LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY GRADE ONE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: REFLECTIONS AND DISPOSITIONS IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

General Education teachers don't have exceedingly specialized capabilities in special education. We don't have much encounters in an inclusive classroom. Not continuously, but regularly, it appears that teachers feel unequal to the errand of educating students with special needs. It may be a characteristic of the calling that General Education teachers need certainty with such understudies, and feel incapable since we think we lack the skills. This can be something of a myth to be refuted. But teachers know more than they think they know. The challenge is getting these students to appreciate, engage, and keep them on task as much as possible without ruining the usual flow of the classes. Ten participants who are all Elementary teachers in selected public schools in Davao City are the focused in this study. The said participants are chosen through random sampling. All of them are licensed teachers and has experience teaching for almost two years to learners in grade one with disabilities. Many professionals in the literature express concerns about whether full inclusion is appropriate for all students with disabilities and emphasize the importance of maintaining a continuum of services. Supporters for a continuum of services for students with disabilities cite two main reasons. First, they believe there is an inadequate research base to advocate such a drastic change to the current educational system believes, the research evidence on the relative efficacy of one special education service delivery model over another is scarce, methodologically flawed, and inconclusive. Some studies support positive trends with inclusion programs; however, others have reported disappointing or unsatisfactory academic and social achievement through inclusion models.Learning in a remote setting may differ from mainstream, classroom-based environments. This includes expectations for students and course methodology. Curricula must often be adjusted. For example, homework can be simplified, allowing students to dictate rather than type, and audio materials can be provided for reading assignments during online class.

KEY WORDS: *learning strategies, grade one elementary teacher, teaching students with special needs, reflections*

INTRODUCTION

General Education teachers don't have exceedingly specialized capabilities in special education. We don't have much encounters in an inclusive classroom. Not continuously, but regularly, it appears that teachers feel unequal to the errand of educating students with special needs. It may be a characteristic of the calling that General Education teachers need certainty with such understudies, and feel incapable since we think we lack the skills. This can be something of a myth to be refuted. But teachers know more than they think they know. The challenge is getting these students to appreciate, engage, and keep them on task as much as possible without ruining the usual flow of the classes.

As inclusion continues to grow in the school setting, ways to make the educational experience more meaningful and successful for students with disabilities must be studied. The very purpose of this study is clearly validated in light of recent education system in our country. Teachers are now held accountable for the education of students with

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disabilities in their classroom like never before. No longer are students with disabilities just visiting the general education classroom.

This study also highlights the use of scientific based interventions in the general education online classroom to ensure students' learning difficulties are not due to a lack of adequate instruction, but studies continue to report that general education teachers minimally change their instructional methods when students with disabilities are placed in their classrooms (Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). It is important to better understand the phenomenon of teaching and planning instruction for students with disabilities from the general education teachers' perspective in order to improve the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom

Advocates for full inclusion refer to a number of studies that support the effectiveness of inclusive programs for students with learning disabilities. Students in these studies did at least as well, if not better, on academic and social measures in inclusive settings as compared to separate class settings (Bear & Proctor, 1990; Madge, Affleck, Lowenbraun, 1990; Waldron, 1994). Studies have found that students with learning disabilities can be supported in general education settings for the entire school day with academic achievement at least as high, if not higher than those achieved in separate class settings (Banerji & Daily, 1995; Bear & Proctor, 1990).

P. L. 94-142 requires educational services for students with disabilities, but it does not require a special education system (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). Proponents of full inclusion claim a merged system where individualized adaptations and supports are made available to all children in general education will be better for meeting the needs of all students (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Lilly, 1988, Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986). Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1987) call for the joining of effective practices from special and regular education to establish a general education system that is more inclusive and better serves all children.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
The researcher made these qualitative assumptions that consist of the methods used in the process of qualitative research (Creswell 2003). The procedures used by the researcher are inductive and are based on the researcher's own experience in collecting and analyzing data. The research here is the product of the values of the researcher. Through an inductive approach, raw textual data is condensed into a brief, summary format. Clear links are established between research objectives and summary findings derived from raw data. A framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident from the raw data is developed.

A phenomenological study describes the meaning of lived experiences of individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2003) wasused in this study. The intent of a phenomenological study is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participants. A key characteristic of this approach is to study the way in which members of a group or community interpret themselves, the world and life around them (Mertens, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the experiences of general education teachers and how they view and interpret their instructional planning, strategies, and outcomes when teaching grade one students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Phenomenology is considered as the best approach applicable in this study since the researcher will be asking the lived experiences of general educational teachers in the elementary level on their strategies used to teach students with disabilities.

Participants and Sampling
Ten participants who are all Elementary teachers in selected public schools in Davao City are the focused in this study. The said participants are chosen through random sampling. All of them are licensed teachers and has experience teaching for almost two years to learners in grade one with disabilities.

Research Instruments
Semi-Structured Interviews
Patton (1990) proposes researchers to conduct interviews in order to learn the things they cannot directly observe. Qualitative interviewing is not used to get answers to questions, but to understand the experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 1988). Generally, qualitative studies use unstructured, open-ended interviews, because they allow for the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both the

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participants and interviewer; however, the use of semi-structured interviews is not uncommon and used when the researcher seeks to obtain specific more focused information (Schwandt, 2001). Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of unstructured, open-ended interviews with directionality and an agenda to produce focused, qualitative, textual data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 71 1999). This study collected data using semi-structured interviews in order to explore how general education teachers describe their instructional planning, strategies, and outcomes when teaching students with disabilities.

In order to ensure that the same information was collected from all the participants, an interview guide was used. The interview guide included open-ended questions and topics to help structure the interview, but when needed, the interviewer also explored, probed, and asked additional questions to clarify and expand on a particular topic. The interview guide helped make interviewing across a number of different participants more systematic and comprehensive by defining in advance the issues to be explored (Patton, 1990). The open-ended questions were framed in a way, so the participants could represent their views and perspectives in their own words and terms, in addition to taking the questions in any direction that they chose (Patton, 1990).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis begins with the process of organizing, reducing, and describing the collected data (Schwandt, 2001). Unlike quantitative analysis there are no prescribed formulas for qualitative analysis. Marshall and Rossman (2006) remind researchers that qualitative analysis does not proceed in a linear fashion and it is not neat. However, good practice and procedures enhance the credibility of qualitative research. In this last section, the data analysis procedures will be explained and the steps taken to ensure the results from this study are credible, transferable, dependable, and authentic will be thoroughly described. To guide the data analysis, the researcher used the seven phases of data analysis described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) as a means to reduce data, create manageable pieces, allow for interpretation, and find meaning in the words of the participants. The seven phases included: (a) organizing the data; (b) immersion in the data; (c) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; and (f) searching for alternative understandings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Data analysis first begins with organizing the data. Organization of the data involved keeping information provided by each participant separate and in sequence with the order of the interviews. The process of organizing the data allowed it to remain manageable, easily accessible, and readily available. The digital audio files from the interviews were carefully transcribed into written form. Electronic folders were established to create organization for the data collected from each individual participant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through inclusion, general education teachers take more responsibility for students with disabilities instead of sending them to resource rooms. Students with disabilities enjoy increased instruction time due to inclusion, because students are no longer traveling to the resource room for instruction and missing key content in the general education classroom. Studies have found that students with learning disabilities can be supported in the general education settings for the entire school day with academic achievement at least as high, if not higher than those achieved in separate class settings.

Many professionals in the literature express concerns about whether full inclusion is appropriate for all students with disabilities and emphasize the importance of maintaining a continuum of services. Supporters for a continuum of services for students with disabilities cite two main reasons. First, they believe there is an inadequate research base to advocate such a drastic change to the current educational system believes, the research evidence on the relative efficacy of one special education service delivery model over another is scarce, methodologically flawed, and inconclusive. Some studies support positive trends with inclusion programs; however, others have reported disappointing or unsatisfactory academic and social achievement through inclusion models.

Secondly, many students with learning disabilities need individualized teaching and explicit instruction, which some professionals believe is extremely complex and difficult to provide in the general education most especially conducting classes using different online platforms. Advocates of a continuum of services believe inclusion ignores the notion of individual planning and that students with disabilities need more intensive instruction then can be provided in a general classroom. Full inclusion threatens the varied and intense service delivery options that advocates have spent years

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obtaining for students with disabilities. The availability of a continuum of services has been mandated in the law and reflects the wishes of many parents, educators, and legislators and the loss of these service options would violate the civil rights of students with disabilities.

The different inclusion philosophies have overwhelmingly been disputed and discussed by leading researchers in the field through numerous books, journals, and position papers. It is evident that a division still exists between supporters of full inclusion. However, teachers can be better served the learners with disabilities by using different strategies in teaching online.

The research on special education placement spans more than two years time and provides no compelling research evidence that place is the critical factor in the academic or social progress of students with mild or moderate disabilities. No intervention eliminates the impact of having a disability and there is not one placement or program model that is effective for all students with disabilities. The placement or setting is not a treatment, but it is what goes on in that setting for student with disabilities that is important. The one thing that makes the difference for students with disabilities is the level and quality of instruction. It is not the placement in the general education classroom, but the instructional strategies used by the general education teacher that makes the difference for students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

The key to success for students with disabilities in the general education classrooms is the general education teacher. Despite the overabundance of effective instructional strategies for students with disabilities in this time of pandemic, numerous researchers and practitioners have found that few strategies are systematically and frequently implemented in inclusive classrooms by general education teachers. Individualized instruction typically does not occur in the general education classroom and many teachers make few or no adaptations for students with disabilities. Regular education tends to be dominated by instructional practices that are designed to teach to the "average" student instead of a wide range of students with diverse backgrounds.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
A number of recommendations for future studies emerged from the data. This study was restricted to fifteen elementary general education classroom teachers from Davao City The first recommendation would be to expand this study's sample size and the geographic area of the participants. Another recommendation would be to study the perspectives of participants not included in this study: middle and high school teachers, specials teachers, and special education teachers. In order to collect more data on the lived experiences of general education teachers, follow-up classroom observations are recommended.

Studying the instructional strategies for inclusion as described by the participants using a quantitative approach would also be beneficial. One of the findings from this study was the lack of collaboration between the general education and special education teachers. Further research is recommended to explore what type of co-teaching and alternative school program models increase the collaboration between general education and special education teachers and better serve students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Moreover, educators, parents and individual students assess each student's situation and discuss adjustments needed for remote learning. Some examples include using alternatives to print, such as audio or other formats in instruction, as well as pictures, flexible scheduling and deadlines, and assistive technology.

Learning in a remote setting may differ from mainstream, classroom-based environments. This includes expectations for students and course methodology. Curricula must often be adjusted. For example, homework can be simplified, allowing students to dictate rather than type, and audio materials can be provided for reading assignments during online class.

Finally, more time and resources are required for students with disabilities to actively participate in learning. This includes equipment, internet access and specially designed materials and support.

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