

For the Love of Teaching: The Chronicles of Teachers Handling Students with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract

Teaching learners with special needs is a very different reality in the profession. This study aimed to determine the lived experiences of teachers who handle learners with special needs. Qualitative-phenomenological design was employed in order to explore their lived experiences. The participants were purposefully chosen based on pre-determined criteria and were interviewed in order to gather the needed data. Results showed that they encountered difficulty in communication and performing adaptive skills, denial of parents on their children's condition, learners having delayed motor skills, lack of parental support, and the most recurring challenge that emerges is learners' behavioral problems. With the educational practices that teachers employed that are suitable for the children's needs, several outcomes were identified specifically increased participation in different activities, improvement of verbal and non-verbal skills, improvement of behavior through simple instructions, increased socialization with their classmates, and learners improved their skills in reading and writing. Furthermore, compassion, enthusiasm, good communication and leadership skills, patience, and resourcefulness and creativity were the skills necessary for teachers to possess in providing the most suitable learning experience to their learners.

Keywords: special education, special education teachers, learners with special educational needs, qualitative, Philippines

1. Introduction

Children have the right for an access of quality and relevant education. Unfortunately, not all learners are the same. There are some learners who are in need of special education programs in order to match their special education needs. Learners who have special needs are those learners with learning, physical, and developmental abilities, behavioral, emotional, and communication disorders; and learning deficiencies. Due to these realities, inclusive education is set in place as it is thought of as an approach to serve children with educational needs within the mainstream classrooms (Furuta & Alwis, 2017).

The usual studies about dealing with learners with special education needs focus on the development of an inclusive curriculum as seen in the work of Pawilen (2018), the academic performance of learners as in the study of Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019), and the lived experiences of students considered to be PWDs from the work of Dianito et al. (2021). Unfortunately, in the Philippines, special education teachers encounter several challenges which affect the quality of teaching that they do to their learners. Some of the challenges faced by these teachers are difficulties in choosing appropriate teaching strategies and motivation, difficulty in identifying the individual needs of the learners, and problems with overall handling of such students (Allam & Martin, 2021).

However, with the current studies mentioned above, it can be seen that it is the learners who are given focus and prime consideration while the teachers' lived experiences in dealing with their learners with special needs remains to be understudied. This knowledge gap has incited the researchers to come up with study also in consideration of sudden

transition from face-to-face to distance learning modality has caused a major disruption in the delivery of learning, monitoring of performance, and evaluation and assessment of learning outcomes.

As such, this paper would be of a beneficial contribution to the institution as this would serve as a steppingstone towards the consideration of capacitating teachers and other interested individuals in terms of acquiring necessary skills to be enhanced in order to better deal with learners diagnosed with special needs. The findings of this study will be used to define the suitable measures and strategies for transforming and reconstructing the specified institution's learning techniques and environment in handling learners with special needs.

More importantly, this study determined the experiences of teachers in providing educational guidance to learners with special needs. Likewise, educational practices employed by teachers to better assist their learners was sought. Moreover, this identified different outcomes of educational practices which could have the significant impact on the progress of learners with special educational needs. Finally, skills of teachers were revealed to better provide the most suitable learning experiences.

2. Methods

In order to properly explore the phenomenon which is focused in this study, the researcher made use of a qualitative phenomenological research design. Through the employment of such research design, the researcher would be able to investigate the phenomenon in a more in-depth manner allowing the deeply explore their lived experiences (Cypress, 2018). Considering that there are multiple participants in this study, it is understood that no reality is the same which means that the researcher needs to be open to the emergent realities that shall be put forward by the participants in their revelations during the conduct of the interview (Larkin et al., 2019).

The best characteristic of qualitative research is that this design is very flexible. What this means is that the researcher, in case that there are loopholes encountered in the study, she can simply move backwards in an iterative manner. It also allows for a systematic approach which propels the study forward (Kim et al., 2017). This iterative process facilitates a prolonged experience which is necessary for a credible reporting of the research findings later on in this study (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020).

To be more specific, phenomenology as a research design enables participants to be emancipated due to its encouraging nature of allowing them to share a fraction of the realities they face in their lives to the researcher (Qutoshi, 2018). This study made use of the qualitative-phenomenological research design since the characteristics of the participants of this study were unique in their own way. Teachers who handle learners with special educational needs tend to be an under represented population because researchers tend to focus on the learners themselves. Hence, it is vital that this phenomenological inquiry would be conducted in order to understand their point-of-view about this discipline.

In this study, the researchers chose those teachers who specialized in dealing with learners who had special needs (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Academically Backward, Ocularly Impaired, Auditory Impaired, and the like). Ideally, qualitative research requires a maximum of twenty-five participants. Thus, the researchers made sure that the participants would reach or be as close to that number to properly explore the phenomenon.

3. Results and Discussions

This section elaborates the findings of the study. Each of the themes was discussed profoundly to give the wider perspectives of the experiences of teachers handling learners with special needs.

Emergent Theme 1: Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Handling Learners with Special Needs

Teachers who participated in this phenomenological study faced a variety of obstacles on their way to teaching pupils with special needs. There were five themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. Individual themes are covered below:

Cluster Theme 1: Difficulty in Communication and in Performing Adaptive Skills

Special education covers a wide range of issues, from learning problems and attention deficit disorder to autism and deafness, and on to severe intellectual and physical disabilities, many of which are overlapping. As a result, several authors namely Kingsbury et al. (2020) and Bhat (2021) backed this up, stating that children with special needs, particularly students with autism, have major difficulties communicating effectively and developing spoken language skills, little or no general cognitive impairment, cognitive, adaptive, and behavioral difficulties, as well as sensory integration difficulties, which the participants in this study see as a challenge in their profession resulting to the

increase the risk of burnout among teachers making it difficult for them to provide and promote effective education to all of their students (Lipka et al., 2019).

Cluster Theme 2: Denial Parents on their Children's Condition

The reason behind when parents make excuses for their child's academic setbacks is because they do not want to accept the disability (Kayama et al., 2017). As a result, when a child is diagnosed with special needs, parents generally have a negative attitude toward the situation, which includes denial, rejection, and self-blame. They become frustrated and show hostility or overprotection toward the child's condition, failing to make reasonable expectations of the child (Sahu et al., 2018; Hazarik & Choudhury, 2021). As a result, despite teachers' best efforts and educational approaches, repeated failure or poor performance, parents' denial of their child's illness can impose additional problems on teachers, leading to higher levels of stress, frustration, and dissatisfaction (Kirby, 2017).

Cluster Theme 3: Delayed Motor Skills

Measuring a child's acquisition of motor skills has been recognized as critical for their continued smooth physical, cognitive, and social development in their early years (Harman et al. 2018; McClelland & Cameron, 2019). As such, delayed motor skills are the third recurring theme that was uncovered as part of the challenges faced by teachers working with students with special needs, which was supported by Allen et al. (2017), who stated that the motor development of children with special needs is slower than that of children with typical development as this is linked to their mental function impairment (Cupples et al., 2018). As a result, Miri-Lavasani (2018) demonstrated that students with special needs have difficulty managing pencils, crayons, and scissors given that they have difficulty coordinating the small muscle groups in their hands. This problem makes children reliant on others and prohibits them from fulfilling educational requirements.

Cluster Theme 5: Lack of Parental Support

Many parents of children with disabilities are unable to access vital services for their children due to stigma, poverty, and a lack of useful knowledge of the existence of resources and services (Odongo, 2018). As a result, children with special needs are taken to school and left in the care of teachers who are overwhelmed by the large number of children in the classes, that they do not pay much attention to the child with disabilities resulting for their learning process and cognitive development to be compromised (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). As such, parental support, therefore, is an important aspect in a child's education and one of the most significant factors that is positively associated to academic performance (Amponsah et al., 2018). Academic achievement is thus not solely determined by school-based educational processes; it also depends on the circumstances in which young people live, as well as the encouragement and support they receive at home as it can support them in overcoming their learning difficulties (Kapur, 2018; Minnaert, 2018; Semeraro et al., 2020). Otherwise, parents who lack to show support tend to increase the difficulty of teachers (Sabagh et al., 2018).

Cluster Theme 6: Behavioral Problems

Teachers reported feeling vulnerable and worried of students with learning disabilities or behavioral concerns in a study done by Gash (2006) because of previous negative experiences. In particular Burrows (2004) stated that teachers who work with students with learning disabilities and/or behavioral disorders frequently face difficulties and strong emotions when dealing with issues relating to their students' behavior which affect their capacity to communicate, interact, and teach their students successfully. Moreover, Pepe and Addimando (2013) cites that verbal and physical hostility are two key kinds of these behaviors. Rudeness, bickering, sarcasm, and taunting are examples of the former, while kicking, hitting, fighting, spitting, hurling items, and biting are examples of the latter. Hence, when directed toward the teacher or other classmates, aggressive/hostile behaviors impair the learning process. Aggressive misconduct is a serious hazard to instructors because it can escalate if handled incorrectly or underestimated. Indeed, determining the extent to which students' behaviors contribute to teachers' strain is a challenge in special education, which has been shown to increase levels of distress for both qualified and novice teachers (Zhang, 2017), leading to acute psychological distress in teachers (Boysen, 2017), and sometimes leading to early retirement (Harmsen et al., 2018).

Emergent Theme 2: Educational Practices Employed by Teachers in Assisting Learners

Due to the different challenges that the teachers have encountered, they were eager to find ways in order to cope with them. During the analysis, a number of themes have surfaced in relation to their educational practices to better assist learners with special needs which are discussed individually:

Cluster Theme 1: Employing Proper Treatments for Learners

Providing learner treatment customized to their needs are imperative so that they receive the best instruction at school and that their special needs are addressed which can develop their interest to study (Fletcher et al., 2018). Perhaps Zigmond and Kloo (2017) defined special education as being more (a) explicit, (b) intensive, and (c) supportive for students with learning difficulties than general education. Whereas individualization and validation are two characteristics of effective special education for students with special needs, according to Bryant et al. (2019), as these curriculum-based measures and other progress-monitoring tools help ensure that the educational intervention is responsive to students' individual needs.

Cluster Theme 2: Providing Activities that Develop Motor Skills

When a child's fine motor skills are lacking, classroom tasks can be difficult and result in delays in many aspects that are necessary for learning and functioning in the school environment. Hence, providing activities that develop children with disabilities motor skills eventually help teachers to conduct effective teaching and learning sessions which is also beneficial for their students with disabilities as they progressed over time in terms of performing difficult tasks as well as managing their sensory faculties (Valentini et al, 2017; (Bremer & Cairney, 2018; Arshad, 2012; Damonse, 2021). Such practices include hand-eye coordination and small muscle control and are used to cut, grab small items, and button clothing (Bhatia et al., 2015). Fine motor activities like cutting, pasting, drawing, writing, tearing, scrunching paper, and folding, which are wonderful strengthening exercises, also help kids with disabilities improve their motor skills (St John, 2013). This also includes using crayons, markers, and colored pencils to sketch and paint to strengthen the tiny muscles in the hands. Teachers have also adopted manipulating play dough because it builds hand muscles and promotes controlled movement. Without a doubt, solid motor skills are critical for a child's physical, social, and psychological development (Hestbaek et al., 2017).

Cluster Theme 3: Communicating with Parents and Monitoring Learners' Progress

As parents, they know their child's learning style and they also know if there are any other issues going on that might be affecting their learning at school. Hence, when teachers put in the time to communicate with parents, they can gain understanding about their students' home learning environment and needs (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). As a result, ongoing communication with their students' parents allows them to tailor their approach and apply appropriate strategies to suit their students' needs and learning in class (Aouad & Bento, 2019). Consequently, in their study, Urie and Bunijevac (2017) reaffirmed this topic, stating that effective collaboration between teachers and parents can contribute to academic progress for students with special needs as well as students' feelings of competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, research shows that low student achievement and engagement are linked to little or absent parental participation (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Negative teacher-parent communication aimed at increasing parental monitoring of student conduct and schoolwork, on the other hand, may reduce students' sense of autonomy and participation.

Cluster Theme 4: Giving of Positive Reinforcements

In the context of children with special needs, positive reinforcement reinforces what the child is doing right rather than concentrating on what the child is doing wrong (Stallard, 2019). By looking on it positively, it increases the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated. It also supports the child's positive deeds and qualities through enthusiasm, descriptive encouragement, and natural, logical rewards (Carr & Boat, 2019). As such, when working with students on academic skills, especially in the setting of special education, educators use these behavioral tactics on a regular basis to which students can learn positive behavior all through positive reinforcement (Harwell & Jackson, 2014). Otherwise, the problematic behavior in children with special needs can block their own learning as well as disrupt the classroom for other students (Ostmeyer & Scarpa, 2012). Problematic behaviors include challenges in listening and following directions, issues conforming to classroom rules, and exhibits of repetitive behaviors that can be disruptive. Introduced situations intended to reduce repetitive behaviors in people with autism can often be stressful, resulting to excessive anger, violence, self-injury, and other recurrent and bothersome behaviors (Boyd et al., 2011).

Emergent Theme 3: Outcomes of the Educational Practices for the Learners with Special Needs

The Special Education teachers, over the course of their experiences and the educational practices they employ were able to acquire significant outcomes among students with special needs. Their observations are presented and individually discussed below:

Cluster Theme 1: Increased Participation in Different Activities

Compared to competitive or individual work, cooperation among students with learning difficulties leads to higher group and individual achievement, higher-quality reasoning strategies, more frequent transfer of these from the

group to individual members, greater metacognitive skills, and more new ideas and solutions to problems which necessitates participation of individual members (Johnson & Johnson, 2018; Gillies, 2019). As a result, this theme also supported several reports claiming that kids' participation in diverse activities has improved over time, which has a favorable impact on their academic achievement and social and emotional development (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Fernandez-Rio et al., 2017). Ottosen, et al. (2017) further attested to educational intervention in terms of activities provided by teachers, giving students greater opportunities for activity engagement appropriate to their interests and talents. As a result, Mahoney and Cairns (2019) claimed that the impact of educational practices provided by teachers has captured the motivation and interest of learners, causing them to engage, participate, and join activities both inside and outside the premise of their classroom, and that their participation has been maintained over time. It was also emphasized that participating in various activities helps kids with learning disabilities build social skills and improve their academic performance (Ritchie, 2018).

Cluster Theme 2: Improvement of Verbal and Non-verbal skills

The ability to communicate is one of humanity's greatest achievements which include both speech and gestures. Children with severe learning disabilities, on the other hand, face significant communication difficulties. Fortunately, it has been noticed over time that students with special needs of all ages and types are able to enhance their verbal and non-verbal skills to some extent due to the instructional procedures used in school. In the study of Duque et al. (2020), most children with severe learning disabilities made significant progress over the years of implementing educational practices that are aligned with their needs, where they were able to utter some words, allowing them to successfully interact with their environments and develop the ability to learn from interactive experiences, which the non-disabled do readily. Furthermore, according to special education instructors' observations in Mutumburanzou's (2018) study, children with severe learning problems grow more curious, less reclusive, more energetic, and more fun, exactly like children without disabilities. They could also communicate by moving their bodies, making gestures, producing facial expressions, blinking, gazing, making noise, and so on. A youngster may, for example, stare at their peers and teachers to suggest that they want to play or that they need something resulting for them not resorting to negative behaviors or experiencing communication breakdown (Gregg, 2017).

Cluster Theme 3: Improvement of Behavior through Simple Instructions

Redirecting a child from an undesirable behavior to one that is more appropriate is an effective behavior modification technique used in most special education classrooms today. Instead of being punished for their inappropriateness, the child is given the opportunity to make a different choice when he or she becomes involved in a different activity. As a result of the specific teaching approaches and behavioral interventions used by teachers, children with special needs, particularly those with ADHD, according to Lan et al. (2018) improve their conduct and learn to follow basic instructions. In agreement, Schoepfer et al. (2019) claimed that children with ADHD appear to be rather stable and persistent over time when compared to their behavioral patterns prior to implementing specific education approaches that are appropriate for their needs. Novak and Honan (2019) also found significant behavioral gains in kids with exceptional needs, stating that changes in performance on attention training tasks over time have been repeatedly demonstrated in students with special needs. Improvements in sustained attention to task, accuracy and speed of visual search, and a wide range of activities requiring increasingly complex stimulus–response demands have been seen in students with severe acquired cognitive impairment. In this light, it is obvious that the majority of children with behavioral disorders have progressed to the point where they can maintain attention to tasks throughout time.

Cluster Theme 4: Improved Socialization with their Classmates

Teachers understand that no child is born with an innate skill for understanding social skills, and it can take kids with special needs more time and effort to get a handle on them (Hajal & Paley, 2020). Hence, in an effort to improve their socialization towards their classmates, special education teachers used activities in the classroom that everyone could participate in, such as group activities and/or games, to build social connections between and among children with special needs. As a result, learners are reported to be able to establish and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, gain peer acceptance, establish and maintain friendships, and terminate negative or pernicious interpersonal relationships (Zerk et al., 2021). Moreover, through the use of cooperative group learning, in which students are teamed for activities or projects and must cooperate, share ideas and materials, and share in the development of project products, Full et al. (2021) reported that students eventually foster good relationships with their classmates. Furthermore, Bakken et al. (2017) reported that social relationships among students with special needs are more likely to occur in group activities such as role play where they can practice acceptable small talk, a social skill that is critical to acceptance in the inclusion classroom, resulting in a positive social atmosphere.

Cluster Theme 5: Improved Skills in Reading and Writing

Most of the children with disabilities seem to struggle the most with reading and writing skills. However, reading and writing are fundamental skills that everyone should learn and children with special needs is not an exemption. For this to be achieved effectively, the instructors' desire to devise humane educational practices to assist kids in learning to read and write appears to be the driving force behind their improvement as such methods are tailored to the needs of students with learning difficulties, allowing their skills to grow over time. As a result, it was reported that like their normally developing classmates, students with special needs have progressed in reading and written expression tasks as a result of educational interventions done by teachers (MacArthur, 2007; Reid & Lienemann, 2006). Learners with learning difficulties, for example, are said to begin planning for writing which appears to be adequate, and they have improved in structuring their ideas compared to when educators did not provide educational interventions (MacArthur & Graham, 1987). They can also read and comprehend simple to complex sentences with practice (Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000). As a result, their reading and writing skills improve, increasing their willingness to complete assignments and developing favorable attitudes toward them. Moreover, Balantekin (2020) reports that the outcomes of educational practices used by teachers with students is that it reduces their confusion of similar words, difficulty using phonics, and problems reading multi-syllable words. In terms of writing, on the other hand, the pupils improved their tracing of symbols and lines, as well as modest phrase structure.

Emergent Theme 4: Teachers' Skills in Handling Learners with Special Needs

Handling learners with special needs equates to a more vigorous job responsibility than handling typical children. Teachers encounter different behaviors and different limitations physically, intellectually, emotionally, and cognitively which in turn increase the demands for them to be a more effective teacher. With the said situation, teachers need to implement educational practices for it to be suitable and appropriate for the unique needs of each student. More so, given the complexity of the demands in dealing with kids with special needs, the following skills and abilities aside from educational practices are necessary for teachers based on the responses of the participants of this study:

Cluster Theme 1: Compassion

One can teach basic skills without love and compassion and be effective in the long run, but love and compassion are required to actually make a difference in a student's life. Such abilities highlight patience and understanding, which are crucial in teaching, particularly in special education (Jazaieri, 2018). As a result of the data analysis, a repeating theme emerged: a sense of compassion and love in the teaching profession, which was referred to by the participants as an important aspect that profoundly affects their approach to students and learning experience. Nuri and Varol (2021) agreed with Jazaieri (2018), stating that the presence of compassion promotes teachers' understanding, helpful, and reassuring attitudes toward their students. As a result, compassion among teachers in the classroom aids in the prevention of undesired behaviors and the cultivation of good behaviors making classroom life easier, boosts students' interest and motivation in classes, and improves the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process (Aydemir, 2018). Furthermore, according to Brundiers and Wiek (2017), the result indicates that when an educator has compassion for his or her profession and pupils, the learning process is more effective and efficient thereby emphasizing the idea that compassion in dealing with students with special needs is an important skill for teachers to possess.

Cluster Theme 2: Enthusiasm

Given the unique needs of children with disabilities, enthusiasm has been identified as an important characteristic of effective teachers (Stronge, 2018). In particular, research regarding teacher enthusiasm has generally indicated that it is associated with positive effects in classrooms. For example, enthusiastic teachers might move briskly about the classroom; speak in a clear, implement varied educational strategies, passionate, has distinct voice with varied inflection and vocabulary. Surprisingly, Buri and Moe (2020) supported the available data on enthusiasm by examining the effects of intentionally varied teacher enthusiasm on the classroom performance of students with learning disabilities, claiming that teachers' enthusiasm could have a positive impact on classroom performance of students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, Al-Dababneh and Al-Zboon (2022) revealed a continuous improvement in academic performance of kids with learning difficulties when their teachers were enthusiastic because teachers' enthusiasm can be a reason for hope among students with special needs.

Cluster Theme 3: Good Communication and Leadership Skills

Communication skills involve listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. For effective teaching, a teacher needs to be highly skilled in all these areas to make the things easier and understandable for students with special needs

(Kourakli et al., 2017). Moreover, research suggest that students taught by teacher with leadership skills have a high probability of succeeding academically as well as other areas of growth as compared to those taught under teachers who lack leaderships within and outside the classroom (Warren, 2021). Thus, both communication and leadership skills are really important for a teacher in transmitting of education, classroom management, and interaction with students in the class. As a result, Bambaeroo and Shokrpour (2017) stated that communication skills and leadership skills are the most important skill that teachers of students with special needs must develop and exercise, as these skills are the primary factor in delivering education to students, which includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as initiating methods for effective teaching. Furthermore, McLeskey (2017) underlines the importance of great communication and leadership in educational interactions in order to achieve special education goals. Otherwise, no one can effectively teach unless they possess these essential teaching characteristics.

Cluster Theme 4: Patience

When a child has special needs, patience is a must since this type of learner takes longer to perform simple tasks and understanding is key for development (Adams, Harris, & Jones, 2018). No matter how long it takes, a special education teacher must give a child time to complete the task. Although the classroom is a place for serious learning, dealing with a special needs child will require the ability to create a cheerful environment that empowers this type of student to gain success (Sider et al., 2017). Also, it is up to this teacher to take time and comprehend each student's individual needs so that frustrating situations can be avoided. Noting its importance, L'Ecuyer et al. (2018) back this up stating that patience is the most important trait of all when dealing with children with special needs because some kids can grasp the lesson with little effort while others may require more detailed explanations that may need to be repeated several times. In agreement, Zerk et al., (2021) found that patience is essential in fostering relationships between special education teachers and learners with special needs, as they are more likely to require interventions to help them navigate the social demands of the school environment. Furthermore, according to Hair et al. (2002), special education teachers with more patience, particularly in the areas of resolving conflict, emotional attachment, and the use of pro-social behaviors, are more likely to be accepted by special education learners, resulting in the development of friendships, the maintenance of stronger relationships with them, the perception of them as effective problem solvers, and the cultivation of greater interest in special education.

Cluster Theme 5: Resourcefulness/Creativity

Since all children have different learning styles, a special education teacher must have the ability to adapt lessons that work for the strengths of each child (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017). Hence, while designing daily activities and plans for the classroom, a teacher must get creative in order to accommodate all of the children's needs (Zein, 2017). In particular, Cash (2017) emphasized this theme, stating that teaching students with special needs, such as learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, autism, deafness, and severe intellectual and physical disabilities, necessitates resourcefulness and creativity in adapting general lesson plans to meet the needs of special students. Basic abilities and difficult concepts must be reduced, and the lesson must be delivered in an interesting manner that is understandable by all students. Moreover, various studies have shown that teachers must be able to present the same information in a variety of ways to accommodate different learning styles in order to fulfill the requirement of their job, which is to design Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to assist each student in achieving their own learning objectives based on their learning capacities (Iik & Sar, 2017; Timothy & Agbenyega, 2018; Zigmond & Kloo, 2017). In other words, the instructor must adapt the curriculum to match the interests and requirements of individual students as part of the student-centered constructivism paradigm shift. In this instance, creative educators are quite essential.

4. Implications for Practice

Each learner with special education needs has a unique set of skills, needs, interests, and learning styles. Some special education children can master grade-level programs of study with modified instruction and support measures, but others have more complicated learning requirements that necessitate considerable alterations to the learning outcomes based on the curricular framework. With such disparities, it's critical to examine the unique characteristics of pupils with special needs.

Some noteworthy themes emerged from the comments of the special education instructors in this study, which were gathered from the responses they shared in connection to the issues they faced. The five themes are: (i) difficulties communicating and performing adaptive abilities; (ii) parents' denial of their children's condition; (iii) delayed motor skills; (iv) parental support; and (v) behavioral problems. Based on such stark realities, it serves as a wakeup call for various educational administrations and institutions in general to lower their standards and avoid casting doubt on teachers' ability to assist kids with special needs as if it were a simple task. Instead, they should provide moral and

financial support to create a more hospitable, scrutinized, and successful learning environment for everybody, as only a supportive learning environment will allow learners to reach their full potential.

Teachers should also communicate with their learners' parents. Their involvement in their child's educational journey can have a big impact on their achievement. Given that some of the teachers in this study expressed a lack of parental support and, even worse, parents' denial of their child's or children's situation, it is clear that some parents fail to fulfill their responsibility to aid their children. This is a terrible experience for students, and it may result in lower academic performance and slower cognitive development if the necessary therapies are not implemented immediately.

5. Implications for Future Research

Conducting study on the difficulties teachers have when dealing with kids with special needs does not have to be limited in terms of design. Although qualitative research design allows the researcher to be more exploratory, it can also have some constraints on its own. The following are some of the constraints of qualitative research: (i) sample size; (ii) generalizability; (iii) transferability; and (iv) freedom from bias. The scope of this study reveals the study's limitation. Because this study focused solely on the obstacles that instructors have when dealing with learners with special needs, other demographic groups, particularly parents and friends, were not given the opportunity to express their concerns. As a result, the research becomes context-dependent.

Fortunately, future researchers can use the data from this study. They could create an instrument based on the themes and fundamental concepts in order to perform a quantitative research study. Better yet, they can use a factor analysis that combines Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis to get more rigorously-yielded data. Should they wish to do so, they need to ensure that there a substantial number of research respondents that would go beyond hundreds in order to properly sample the population.

6. Concluding Remarks

It was discovered that the instructors who worked with special needs learners and participated in this study were able to amass a lot of significant experiences that shaped them as valued educators. The challenges they faced, as well as the educational practices they used to better assist their learners' academic success, the outcomes and development of their pupils as a result of their academic approach, and the skills they needed to be special education instructors, were all explored in this study. It was fascinating to note, based on the themes that emerged with the help of an experienced analyst, that the teachers were committed to teaching despite the difficulties they faced. Furthermore, despite the challenges, the special education teachers appeared to be compassionate, enthusiastic, good communicators, creative, and most importantly, patient, all of which were necessary characteristics for them to be able to provide quality education to students with special needs regardless of their conditions and limitations.

In addition, the study provided the researchers with some useful information. As special education teachers, for example, we must remember that the learners with whom we are linked require our assistance as educators in order to follow their aspirations and to realize that their circumstances are not a barrier to them being someone noteworthy in the future. As a result, they, like ordinary students, need to be coached and steered down the correct learning route. Learners should also be provided with safe and non-judgmental environments, as it is only in such a setting that they will be able to practice and develop what they have learnt and acquired in school. Kids should also be given the opportunity to express themselves so that they can receive the required criticism and redirection to help them rectify themselves as they develop proper life concepts in light of their circumstances.

With the experiences shared by special education teachers, it is clear that special education needs to be given the same level of attention as traditional pupils in school. The special education system as a whole has to be evaluated and reviewed in order to devise more strategic interventions that will benefit kids with learning challenges. Only through this approach can teachers and learners feel respected and free of biases regarding their field of study, particularly those with learning disabilities and cognitive, mental, and physical limits.

It is not as simple as it sounds to change the way people understand and judge learners and teachers who belong in special education. However, it is critical to recognize that not everyone will meet society's expectations. It should also be noted that pupils follow varied learning paths, with some meeting the necessary criteria to be considered more capable while others do not. Above all, everything is a process that necessitates steps in order to achieve so-called development, particularly among kids with special needs.

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