

## Teachers' experiences teaching children with special needs: A qualitative inquiry

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### ***Abstract***

The purpose of this study was to determine how teachers handle special children with diverse needs. There were 14 informants in in-depth interviews and focus group discussion (FGD). Furthermore, this study employed phenomenological approach. After a thorough analysis, six themes are generated from the challenges of the participants such as extending the patience, complaint from parents, difficulty in handling the students, lack of support from the parents, parents on denial stage, and application of the concept taught in the classroom. On the coping mechanism, the participants disclosed the following themes, mastery of instruction, home visitation, provides an activity, and variety of teaching strategy.

***Keywords:*** student with special needs, exceptionalities, challenges and coping, Philippines

## **Teachers' experiences teaching children with special needs: A qualitative inquiry**

### **1. Introduction**

Special needs are a stunning array of diagnoses can be wedged or is an umbrella underneath. Children with special needs may have profound cognitive impairment or minor learning disabilities such as terminal illness or food allergies, remain rooted or developmental delays that catch up quickly and serious psychiatric problems or occasional panic attacks. It is important to get needed services, set an appropriate goal, and gain more understanding for a child and to their family (Mauro, 2017).

During the mid-1970's, Australia began to assimilate students with a disability into the mainstream classroom, after almost a century of segregation. This was in response to changing attitudes towards the principle of "normalization" and that people with disability had a right to learn and live environments as with no shame and close to normal as possible, as well as they have an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their communities. The notion of inclusion has posted the debate of students with disability/special needs further in terms of education (Nirje,2013).

The aforementioned initiatives have positively influenced schools' practices on inclusive education. Certain public elementary schools from three municipalities in the province of Negros Oriental have been acknowledged and recognized as inclusive schools because teachers' efforts in establishing inclusive education systems which aim at accommodating all children with special needs. Furthermore, efforts have led to important improvement of teachers' capacities towards teaching children with disabilities especially in the aspect of assessment. It asserts that certain teachers specifically in primary schools (Brolan, 2013). This study is conducted with high hopes that this will contribute to the generation of new knowledge.

#### *1.1 Purpose of the Study*

The main purpose of the study was to know the challenges faced by the teachers teaching children with special needs and on how they manage their class.

#### *1.2 Research Questions*

- What are the challenges of the teachers teaching children with special needs?
- How do they manage their students with special needs?

#### *1.3 Theoretical Lens*

This study is anchored on the concept of Omrod (2000) categories of exceptionalities (learners with exceptionalities). This involves specific cognitive or academic difficulties, physical disabilities and health impairments. The presence of impairments requires the students with disabilities to exert more effort to do things that others like us find easy to do. The theory of Vygotsky on Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to tasks too difficult for a child to master alone can be mastered by the guidance and assistance of adults or more skilled children.

### **2. Review of Related Literature**

The common problems or complaints that a teacher encountered since they teach children with different disabilities as complaint from the parents. These circumstances can create annoyance and displeasure to the teachers' daily teaching. A complaining parent can throw us for a loop. Maybe, this is attributed teachers' vulnerability in terms of emotion (Debruyne, 2016).

SPED teacher experienced also difficulty in handling the students. They experienced children have behavioral issues for example, fretfulness and grouchiness. They may likewise show issues like a limited capacity to focus or a powerlessness to comprehend what is being asked. The instructors must need to figure out to manage these issues and in addition how to take proper method for dealing with children having different needs, despite how hard to deal the students with disabilities (Rebecca, 2013). Furthermore, another thing that the teacher gives consideration was the application of the concept taught in the classroom. What students are educated and how they are instructed must be consistent with the determined learning goals (Cohen, 2012).

The most perceptible normal for a learning incapacity is a contradiction between the students' capacity and the students' execution in school, at home, or at work. Information about incapacity can influence the understudy capacity to peruse, spell, compose or do math. To see whether the children have learning handicap, a group of individuals need to finish numerous perceptions and thorough assessments. The term special education is mainly used to mean the education of children with disabilities. Usually, it is a segregated form of education in which children with disabilities learn completely distinctly from their peers (Kohama, 2012).

### 3. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study employed qualitative phenomenological study. Phenomenology is a plan of request originating from theory and brain research in which the analyst depicts the lived encounters of people.

**Research Participants** - The participants of the study 10 teachers who are teaching in the Special Education program. Purposive sampling technique was employed in this study.

### 4. Results

**Research Question 1.** What are the challenges of the teachers who teach children with special needs?

During the in-depth and focus group discussion, there were six major themes emerged for the data collected:

**1.1 Extending the Patience.** Almost all the key informants and the FGD participants revealed their complaints in teaching students with special needs. They really felt not easy to handle students with different disability.

**1.2 Complaints from parents.** Complaints from the parents are the common problems or issues they faced since they teach children with special needs. These circumstances create annoyance and displeasure to the daily teaching of the teachers. Some of the participants responded to the question referring to their sad experiences handling students with special needs.

**1.3 Difficulty in handling the students.** Children with extraordinary requirements may have behavioral issues including eagerness and testiness. They may likewise display issues like a limited capacity to focus or a powerlessness to understand what is being educated. Even though how challenging to handle students with different disabilities, the teachers must have to learn how to deal with these problems as well as how to take suitable way of handling the said students.

**1.4 Lack support from parents.** A few guardians of students with exceptional needs are unbiased in the welfare of these kids and neglect to give them sufficient care. Then again, they might be excessively defensive. Impartial parents may not be included with their children's instruction or communication with their teachers.

**1.5 Parents on Denial Stage.** Most parents of children with special needs react in ways that have been shared by all parents before them who have also been found with this dissatisfaction and this vast challenge. When so many diverse feelings can flood the mind and heart, there is no way to extend how intensely a parent may experience this constellation of feelings.

**1.6 Application of the concept Taught in the Classroom instruction.** Teachers must comprehend about

the children with extraordinary needs, for instance, learning handicaps should be shown contrastingly or require a few lodging to improve the learning condition and adjustment to help the progressions to the instructional results.

**Research Question no 2.** How they manage their students with special needs in their class?

Based on the interview conducted, the following themes emerged:

1. **Mastery of the Instruction.** Children with exceptional requirements may require more than one opportunity to learn substance or ace procedure. After an instructional movement including the entire class, educator should design an extra introduction for those kids who require it. An educator may show content at a slower pace, utilize more straightforward materials or present new supporting methods/processes.

2. **Home visitation.** Beginning a home visit program and bridging the home school gap do take an amount of planning, training and funding to be effective. When parents of children with special needs are more familiar with their child's teacher, they are more likely to become involved with their child's learning and are more involved in school activities and volunteering. In this way, a few well -placed home visits can improve school community. Also, showing up at students' door is one way to establish a positive relationship with the students' families.

3. **Provide activity.** SPED teacher should provide activities that fit to the needs of the learner. Music time can be especially beneficial to children who are non-verbal and activate every subsystem in the brain, including areas that regulate emotion and motivation.

4. **Variety of teaching Strategy.** Students learned more effectively when they were aware on their own learning. SPED teacher not only focused in one strategy since they were handling diverse students. Plan learning activities that will improve critical thinking skills, creativity and innovativeness. It will help every learner to build effectiveness in acquiring learning.

## 5. Summary

From the results of the study taken from the responses of both the in-depth and focus group discussion, most of them experienced challenges in their part in teaching children with special needs. The teacher carry burden in many years of teaching children. Despite the common problems they encountered being assigned as a teacher of children with different disability, they never ceased to continue finding ways and means to preserve the teaching-learning process. Teachers were very passionate in helping their students. They taught a lot of styles in teaching the said students. The mastery of instruction, home visitation, provide learning activity and variety of instruction were the things needed for them to practice in order to achieve and satisfy the needs of students. Generally, special education is not a place. It is specialized instruction and supplementary aids and services provided to those pupils having different disabilities who need specialized instruction. Moreover, some students may not need or want to spend some of their learning in a quieter place with fewer people or with additional help from others.

### 5.1 Implications for Practice

On the challenges faced by teachers handling students with special needs, there were six essential themes generated which were extending patience, complaint from the parents, difficulty in handling the students, lack support from the parents, parents on denial stage and application of the concept taught in the classroom instruction. The result of these challenges experienced of teachers handling special children may imply that teachers as dedicated government servants were able to comply their tasks despite of the many risks they were able to encounter.

On the way on how teachers manage and deal with their teaching tasks on students with special needs, there

were four themes surfaced which are mastery of instruction, home visitation, provide activity and variety of teaching strategy. In achieving quality of education of our country, the different approaches that teachers heartily employed to their students helps a lot. The sue of modern technologies (Brann& Gray, 2012) decreases the burden of the teachers in teaching the special children.

### 5.2 Concluding Remarks

From the results of the study, we can state that the investigation uncovered difficulties that are very general for showing students with formative handicap. The investigation builds up that instructors' posture difficulties to the necessities of the students with special needs. Most teachers teaching children with developmental disability received special needs education training from the Center for Special Children, that is why they are qualified to teach children with developmental disability. This study revealed that classrooms for children with special needs have rich learning environment that can support the learners. Moreover, comprehensive practice includes working together with others, drawing on the academic and substantial information being imaginative, ingenious and sure, trialing better approaches for education and thinking about the results and being set up to do things any other way.

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