of the Support Chamber in Schools**

The main goal of creating support systems is to develop a system of support for professional, technical, and resource issues to enhance the quality of inclusive education in Vietnamese schools. Additionally, goals of the support chamber include:

- 1) The support activities vary from designing assessment criteria for children with disabilities, developing inclusive education IEPs, including the monitoring and evaluation of children with disabilities' learning achievement.
- 2) To create venues for professional activities being commenced throughout the whole process of supporting children with disabilities in inclusive education schools.
- 3) To support a mechanism for joint learning and development activities between grade-level teachers, administrators, and staff on topics related to curriculum, instruction, teaching, and learning for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools.
- 4) To apply recognized initiatives about the connection between educational activities and career opportunities

compatible to and children with disabilities' abilities and labor markets' need to research and practices about inclusive education.

- 5) To partner closely with support centers (when there is the provincial support centers established in the province) through conducting and coordinating shared activities for the purpose of supporting children with disabilities in inclusive education schools.

## **6. Support Chamber Personnel and Organizing Regulations**

### **6.1. Support Chamber Decision-Making Team/Managing Division**

The decision-making team/managing division is comprised of:

Team leader/managing director: The decision-making team leader/managing director should be a representative of the local school managing board;

Coordinator: The coordinator should be one who is in charge of support activities for children with disabilities in the chamber or any personnel appointed by the school principal.

### **6.2. Support Chamber Assistant Team**

The assistant team is comprised of:

A grade-level leader/subject leader;

Homeroom teachers of inclusive education classrooms;

A representative of Communist Youth Union / Pioneers' Organization;

Non-disabled students who are volunteers for helping children with disabilities (each child with disability needs one volunteer);

A or maybe more than one representative of children with disability;

A representative of parents of children with disabilities;

A representative of healthcare staff (from schools or local healthcare centers).

### **6.3. Roles and Responsibilities**

Members of the school managing board and members of the support chamber's managing division are responsible for governing all activities related to support for children with disabilities in collaboration with teachers teaching children with disabilities in inclusive education classrooms.

The decision-making team leader/managing division director is responsible for handling properties in the ownership of the chamber, not limited to financial resource management and development.

Teachers and parents need inform the people in charge of the chamber if they plan to occupy the space and utilities of the chamber.

All concerned stakeholders are responsible for protecting and maintaining equipment and materials in the ownership of the chamber.

#### 6.4. Suggested Procedural Requirements

Support Chambers Boards often include the following members: 1) Representative of the School Management Board; 2) An education support staff member; 3) A special teacher; 4) A representative of the Community Support Group/volunteer (if any); 5) A representative of parents of children with disabilities; 6) A school medical staff; 7) Students who volunteer to help students with disabilities in school (each child with disability needs at least one student without disabilities to help); 8) A or maybe more than one representative of children with disability.

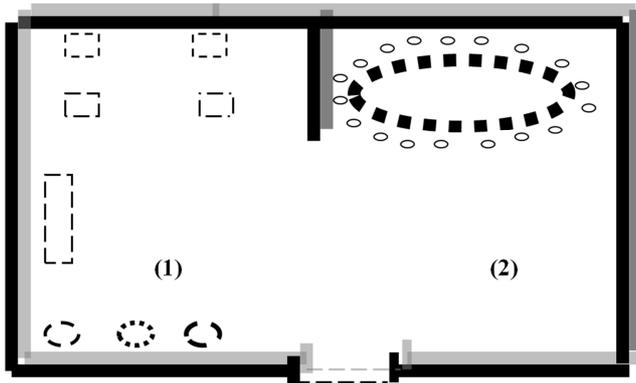


Figure 1. Physical arrangements of inclusive education a support chamber in schools.

In collaboration with other members of the Support Chambers, the education support staff are responsible for developing and updating a database about children with disabilities in their school and analyzing and disseminating information. They are also responsible for participating into developing plans for intervention activities needed for children with disabilities in their school. These plans should be reviewed and approved by all the members in the chamber. Accordingly, teachers who are responsible for intervention and therapeutic activities as well as carrying out individualized teaching units keep the members in the chamber of their schedules. All these activities should be commenced in a physical space which according to the Circular No 03/2018/TT-BGDĐT issued by Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training dated Jan. 29, 2018 is prescribed to be a classroom in the education institution which integrates inclusive education [17]. A visual representation of the support chamber described above appears in Figure 1.

#### 6.5. Physical Arrangement Regulations

According to the Circular mentioned above, the classroom to be chosen as a support chamber for children with disabilities needs to meet the following physical arrangement criteria.

A support chamber should be 45 by 50 square meters, equivalent to that of a regular classroom in a general education school. The chamber should be fully filled with adequate light and aided with relevant tools and materials to support all activities concerning assessment, intervention,

learning, social skills development, career orientation, and the development of children with disabilities' abilities.

The chamber should be comprised of two main areas: the private area and the public area. The private area should function as place serving individual's activities, including intervention, therapy, studying, and career orientation based on a child's individual support needs. The public area should be known as the place for the commencement of cooperative activities such as group work. The forms of groups will vary including peer groups, resource person groups, community groups, parent groups, public relations groups, and workshop coordination groups, etc.

Equipment installed in the chambers will be provided based on a) the school's specific needs b) the characteristics and support needs of children with disabilities, and c) local conditions such as economic resources, participation of people and authorities, etc and d) specialized equipment, therapeutic aiding tools, as well as materials serving career orientation activities used to support children with disabilities.

#### 6.6. Management of the Support Chamber on an Adjunct Basis

When the support chamber is established, the decision-making team members/the members of managing division will be required to handle activities in the chamber on an adjunct basis. That means the school principal undertakes "director" position concurrently. So too are similar personnel, including grade-level or subject teachers, leaders of Communist Youth Union or Pioneers' Organization rotating through the leadership of the team position.

In short, this proposal assumes that the support chambers - a preferred mode of support models for children with disabilities in Vietnam - might provide a window for inclusive education activities taking place in schools while integrating expertise and resources from multiple agencies located in the local schools with the aim to better serve the needs of children with disabilities by achieving public benefits for their high and equal learning opportunities in regular schools. Clearly, the school where the chamber is located will be well on the way to implementing inclusive education.

Much more remains to be done. Specifically, future research should investigate policies, practices, and problems associated with the introduction of the support chamber. If a lack of professional skills appears to be the major obstacle in the schools where the support chambers are located, there are clear implications for teacher training courses. These courses need to move beyond the rhetoric associated with the idea of inclusion, and deal actively with the 'how to' implement the ideas in ways that are appropriate to Vietnam's context. Another practical implication stemming from introduction of the chambers include: the need to increase teachers' commitment by putting inclusive education at the top of the agenda for staff training; to enhance communication among teachers, paraprofessionals and parents; and to equip teachers with supportive Ministry of Education and Training and provincial level policies and regulations.

## 7. Conclusion

Education is a right for all children. Internationally, children with disabilities, whatever the cause, form a considerable number of students who do not have access to quality education in places where support services are inappropriate. Improving education for these students is essential to meet United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, especially in the country where the rates of out-of-school children with disabilities is considerably high and the economy is less-developed like Vietnam. The efforts made in research and practices to find a system of support to address how best to facilitate children with disabilities to thrive in inclusive education systems is being attended to in many countries around the world. Among those efforts, there are numerous approaches that focus on developing support models in schools where children with disabilities are taught in regular classrooms. The underlying assumption is that children with disabilities can maximize their potential if they learn with their general education student counterparts while benefiting from support services provided by all stakeholders of the schools. Taking that world-trending assumption into account and adapting international experiences on the implementation of support models for children with disabilities in inclusive education schools to country specific conditions, Vietnam educators have moved towards a preferred mode of support models known as the support chamber, aiming at gathering expertise and resources from school stakeholders to provide the best opportunity for children with disabilities in their learning with peers in general education classrooms. While the implementation of support chambers in Vietnam has been underway, it is worth considering that this is the moment to capitalize on the knowledge and experience gained and establish support chambers throughout the country.

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