Demystifying the Diagnosis: 
An Inclusive School's Approach in 
Improving the Socio-Emotional Skills 
of Children with Disabilities

Nilda B. Delgado, RSW 
Director, MindHaven School, Inc. 
Arnaldo Blvd., Roxas City 5800, Capiz, Philippines 
+63 918 923 9699, +63 36 621 1383, +63 36 621 1475 
nenetdel@yahoo.com

FRANK S. EMBOLTURA, R.N., M. Ed.-SPED 
Special and Inclusive Education Specialist 
Assistant Professor, University of San Agustin 
General Luna St., Iloilo City 5000, Iloilo, Philippines 
+63 918 939 8709; emboltura.frank@gmail.com
Demystifying the Diagnosis: An Inclusive School's Approach in Improving the Socio-Emotional Skills of Children with Disabilities

Context/Relevance of the study

Theoretical Framework (5 steps of the Demystification Process)

Areas Evaluated for Outcome

Findings / Themes

Conclusion
“It is a sad cliché that having a handicapped child too often results in a handicapped family. (Cordoni, 1990 p. 39).”
No parent wants to have a child with disability. Few parents would forget the moment their child was first diagnosed with a disability, no matter how mild the condition is.
MindHaven School’s Inclusive program applies this Demystification process.

**History**

- 1997 – inclusion program
- 2003 – National recognition from the DepEd

**Today**

- S.Y. 2016-2017
  - 19 teachers
  - 137 students (64 kids 1½ -7 y.o. & 73 kids 8-13 y.o.)

**Parent Education Program (PEP)**

**Paraprofessionals’/Caregivers’ Empowerment Training**
Demystification is one of the phases of “Management by Profile” by Dr. Mel Levine (2002, p. 278).

Demystification is essential since it:

A. Is a process that allows children to know what to work on. It emphasizes the importance of children understanding themselves so as not to suffer a serious loss of motivation.

B. Can be employed at any age that the child can already understand their cognitive and socio-emotional difficulties.

C. Open discussions with adults.

D. Is soothing and empowering for children and parents to know the findings of the assessment.

- small group of children
- one-on-one between clinician/teacher and parents.

(http://inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/demystification-and-culturally-responsive-teaching)
THE GAP OF DEVELOPMENT

**P.L.O.P.: Present Level of Performance**

**Degree of loss of potential**

**Developmental milestones**

Failure to reach their potential in cognitive development

Poverty, poor health, poor nutrition, and deficient care

More nurturing environment with adequate stimulation and nutrition

200 million children under 5 years (conservative estimate)

*P.L.O.P.: Present Level of Performance*
WHAT SHOULD BE?

Child’s Development

- Sensory-Motor
- Interdependent Domains
- Social-Emotional
- Cognitive

Interdependent Domains

Care
Knowledge
Skills
Attitude

competent
maternal care
Interventions focus more on the academic and cognitive gap, downplaying the development of socio-emotional skills.

- Educational institutions more aware of strategies and methods
- Improve parental education, particularly of mothers.
- Failure of children to maximize their developmental potential and achieve satisfactory educational level.
Theoretical Framework and Research Problem of MindHaven School’s Ethnographic Case Study

**FOCUS:** How MindHaven School adapted the Demystification process (Levine, 2002) that was extensively discussed in the book “A Mind at a Time”

**MODIFIED STEPS:** For parents of children aged 3-7 years old and with special needs

**WHY:** The key to the children understanding themselves is to have the children’s disabilities demystified to their parents.

**THEN:** Empower parents to employ the Demystification process on their children.
Five Steps of Demystification, from Dr. Mel Levine

1. Introduction:
   Understanding one’s self

2. Strengths
   (Competence)

3. Weaknesses
   (Dysfunction/breakdown)

4. Introduction of optimism:
   • Improvement is possible
   • Weaknesses can be worked on
   • Strengths can be enhanced

5. Alliance formation:
   Professional assures help to the child
METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

IEP meetings
Focus group discussions

Written Record

Data Analysis Approach

Data Collection Technique

Research Method

Philosophical Assumptions

Journal and portfolio explorations

Document and archival explorations

On-site observations

- Ethnography (Yin, 2003)
- Case Study (Opie, 2004)
Key participants

6 parents (fathers and/or mothers) of students 3-7 years old and diagnosed to have special needs

Secondary participants: 10 teachers (all female, 4 preschool and 6 elementary level), 11 paraprofessionals/caregivers (all female)

TOTAL OF 27 ADULT PARTICIPANTS
## CASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case # 1</th>
<th>Case # 2</th>
<th>Case # 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parents:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parents:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Virgie, 35 y.o., full-time mother</td>
<td>• Lauren, 42 y.o., pediatrician</td>
<td>• Sheila, 32 y.o., teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Luis, 43 y.o., teacher</td>
<td>• Paul, 45 y.o., politician</td>
<td>• Nelson, 38 y.o., merchant marine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Child:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Child:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Max, 5 y.o.</td>
<td>- Mat, 4 y.o.</td>
<td>- Nel, 3 yrs 11 mos,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- has Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
<td>- has Autism Spectrum Disorder</td>
<td>- has Language Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- with language and cognitive delays</td>
<td>- in the inclusion program with pull-out sessions</td>
<td>- in the inclusive program with pull-out sessions to address his language/communication needs</td>
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The process of Demystification and its outcomes are evaluated as to the following:

- **What**
  - Introduction
  - Demystification Process
  - Discussion of Strengths
  - Discussion of Weaknesses
  - Introduction of Optimism

- **So what**
  - Appropriateness of Socio-Emotional Strategies
  - Attainability of Objectives
  - Effective Feedback
  - Correspondence of procedures/steps to objectives
  - Collaborative Home-School Program

### Discussion of Strengths

#### Alliance Formation

#### Introduction of Optimism

#### Demystification Process

- Introduction
- Discussion of Strengths
- Discussion of Weaknesses
- Introduction of Optimism

#### Evaluation

- Appropriateness of Socio-Emotional Strategies
- Attainability of Objectives
- Effective Feedback
- Correspondence of procedures/steps to objectives
- Collaborative Home-School Program
Now what

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

1. Appropriateness of the Socio-Emotional Strategies Employed

   *Understanding leads to acceptance.*

   "My love for my child has to be translated into actions which I need to do daily with him to help him attain specific skills we've identified."
   - Parent

   Parents gained understanding of their children’s brain condition (cognitive and social skills).

2. Providing of Effective Feedback

   *Feedback sessions are avenues:*
   - For consistent formulation of the program
   - For communication of the team during collaborative activities
   - For on-going assessment (objectives attained and standard skills yet to be learned)

   The feedback process provides the “blueprint” that guides the implementation of the school’s three foundational programs.
3. Collaborative Home-School Program

Foundation of an effective and efficient behavior management program

The parents’ awareness of the importance of developing the Executive Function of the brain made them open to the establishment of the Home-School Program.

4. Correspondence of the Procedures/Steps to the objectives

Documentation of the child’s performance as a basis to enhance standards for academic concerns and overcoming barriers to socialization skills

“The PEP and Caregiver’s sessions made us aware of the details we needed to monitor with my child, from his routine activities to coaching and supporting him in school learning opportunities and to identifying strategies to help him in his academic difficulties.” - Parent
5. Attainability of the Objectives

Individualized Education Program (IEP) as a guide to the attainment of the objectives of the child’s personalized learning program

“The process helped us understand our child’s condition and ourselves as parents. We were encouraged to learn more about our child’s condition and identify ways to support and motivate my child. ...now I research consistently and the knowledge I gain I share with other parents... The PEP Sessions strengthened our support group as parents.” - Parent
Before

1. Disabilities generate emotions.
2. Feeling of grief about their child’s disability (Rejection)
3. Impact of isolation

Then

Tool

DEMystification

Collaboration

Early Intervention

After

1. Emotions to Transformation
2. Rejection to Connection
3. Isolation to Collaboration

Before

So what?

What?

Now what?

Then

So what?

What?

Now what?
4. Focus on cognitive development only (Separation)

5. Parents wishing for the child they didn’t have (Imagination)

4. Separation to Inclusion (cognitive AND social skills)

5. Imagination to Determination and Action

Early Intervention

Collaboration

DEMystification
One hundred years from now, it will not matter how much money you made, what kind of car you drove, what sort of house you lived in. Rather, one hundred years from now, what would matter is if the world became a better place because you made a difference in the life of a child.
References


http://inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/demystification-and-culturally-responsive-teaching

http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(07)60032-4/fulltext


