A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY REGARDING TEACHERS'

ATTITUDES AND EFFICACY TOWARD STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

IN AN INCLUSION CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand elementary-level general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. Bandura's self-efficacy theory guided this study of teachers' relationships with their attitudes and efficacy levels with educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. The research questions addressed the teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Ten teachers from local elementary public schools participated in individual interviews, and 4 engaged in a focus group interview. The individual and focus interviews were recorded, digitally transcribed with a qualitative computer software program, and examined to determine rich codes and themes. Five themes emerged from data analysis—addressing challenges of teaching students in the inclusion environment, addressing benefits of teaching students in the inclusion environment, effectiveness of professional development or training opportunities, general education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy, and administrators' support in the inclusion environment—showing the benefits, challenges, and participants' thoughts of teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. The participants outlined the importance of professional development and administration support to teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom setting. Overall, the themes provided a rich and nuanced understanding of the attitudes, experiences, and efficacy of general education teachers in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment.

Keywords: inclusion, students with disabilities, teacher attitudes

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation project to my Heavenly Father: the Almighty God (my Abba), my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit! My True source of Love, Strength, Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, and the list goes on and on! I also dedicate this work to my loving and prayerful parents—Mr. (Joe) and Mrs. (Henrietta B.) Lovett, Sr.—who lovingly encouraged me to finish what I started (with the help of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ)! I dedicate this project to the memory of my dear and loving cousin Kirk Leonard Lovett who inspired me more than words can say! I dedicate this work to my loving and dearest Uncle Ray, who inspired me to pursue my calling in special education! I dedicate this project to my dear and loving honorary mother Betty L. Dickerson. To my loving Siblings, including extended loving siblings (Joe-Joe, Tonya, Jennifer, Latarisha, Tawanna, Rita, Robert, Thomasina, Ebony and Chad), my Siblings Spouses (Freddie Jr, Maurice, Garrick, and Regina). My Aunts (Isabelle, Louise, Patricia, Annie, Margaret, Geraldine, Thelma, and Martha), Uncles (John Henry, Ray, George (Billy), Rolton Jr., Alonzo Sr., Bishop Bennie, and Roy), Nephews (Freddie III, Jaden, Tyjuan, Ian, Jaleel, Joseph Michael, Luke, Teytan, and Jack), Nieces (Sontray, Jkeerah, Jkylah, Tyonna, Faith, Joi and Londyn), Godchildren (Jaden, Maurice Jr., Johnathan, and Ian). My first Cousins (Reggie, Valarie, Vicky, Angela, Ronnie, Sherman, Rolton (III), Patrick, Kirk, Shun, Napoleon, Jewell (Jay), Yolanda, Carla, Lavadous, DeAndre), including other loving cousins, family, friends. My Godparents (Mr. & Mrs. Charles (Delores) Cummings) and Special Godmother (Sis. Barbara Davis). My deceased loving Godparents (Mr. and Mrs. Bobby (Dorothy) Vaughn); neighbors, work family (Department of Specialized Instruction/ DSS Team); and Church families (Pastor & Deacon Lovett & Bryan Neck Missionary Baptist Church Family), (Pastor & Elect Lady Staley & Fairmount Baptist Church Family), (Pastor & Elect Lady Riley & Canaan Missionary Baptist

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List of Abbreviations

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Least-Restrictive Environment (LRE)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teachers' pedagogical practices and experiences directly impact their attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom environment. Inclusion education and teacher attitudes are paramount to the overall scholastic performance of students with disabilities. This study was an in-depth examination of teacher attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment. More specifically, a historical, social, and theoretical background summary occurred to address educators' concerns with children with exceptionalities taught in the inclusion classroom environment. Following the historical, social, and theoretical background, a problem and purpose statement was outlined to address teacher attitudes regarding students with exceptionalities taught in the inclusion classroom environment. The research questions' design was to address general and special education attitudes and self-efficacy. Definitions provided clarity to inclusion classroom terms. Finally, a summary offers a succinct review of teacher attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom.

Background

An overview of the historical, social, and theoretical frameworks facilitates an understanding of teachers' attitudes regarding children with disabilities taught in the inclusion classroom environment. The historical summary is a synopsis of the inclusion classroom's chronological progression from an educational and legislative viewpoint. The social background framework pertains to teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom from a social perspective. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy served as a theoretical framework to discuss teachers' attitudes.

Historical Context

Throughout history, educational legislation has provided regulations for the education of students with learning needs nationally and internationally. At the beginning of the 20th century, public schools did not provide for many students with disabilities (Pardini, 2002). The beginning of the 20th century signaled a difference in the social treatment and society's perception of persons with disabilities in the United States (Kauffman et al., 2018). In 1910, the first White House Conference on Children resulted in the education of individuals with disabilities in special classes with smaller teacher–student ratios. Another result of the White House Conference on Children was an emphasis on the need for individualized instruction for children with specialized learning needs (Children's Bureau, 1967).

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provided a foundation for the provision of a free public education for all children (United Nations, 1948). As stated in the Universal Declaration, education is a fundamental human right, and parents have greater decision-making rights regarding the type of education their child receives (United Nations, 1948). During the 1950s, the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling indicated that segregation denied equal rights for individuals with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities have the same rights as their nondisabled peers.

According to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which later became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975, students with disabilities should receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in their least-restrictive environment (LRE) as much as possible (Gilmour, 2018). A major component of IDEA was the individualized education plan (IEP), allowing the educational team to outline the overall scholastic needs for students with disabilities. Another requirement of IDEA was educating students in a regular

education classroom environment unless educators could not meet their academic and behavioral needs, even with extensive supplemental aids, services, accommodations, and modifications (Francisco et al., 2020).

Internationally, the Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994) allowed every child the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning within the regular education environment (Cretu & Morandau, 2020). The Salamanca Statement further mandated that teacher education programs address the specific educational needs of disabled learners educated in inclusion settings. In 2004, the IDEA required educational institutions to outline procedural guidelines to maintain students with disabilities in the general education environment to the greatest extent possible. Because of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, schools needed to ensure that students with disabilities had equal access to general education curricular standards (Francisco et al., 2020). Equitable educational access required educators to examine their roles and responsibilities in educating all learners within the inclusion environment. As a result of continued legislation regarding the scholastic needs of learners with disabilities, teachers should provide an educationally stimulating learning environment for all learners.

Social Context

Teachers' attitudes have a significant impact on students with specialized learning needs within the inclusion classroom environment (Cook & Ogden, 2021). Beginning in the late 20th century, international and national educational legislation suggests or requires including students with disabilities in the mainstream or general education classroom environment (McFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). In 2005, the reauthorization of the IDEA (Edwards et al., 2019) led to educating students with specialized learning needs to the greatest extent possible within the

inclusion classroom environment. Despite federal and state laws and policies, some educators hesitate in teaching students with exceptionalities within the inclusion classroom environment. Negative attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment result in negative attitudes toward teaching practices; similarly, positive attitudes lead to improved teaching strategies (Emmers et al., 2020).

Inclusion teaching strategies within the inclusion classroom environment could influence teacher attitudes. Because teacher efficacy could impact the attitudes of students with and without disabilities within the inclusion classroom (Edwards et al., 2019), current and preservice teachers could benefit from research about teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion environment. Yu and Park (2020) affirmed that teacher preparation programs should provide insightful coursework and effective field work experiences to assist educator candidates in developing positive views on inclusion. Preservice programs should also provide opportunities to utilize evidenced-based teaching practices that benefit students with and without disabilities within the inclusion classroom. School administrators, instructional staff who teach within the inclusion classroom, and members of the IEP team could benefit from this study's findings.

Theoretical Context

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy could impact their ability to teach students with exceptional needs (Cook & Ogden, 2021). According to the self-efficacy theory constructs, a person's thoughts or belief systems center around four main influences: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). Teachers with high self-efficacy levels usually feel confident about their teaching capabilities. Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy might not feel motivated or encouraged to educate students with diverse learning needs (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Hopman et al. (2018)

defined self-efficacy as a teacher's ability to impact student educational outcomes. Specific to this study, educators' sense of self-efficacy contributes to their attitudes regarding teaching students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom environment.

Mintz et al. (2020) researched how teacher attitudes impacted teacher efficacy levels regarding teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. The researchers addressed how teachers' accomplishments and experiences would impact their attitudes regarding rural elementary inclusion classroom environments in a local Southeastern U.S. public school system. This study's findings could contribute to successful elementary inclusion classrooms by identifying factors that contribute to positive or negative teacher attitudes. A lack of knowledge about this topic could negatively affect teachers' attitudes and efficacy levels (Kuyini et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem is that teachers have academic concerns regarding the supports that students with disabilities receive in the elementary inclusion classroom environment (Kuyini et al., 2020; Lübke et al., 2019; Savolainen & Airo., 2020). Edwards et al. (2019) defined inclusion as the "integration of students with and without disabilities in mainstream classrooms" (p. 298) to the greatest extent possible. Gilmour (2018) found that "more than 60% of students with disabilities are educated within the inclusion classroom environment" (p. 8). Educators must provide an academically enriching experience for all, regardless of the students' learning abilities. Studies have suggested educators' attitudes toward the inclusion classroom significantly impact students' success within the elementary inclusion classroom (Yu, 2019). Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017) found that educators' attitudes about their responsibilities for students with specialized needs could influence all students' performance within the inclusion classroom environment.

General and special education teachers appear to have mixed attitudes regarding serving students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Special education teachers' attitudes are more favorable (Somma, 2020); general education teachers generally support the inclusion of pupils with mild disabilities but not those with more complex needs (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). The educational team could use this exploration of teachers' attitudes to focus on key factors and challenges within the inclusion classroom. Lautenbach and Heyder (2019) concluded that "teachers' attitude toward the inclusion classroom environment has been shown to impact their behavior and is an influential [factor]" (p. 6) that influences successful inclusion practices. Teacher attitudes could also affect the performance of exceptional learners within the inclusion classroom environment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore elementary-level general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. In this study, teachers' attitudes meant perceptions regarding teaching in the general education setting at the elementary school-level. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for describing individuals' lived experiences and exploring how participants relate to a phenomenon. In this study, elementary school educators discussed their lived experiences of educating students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom.

Significance of the Study

Educators are integral educational team members and necessary agents to assist with successfully implementing the inclusion classroom environment (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019; Mieghem et al., 2020). Whether positive or negative, teacher attitudes can impact the

achievement levels of students with disabilities served within the inclusion classroom environment (Parey, 2021). The theoretical implications of this study's findings could affect how general and special education educators can successfully collaborate, consult, co-plan, co-assess, and co-teach (Mieghem et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion setting tend to influence their self-efficacy and educational ideology (Cook & Ogden, 2021). Improving teacher self-efficacy helps to improve the academic and social outcomes of learners with disabilities (Sakız, 2017).

The inclusion classroom has become more prevalent within the last 10 years. Today, more than 60% of all students with disabilities spend at least 80% of their school day in general education classrooms along with students without disabilities" (Gilmour, 2018, p. 8). Although Pre-K–12 teachers receive training to educate students with varied learning needs within the inclusion classroom environment, they might not receive adequate training to meet the needs of exceptional learners (Manrique et al., 2019; Van Steen & Wilson, 2020; Yu & Park, 2020). In a phenomenological study with teachers, Somma (2020) found that educators who receive professional development and training opportunities feel confident regarding their teaching abilities within the inclusion classroom. Hopman et al. (2018) affirmed that teaching self-efficacy influences a teacher's job satisfaction.

The practical significance of this study could be affecting the attitudes of elementary school–level general and special education teachers in Southeastern U.S. public school districts. The findings could enable general and special education teachers to recognize the barriers preventing the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom environment. The IDEA (2004) mandated placing students in the inclusion classroom environment to the greatest extent possible (Yu & Park, 2020). The phenomenological findings from this study could influence the

attitudes, self-efficacy, professional development, and training opportunities for teachers and teaching education candidates in Southeastern U.S. public schools. The identified barriers could provide opportunities for general education teachers, special education teachers, and administrators to plan professional development or in-service trainings. Furthermore, the study could lead to improved outcomes for all learners in the inclusion classroom.

Research Questions

Teachers have expressed concern about supporting students with disabilities in the elementary inclusion classroom environment (Kuyini et al., 2020; Lübke et al., 2019; Savolainen & Airo, 2020). This study was an exploration of educators' experiences with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment at the elementary school setting Southeastern U.S. rural community. The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore elementary-level general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. One central research question and two subquestions guided the study.

CRQ. What are general education elementary teachers' attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

SQ1. What are general education elementary teachers' experiences teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

SQ2. What are general education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

Definitions

1. *General education teacher*: Educator who teaches the general education curriculum (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

2. *Inclusion*: The "combination of students with and without disabilities in general education classrooms" (Edwards et al., 2019, p. 298) to the greatest extent possible.

3. *Resource teacher*: Educator that provides small group instruction to students with disabilities (Kirkpatrick et al., 2020).

4. *Special education*: Specific teaching practices specifically designed for individuals with disabilities (Francisco et al., 2020).

5. *Special education teacher*: Educator who develops IEP plans, adapt and accommodate instructional lessons for students with mild to profound learning needs (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

6. *Students with disabilities or exceptionalities*: Students with specialized learning needs that require outlined academic, behavioral, or social support (Gilmour, 2018).

7. *Teacher attitude*: An educator's tendency that involves preference or non-preference regarding the instruction of students (Saloviita & Consegnati, 2020).

8. *Teacher self efficacy*: Educators' perception of their teaching ability to impact student outcomes (Hopman et al., 2018).

Summary

In this transcendental phenomenological summary, the main purpose was to explore the experiences that educators have with teaching students with disabilities being taught in the inclusion classroom environment. Due to educational legislation and policies of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, teachers need full teaching certification in the core subject they teach (Francisco et al., 2020). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001), had an effect on special education by requiring standardized testing to measure student learning (Francisco et al., 2020).

Due to the lack of training, professional development opportunities, and resources for varied learners, general and special educators might have reservations about serving students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment (Saloviita & Consegnati, 2020). General education teachers should identify and address barriers impacting the inclusion classroom environment. Moreover, teacher efficacy has an impact on the performance of students within inclusion classroom environment (Sakız, 2017).

Teachers have academic concerns regarding the support of students with disabilities in the elementary inclusion classroom environment (Kuyini et al., 2020; Lübke et al., 2019; Savolainen & Airo, 2020). The transcendental phenomenological study showed educators' experiences teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment within Georgia elementary school settings. Yu (2019) found that, overall, "Early childhood educators have positive attitudes regarding inclusion practices and the policies, resources and beliefs that affect successful inclusion" (p. 38).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two includes a review of the literature related to the topic of study. A systematic review occurred to explore the issue of teacher attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom environment, specifically, educators' concerns about teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. The first section presents the theory of self-efficacy followed by recent scholarship regarding general and special education teachers' attitudes toward teaching students with exceptionalities in the inclusion classroom environment. The literature review addresses the benefits and drawbacks of teaching students within inclusion settings and the factors contributing to teachers' attitudes about the practice. The literature gap identified from the review indicates the need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

Self-efficacy theory served as the framework to explore teachers' efficacy and attitudes toward inclusion. Emmers et al. (2020) found that educators needed self-efficacy and confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities to provide a thriving inclusion classroom environment. Hopman et al. (2018) concluded that teachers with high teaching self-efficacy feel capable of handling students with academic and behavioral challenges. In contrast, educators with low teaching self-efficacy feel less capable of positively impacting the performance of students with academic and behavioral difficulties. Teachers might have less-positive attitudes and lower self-efficacy due to changes in legislation and growing numbers of students with exceptionalities in the inclusion classroom environment (Emmers et al., 2020).

Bandura developed self-efficacy theory in 1977 as a guiding principle to identify, create, or generate expectations based on a person's occurrences or experiences. Self-efficacy refers to

individuals' belief in their ability to demonstrate control over events, perceptions, or actions impacting their lives. In educational contexts, teachers' sense of self-efficacy could affect their ability to teach students with exceptional needs (Cook & Ogden, 2021). Werner et al. (2021) defined teachers' self-efficacy as their confidence level, ability to create a positive classroom setting, and ability to influence their students' overall performance. In a quantitative study, Werner et al. assessed the attitudes and self-efficacy of 352 teachers in general ($n = 252$) or special ($n = 100$) education regarding the inclusion classroom. The results showed that teachers with adequate knowledge of inclusion and strong school support had more positive attitudes than teachers with less support. Additionally, educators who perceived their schools as supportive of the inclusion classroom environment had higher self-efficacy and reported "positive, affective and behavioral attitudes" (p. 8) toward the inclusion classroom environment ($p < .001$).

Self-efficacy significantly influences a teacher's ability to reach students within the inclusion setting. Reina et al. (2021) noted that authentic self-efficacy affects how well educators adapt to a myriad of learning methods, set objectives, and accept the varied needs of all learners in the classroom. Teacher efficacy affects instructional practices and policies, classroom management, student motivation and engagement, attitudes about the inclusion classroom environment, and the overall cooperation of parents and school employees (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). Further, teacher efficacy influences teaching behaviors, allowing teachers to "choose activities that will enhance the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (Desombre et al., 2019, p. 40). Training in special education, qualification, gender, and knowledge of the inclusion classroom environment are other factors affecting teacher self-efficacy (Kuyini et al., 2020).

Teachers with higher self-efficacy levels usually feel confident about their teaching capabilities. Woodcock and Faith (2021) affirmed that educators with high self-efficacy provided

encouraging feedback to students and were less likely to become frustrated with the inclusion classroom environment. Highly self-efficacious teachers help students with academic struggles and hold positive attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom (Metsala & Harkins, 2020). Teachers with high self-efficacy are confident in their ability to implement successful inclusion practices, adapt instruction to meet the varied needs of all learners, engage in ongoing collaboration with the educational team, and execute the school's policy consistently (Kiel et al., 2020; Metsala & Harkins, 2020).

Educators with high self-efficacy tend to be engaged and willing to persist longer in supporting students with academic and learning challenges than teachers with low self-efficacy (Desombre et al., 2019). Teachers with high self-efficacy have more resilience than their counterparts and encourage students with exceptionalities to reach optimal achievement (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). On the other hand, there is a relationship between "teachers' self-efficacy toward inclusion practices and the perceived level of a student's disability. Moreover, teachers have a lessened self-efficacy for students with severe disabilities" (p. 218). In the inclusion classroom environment, teachers with low self-efficacy require more curriculum development and opportunities for rich engagement and collaboration (Kiel et al., 2020). Likewise, teachers with low self-efficacy might not feel motivated or encouraged to educate students with diverse learning needs (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Research shows that teachers with low self-efficacy are more likely to blame students for not performing well on tasks and tend not to reflect on their pedagogy and instructional practices (Moradkhani & Haghi, 2017; Woodcock & Faith, 2021). Overall, teachers' efficacy beliefs regarding inclusion education stem from their acquired skills, previous contact or work with persons with exceptionalities, age,

experiences accommodating students with disabilities, confidence in implementing inclusion practices, and success with inclusion practices (Kiel et al., 2020; Subban et al., 2021).

The self-efficacy theory provided a foundation for this study's interview and focus group questions. According to Cook and Ogden (2021), "Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and students with neurodiversity needs influence their self-efficacy" (p. 7). The qualitative study was an exploration of teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy regarding students with disabilities taught in the inclusion classroom environment. Kuyini et al. (2020) affirmed that teachers' self-efficacy positively influences their attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities within an inclusion classroom environment. This study's findings could help teachers identify how their sense of efficacy influences their attitudes regarding teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. The theory of self-efficacy served as a framework for participants to share their positive and negative experiences.

Related Literature

The inclusion classroom environment offers myriad learning opportunities for students with diverse learning needs within the general education setting. Legislation and international policies such as the UNESCO Salamanca Statement include expectations to ensure the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom setting (Finkelstein et al., 2021). The Salamanca Statement is an influential educational policy that holistically supports the inclusion setting as the best way for all students (with and without disabilities) to learn (Woodcock & Faith, 2021) and shows that the inclusion classroom facilitates the acceptance of all children (McKinlay et al., 2022). The inclusion classroom environment has been an essential topic of educational reform for over 30 years (Metsala & Harkins, 2020). In the inclusion setting,

general and special education teachers co-teach students with disabilities and students without identified disabilities in the general education classroom.

The inclusion classroom emerged in response to social justice reform that influenced the development of a fair society (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018). Inclusion refers to "integrating students with and without disabilities in mainstream classrooms" (Edwards et al., 2019, p. 298). Moreover, educators must meet all learners' academic and social needs within the inclusion classroom (Cretu & Morandau, 2020). In the inclusion classroom, general and special education teachers collaborate to meet all learners' academic and social needs, providing a challenging and meaningful educational curriculum within a supportive learning environment (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). To create an authentically engaged learning environment, educators need to foster inclusion values and positive attitudes and utilize effective inclusion strategies (Emmers et al., 2020). Maciver et al. (2019) suggested that students with disabilities require full participation and active, engaged opportunities for meaningful experiences within the inclusion classroom environment. Inclusion education allows students with specialized learning needs to have maximized educational experiences in a supportive setting.

Educators in the inclusion classroom environment require additional training and materials to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Manrique et al., 2019). Teachers participating in inclusion education training courses generally have more favorable attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities within the inclusion setting (Clipa et al., 2020). In a mixed-methods study, Ginja and Chen (2021) used surveys, document reviews, and questionnaires to obtain the perspectives of 125 teachers from Ethiopia. Ginja and Chen identified three purposes of inclusion education: "integration (36%), equal access to quality education (28%), and as a means to achieving acceptance (22%)" (p. 7). The goals of an

inclusion classroom environment are to enhance academic development, facilitate continued learning development, and equip pupils with the necessary skills for a successful transition to adult life (Sakız, 2017).

Teacher's Role Within Inclusion Education

The educator's role and responsibility regarding the inclusion education setting impact all learners, with and without disabilities (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Educational legislation (e.g., Salamanca Declaration Statement, NCLB, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities) mandates inclusion education efforts worldwide (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). In 2006, the United Nations Convention expressed a commitment to educating students with and without disabilities in mainstream classes (Krischler et al., 2019). The teacher's goal within the inclusion classroom environment is to ensure that all pupils learn together regardless of their educational differences. Educational practices, such as integrating inclusion pedagogy, require educators' commitment to and responsibility for the success of each learner within the inclusion classroom environment (Finkelstein et al., 2021; Ginja & Chen, 2021). McKinlay et al. (2022) found that successful inclusion depends on the educational stakeholders having a supportive, acceptable, and tolerant attitude.

Educators responsible for leading an inclusion classroom environment are receptive to adopting differentiated instructional practices, engaging in continuing collaborative activities, and improving their teaching skills (Ginja & Chen, 2021). Educators must provide all students access to an academically engaging curriculum that meets all learners' needs. Another essential role of inclusion schools is to ensure all students with disabilities receive equitable opportunities to access extracurricular activities (Somma, 2020). Although all students taught within the inclusion classroom environment should feel included, teachers must adapt to implement

inclusion practices effectively (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). In many countries implementing inclusion classrooms, educators' roles are becoming increasingly diverse to accommodate all learners' needs. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion depend on the following elements: the social benefits of students with disabilities, the academic achievement levels of students with disabilities, the social benefits of inclusion toward students without disabilities, and the academic achievement levels of students without disabilities (Lübke et al., 2019). Elementary school teachers' attitudes toward educating students with disabilities depend on training, age, gender, and self-efficacy (Clipa et al., 2020).

Perrin et al. (2021) attributed teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion classroom to gender (women have more favorable attitudes toward inclusion than men), teaching experience, age (educators who are younger or have less teaching experience are more favorable toward inclusion), and teacher self-efficacy (educators who are more confident about their teaching abilities tend to be favorable toward inclusion). Low et al. (2020) found that female educators had more positive attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment than males due to the "more emotional nature of female teachers" (p. 500). Perrin et al. also found that younger teachers tend to have more positive attitudes about teaching students with exceptionalities within the inclusion classroom environment than older teachers. Conversely, Ginevra et al. (2021) noted that older teachers with extensive experience tend to have more positive attitudes toward teaching in the inclusion classroom due to their willingness to face challenging classroom settings. DeVault (2021) surveyed K–12 teachers, finding that more-experienced educators agreed that students with disabilities academically and socially benefitted from being taught in the inclusion classroom.

General Education Teachers

General education teachers are responsible for the instruction of all learners in the inclusion classroom environment. In a qualitative study of 13 resource teachers and 12 classroom (general) teachers, Kirkpatrick et al. (2020) found that general education teachers prefer the inclusion setting and the shared responsibility to build partnerships with colleagues and students. General education teachers are primarily responsible for implementing inclusion practices within the classroom environment (Finkelstein et al., 2021). In a case study that included 14 general and special education teachers, Lindacher (2020) found general education teachers responsible for delivering instruction and viewed as content experts within the inclusion classroom environment. Cretu and Morandau (2020) affirmed that "general education teachers are core actors in developing inclusion practices" (p. 3).

Cretu and Morandau (2020) suggested that general education teachers must learn to meet the needs of diverse learners, including those with specialized learning needs and those with disabilities. For students with disabilities to perform their best in the inclusion environment, general and special education teachers need time to collaborate and learn from each other. Compared to special education teachers, general education teachers have received more training in subject matter pedagogy and content methodology techniques (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). To ensure students acquire the necessary grade-level content within the inclusion environment, general education teachers can create instructional content sheets outlining academic subject matter for the special education teachers.

Despite educational mandates to include students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, many general education teachers do not feel adequately prepared to meet these students' needs. According to Finkelstein et al. (2021), an inclusion general education

teacher should be competent in five areas: "instructional practices, organizational practices, social/emotional/behavioral practices, determining progress and collaboration teamwork" (p. 239) to promote an effective and evidence-based inclusion classroom environment. Chadwell et al. (2020) found that teachers with advanced degrees felt better prepared to teach students with disabilities. Further, teachers with education degrees also felt more prepared to teach students with disabilities than those who majored in unrelated fields. Gilmour (2018) found that general education teachers believed they had inadequate training or lacked the necessary skill set to meet the vast needs of the specialized learners within the inclusion classroom environment. In Moberg et al.'s (2020) study, general education teachers said they would feel more prepared to educate students with disabilities if they had the necessary training. Prior showed that although 71% of K–12 educators had taught children with exceptionalities, only 17% felt prepared to meet these students' overall academic needs (Chadwell et al., 2020). Furthermore, Moberg et al. (2020) found that educators do not feel capable, competent, or confident in teaching students with varying exceptionalities within the inclusion classroom environment.

General education teachers who receive professional development and training are better equipped to assist students with and without disabilities (Mieghem et al., 2020). General education teachers need adequate support in teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion environment (Yu & Park, 2020). Chatzigeorgiadou and Barouta (2022) suggested that general education teachers welcomed the inclusion of students with disabilities with effective educational resources and a second teacher to support them. Similarly, Kozleski et al. (2021) found that more general education teachers accepted learners with disabilities in general education environments when given ample opportunities for collaboration with necessary team members. In a study of 359 Japanese and 872 Finnish teachers, Yada et al. (2018) found that

Japanese teachers wanted more training, observations, and teaching practice with students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. The study also showed that Finnish teachers wanted to attend in-service training to learn about the successes and challenges of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. General education teachers who do not feel adequately trained to meet the needs of exceptional learners could have negative attitudes toward teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. One of the greatest challenges for general educators in the inclusion classroom is effectively meeting all diverse learners' needs (Parey, 2021).

Special Education Teachers

Within the inclusion classroom environment, special education teachers are responsible for modifying instructional tasks, providing accommodations for instructional assignments, and delivering differentiated instruction to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). General and special education teachers need frequent collaboration to discuss the holistic needs of students within the inclusion environment. Special education teachers can create student information fact sheets outlining each learner's accommodations, modifications, strengths, areas of need, necessary IEP data, and specific educational characteristics (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Reviewing these sheets with the general education directors helps both sets of educators collaboratively co-plan and co-teach.

Ginevra et al. (2021) found that attitudes toward the inclusion environment depend on strengthening the co-teaching partnership. Chatzigeorgiadou and Barouta (2022) defined co-teaching as an educational partnership between special education and general education teachers that includes shared planning, instruction, and the assessment of students with and without disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Co-teaching allows students with disabilities

to integrate within the general education classroom environment while promoting academic and social opportunities.

Special education teachers are integral in ensuring the provision of necessary wraparound supports and resources for students with disabilities, whether academic or behavioral. When educators consult and collaborate about meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities, teachers gain an acceptance of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion environment. According to Mihajlovic (2020), special educators expect to "possess a knowledge of common characteristics of various disabilities, expertise with behavior modification techniques, proficiency with developing IEPs, and the ability to collaborate, co-plan and co-teach within" (p. 84) the inclusion environment effectively. According to Lindacher (2020), special education teachers have the dual responsibility of continued training on specialized and general "pedagogical competence" (p. 142) within the inclusion classroom environment. Furthermore, special education teachers need training on IEP and professional development to ensure that students with disabilities perform to the best of their abilities. Al-Shammari and Hornby (2020) argued that effectively educating students with disabilities necessitates consistent and ongoing intensive training for special education teachers.

Special education teachers require opportunities to gain effective methodological practices and content pedagogy within the inclusion classroom environment (Somma, 2020). Due to the intensive training needed to address the varied needs of students with exceptionalities, special education teachers tend to have more positive attitudes than general education teachers about accepting these students within the inclusion classroom environment (Low et al., 2020). Special educators who utilized "advanced teaching pedagogical practices displayed more job satisfaction when consulting and collaborating with general education teachers" (Ghedin &

Aquario, 2020, p. 7). When special and general education teachers have collaborative planning and ample opportunities to develop positive relationships, learning occurs within an inclusion classroom environment (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Training resources focused on teachers gaining knowledge and specific skills allow students with and without disabilities to perform their best. Mieghem et al. (2020) found that efficient training programs focused on teachers learning about their students' specific needs within the inclusion classroom environment are more effective than generalized training programs.

Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Teachers must provide an enriching and engaging educational experience for all students, regardless of their learning abilities (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). Ginja and Chen (2021) stated that the willing disposition of educators to accept students with disabilities and their previous knowledge and attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom are fundamental in creating a conducive inclusion environment. Teacher attitudes are a primary component of the success of the inclusion classroom (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2022). Krischler et al. (2019) deemed educators' positive attitudes and beliefs imperative to ensure the success of inclusion practices, as teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy "will likely affect their commitment to effectively implementing" (p. 638) the practices of the inclusion classroom environment. Teacher attitudes toward inclusion education depend on student characteristics, classroom factors, and previous experience (Clipa et al., 2020).

D'Agnostino and Douglas (2021) suggested that knowledge of classroom practices, perceptions of students' behaviors, knowledge of disabilities' characteristics, and teacher attitudes are important factors that impact the inclusion classroom. Moreover, teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are influenced by the educators' experience, competence, and resources and the

pupils' global needs (Olsson et al., 2020). Emmers et al. (2020) found that experience-based educators' self-efficacy influences their attitudes toward students with disabilities taught in the inclusion classroom.

Educators' attitudes can negatively or positively impact students' performance within the inclusion classroom environment. According to Clipa et al. (2020), researchers have found "a positive relationship between self-efficacy and attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment, thus being an excellent predictor of elementary teacher attitudes regarding students with disabilities" (p. 137). In a study of 108 Chilean teachers, Kuyini et al. (2020) found that educators typically had high levels of self-efficacy regarding implementing inclusion educational practices. Previous years of experience teaching students with disabilities were the strongest predictor of attitudes toward the inclusion classroom. Special education teachers expressed more positive attitudes than general education teachers, partly due to their perceived high teacher efficacy (Desombre et al., 2019).

The goal of the inclusion classroom for students with and without disabilities is for all peers to learn in a "common learning environment" (Muñoz Martínez & Porter, 2020, p. 1565) that encourages academic and social success. Lautenbach and Heyder (2019) found that "educators' attitudes toward the inclusion environment have been shown to impact their teaching behavior and are considered one of the most influential factors for successfully implementing inclusion" (p. 232), which impacts overall student achievement and learning. In Krischler et al.'s (2019) study, teachers generally showed positive attitudes toward students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment but showed "less readiness" to implement inclusion practices. Yu (2019) stated, "There is an ongoing need for additional research to fully understand how

educators perceive their competence in teaching children with disabilities and teaching students with disabilities and teaching students with challenging behaviors" (p. 39).

Olsson et al. (2020) affirmed that educators need strong competence to work with students with and without disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. Supportive educational reforms, such as differentiation and team teaching, positively impact the inclusion classroom (Krischler et al., 2019). The inclusion classroom environment allows students with varied learning needs to perform to the best of their abilities. Desombre et al. (2019) found that teachers' attitudes depend on modifying instructional practices to accommodate the curricular needs of students' specialized learning. Ginevra et al. (2021) noted that educators are significantly more positive about inclusion when combined with teacher curriculum preparation programs, thus, general and special education teachers should begin collaboration opportunities within teacher preparation programs (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Special and general education teachers should consider accountability procedures and effective collaboration techniques when planning for and monitoring students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment (Muñoz Martínez & Porter, 2020). General and special educators are responsible for providing instruction in a positive, authentically engaged learning environment (Mieghem et al., 2020).

Positive Attitudes

Educators are instructional leaders who can negatively or positively influence other educational team members. Consequently, teachers draw on their team members' experiences (whether intentionally or inadvertently) through observation, cues (nonverbal, verbal, or visual), or feedback to develop their educational practice (Farrell, 2020). D'Agnostino and Douglas (2021) suggested careful consideration when preservice teachers observe inclusion classroom

environments so that future educators can experience the environment positively, as positive teaching equates to positive learning experiences within the classroom. Ginja and Chen (2021) suggested that meeting the unique and diverse population of exceptional pupils requires teachers to adopt constructive skills and attitudes that can lead to continued positive outcomes in the academic, social, and behavioral skills of pupils with disabilities. Emmers et al. (2020) found that educators who feel positive about the inclusion classroom environment have confidence in their teaching abilities and are supportive of inclusion. According to Yu (2019), "Educators with positive attitudes toward students with disabilities were likelier to act positively toward those students with disabilities than other teachers who expressed negative attitudes" (p. 31), contributing to the overall climate of the inclusion environment.

The effective and successful instruction of students with exceptional learning needs depends on educators' positive attitudes (Saloviita & Consegnati, 2020). In a mixed methods study of 41 middle and high school teachers, DeVault (2021) found overall positive attitudes toward teaching students with exceptionalities in the inclusion classroom. DeVault concluded that special education training, administrative support, and the teacher's perception of educating students with exceptionalities contributed to positive attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment. Continuous teacher training builds positive attitudes toward students with disabilities (Clipa et al., 2020).

Teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment are more often positive if educational team members (parents, teachers, students, administrators, and therapists) support all parties involved. Supportive parental involvement provides encouragement for educators' positive attitudes toward teaching in the inclusion classroom (D'Agnostino & Douglas, 2021). Parental involvement can enhance a positive school environment necessary to "advance

inclusiveness in schools" (McKinlay et al., 2022, p. 2). Clipa et al. (2020) suggested that if teachers had more time to implement inclusion practices successfully, they would have supportive and positive attitudes regarding educating in the inclusion environment. In Krischler et al.'s (2019) study, educators with a deep understanding of the roles and responsibilities of teaching students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom also reported positive attitudes toward implementing inclusion practices.

Kirkpatrick et al. (2020) suggested that general education teachers would have increased positive attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment with more time to plan with the special education teachers and more opportunities for professional development. DeVault (2021) identified a positive relationship between the "level of support teachers receive when teaching students with disabilities and 'their attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities" (p. 673). According to Kuyini et al. (2020), positive teacher attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment are highly dependent upon high teacher efficacy, collaboration opportunities, and opportunities for differentiation. The success or failure of an inclusion classroom environment depends significantly on the attitudes of the educational team. When academic team members view the inclusion classroom positively, teachers and peers will likely accept children with disabilities (Krischler et al., 2019).

According to Lautenbach and Heyder (2019), teaching frameworks that lead to increased positive attitudes regarding inclusion practices include instruction on effective planning and inclusion teaching field experience. Educators who hold more positive attitudes toward teaching in the inclusion classroom tend to adapt to the necessary learning environment while employing many learning and teaching strategies to assist struggling learners (Ginevra et al., 2021). DeVault (2021) affirmed that educators teaching for at least 5 years were more comfortable adapting

instruction for students with developmental delays and learning disabilities. According to Yu (2019), educators who engage in ongoing, hands-on teaching experiences will likely feel more confident about their teaching abilities within the inclusion environment. Somma (2020) affirmed that educators with actively engaged inclusion practices tend to hold positive perceptions of teaching within the inclusion classroom environment. In a comparative study of Japanese and Finnish teachers, Yada et al. (2018) found that overall teaching experience positively impacted teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy. Teachers with a positive attitude toward the inclusion classroom environment are likelier to show favorable behaviors to teaching all students (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019). In a comparative study with 362 Finnish and 1,518 Japanese teachers, Moberg et al. (2020) concluded that teachers with "successful experiences within the inclusion classroom held more positive attitudes than teachers with unsuccessful experiences in both countries" (p. 108).

Contributing factors to teacher attitudes about the inclusion classroom environment include experience teaching children with exceptional needs, student disability type, and years of teaching experience. Clipa et al. (2020) suggested that teachers' interactions with persons with disabilities predicted positive attitudes toward these students within the inclusion environment. According to Yu and Park (2020), preservice and early childhood teachers' attitudes appeared slightly more positive than in the secondary environment. The elementary preservice teachers in Ismailos et al.'s (2022) study reported significantly higher positive attitudes toward the inclusion classroom than their secondary preservice counterparts. Tan et al. (2021) stated that teachers in elementary schools tended to have more favorable attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment than teachers in secondary schools. Another finding was that preschool teachers hold more positive attitudes toward the inclusion environment than primary and secondary

teachers. Ginevra et al. (2021) found secondary school teachers are more apt to hold negative attitudes toward students with disabilities taught within the inclusion classroom environment.

In a study of 179 elementary service teachers, Metsala and Harkins (2020) found that most felt more positive and responsible for students with disabilities in the inclusion environment. Knowledge of inclusion practices and policies and the overall school support of the inclusion classroom environment are determining factors that positively impact teacher attitudes. Lübke et al. (2019) affirmed that, in an inclusion classroom environment, teachers view students with physical disabilities more positively than those with learning and academic challenges. Ginevra et al. (2021) found that educators tended to have more positive attitudes about teaching students with physical disabilities and social challenges than students with academic and behavioral difficulties. Van Steen and Wilson (2020) conducted a literature review meta-analysis of 64 sources that included attitude measurements and allowed for calculating effect sizes. The findings showed that educators held positive attitudes toward children with exceptionalities served in inclusion classroom environments, resulting in a medium positive effect ($p < .0001$). Van Steen and Wilson (2020) also agreed that teachers "favor children with physical disabilities more than those with behavioral or learning disabilities" (p.3) within the inclusion classroom environment.

Moberg et al. (2020) agreed that educators showed the greatest acceptance of teaching students with physical disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or sensory impairments within the inclusion classroom as opposed to students with emotional or behavioral disorders and intellectual disabilities. Moreover, students with behavioral challenges and intellectual disabilities were viewed as causing more concern to teachers than students with other disabilities (Moberg et al., 2020). Ginevra et al. (2021) found a close relationship between the acceptance of

students with intellectual deficits and teachers' attitudes, as shown through verbal and nonverbal behavior (e.g., eye contact, addressing students by name, and providing positive support through gestures, such as affirming smiles).

Negative Attitudes

Teachers can positively or negatively affect other educational team members' attitudes within the inclusion classroom environment. Poor teaching experiences can create negative teaching attitudes within the inclusion environment. Moberg et al. (2020) suggested that teachers with unsuccessful experiences in the inclusion environment held more negative attitudes than those without previous experience in such settings. Teachers having negative attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment reported the inability to meet the full academic needs of students with disabilities (Somma, 2020). Negative attitudes about the inclusion classroom environment are a damaging ideology that leads to unsuccessful inclusion practices (Metsala & Harkins, 2020). Teachers who view the inclusion classroom negatively tend to believe that "special schools" in a separate segregated environment (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018) are in the best interest of students with disabilities. Despite the European Commission adopted in 2010 to promote equality for quality education, there remain instances of alienation and segregation of disabled persons. Damianidou and Phtiaka (2018) interviewed 28 teachers from the 536 randomly selected secondary education teachers in Cyprus who completed questionnaires. The data suggest that secondary teachers have low expectations for students with disabilities and do not promote inclusion practices within the educational environment.

Students with disabilities must be academically, developmentally, behaviorally, and socially engaged within the inclusion classroom environment. Chatzigeorgiadou and Barouta (2022) suggested that the lack of collaborative time and educational resources negatively impacts

teachers' attitudes in the inclusion classroom. Furthermore, teachers need the necessary materials and resources to fulfill all students' learning needs. In a qualitative study of 13 resource teachers and 12 classroom teachers, Kirkpatrick et al. (2020) discussed the importance of allocating necessary educational resources to support the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom environment. A lack of differentiation resources could adversely impact teachers' attitudes, which affect their thoughts, judgments, and behaviors regarding inclusion education (Kuyini et al., 2020). Similarly, some teachers report a shortage of resources, a lack of knowledge in differentiating instruction, and difficulties in adequately supporting students with severe academic and behavioral concerns as challenges within the inclusion environment (Yu, 2019).

Although education for all students with and without disabilities is a fundamental human right, some teachers feel unprepared to address the needs of students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom environment. Furthermore, Clipa et al. (2020) suggested that educators have a negative attitude because they feel unprepared for teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom. The "lack of accommodations, educational resources, professional development, and the need for awareness and timely diagnosis and assessment contribute to teachers' negative attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment" (Parey, 2021, p. 6). Likewise, despite inclusive educational policy requirements, many teachers report being inadequately trained to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom environment (Manrique et al., 2019).

Academic and behavioral deficits can impact teacher and student acceptance of students with exceptionalities within the inclusion classroom environment. Ginevra et al. (2021) found that educators held negative attitudes toward students with exceptionalities who displayed

behavioral challenges and were less inclined to want them in their classes. Likewise, Garwood and Van Loan (2019) affirmed that negative attitudes toward students with behavioral challenges create a barrier to the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom environment. Instead of educators seeing students with behavioral challenges as having needs to address, they tend to view the students as problematic and inappropriate in the inclusion classroom environment. According to Gilmour (2018), placement data show the integration of students with exceptionalities into the inclusion classroom environment; however, achievement data indicate these students are not achieving grade-level standards, even with accommodations and modifications. Griful-Freixenet et al. (2017) found that when provided appropriate accommodations, students with disabilities perform successfully within the classroom environment. Despite exposing students with identified learning disabilities to the general education curriculum, wraparound supports, services, and resources from the educational team are needed for improved outcomes. Moreover, Perrin et al. (2021) affirmed that the successful operation of the inclusion classroom remains a challenging task, despite the globally shared values of educational teams due to negative attitudes toward the educational policy.

Teachers holding attitudes toward the inclusion classroom often perceive that students with disabilities take already-limited classroom time away from students without disabilities (Metsala & Harkins, 2020). Desombre et al. (2019) found that educators hold more negative attitudes toward students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder than learning disabilities within the inclusion classroom. Finally, teachers are less accepting of the inclusion classroom environment comprising students with more moderate learning needs and social, emotional, and behavioral disorders (Mieghem et al., 2020).

Impact of Students With Disabilities Within the Inclusion Environment

Students without disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment significantly influence students with disabilities. Cook and Ogden (2021) found that contact with their peers affected students' achievement within the inclusion classroom. Building social and academic partnerships within the inclusion classroom helps create a successful classroom environment. All students need opportunities to develop academic, learning, and social skills (Yu & Park, 2020). Clipa et al. (2020) found that students learn to value the differences among people when taught in collaboration-engaged learning environments instead of competitive learning environments. Conversely, if students do not receive multiple opportunities to engage with one another, collaborative learning opportunities effectively might not occur.

Benefits

The inclusion classroom benefits students with disabilities, students without disabilities, teachers, and society (Chadwell et al., 2020). Positive outcomes occur when educators encourage productive and socially engaging friendships within the inclusion classroom for students with and without disabilities (Cook & Ogden, 2021). Chadwell et al. (2020) found that when taught in an inclusion classroom environment, students with the most significant learning needs experience increased academic, cognitive, and social development than in more restrictive or self-contained settings. Moreover, Mieghem et al. (2020) identified the benefits of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom, including the acquisition of individual learning objectives, fewer incidences of inappropriate behaviors, generalization of skills learned, and enhanced friendships among students without disabilities. Furthermore, positive teacher attitudes toward inclusion positively impact the behaviors of students with and without disabilities in the general education classroom (McKinlay et al., 2022).

Teachers can encourage positive benefits for students with and without exceptionalities by implementing strategies to facilitate classroom engagement. Kozleski et al. (2021) found positive peer partnerships and bonds between students with and without disabilities beyond academic lessons when encouraged by educators who taught within the general education classroom environment. Furthermore, Kozleski et al. (2021) also suggested that when students with exceptionalities work with students without disabilities peers in the general education environment, it helps to strengthen positive peer relationships and build diverse relationships. Likewise, Yu and Park (2020) affirmed that providing students without exceptionalities engaged opportunities to socialize with students with disabilities increases their understanding and acceptance. Mieghem et al. (2020) listed the benefits for students without exceptionalities taught in the inclusion classroom: increased acceptance of diversity, meaningful friendships, respect for all persons, and increased opportunities to practice working with others with varied needs. In a mixed methods study, D'Agnostino and Douglas (2021) found that all 81 preservice teachers agreed that students with autism spectrum disorder and special needs should be included in the inclusion classroom, and all students with and without exceptionalities positively benefit from inclusion. The preservice teachers who completed the questionnaire and engaged in interviews agreed that teacher preparation programs influenced their perceptions and attitudes toward students with an autism spectrum disorder.

Establishing shared commonalities and interests through extracurricular activities or technology are mechanisms to promote engagement for all students. In a qualitative study, Kozleski et al. (2021) conducted individual interviews and focus groups with 17 general education teachers, 18 special education teachers, 12 principals, and 126 students. The findings showed that teaching students with and without disabilities in the general education classroom

provides meaningful opportunities for all learners to engage in authentically engaged learning experiences. Kozleski et al. (2021) found only 16% of students with intellectual disabilities served in the general education for 80% or more of the tim, despite findings showing that students with exceptionalities benefit and learn within the inclusion classroom environment.

Cooperative learning and peer support learning opportunities can produce beneficial outcomes for all learners within the inclusion classroom environment. Successful inclusion methods include successful educational practices for all students, opportunities for effective professional development, supportive administration, and positive peer support opportunities for learners with disabilities (Finkelstein et al., 2021). Professional development is an effective strategy to assist educators with current and successful educational practices (Al-Shammari & Hornby, 2020). Furthermore, the level of training, professional experience, teachers' beliefs about students with disabilities included in the inclusion environment, the class size, and the quality of educational resources positively impact the attitudes of educators who teach within the inclusion environment (Clipa et al., 2020). Roberts and Callaghan (2021) identified the essential components educators need to have competence and confidence within the inclusion classroom as effective professional development and collaborative instruction opportunities with all relevant school team members. Resource and general education teachers indicated that increased opportunities for student learning, enhanced supports for students, collaborative opportunities, and a myriad of diverse approaches are benefits of teaching in an inclusion classroom environment (Kirkpatrick et al., 2020).

Mieghem et al. (2020) stressed the importance of peer support interventions to improve learners' performance with reading comprehension difficulties, moderate learning disabilities, and behavioral challenges within the inclusion classroom. Learners positively encouraged by

their peers are apt to perform better at all developmental levels. Sakız (2017) stated that a positive inclusion environment facilitates improved peer relationships between students with and without disabilities. When peers hold a favorable outlook of students without disabilities, increased learning could occur. Likewise, Reina et al. (2021) found that "increasing control beliefs and subjective norms" (p. 839) can improve the attitudes of students without disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. When students without disabilities believe they can succeed in global arenas (academically and socially), they are more likely to have a positive attitude toward the inclusion classroom environment. Somma (2020) suggested that peers and teachers within the inclusion environment create a classroom culture that accepts all students, regardless of their learning differences. Furthermore, a positive inclusion classroom environment creates positive inclusion adults within the global community (Somma, 2020).

Kirkpatrick et al. (2020) identified four benefits of teaching in the inclusion classroom environment: identifying and coping with skills with students with disabilities, including students with disabilities in appropriate peer groups, informing stakeholders that the inclusion classroom environment does not separate students, and showing that when certain students with disabilities are separated, they experience discomfort, isolation, and stress. Reina et al. (2021) noted that the overall attitudes of peers without disabilities are generally positive toward students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom. Peer attitudes affect peer acceptance of students with disabilities within the inclusion classroom environment. (Edwards et al., 2019). Völlinger and Supanc (2020) agreed that supportive peer groups provide academically enriched, socially enhanced, and improved behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Likewise, McKinlay et al. (2022) suggested that successful inclusion can result in improved academic outcomes and enhanced social opportunities. In Lübke et al.'s

(2019) study, teachers agreed that the inclusion classroom environment provides opportunities for students with exceptionalities to achieve higher academic aspirations and achievement due to peer support and positive role models. Moberg et al. (2020) suggested offering students with and without disabilities guidance on how to view themselves as appropriate role models for others. Clipa et al. (2020) conveyed that interaction with persons with disabilities is a key factor that promotes positive peer attitudes in the inclusion classroom. Moreover, Völlinger and Supanc (2020) stated that students with exceptionalities not afforded supportive peer groups have fewer friendships, opportunities for peer acceptance, and positive social interactions in an inclusion classroom environment.

Drawbacks

Including students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment could impact the academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for all students in the classroom. Garner et al. (2020) recommended not including students with communication disorders in the inclusion classroom environment. Students with exceptionalities have a myriad of academic, social, and behavioral needs. Gilmour (2018) concluded that general education teachers rated students without disabilities as having more behavior problems, lower levels of self-control, and lower interpersonal skills when they were in classrooms with students with disabilities". According to Gilmour (2018), although general education teachers might welcome students with exceptionalities into their classrooms, they often spend more time on discipline and classroom management and are more inclined to leave the profession. DeVault (2021) suggested that some teachers report that students with disabilities require more time from educators than those without disabilities in the inclusion environment. A qualitative study in Israel showed that teachers in mainstream classrooms felt inadequately prepared to educate students with

disabilities within the inclusion classroom environment (Kugelmass & Kupferberg, 2020). Data collected from 80 stories of student teachers and mainstream teachers underwent content analysis, which showed that the mainstream teachers demanded changes in teacher education programs so they could be prepared to teach in the inclusion classroom environment.

Specific inclusion strategies, such as social and academic engagement opportunities, are necessary within the inclusion classroom environment. Educators who teach within the inclusion environment struggle with the lack of time, resources, and extracurriculars (Kirkpatrick et al., 2020). In a study of secondary education teachers in Cyprus, Damianidou and Phtiaka (2018) identified inadequate teacher training, equipment, supporting materials, ineffective curricular standards, and peers' attitudes as barriers that impact the successful implementation of the "inclusion setting. Additional educational barriers that impact the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom include the absence of practical experience, training, and funding (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of understanding of educational and legislative mandates and the needed continued training on IEP development can inhibit the full implementation of inclusion practices (Al-Shammari & Hornby, 2020). Other significant barriers include negative attitudes toward implementation, the inability of the curricular standards to meet the needs of diverse learners, and the lack of effective training for educational staff members. If educators or school administrators have ineffective training experiences in meeting the diverse needs of students with disabilities, they are less likely to be "confident in practicing inclusion" (Clipa et al., 2020, p.136).

Furthermore, (D'Agnostino and Douglas (2021) affirmed that beliefs and attitudes are the greatest barriers that negatively impact high-quality inclusion for students with disabilities served within the inclusion classroom. Edwards et al. (2019) stressed that schools should

implement specific inclusion school policies to support all learners' needs. Additionally, teachers must continuously support all students' positive interactions, peer acceptance, and friendship development for students with disabilities to find social acceptance within the inclusion classroom.

Gaps in the Literature

According to Kozleski et al. (2021), despite the positive effects of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, inclusion education remains an underutilized strategy to improve the performance of all learners, nationally and globally. Educators' attitudes can impact all students' performance in an inclusion classroom environment. Attitudes form over time, supported by indirect and direct experiences and a person's primary social group (Yu & Park, 2020). Future studies regarding teacher attitudes toward students in an inclusion education environment should focus on inclusion pedagogy practices in teacher training (Ginja & Chen, 2021). Inclusion pedagogy practices would provide professional training and effective instructional strategies to enhance educators' attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs regarding the inclusion classroom environment.

Moberg et al. (2020) recommended providing preservice teachers with multiple positive experiences of the inclusion classroom environment early in their teaching practicums. Cole-Lade (2021) suggested that reading inclusion literature is beneficial for educators, as it offers a deeper understanding of persons with disabilities and clarifies the challenges and complexities of the lives of persons with disabilities. Inclusion literature is nonfiction written by an individual with a disability or their family (Cole-Lade, 2021). Researchers indicated that when preservice educators read inclusion literature, it increases acceptance of persons with disabilities and creates

more teachers who self-reflect. Furthermore, inclusion literature provides educators with a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

Yu and Park (2020) modified teacher training programs to improve preservice teachers' attitudes by creating classrooms where students without disabilities can understand and accept students with disabilities as their friends and peers. D'Agnostino and Douglas (2021) suggested that educator preparation programs influence preservice teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions preservicetoward the inclusion of students with disabilities. If preservice training programs had more content-specific coursework, educators might be more prepared to teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom (Chadwell et al., 2020). Although teachers who majored in education-related fields felt better equipped to work with students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom, their practical experiences and coursework likely contributed to their preparation.

Alsarawi and Sukonthaman (2021) suggested that future researchers explore the self-efficacy of inclusion education related to the preparatory courses available for preservice teachers. Likewise, teacher preparation courses include curricular strategies and practices to help teachers impart the necessary competencies and challenges they will face when transitioning into the inclusion classroom environment. According to Kuyini et al. (2020), preservice teachers with high perceived teaching efficacy had lessened concerns about inclusion education. Future preservice educators should discover the humanity, individuality, and daily life concerns of students with disabilities to support them in the inclusion classroom (Cole-Lade, 2021). Yu (2019) identified the need to train teachers with evidence-based inclusion practices to feel competent in educating various students with exceptionalities.

Another suggestion is to examine providing teachers with continued specialized training and policies that promote training initiatives for the inclusion classroom. Other areas of future study include factors beyond teacher attributes, such as parental expectations of the inclusion classroom, availability of school resources, and school climate and culture, providing a deeper understanding of teacher attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom environment (Tan et al., 2021).

Manrique et al. (2019) suggested that educational teams work toward improving all learners' social, developmental, emotional, and educational needs. Van Steen and Wilson (2020) recommended exploring teacher attitudes regarding the varied disability types. Future researchers should identify necessary supports to promote behavioral and academic outcomes for all learners (Gilmour, 2018). Additionally, researchers should conduct studies that focus on whether students with disabilities affect the performance of their nondisabled peers within the inclusion classroom. Early childhood educators from a Head Start inclusion classroom identified a successful inclusion environment as comprising children with and without disabilities having the same experiences and assistive technology opportunities and peer assistance via modeling and assignment modification (Park et al., 2021).

Summary

Implementing an inclusion classroom environment successfully requires general and special education teachers to execute their defined roles and responsibilities collaboratively (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment were a significant focus of the literature review. Negative and positive attitudes can impact all learners' performance within the inclusion classroom environment, whether with or without disabilities. Attitudes impact the learning atmosphere and educational opportunities students with

exceptionalities receive within the inclusion classroom (Ginja & Chen, 2021). The theory of self-efficacy served as the theoretical framework to explain teachers' attitudes regarding educating students with special needs within the inclusion classroom environment. Inclusion refers to integrating special and general education students within a general education classroom environment (Edwards et al., 2019). General and special education teachers appear to have mixed attitudes about teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment.

Educators' attitudes toward students with disabilities can impact their performance within the inclusion environment (Nilsen, 2020). Many regulations and laws require special and general education teachers to educate students with exceptionalities within an inclusion classroom environment (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). Additionally, educational policy mandates all teachers to meet the academic needs of the students they teach. To the greatest extent possible, most students with specialized learning needs receive instruction within the inclusion classroom environment. Educators who use evidence-based inclusion practices can provide an educationally stimulating classroom environment for all learners (Mieghem et al., 2020). The literature review also presented the benefits and drawbacks of students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. This study addressed the literature gap on teachers' attitudes within the inclusion classroom environment.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore elementary-level general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. A transcendental phenomenological approach was appropriate for eliciting unbiased and vivid perceptions of the participants' efficacy and lived experiences of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion environment. In the transcendental phenomenological method, researchers use bracketing or setting aside personal bias (Moustakas, 1994). A significant component of bracketing is intentionality, the internal experience of being conscious of something linked to judgment or . Chapter 3 presents the research design, research questions, subquestions, setting, and participant guidelines. The chapter includes the data procedures, the researcher's positionality and role, and data collection. Chapter 3 concludes with the elements of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers collect data through narrative lenses, interviews, and observations. The qualitative methodology is a means of eliciting narratives in the participants' voices while providing contextual perceptions of their experiences (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Qualitative research requires understanding the beliefs and theories used to guide the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Theoretical frameworks address the unique experiences of the individuals under study. For this study, social constructivism was the framework used to understand the teachers' lived experiences of inclusion classrooms and environments with students with disabilities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of social constructivism is to rely on the participants' views of the situation.

The phenomenological approach was the means used to explore the participants' perceptions and understanding of the phenomenon. Vivid descriptions of the participants' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching in the inclusion environment provided insight and contextual information into their viewpoints. The phenomenological approach enables researchers to spend significant time with the observed and studied individuals (Moustakas, 1994). Interviewing and observing are essential in phenomenological research for accurately documenting lived experiences (van Manen, 2017). During the interviews, the participating educators shared their lived experiences regarding teaching in the elementary inclusion classroom. Phenomenologists collect data from myriad participant experiences and accounts to interpret the participants' perceptions, ideologies, and lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is an approach to uncovering and describing what individuals perceive, sense, and know based on their immediate awareness and lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological scholars seek to understand the complexity and meaning of a phenomenon and experience from the participants' perspectives and experiences (van Manen, 1990). European philosopher Husserl (Moustakas, 1994) developed transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenologists can visualize a phenomenon from an unbiased position when they set aside preconceived ideas. *Epoche*, a Greek word meaning *to refrain from judgment*, is key to transcendental phenomenology. Epoche involves setting aside everyday understandings and knowledge and revisiting phenomena from an unbiased vantage point. Another component of transcendental phenomenology is intentionality, with thought directed toward objects, perceptions, and phenomena.

Bracketing, another component of the transcendental qualitative design, involves identifying personal experiences, assumptions, and interests that could influence the study's data

collection and analysis. Therefore, researchers seek to freshly view the data by acknowledging and setting aside their experiences and assumptions as much as possible (Fischer, 2009). Bracketing was the tool used in this study to remove personal biases and capture the teachers' lived experiences and thoughts regarding teaching in the inclusion classroom.

Transcendental phenomenology was most appropriate for obtaining the lived experiences of teachers of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. The goal of this study was to capture the participants' attitudes and lived experiences, not my interpretations of their experiences. Therefore, transcendental phenomenology was the approach selected to understand the participants' lived experiences. In this transcendental phenomenological study, individual interviews, a focus group, and narrative artifacts (lesson plans) were the means of capturing the participants' lived experiences and attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom.

Gilmour (2018) found that students with disabilities had better academic and behavioral outcomes when taught in inclusion or mainstream settings. Therefore, this study focused on general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding serving students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Teacher efficacy in the inclusion classroom environment could impact the educational practices and experiences of students with disabilities (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). Three research questions guided this phenomenological study.

Research Questions

CRQ. What are general education elementary teachers' attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

SQ1. What are general education elementary teachers' experiences teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

SQ2. What are general education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

Setting and Participants

This study's participants were qualifying teachers who met the criteria. The participants had varied ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds. The individuals studied in qualitative research are the participants (Merriam, 2009), willing individuals who decide to be part of a study. In this study, all participants currently or previously taught in the elementary inclusion classroom environment for at least 1 year. The setting was any general education elementary classroom in Georgia that aligned with the criteria.

Participants

The sample included 10 general education teachers, nine women and one man of varied ethnicity and age. A typical sample size for phenomenological research is between eight and 15 participants, depending on data saturation (Peoples, 2020). Each participant held a valid teaching license at the elementary level and taught in an inclusion classroom environment. In transcendental phenomenology studies, all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling resulted in participants who experienced the phenomenon of teaching in the elementary inclusion classroom. Experience and educational requirements included 1 or more years of teaching experience in the inclusion classroom environment and a graduate degree (e.g., master's, education specialist, or doctorate). After Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, recruitment commenced with a Facebook post with a detailed description of the study.

Researcher Positionality

Instructional leaders can reach and grow students in the classroom environment. All students, regardless of their ability, should have educators passionate about teaching in any classroom environment. I have been a district staff specialist in my local county public school

system for 7 years. District staff specialists handle training and mentoring for special education teachers and ensure all special education documents comply with local, state, and national guidelines. Before my current position, I taught special education for 15 years to students with varying exceptionalities in inclusive and self-contained classrooms. My pedagogical philosophy is to teach, nurture, and reach all students with diverse backgrounds. I believe all students can succeed when given vast opportunities to holistically execute their abilities and callings in their learning environment (Epstein, 2009).

The goal of this study was to document general education teachers' experiences with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. According to Lodico et al. (2010), social constructivism indicates how different persons share different conceptual frameworks regarding a situation based on their experiences. Experiences can significantly influence a person's perceptions of a situation. In phenomenological research, social constructivists attempt to visualize a phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. In this study, obtaining the teachers' viewpoints of their lived experiences in the inclusion classroom provided the opportunity to document their attitudes. Social constructivism was an appropriate and sound framework for studying the inclusion practices used to improve the participation of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom (Jamero, 2019; Malloy, 1994). From an educational viewpoint, social constructivism suggests a connection between learning and development and children's meaningful experiences (Jamero, 2019). Academic and social inclusion align with social constructivism, as teachers seek to establish the emotional and social tone of the classroom environment by modeling expectations for all students (Grier-Reed & Williams, 2018).

Interpretive Framework

Meaningful teaching includes opportunities for students to actively and authentically engage in the classroom environment. The interpretative framework was this study's contextual foundation. Social constructivism indicates that people seek to meaningfully understand the world in which they live and work with complex and varied views (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interpretative framework of social constructivism suggests that researchers should become actively involved with the participants to understand their perspectives (Lodico et al., 2010). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to gather and understand teachers' experiences and attitudes regarding teaching students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical position can influence an individual's theoretical viewpoint (Schunk, 2020). Phenomenology has four philosophical perspectives: a return to the traditional tasks of philosophy, a philosophy without presuppositions, the intentionality of one's consciousness, and the refusal of the subject-object dichotomy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). In this qualitative study, the philosophical assumptions indicated the research goals and outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ideally, after the participants shared their varied experiences of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, they reflected, meditated, and modified their theoretical positions as needed. Educators are privileged dispensers of knowledge who educate, motivate, empower, and influence students.

A Christian worldview consists of more than philosophical, social, political, cultural, or economic standpoints. A Christian should use the Holy Bible as a blueprint for governments, laws, and values. Tackett (2006) argued that people who truly embrace God's worldview can

make truthful, unbiased decisions. The study's three philosophical assumptions were ontological, epistemological, and axiological.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption indicates how an individual views reality. A phenomenological researcher seeks to capture the lenses of how participants express their different viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Ontological assumptions are a diverse platform for qualitative research participants to share their opinions from varied perspectives. In education, teachers can use diverse teaching methods to meet each learner's needs effectively. Differentiation is a way to complement every student's unique learning needs in the inclusion classroom. Likewise, qualitative researchers can capture 'participants' perspectives, ideals, or realities with varied instruments, such as interviews, observations, journaling, focus groups, photographs, or videos. The participants' perspectives and attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom provided a unique view of their perceived realities (Lodico et al., 2010).

Epistemological Assumption

An epistemological assumption is the relationship between researchers and what they research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Smith and Shaw (2019) noted" that epistemology addresses what an individual can know. According to Proverbs 4:7 KJV, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: And with all thy getting get understanding" (King James Version, 2017). As a passionate educator, I sought to capture and explore educators' lived experiences of the inclusion environment and teaching students with disabilities. This study could indicate barriers to teachers and students performing to the best of their abilities. According to Schunk (2020), thinking guides epistemologists, including their basis for knowledge and thought processes

(Schunk, 2020). Metacognition is reflecting on one's thinking to improve performance (Conyers & Wilson, 2006). The participants reflected on their classroom experiences, thus engaging in metacognition. Therefore, the data showed how educators can improve students' academic outcomes in the inclusion classroom.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption is the qualitative researcher's position regarding the study's context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenologists capture their positionality related to the lived experiences of the participants. As a former special education teacher, I have witnessed how teachers' attitudes can impact the performance of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms. Teachers with positive attitudes about students with disabilities learning in the inclusion classroom enabled the students to perform their best academically. Conversely, teachers with negative attitudes about serving students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment correlated with reduced academic performance. An axiological assumption indicates the importance of addressing what is valued in research processes to generate in-depth knowledge (Smith & Shaw, 2019). I am passionate about bridging the achievement gap between learners with and without disabilities in inclusion classrooms. Therefore, I reduced bias in this study with bracketing. Phenomenological researchers should ensure ethical integrity by bracketing their experiences and collecting information from individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researcher's Role

As a district staff specialist, I have many opportunities to train, mentor, and collaborate with special education teachers who teach in inclusion classrooms and self-contained settings. Data collection occurred through me, the human instrument, via interviews, a focus group, and

document review (lesson plans). In my district-level position, I support special education

teachers; however, the research included only general education teachers. I did not hold authority

over the participants. I have taught students with varying exceptionalities, including intellectual

disabilities, learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, and physical disabilities in

the inclusion classroom and self-contained settings. I have reservations about serving students

with disabilities in the inclusion classroom without providing teachers with the necessary

resources and support. Following Moustakas's recommendation (1994), in this transcendental

phenomenological study, I bracketed my experiences regarding the inclusion classroom

environment while examining the data. Due to my experience with teaching students with

disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, I remained cognizant of any thoughts or

biases that I brought to the study.

Although I advocate for educating certain students with disabilities in the inclusion

classroom environment, I have witnessed educators struggle to meet their students' needs due to

high-stakes testing accountability. Moreover, many teachers have overcrowded classrooms and

limited educational materials. BecauseI did not have authority over the participants, I expected

they willingly shared their lived experiences and attitudes regarding teaching in elementary-level

inclusion classrooms.

Procedures

The first step for this study was to submit a proposal to the IRB to obtain approval. After

modifying the study per IRB requirements for official approval, I contacted the participants via

social media (Facebook). Contact occurred with each potential participant who indicated interest

via email. The transcendental qualitative data collection included open-ended interviews, a focus

group, and artifacts of lesson plans (Moustakas, 1994). The participants received the study

details, such as the data collection process and approval letters. Each participant replied to the invitation via email within 2 weeks. Potential participants who did not respond received a follow-up email with similar information. Creswell and Poth (2018) identified four considerations for qualitative researchers in planning their studies:

1. What is the setting, and who are the people you will study?

2. What methods do you plan to use to collect data?

3. How will you analyze the data?

4. How will you validate your findings?

5. What ethical issues will your study present? (p. 59)

Qualitative researchers can obtain meaningful information through open-ended data sources (Schunk, 2020).

After data collection, I coded for rich, vivid details occurred from multiple sources. Coding involves assigning a words, letters, numbers, phrases, or colors to make the data easily accessible and retrievable (Merriam, 2009). Data sources were labeled to effectively determine and document the findings. Triangulation is a way to confirm or refute assumptions, make interpretations, develop themes, and draw conclusions (Johnson et al., 2020). Follow-up interviews occurred with the teachers to ensure the findings' validity. The participants received their interview responses via email for member checking. Triangulation occurs when more than one person collects and analyzes data findings (Merriam, 2009). Thus, the dissertation committee members confirmed the findings.

Permissions

Conducting the study required permission from Liberty University's IRB and the teachers. After IRB approval, I posted the intent letter on Facebook to recruit participants who

met the criteria. Potential participants who met the criteria indicated their interest via email. The participants who answered the teacher screening questions and met the criteria received emailed consent letters. See Appendix C for IRB approval and Appendix D for recruitment. The participants received and signed informed consent forms, which included participants' rights, procedures, and confidentiality.

Recruitment Plan

This study's population was general education teachers in Georgia phenomenological study included 10 teachers who taught elementary-level inclusion classrooms. Each participant held a valid teaching certificate and at least a graduate degree and currently or previously worked in the inclusion classroom. Qualitative researchers obtain information from individuals who have lived and experienced a phenomenon in a specific context (Johnson et al., 2020). The intent was to select 10 teachers to participate in the study who met the criteria for teaching experience, certification, and degrees. A drawback to qualitative research is the small number of participants; thus, the study's findings were specific to the sample and not generalizable to larger populations (Schunk, 2020).

An in-depth and meaningful phenomenological research study should include five to 25 participants who have experienced a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Polkinghorne, 1989). Transcendental phenomenological studies requires participants who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participant selection occurred via criterion sampling for individuals who met the predetermined criteria. Participation critiera were holding a valid teaching license, a graduate degree, and at least 1 year of experience teaching in the inclusion classroom. Researchers should protect their participants' privacy and confidentiality (Creswell &

Guetterman, 2019). The teachers who agreed to participate received consent forms (see

Appendix E) on their confidentiality and privacy rights.

Data Collection Plan

The transcendental phenomenology study included multiple data sources, providing an

accurate understanding of the participants' experiences and attitudes. Data collection occurred in

the following order:

1. Individual interviews

2. Focus group

3. Document analysis

The open-ended, in-depth interviews were the means of capturing the participants' rich lived

experiences and attitudes regarding teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom.

The data collection included a focus group and document analysis of lesson plans. A focus group

provides information about a topic with a group of people knowledgeable about the topic

(Merriam, 2009). In this study, the participants received notification about the focus group via

email. Finally, organizational documents (lesson plans) underwent review to supplement the

interviews. Data analysis occurred using details about the individual interviews, focus group, and

document analysis.

Individual Interviews (Data Collection Approach 1)

In-depth, structured interviews with open-ended questions was the instrument used to

capture the participants' experiences and attitudes about teaching students with disabilities in the

inclusion classroom environment. Semistructured interviews enable scholars to clarify a

participant's response for enhanced confirmability (Johnson et al., 2020). Human science

research requires developing guiding interview questions, conducting in-depth, semistructured

interviews focused on the topic of study, and conducting follow-up participant interviews if necessary (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews provided rich, detailed information of the participants' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching in inclusive classrooms. Upon agreeing to participate, the interviewees scheduled their interviews at convenient dates and times. Each interview occurred with video conferencing via Zoom or Microsoft Teams and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviewees consented to video recording for verbatim transcription.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background, career, and training opportunities through your current position. (SQ1)

2. What are your perceptions of your teaching abilities regarding educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

3. Please describe the benefits of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

4. Please describe the challenges of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

5. Please describe a typical day in the inclusion classroom environment. (SQ1)

6. How do you feel about teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ2)

7. Please describe how teacher preparation courses prepared you to teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. (SQ2)

8. Please describe the professional development or training opportunities that prepared you to teach students with disabilities (mild and moderate) in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

9. Please describe how a student with mild disabilities can academically, behaviorally, and socially succeed in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

10. Please describe how a student with moderate disabilities can academically, behaviorally, and socially succeed in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

11. What are some challenges you have experienced as a general education teacher in the inclusion classroom environment?

12. Why do you continue serving in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

13. If there are challenges with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, how do you suggest addressing them? (SQ1)

14. How can administrators support your role as a general education teacher to better educate students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (CRQ)

15. What professional development and training prepared you to work with students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

16. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with disabilities? (SQ1)

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The digitally recorded individual interviews underwent verbatim transcription for accurate and effective data analysis. I compared the transcripts to the recordings for accuracy and integrity, and the participants verified the transcripts. Next, I uploaded the transcripts to a qualitative data analysis software program (NVivo) to identify and examine codes, themes, and contextual categories and subcategories (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Scholars can use computer software to detect coding errors and appraise interrater reliability (Johnson et al., 2020). Upon identifying common categories or themes, a researcher should remove overlapping information and repetitive statements before organizing the data (Moustakas, 1994). If necessary, I scheduled follow-up interviews to address any gaps in the data, such as omitted information or confusing statements. Data saturation occurred when no more categories, themes, or interactions emerged from open coding (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Focus Groups (Data Collection Approach 2)

Focus groups are a meaningful platform for participants to share, dialogue, and discuss contextual information in a group. The focus group questions enabled the participants in this study to engage and collaboratively listen to other teachers. In a phenomenological study, the human science research question "is illuminated through careful, comprehensive descriptions,

vivid and accurate renderings of the experience, rather than measurements, ratings or scores" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 109). This study's focus group occurred with structured, open-ended questions on the participants' thoughts, attitudes, and experiences regarding students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment.

The focus groups participants made meaningful comments as they listened to the other interviewees' responses (Merriam, 2009). A recommended focus group size is four to six persons, with a moderator to facilitate the discussion; thus, this study's focus group included four participants. Before asking questions, I asked for a volunteer to serve as the moderator and remind participants to take turns when speaking (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). An icebreaker activity enabled the participants to feel more comfortable about the interview process. The focus group occurred at a date, place, and time convenient for all participants. I conducted the 45-minute focus group via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interviewees consented to video recording for verbatim transcription. Like the individual interviews, I digitally recorded and transcribed the focus group interview.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please state your name and which school you are associated with, and please describe your role as a general education teacher. (SQ2)

2. What are some successes you have experienced as a general education teacher in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

3. What are some challenges you have experienced as a general education teacher in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

4. Please describe your experience at IEP meetings when placement decisions are discussed and outlined for students with disabilities. (SQ1)

5. What, in your opinion, is the best way to effectively educate students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (CRQ)

6. How would you describe the responsibility of a special education teacher who teaches in the inclusion classroom environment? (CRQ)

7. Please describe your thoughts and feelings when you learned you would teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. environment (SQ2)

8. Please describe your thoughts when addressing the needs of students with disabilities in your lesson plans. (SQ2)

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The digitally recorded focus group underwent verbatim transcription. Observational field notes during focus groups provided an additional layer of anecdotal information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Field notes in transcripts enables a researcher to effectively organize and process the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I uploaded the interview and focus group transcripts to NVivo to identify and examine codes, themes, and contextual categories and subcategories. The identification of common themes from the focus group showed the participants' efficacy in the inclusive classroom environment. Subcategory organization occurred after identifying the themes, categories, and clustered meanings (Moustakas, 1994).

Document Analysis (Data Collection Approach 3)

Document analysis was a means of obtaining additional information related to the classroom environment. Nontechnical data sources provide useful information to assess concept relevance and interpret the data (Moustakas, 1994). The participants in this study shared their lesson plans. An effective lesson plan should include accommodations and learning activities for all students and a timeline for executing the lesson while meeting the curricular standards.

Document Analysis Data Analysis Plan

Physical or personal documents provide information regarding participants' perceptions. Personal documents (e.g., lesson plans) can indicate the participants' beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes regarding a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Artifacts are a form of communication with the participants. A methodologist can analyze documents for a thorough critique (Johnson et al., 2020), and teachers can support each student's holistic learning needs by differentiating their

lessons. Successful inclusion involves the use of inclusion practices in lesson planning (Muñoz Martínez & Porter, 2020). Ideally, efficient lesson plans reflect each student's strengths and needs.

A teacher's most significant accomplishment in an inclusion classroom is fusing the general education curricular content with each learner's instructional needs (Muñoz Martínez & Porter, 2020). Teachers' attitudes and motivation could impact their involvement in a lesson study cycle, lesson planning, and professional growth opportunities (Jhang, 2020). Sawyer et al. (2020) affirmed that engagement in lesson planning impacts teachers' growth, understanding, and motivation.

This study included collecting 4 weeks of each participant's lesson plans. The lesson plans underwent review to determine if they included various strategies to reach all learners' needs and accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities. Teachers who proactively design lesson plans to accommodate each learner's needs can create a diverse and inclusive learning environment for all students to perform to the best of their abilities. Educators who design diverse activities for all students during lesson planning can successfully teach within the inclusion classroom environment (Muñoz Martínez & Porter, 2020). The lesson plans underwent review for instructional opportunities and accommodations for learners with specialized learning needs.

Data Synthesis

Qualitative researchers synthesize their data findings to strategically identify themes and codes, make sense of the data, and transmit necessary ideas into organized platforms (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In this transcendental phenomenological study, I analyzed the findings from

the individual interviews, focus group, and artifacts collectively for common themes. The

synthesis of the data into themes or codes included six steps in the following order:

1. Get a sense of the whole compilation of findings.

2. Pick one document, consider the underlying meaning, and write it down in the margin in two or three words.

3. Begin the process of coding, identifying the text segments placing a bracket around them and assign a code word that accurately describes the meaning of the text segment.

4. After coding an entire text (or document), make a list of code words.

5. Take the list, go back to the data, and circle specific quotes from participants that support the codes.

6. Reduce the codes to get five or seven themes or descriptions of the setting or participants. (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, pp. 244–245)

Effectively synthesizing all the findings from the data sources enables a researcher to

answer the research questions. The data analysis in this study included NVivo, a software

program for coding, retrieving, and completing data analysis to visualize theory-building

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Scholars can use qualitative analysis software to compare the

data across categories. Theme and code identification occurred in this study to effectively

organize the participants' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding teaching in the inclusion

classroom environment. Holistic interview and document synthesis provided a deeper

understanding of the findings.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability,

and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, qualitative data analysis software

provided the opportunity to organize and analyze the codes and themes to establish

trustworthiness. Three data sources (i.e., individual interviews, a focus group, and documents)

provided meaningful information to address the research questions. Data triangulation showed

the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). An important consideration

for trustworthiness in qualitative research is "how the researcher can be a valid and reliable

primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 2009). Researchers should

consider six core trustworthiness principles: what they believe, how they know what they know,

what is worth studying, what is worth knowing, which questions to ask, and how to engage in the

research (Peterson, 2019).

Credibility

Credibility indicates the truthfulness of a study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An

easy-to-read results section shows the findings' readability and credibility (O'Sullivan &

Jefferson, 2020). An essential consideration of credibility is that the researcher is an active

participant in the research process. The methodologist in the data analysis process can enhance

credibility by diminishing the effects of researcher bias (Peterson, 2019). In this study, the

researcher was an expert who evaluated the data analysis to ensure the findings' credibility.

Transferability

Transferability 'relates to research findings applicable in other settings or contexts

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research should have rich, vivid details for transferability

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009) and generalizability to other contexts. Transferable

results require rich data on the "participants, context, data gathering, and data analysis"

(Peterson, 2019, p. 155). A researcher defines the conditions of a study; therefore, there is no

guarantee for replicating the findings in subsequent research. This study's findings showed

transferability despite a specific sample of participants and locations by providing necessary

information regarding each participant and the data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth,

2018).

Dependability

A qualitative study has dependability with consistent and repeatable findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study presented the procedures used to explore the teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Dependability requires reporting the process fully for the reader to indicate adherence to proper research practices (Johnson et al., 2020). My committee members reviewed the procedures outlined,ensured I followed the necessary steps, and determined the findings' repeatability. The committee members also examined the data collection process to ensure the data supported the findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the neutrality or the extent to which the respondents, not researcher bias, motivation, or interest, shaped the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity, triangulation, and confirmability audits are techniques for determining confirmability. Reflexivity is the researcher's ability to identify personal experiences and how they impacted the "interpretation of the phenomenon" (O'Sullivan & Jefferson, 2020, p. 5). In this study, I documented my influences and background information regarding the phenomenon in the Researcher's Role Section. Confirmability indicates a researcher's influence on the data findings and results via peer review, triangulation, and member checking (Johnson et al., 2020). Triangulation and member checking contributed to this study's confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers must adhere to ethical considerations to ensure integrity. I obtained the necessary approval from the Liberty University IRB and the participants. The participants received and signed consent forms outlining their voluntary participation and right to withdraw at any time. The study remained confidential due to participant pseudonyms. The participants

received a detailed explanation of the steps to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand elementary general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Transcendental phenomenology is a means of illuminating a phenomenon without eliminating personal bias (Peoples, 2020). Chapter 3 presented the transcendental phenomenological method and how it aligned with the study's central research question and two subquestions. The research questions required exploring the participants' shared experiences regarding inclusive classrooms. The chapter presented the study's setting and participants.

Chapter 3 also included the researcher's positionality within the interpretive framework. There were discussions of the philosophical ontological, epistemological, axiological assumptions and the researcher's role. Individual interviews, a focus group, and documents provided the data for analysis. The data collection and analysis methods aligned with phenomenological principles, and the study aligned with the foundational criteria of trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability). Chapter 3 concluded with the importance of ethical considerations and ethical integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis. This chapter contains the findings,', including participant descriptions, with the data presented as narrative themes, charts, graphs, tables, or models. The findings included outlier data. The findings according to the research questions precede before the chapter conclusion.

The purpose of the individual interviews and the focus group was to explore the participants' experiences of teaching students with disabilities in elementary inclusion classrooms. This chapter presents the qualitative data analysis from individual interviews with 10 participants and a focus group with four participants. After a description of the participants and the themes that emerged during interview and focus group data analysis is the qualitative data analysis of the lesson plans.

Ten general education teachers recruited via criterion sampling participated in the individual interviews. Participation criteria were general education teachers with at least 1 year of teaching experience in elementary inclusion classrooms, a valid teaching license in Georgia, and a graduate degree. The participant recruitment occurred via a social media post on Facebook. All 10 participants met the study criteria (see Table 1).

Table 1

Individual Interviews

Participant	Years taught	Highest degree earned	Content area/certifications	Grade level
P01	18	Education Specialist	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	2nd
P02	18	Master's	General Education– Elementary Education PK–5 Special Education	2nd
P03	8	Master's	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	Currently an EIP teacher
P04	14+	Master's	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	2nd
P05	17+	Education Specialist	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	5th
P06	7+	Education Specialist	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	3rd
P07	13+	Doctorate	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	3rd
P08	15+	Education Specialist	General Education Elementary Education PK–5	1st
P09	7+	Education Specialist	General Education Teacher– Elementary PK–5 & Special Education	2nd
P10	23+	Master's	General Education Elementary PK–5 & Special Education	4th

Note. EIP = early intervention program

Focus Group Interviews

Participants from two schools engaged in the focus group. The focus group included four participants. Two participants wrote their lesson plans together. See Table 2 for the demographics.

Table 2

Focus Group

Participant	Years taught	Highest degree earned	Content area/ certifications	Grade level
FGP01	18	Education Specialist	School W	General Education Teacher Elementary Education PK–5

Participant	Years taught	Highest degree earned	Content area/ certifications	Grade level
FGP03	8	Master's	School W	General Education Teacher Elementary Education PK–5
FGP04	14+	Master's	School W	General Education Teacher Elementary Education PK–5
FGP05	17+	Education Specialist	School X	General Education Teacher Elementary Education PK–5

Lesson Plans

General education teachers are highly qualified educators who adapt their lesson plans to meet the needs of students with various backgrounds and academic skills. General education teachers work in inclusion classroom environments with students with special needs and create lesson plans to engage the interest of and instruct all learners. In this study, analysis of incidences of code words occurred across lesson plans for four participants from four schools (see Table 3).

Table 3

Incidences of Code Words in Lesson Plans

Codes	Code appearance across lesson plans			
	School W	School X	School Y	School Z
Differentiation	3	0	0	0
Small group	0	0	0	1
Individualized teaching	0	0	0	0
Inclusion	0	0	0	0
Specially designed instruction				
Accommodations	0	0	0	0
Modifications	0	0	0	1
Content adaptations	0	0	0	0
Communication	0	0	0	0
Collaboration	0	0	0	0

Demographics

Participants' educational breadown was 10% with doctoral degrees, 50% with specialist degrees, and 40% with master's degrees (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Educational Background
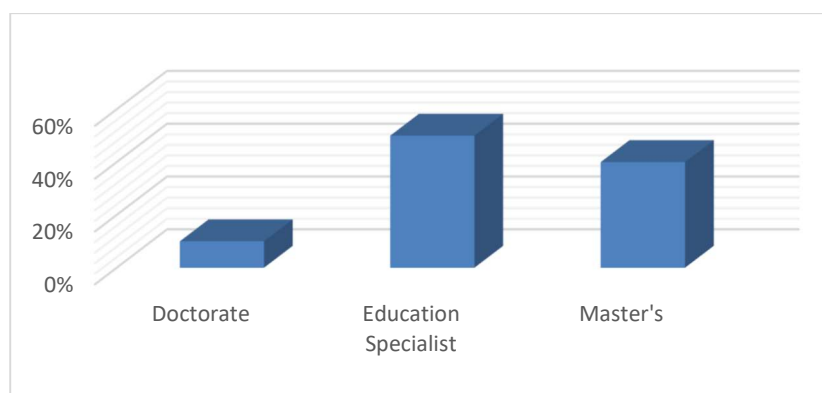
Regarding careers (see Figure 2), one participant was an early intervention program teacher and Multi-Tiered System of Support coordinator and the rest were teachers.

Figure 2

Career Experience

Figure 3 shows the participants' training opportunities. Twenty-nine percent received training on inclusion and coteaching, 15% received professional development, 14% had professional learning communities, and 42% did not have any training opportunities.

Figure 3

Training Opportunities

Legend:
- Training on Inclusion or Co-Teaching
- Professional Development Opportunitites
- PLC's
- Did not have Training

Values shown: 29%, 42%, 15%, 14%

Results

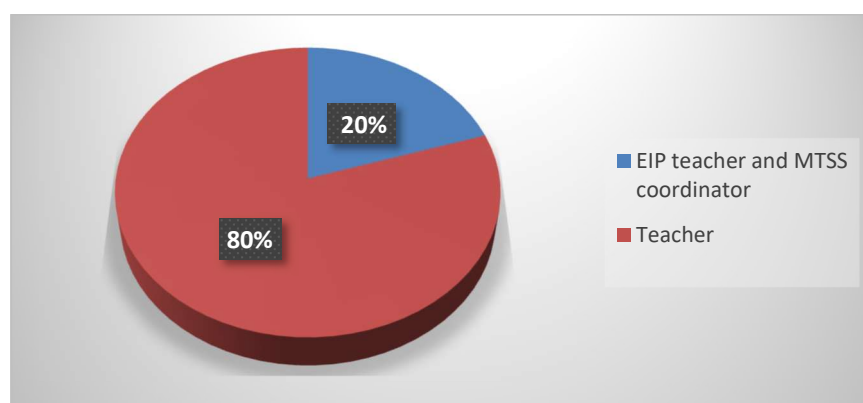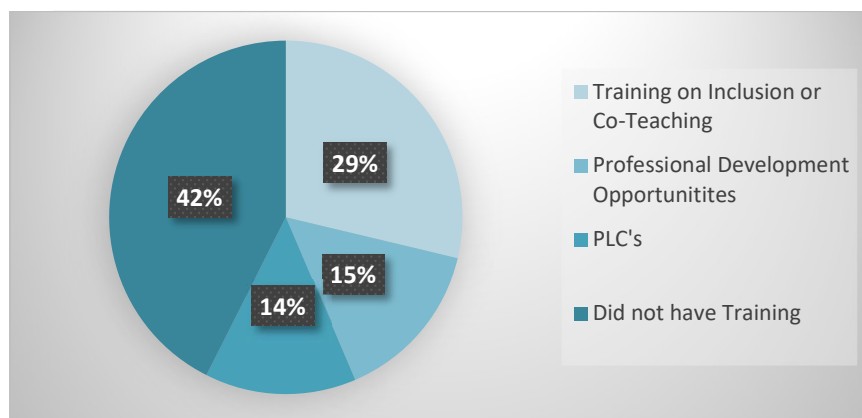The purpose of this research was to explore general education elementary teachers'

perspectives of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. The

study showed the participants' experiences of and perceived efficacy in teaching students with

disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. One central research question and two

subquestions guided the study.

CRC. What are general education elementary teachers' attitudes toward teaching
students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

SQ1. What are general education elementary teachers' experiences toward teaching
students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

SQ2. What are general education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching
students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

The qualitative data from the interviews underwent thematic analysis with NVivo and the

transcript codes were categorized into relevant themes. Five major themes emerged from the

analysis of the individual interviews, focus group, and documents. The themes were addressing

challenges of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment, addressing benefits

of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment, effectiveness of professional

development or training opportunities, general education teachers' perception of their self-

efficacy, and administrators' support in the inclusion classroom environment (see Table 4)

Table 4

Themes

Theme number	Theme description
1	Addressing challenges of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment
2	Addressing benefits of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment
3	Effectiveness of professional development or training opportunities
4	General education teachers' perception of their self-efficacy
5	Administrators' support in the inclusion classroom environment

Theme 1: Addressing Challenges of Teaching Students With Disabilities in the Inclusion Environment

Theme 1 showed the participants' attitudes toward addressing challenges while teaching

students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom environment. General education teachers are

highly skilled educators who adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of students of

varying abilities and backgrounds. General education teachers work in inclusion classroom

environments that include students with special needs and create lesson plans to engage and

educate all students. These teachers are responsible for assessing student progress and working

with special education teachers to ensure all students receive the support needed to succeed. The

general education teacher' primary goal is to provide an equitable and inclusive learning

environments for all students. The participants reported various ways of addressing challenges.

Need for Collaboration

Inclusion has rewards and challenges in the classroom environment, but determining the

right approach for a particular student can be difficult. The participants highlighted the challenge

of providing all students with resources while catering to their individual needs and abilities. The participants also conveyed the challenge of finding the time to collaborate with special education teachers to meet all students' needs. The participants described teamwork as important in addressing the challenges of teaching students. For example, P01 suggested allowing general education teachers and special education teachers to work together for longer hours, saying, "We do a lot of training for how the inclusion room should look, but then we don't have enough time [to implement the training]." Thus, the participants reported a neglect of individual student needs and progress.

Inclusion teachers who cannot observe students and their needs in the classroom might not provide the best education possible. The participants highlighted the importance of teachers being in tune with their students and understanding their needs to provide them the best possible education. P03 stressed the need for a special education teacher in every inclusive classroom. The participant stated, "You know, there [are] two teachers. The general education teacher can be with a group, and the special education teacher can be with students with disabilities and can work more closely with them using different strategies."

Three participants described collaboration as effective in addressing challenges with teaching. P07 suggested finding solutions by talking to all stakeholders, including students, parents, and special education teachers, whereas P08 recommended assembling a team to assess teachers' perceptions and find the right strategies. P08 said,

> I think there [should be] a team that can help [and] can listen to what teachers are
>
> explaining about what's happening and work from there, rather than saying, "Just try
>
> these blanket strategies." [Blanket strategies] may not work for all students. Educators

have to find the right strategy, and I think we have to realize we're in this together as

stakeholders.

P09 discussed that the importance of coteachers working together:

I know I can previously speak to [collaboration]. Previously, I worked with a wonderful

coteacher. [I have] also worked with a not-so-wonderful coteacher. I think it's your job as

a team to come forward as a team. When there are discrepancies or issues in the

classroom, [the team should] be on the same page.

General education and special education teachers who collaborate can better support and

foster the performance of students with disabilities. P01 argued that students with disabilities can

academically, behaviorally, and socially succeed when special education and general education

teachers work together. P01 said,

I really think [it] goes back to the special education teacher and the general education

teacher working really closely together and providing the services and support that

students with disabilities need. Unfortunately, [collaboration] will be hard if they are not

able to work together because the special education teacher is being pulled out of the

room for whatever reason.

Lack of Support, Resources, and Staff

The participants reported a lack of support, resources, and staff as a challenge to teaching

students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. P05 described the lack of

resources aschallenging; . other participants identified the lack of special education teachers as

an issue. P01 noted that general education teachers struggled when they did not "have the special

education teacher in the room to help [them] understand the way a student with disability is

learning and the things that they need." Therefore, the special education teachers' absence was a

challenge in the inclusion classroom environment. P04 discussed the difficulties with lacking

staff and sharing a special education teacher and paraprofessional in a day-on/day-off scenario.

The participants reported a lack of support as one of the main challenges with teaching in

the inclusion classroom. The lack of support caused behavior problems and difficulties with class

management. Behavioral occurrences in the inclusion classroom resulted in slow academic

progress and a challenging environment for students with and without disabilities. Thus, the

participants struggled to foster students' motivation and confidence and meet their various needs.

The participants emphasized that the struggling students did not often receive the attention and

support they required, causing inequality.

The participants said the lack of the necessary attention and support in the inclusion

classroom was compounded by the insufficient resources and lack of trained staff. The variety of

students in the classroom also caused teachers to lose focus, negatively affecting all learners. The

participants stated the limited special education staff in inclusion classrooms caused teachers to

feel overwhelmed and unsupported. The findings showed the complexities and challenges of

inclusion classrooms and the need for increased support and resources to ensure all students

receive the best education possible.

Working With All Students in the Inclusion Classroom Environment

P10 stated that the exceptionalities of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom

can be a challenge "because they aren't given instruction necessarily on their level.

Differentiation is there, but sometimes in an inclusion classroom, it's not enough for the students

with disabilities." The code word *differentiation* occurred three times in the lesson plans for one

of the four schools. All the participants described giving equal attention to all students as a major

challenge in inclusion classrooms. P01 said, "Sometimes I feel like [students] don't get as much

attention as they need." Additional challenges also occurred due to academic and behavioral components.

Meeting the needs of students with mixed abilities in an inclusion classroom was challenging due to their varied needs. P02 stated, "The challenge is that you've already got other students [with differentiated abilities and needs]." The rigor of the work was another issue, especially when striving to keep all students focused and on task. The participants said the challenge of students' behavior and social issues in the inclusion classroom sometimes felt insurmountable. P10 stressed the importance of providing students more educational choices in the inclusion classroom environment, saying, "I'm so passionate for kids' education, and I want them to be successful. We need to give students with disabilities and their parents more choices of environments to be educated in." The participant suggested offering students various career and educational paths.

Theme 2: Addressing Benefits of Teaching Students With Disabilities in the Inclusion Environment

Theme 2 included the participants' perspectives on the benefits of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom. P01 identified the primary benefit of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom was the inclusion itself. P01 said, "[The inclusion classroom is] pretty much what the word *inclusion* signifies, so students with disabilities do not feel isolated [or] different." Thus, the inclusion classroom environment is a means of including students with disabilities in the general education setting.

Opportunities for Collaborative Learning for All Students

The participants agreed that a benefit of the inclusion classroom was access to multiple teachers at a time. P03 said,

One of the greatest things I can say is having extra bodies with extra support in the inclusion classroom environment. [The extra support] benefits students with and without disabilities because every student's needs can be met, regardless of a student's ability.

Two participants suggested that the inclusion classroom environment provides peer learning opportunities for all students. P05 said that students learn more from other students, as peers can sometimes share and explain concepts to each other differently than teachers for enhanced understanding. Additionally, P05 considered peer learning highly beneficial and used "peer tutoring [and] working in small groups" to foster active participation. P05 told students to share something that they learned from their classmates.

Students with disabilities can benefit from learning in the inclusion classroom. The inclusion classroom environment is way to build up students with disabilities and create student leaders. Inclusion is the key to making students with disabilities feel valued and included in the learning process. The inclusion classroom environment provides emotional support and a sense of belonging to students with disabilities, reducing the stigma associated with their performance. Inclusion provides opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and growth. Students with disabilities can learn from their peers and grow socially, emotionally, and academically while the other students learn empathy, compassion, and kindness. Inclusion classrooms enable students to bond with their peers and learn from each other. P08 stated that opportunities for peer support provide students with disabilities with "emotional support to positively motivate them to feel like, 'Even though I'm being challenged by this, I'm not singled out because I may not perform as well as other kids.'"

Socialization

Students with disabilities benefit from socialization and an inclusive environment where they do not feel singled out by other students. Three participants considered socialization a major benefit of inclusion classrooms. P05 said, "I may have a student with autism in my class who is positively benefitted from the socialization aspect of inclusion. In a good classroom, you wouldn't recognize who students with disabilities are and the ones who aren't." P04 also noted the benefits of socializing students with disabilities and "exposing [them] to students of different abilities." P09 stated that students can grow from one another and stated, "I think that each person honestly on this earth has a gift, and that gift needs to be shared." P09 indicated that all students can learn and grow from each other socially, emotionally, academically and can increase in empathy, compassion, and kindness. Furthermore, P09 indicated that students with mild disabilities can succeed in inclusion classrooms due to the "positive motivation of their peers and teachers, whether socially, academically or emotionally."

Opportunities for Collaboration With Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers receive training on the delivery of specialized instruction strategies to assist students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. P08 said,

> If children are going to be in an inclusion classroom setting, there should be a teacher who is specialized to work with those students. I don't think a general education teacher should be the lead special education teacher. I think a special education teacher should be the lead teacher.

Some participants enjoyed working with special education teachers and participating in learning opportunities to broaden their knowledge and create an environment where all students can succeed. FGP01 stated,

In the past, when I've taught in the inclusion classroom, a success I witnessed was being able to see the growth in some of the students and being able to learn from my special education teacher about the specific needs of my students.

Likewise, FGP04 said, "The successes I have witnessed in the inclusion classroom environment [have been] watching our children grow."

Individuals with impairments have a mental or physical condition that affects their capacity to study, interact, or perform daily tasks. Students with disabilities can access the general education curriculum with specialized accommodations, modifications, or support programs. The special education teacher's duty is to work with children with disabilities to aid their learning, meet their needs, and assist them in achieving their academic and personal objectives. Special education instructors can provide individualized instruction, help in the general education classroom, and distinct special education classes. Each student with a disability is unique and may require varied support and accommodations. General education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff can collaborate to help students with disabilities thrive in school and attain their full potential. Furthermore, general education teachers provide critical support at IEP meetings. FGP02 described an IEP as the "individual plan for the students and [the] accommodations given to the students."

Understanding Roles, Responsibilities, and Research

The participants emphasized the need to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of educators in the inclusion classroom environment. P04 said, "A couple of years ago, I reached out higher because there was a misunderstanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities. Once roles and responsibilities are clear and once a good teaching schedule is done, [the inclusion classroom] can run wonderfully." Similarly, P09 said, "It's really important for coteachers to

work together as a team and come forward when there are discrepancies or issues in the classrooms to be on the same page." Educators should understand each team member's roles and responsibilities and research and find new ways of to improve the outcomes of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. P03 suggested educators "do [their] own research [and] find other strategies and resources to allow students to be successful. [General education teachers should be] willing to continue to learn. We have to learn new things just as we expect from the students."

The participants also described the roles of special education teachers. FGP03 said that special education teachers and general education teachers share the same responsibilities in the inclusion classroom: "Everything should be shared as it is a co-teaching situation, and no one teacher is greater than the other." FGP02 stated, "The special education teacher should be a go-to resource person when it comes to handling the needs of [students with disabilities]." Furthermore, PGP04 described the main responsibility of special education teachers as "modify[ing] the strategies learned to assist the exceptional learner while planning with the general education teacher so they can be on the same page."

Consulting Regarding Lesson Plans

General education teachers in inclusion classroom environments adapt their lesson plans to meet the differentiated learning needs of all learners. The goal of a general education teacher in the inclusion classroom environment is to provide an equitable learning setting for all learners. P07 planned lessons to meet every student's needs and said, "I believe that all of my students can learn; they may not learn at the same pace. However, I plan my lessons to make sure that they can understand, to meet the needs of each learner in my class." Likewise, FGP02 stated,

I tend to give them the same activities that we are doing in class so that they are exposed to grade level content, in addition to ensuring that I find the appropriate accommodations with assignments so that they can be successful.

FGP02 also researched resources helpful for students.

Love of Teaching Students

Many participants continued to teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment because they enjoyed doing so. P03 reported enjoying the coteaching setting. Likewise, P08 enjoyed the moment "when I'm teaching and the kids actually relate to something that we did before to something we are doing now." Similarly, P05 said, "I continue serving. I am compassionate about what I do, and I just feel like everyone deserves to learn." P10 stated, "I love special education, so I will always want to have them in my class. That's why I got my degree in it, I thought it was important for me to learn both sides."

It is important for educators to create a positive learning enriching learning environment in order for learners to perform to their optimal levels. P03 indicated that teachers need to eliminate triggers and distractions that "play a major role in [students'] behavior problems" and provide modifications in advance for students with academic struggles. However, P07 said, "I don't treat my students differently. I have high expectations for all of them." Similarly, P06 stressed thinking outside the box, using various strategies and resources, and building a positive learning environment to promote optimal learning for all students.

Theme 3: Effectiveness of Professional Development or Training Opportunities

Professional development can enable educators to learn current and successful educational practices for the classroom setting. Further, training and professional development can affect educators' attitudes in the inclusion environment. P04 emphasized the need for more

training and said, "I think general education teachers do need more training or courses offered toward special education." P08 said, "[General education teachers] need to be specially trained to deal with every situation. I don't feel like general education teachers can take care of the needs of a student with different needs." The participants felt that general education teachers need more training on the skills and knowledge needed to assist students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms. Similarly, P05 said, "Teachers should be offered training from time to time to keep them abreast regarding current strategies [to improve student performance]."

The participants described the training and support provided to teachers working in inclusion classrooms. The participants emphasized that teachers need proper training and knowledge in various areas, such as managing physical aggression, providing emotional support, developing effective strategies, differentiating instruction, and supporting diverse student needs. All the participants stated that teachers need proper training and support to work in inclusion classrooms and ensure the best outcomes for all students. P02 noted that professional development and training could provide teachers with more skills in working with diverse learners.

Learning Through Experience

In addition to learning strategies, the participants felt that real-world experience and on-the-job training contributed to their preparation to meet students' diverse needs. P03 said,

Most of my knowledge came through experience. I've attended a few personal

professional developments, but I never felt they played a major role in how I ran the class

or taught different things. It was mostly just learning through experience and learning the

abilities of the students that truly helped me.

Likewise, P04 stated, "I don't feel like I've been trained to do this. I'm learning as I work."

Similarly, P07 said, "The classes I took gave me knowledge I did not have, but the working knowledge, combined with what I learned in the classroom, has really helped me and taught me."

On the other hand, P01 had not attended training specific to students with disabilities. P01 stated, "I've been to trainings and professional development on how to work in the inclusion classroom setting; however, as far as teaching special education students, I haven't had training in that." Several participants considered their teacher preparation courses inadequate preparation for modern classroom realities and students. Nevertheless, the participants believed that good teaching skills and support from colleagues enabled teachers to adapt and grow in their roles as educators.

Theme 4: General Education Teachers' Perception of Their Self-Efficacy

The participants shared their perceived self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Some participants felt overwhelmed, some reported hesitation, and others thought they would receive additional assistance while teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. FGP04 said,

I just want to do my best. When I first was given the task of being an inclusion teacher, I may have been somewhat hesitant, as it was my early years. But as time progressed, I have become more confident.

Similarly, FGP03 reported expecting extra help and another teacher in the class to coteach. Educators' self-efficacy and attitudes can affect students' performance in the inclusion classroom environment.

Teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions regarding teaching students with disabilities can impact their teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. FGP01 said, "I was extremely overwhelmed because I felt like I did not have the experience to work with special needs

students." The coteaching relationship with special education teachers can also impact general education teachers' self-efficacy. P09 said, "It's really important for the coteachers to work together."

Some participants felt confident in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. P07 said, "I enjoyed teaching all of my students. If I need to talk to them about their work or behavior, I'm always willing to help them. I enjoy working with all of them, so I don't categorize them." Similarly, P09 stated, "I have a good perception of [the inclusion classroom], and I love being in the inclusion classroom setting." P10 stated, "It has always been my heart, so I just love them." P02 said, "Teaching a student with disabilities and teaching a student without disabilities is the same idea—it's just that you teach them differently."

Teacher efficacy affects instructional practices and policies, classroom management, student motivation and engagement, attitudes about the inclusion classroom, and cooperation of parents and school employees (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). P03 stated that a good coteaching team and inclusion team provide a beneficial classroom setting for all students. Moreover, P02 said, "What fun would it be to have students that all learn the same way? That would be monotonous and boring."

Theme 5: Administrators' Support in the Inclusion Classroom Environment

The participants focused on different aspects of school administration and its role in education. Empathetic administrators help teachers feel more supported; provide sufficient time for trainings and implementation; advocate for consistent support, not just on certain days but all week; and express concern about pulling special education teachers to cover other classrooms, which can disadvantage students and prevent them from receiving the services they need. One

participant stated, "If you have a student whose behavior is distracting other students, that's when you need support from administration."

The participants indicated that administrators should have hands-on education and spend time in classrooms to understand teachers' challenges. P09 said, "If we had a more hands-on administration, they would be able to better support us by seeing what we go through on a daily basis. I feel like that would help develop their empathy and compassion [for teachers]." Likewise, P03 suggested administrators create a plan to provide teachers with consistent support. P08 said administrators should "try to get more school social work support." P08 further stated, "I don't think the children who are having academic challenges are the ones who [do] not do well. Actually, it's the [students] who have severe behavioral and emotional challenges who are going to bring a challenge to new or veteran teachers." One participant noted that teachers struggled with grading if administrators tell them not to fail students in special education. Overall, the participants discussed administrators' role, highlighting the need for collaboration, empathetic and consistent support, resources, and professional development for teachers in the inclusion classroom environment.

Research Question Responses

This section addresses the central research question and subquestions. The answers aligned with the five themes and the central question and subquestions. Each answer contains relevant quotes from the individual interviews and the focus group.

Central Research Question

What are general education elementary teachers' attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? The primary goal of a general education teacher in the inclusion classroom environment is to provide an equitable and optimal learning

environment for all students. A general education teacher is a highly skilled professional who adapts teaching methods to meet the needs of students with varying abilities and backgrounds. The participants in this study addressed the challenges of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom setting. The participants stressed the need for collaboration between general education and special education teachers to support students, noting the burden of dealing with classroom challenges alone. For example, P07 said, "If I'm having challenges, I can work things out or figure it out with the student. I will also meet with the special education teacher and other stakeholders." Thus, teachers and students benefit from a collaborative partnership in the inclusion classroom environment.

The participants discussed the challenges of a lack of support, resources, and staff when teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. P01 described the challenge of not having a "special education teacher in the room to help you understand the way a student with disability is learning and the things that they need." All the participants identified giving equal attention to all students as a major challenge in the inclusion classroom environment. P02 stated, "The challenge is that you've already got other students [with differentiated abilities and needs]."

The participants discussed the challenges and benefits of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom setting. The benefits included increased socialization and acceptance for all students, collaborative teaching opportunities, consultation regarding lesson plans, and the love of teaching all students. Another benefit was access to multiple teachers. P03 said, "One of the greatest things I can say is having extra bodies with extra support in the inclusion classroom environment." Socialization and peer acceptance are major benefits of the inclusion classroom. Similarly, P09 said, "I feel as everyone grows from one another."

The participants emphasized the need to outline the roles and responsibilities of the necessary stakeholders to create a successful inclusion classroom setting. P04 said, "Once the roles and responsibilities are clear, and once a good teaching schedule is done, it can run wonderfully." General education teachers in inclusion school environments create lesson plans that address all learners' needs. P07 remarked, "I believe all of my students can learn. They may not learn at the same pace [and] they may not all learn the same thing, but they can all benefit." Lastly, many participants enjoyed teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. P10 stated, "I just love special education; that's why I got my degree in it. I thought it was important for me to learn both sides." Similarly, P06 said,

> Teachers should be prepared to be ready, be patient, be consistent, [and] be fair. You just want to continue working with them, you want to scaffold, you want to differentiate, you want to praise, you want to celebrate the small wins, and you want to give incentives.

Subquestion 1

What are general education teachers' experiences toward teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? The participants discussed the importance of adaptation and growth through experience. The participants believed that good teaching skills and support from colleagues could enable teachers to adapt and grow in their role as educators. The teachers perceived experience and on-the-job training as the most valuable for their preparation but also saw the importance of professional development in learning strategies and exceptionalities. The participants felt that teachers needed more training to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively support students with disabilities. The participants also discussed the need for teachers to have proper training and knowledge in managing physical aggression, providing emotional support, developing effective strategies, differentiating

instruction, and supporting diverse student needs. P03 stated, "Most of my knowledge, came through experience. I've attended a few personal professional development [opportunities], but I never felt that they actually played a major role in how I ran the class or taught different things." Furthermore, P08 noted that teachers who work with students in the inclusion classroom environment "need specialized training to deal with every situation that may come up."

Subquestion 2

What are general education teachers' perception of their self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? Self-efficacy can influence educators' ability to influence their students' performance. Educators with high self-efficacy feel confident regarding their teaching abilities. On the other hand, educators with low self-efficacy feel less confident in their teaching abilities. Many participants in this study had high perceived self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities. For example, P02 said, "Teaching a student with disabilities and teaching a student without disabilities is the same idea—you just do them differently." Likewise, P09 loved teaching students with disabilities. P03 said, "In regards to my teaching abilities in the inclusion classroom environment, I think my greatest ability is being flexible, being patient, and quickly noticing where the disconnect is with the foundational skills [of students with disabilities]." Some participants initially hesitated to teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, indicating their self-efficacy. FGP04 stated, "I just want to do my best. When I was first given the task of being an inclusion teacher, I may have been somewhat hesitant, as it was my earlier years." Similarly, FGP01 said, "My feelings were that I was overwhelmed. I felt like I didn't have the experience to work with special needs students."

Summary

This chapter included the purpose statement, research questions, data analysis and findings. After the analysis of qualitative interview data for themes in NVivo, the transcripts underwent classification and organization into relevant thematic areas. Examining the participants' responses resulted in five emergent themes: the challenges of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment, the benefits of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment, the effectiveness of professional development or training opportunities, general education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy, and administrators' support in the inclusion classroom environment. The participants shared their perspectives on the benefits and challenges of teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. Further, the participants outlined the importance of professional development and administrative support in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom setting. Overall, the themes provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the participants' attitudes, experiences, and efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore elementary general education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. The phenomenological research approach was the means of exploring how the participants related to the phenomenon. Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of individuals. In this study, elementary school teachers described their lived experiences of educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. This final chapter presents an interpretation of the findings, policy and practice implications, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The findings of this study connected with the empirical and theoretical literature from Chapter 2. This section presented the study's findings based on the themes, literature, and theoretical framework showing the participants' attitudes and efficacy regarding educating students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. Overall, the participants provided rich and complex knowledge of their experiences instructing learners with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. This study's themes and findings provided a thorough and multifaceted response to the research questions.

Interpretation of Findings

This section includes a brief summary of the thematic findings addressed in Chapter 4, followed by the interpretations. The themes were the challenges of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion environment, the benefits of teaching students with disabilities in the

inclusion environment, the effectiveness of professional development or training opportunities, general education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy, and administrators' support in the inclusion classroom environment.

Summary of Thematic Findings

A thematic analysis occurred for the qualitative interview and focus group data with NVivo. The transcript categories underwent coding and organization according to the main themes. Theme 1 focused on the participants' responses on the challenges of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. The subthemes were the need for collaboration; a lack of support, resources, and staff; and the need to work with all students in the inclusion classroom environment. Theme 2 addressed the participants' perceptions of the benefits of teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. The theme had the following subthemes: providing collaborative learning opportunities for all students, socializing, collaborating with special education teachers, understanding roles and responsibilities, consulting regarding lesson plans, and loving teaching students.

Theme 3 showed how professional development or training opportunities affected the participants' attitudes about teaching in the inclusion environment, and the subtheme was learning through experience. Theme 4 presented the participants' perceived self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Lastly, Theme 5 showed how the participants focused on different aspects of school administration and its role in education, with the subthemes of the importance of empathetic school administrators and how they help teachers feel more supported, provide sufficient time for trainings and implementation, and advocate for consistent support.

Addressing Challenges of Teaching Students with Disabilities in the Inclusion Environment. The primary subject in the individual interview and focus group was the instruction and support provided to teachers working in inclusion classrooms. The participants noted that teachers should have training and practical knowledge in various fields, including managing physical aggression, providing emotional support, developing effective strategies, differentiating instruction, and accommodating students' various needs. P02 stated, "The challenge is that you've already got other students [with differentiated abilities and needs]." The participants also described the rigor of the work, especially when striving to keep all students focused and on task. This finding aligned with Parey (2021), who found that one of the greatest challenges for general educators in the inclusion classroom was effectively meeting the needs of all diverse learners.

McKinlay et al. (2022) found that successful inclusion occurred when educational stakeholders had supportive, acceptable, and tolerant attitudes. Teacher efficacy affects instructional practices and policies, classroom management, student motivation and engagement, and attitudes about the inclusion classroom (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). Educators who lead an inclusion classroom environment should remain receptive to and use differentiated instructional practices, engage in continuous collaborative activities, and improve their teaching skills (Ginja & Chen, 2021).

The participants also discussed the challenge of the absence of support in the classroom. The lack of support resulted in behavior issues and difficult to manage the class. Educators may struggle to support students' drive and confidence while attending to their diverse needs. P01 discussed the challenge of lacking a "special education teacher in the room to help you understand the way a student with disability is learning and the things that they need." Academic

and behavioral deficits can impact teachers' and students' acceptance of students with exceptionalities in the inclusion classroom environment. Ginevra et al. (2021) found that educators had negative attitudes toward students with exceptionalities who displayed behavioral challenges and were less inclined to want them in their classes.

The participants considered it unfair that struggling students frequently did not get the help and attention they required. P01 said, "Sometimes, I feel like they don't get as much attention as they need." Additional challenges occur with academic and behavioral components and a lack of resources and professionals with the expertise to support students. Chatzigeorgiadou and Barouta (2022) suggested that general education teachers are likelier to welcome students with disabilities if they have effective educational resources and a second teacher for support. General education teachers in inclusion classrooms need additional support from all educational stakeholders, including administrators, school social workers, counselors, and special education staff. Many participants in this study noted that a difficult grading system did not enable teachers to fail students in special education. The lack of support exacerbated difficulties with the grading system. The response-to-intervention approach to identify students needing special education is difficult because implementation can take an entire school year.

Learning occurs in an inclusion classroom environment when special and general education teachers collaboratively plan and have ample opportunities to develop positive relationships (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Thus, general and special education teachers need time to work together. Training for teachers can enable them to gain knowledge and skills to help students with and without disabilities to perform their best. Mieghem et al. (2020) considered training where teachers learn about their students' needs in inclusion classrooms more effective than generalized training. Further, educators need more resources, from classroom

supplies to educational materials, to support students with behavioral challenges. P05 noted that the lack of resources for students with disabilities was a challenge in the inclusion classroom environment.

Teachers need support and resources. Supporters of continued support have expressed concerns about reassigning special education teachers to cover other classrooms, claiming that doing so could prevent students from receiving the services they need. The participants emphasized the value of teamwork, professional development, and resources and the importance of addressing staff shortages and practical education. General education teachers who receive professional development and training are better equipped to assist students with and without disabilities (Mieghem et al., 2020).

Addressing Benefits of Teaching Students With Disabilities in the Inclusion Environment. In an inclusion classroom, students with disabilities do not feel singled out can socialize with their peers. Inclusion classrooms enable students to develop relationships with classmates and benefit from one another. Cooperative learning and peer support can have beneficial outcomes for all learners in the inclusion classroom environment. Successful inclusion methods include effective educational practices for all students, professional development, supportive administration, and positive peer support opportunities for learners with disabilities (Finkelstein et al., 2021). Inclusion is the key to ensuring that students with disabilities feel respected and included in the learning process.

Inclusion classrooms provide emotional support and a sense of community to students with exceptionalities, minimizing the stigma associated with academic success. Students with disabilities can gain from student-led cooperative learning through peer tutoring by learning from one another and participating more actively in class. P05 considered peer learning beneficial for

active participation and said, "In my classroom, students do a lot of peer tutoring, working in small groups." Inclusion presents opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and development. Peer attitudes affect peer acceptance of students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment (Edwards et al., 2019). Völlinger and Supanc (2020) indicated that supportive peer groups have academically enriched, socially enhanced, and improved behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Similarly, McKinlay et al. (2022) suggested that successful inclusion can result in improved academic outcomes and enhanced social opportunities. Students with disabilities can learn from their peers and develop socially, emotionally, and academically while the other students learn empathy, compassion, and kindness. P08 stated that peer support provides "emotional support to positively motivate [students with disabilities]."

Teachers and students benefit from having multiple teachers in the inclusion classroom. Students should have more time and content modification choices. P10 stressed the importance of providing students more educational choices, saying, "I'm so passionate for kids' education, and I want them to be successful. We need to give students with disabilities and their parents more choices of environments to be educated in." The participant suggested offering students various career and educational paths.

The provision of social services to special education students involves coordination between all necessary stakeholders. Educational stakeholders (e.g., general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, therapists, counselors, school social workers, and parents) can work together proactively to guarantee that every child has the best learning experience possible. Educational stakeholders who effectively collaborate have positive attitudes toward the inclusion classroom. Moreover, teachers with high self-efficacy feel confident in their

ability to implement inclusion practices, adapt instruction to meet learners' varied needs, engage in ongoing collaboration with the educational team, and execute the school's policy consistently (Kiel et al., 2020; Metsala & Harkins, 2020).

The participants' responses also showed the paradox of inclusivity in education. Educators should address each student in the inclusion classroom environment by providing the needed materials and considering their individual needs and skills. Students receiving special education in an inclusion classroom can be challenging and rewarding to teach. Supporting students with disabilities requires close cooperation between general education and special education teachers. Supportive educational reforms, such as differentiation and team teaching, positively impact the inclusion classroom (Krischler et al., 2019). Special and general education teachers should consider accountability procedures and effective collaboration techniques when planning for and monitoring students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms (Muñoz Martínez & Porter, 2020). FGP01 stated, "In the past, when I've taught in the inclusion classroom, some successes I witnessed was being able to see the growth in some of the students and being able to learn from my special education teacher about the specific needs of my students."

General education teachers in the inclusion classroom seek to educate a diverse group of learners and work collaboratively with educational team members to find solutions. An educationally stimulating inclusion classroom includes socially engaging and positive experiences for all learners and teachers sensitive to their students' needs who provide the best education possible. Ginevra et al. (2021) found that educators were highly positive about inclusion when there are effective special and general education teacher training opportunities. Paraeducators also need more support for working with students, especially those with emotional and behavioral challenges.

A highly skilled general education teacher adapts lesson plans to meet the needs of students with various backgrounds and academic levels. General education teachers work in inclusion classrooms with students with special needs, creating lesson plans to interest and instruct all students. P07 planned lessons to meet every student's needs and said, "I believe that all of my students can learn. They may not learn at the same pace, [but] I plan my lessons to make sure that they can understand. [I seek] to meet the needs of each learner in my class." General education teachers should work closely with special education teachers and evaluate students' progress to ensure all children get the help they need to succeed.

The goal of a general education teacher is to provide an equitable and inclusive classroom environment for all students. Lindacher (2020) noted that general education teachers deliver instruction and are content experts in the inclusion classroom environment. Students with disabilities could require specialized accommodations, adaptations, or support services to access the general education curriculum.

Special education teachers work with children with specialized needs to support their learning, address their needs, and assist them in achieving their academic and personal objectives. In the inclusion classroom environment, special education teachers modify instructional tasks, provide accommodations for instructional assignments, and deliver differentiated instruction to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). Every student with a disability is unique and requires varying degrees of assistance and adjustments. General education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff can collaborate to assist students with specialized learning needs to succeed in school and reach their full potential. Reina et al. (2021) noted that authentic self-efficacy affects how educators adapt to learning methods, set objectives, and accept the varied needs of all

learners in the classroom. P06 stressed the importance of using various strategies and resources and building a positive learning environment to promote optimal learning for all students.

Effectiveness of Professional Development or Training Opportunities. The participants said they had received minimal training in inclusion practices. Although the participants received training in the physical components of an inclusion classroom, they did not learn how to educate or engage with students. The participants indicated that general and special education teachers need more training. P04 said, "I think general education teachers do need more training or courses offered toward special education." Training in educating students with disabilities should focus on scaffolding and customizing education.

General education teachers lack training in dealing with emotional, social, and behavioral concerns, as indicated by many participants. Gilmour (2018) found that general education teachers believed they had inadequate training or lacked the necessary skills to meet the vast needs of specialized learners in the inclusion classroom environment. General education teachers may receive training in altering educational programming for students with academic challenges. However, teachers in inclusion classrooms need proper training and assistance to ensure the best outcomes for all students. P05 said, "Teachers should be offered training from time to time to keep them abreast regarding current strategies." Moberg et al. (2020) stated general education teachers with the necessary training might feel more prepared to educate students with disabilities.

The participants reported that teacher preparatory courses did not provide the necessary tools to manage special education students and inclusion classrooms. Instead, the participants acquired most of their knowledge through practice and practical instruction. Alsarawi and Sukonthaman (2021) suggested that researchers explore the self-efficacy of inclusion education

in the preparatory courses for preservice teachers. Some participants indicated the need for more flexibility and methods in the preservice curriculum for better preparation for the challenges faced in the classroom. Despite these challenges, some participants felt their teacher preparation courses contributed to their ability to develop strategies and comprehend the characteristics and exceptionalities of students in special education.

Teacher preparation courses should include curricular strategies and practices so teachers know of the competencies and challenges they will face when transitioning into the inclusion classroom environment. The participants also felt that experience contributed to their readiness to teach in inclusion classrooms. P03 said, "Most of my knowledge came through experience." In addition, some participants considered their teacher preparatory courses inadequate preparation for the realities of modern classrooms due to significant changes in student and parent demands over time.

The educational barriers to the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom include the lack of practical experience, training, and funds (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). The participants in this study knew about the advantages of adaptation and experience-based learning. They believed that instructors can advance and acclimate to their responsibilities with the aid of their peers and efficient teaching methods. This study's findings suggest that teachers struggle in inclusion classrooms and their introductory teacher preparatory courses may not address the issues in inclusion classrooms. Although the participants noted the value of teacher preparatory courses for learning teaching strategies and identifying exceptionalities, they considered experience and on-the-job training more beneficial for their preparation. Educators who use evidence-based inclusion practices can provide an educationally stimulating classroom environment for all learners (Mieghem et al., 2020).

General Education Teachers' Perception of Their Self-Efficacy. The participants provided a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. The findings addressed the central question and gave insight into the participants' beliefs, feelings, and motivations. A successful general education teacher fosters relationships with students, sees improvements in performance, learns from other general education teachers, broadens knowledge, and creates an environment where all children can succeed. P07 said, "I enjoyed teaching all of my students. If I need to talk to them about their work or behavior, I'm always willing to help them, and I enjoy working with all of them, so I don't categorize them." Teachers with high self-efficacy feel confident in their ability to implement successful inclusion practices, adapt instruction to meet learners' varied needs, engage in ongoing collaboration with the educational team, and execute the school's policy consistently (Kiel et al., 2020; Metsala & Harkins, 2020).

The participants had varying perceptions of educating students with disabilities. Some felt overwhelmed, others felt nervous, some wanted additional help, and others felt neutral. FGP01 said, "I was extremely overwhelmed because I felt like I did not have the experience to work with special needs students." The participants developed strategies to improve their perspective of teaching students with disabilities, including allowing more flexibility, getting to know students to understand where they are and their needs, and providing repetition. The participants noted that special education students receiving social services required coordination between all necessary educational stakeholders. Insufficient special education staff might cause inclusion classroom instructors to feel overworked and unsupported. Furthermore, instructors who lack professional development could feel unsupported and ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of an inclusion education environment. Likewise, teachers with low self-efficacy

might not feel motivated or encouraged to educate students with diverse learning needs (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Teachers with low self-efficacy tend not to reflect on their pedagogy and instructional practices to improve academic outcomes for all learners (Moradkhani & Haghi., 2017; Woodcock & Faith, 2021).

Administration Support in the Inclusion Classroom Environment. According to the participants, teachers need more instruction to gain the skills and knowledge needed to serve students with impairments. The participants discussed the various aspects of school administration and its effects on education. The participating teachers described the importance of school administrators supporting teachers and of teachers in special education and general education cooperating. In addition, the participants noted that teachers need sufficient time for training and execution. Inclusion methods include successful educational practices for all students, professional development, supportive administration, and positive peer support opportunities for learners with disabilities (Finkelstein et al., 2021). DeVault (2021) concluded that special education training, administrative support, and the teacher's perception of educating students with exceptionalities contributed to positive attitudes toward the inclusion classroom environment.

Administrators should spend more time in classrooms and obtain hands-on training to understand the challenges instructors face due to staff shortages, particularly of paraeducators. However, the participants suggested that not much can be done about staff shortages. P03 recommended administrators create a plan to provide teachers with consistent support. Administrators could also attend the inclusion classroom environment to observe, learn, make recommendations, and support inclusion and general education teachers.

Implications for Policy or Practice

This section includes recommendations for various stakeholders, such as policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents. The section includes the following subsections: implications for policy and implications for practice.

Implications for Policy

The IDEA (1975) gave children with impairments the right to FAPE, a right reinforced in the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (2004). Per federal law, special education is specially created teaching provided without charge to parents to suit the individual needs of students with exceptional needs. Special education includes related programs and transition services for children and young adults 16 and older. All children with disabilities have four fundamental rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act. The law contains two safeguards to ensure these rights.

IDEA-Related Rights.

- Children with disabilities (from birth to 22) who meet the requirements for special education are entitled to a public education suitable for their needs and provided without charge to their family under the FAPE provision.

- Each public organization must ensure that, to the greatest degree possible and in the LRE, children with disabilities receive an education alongside peers without disabilities. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of a child with a disability from the regular educational environment can occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The local education agency can also provide appropriate assistance and services for pupils with disabilities as near their home schools as possible.

- Supplementary aids and services (related services): For each child to receive an education with peers without disabilities to the greatest extent possible, they must receive aids, services, and other supports in regular classes, other educational settings, and extracurricular and nonacademic settings.

- Evaluation: An assessment should occur to ascertain the child's needs in every area connected to any potential disability, but only with the parent or guardian's informed consent. There must be a reassessment at least every 3 years to establish continued

eligibility and service needs after the initial evaluation and determination of eligibility for special education.

- Legal procedural safeguards include a description of due process so parents can approve available special education programs after receiving adequate information. In addition, due process provides a method for settling disputes.

- IEP: Each student with a disability must have an IEP created at least once a year. One or both of the child's parents or a guardian, a special education teacher or provider, a general education teacher, the people who evaluated the child (if relevant), and someone with knowledge of the general curriculum and the availability of resources (administrator) make up the team to create the plan. Every time it makes sense, the student is urged to go to the IEP meeting. At the discretion of the local education agency or parent/guardian, additional people who know anything about the student or have specialized knowledge about them might also attend. If the student receives instruction from more than one general education instructor, one teacher may be chosen to represent the other teachers (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2000).

Implications for Practice

The participants' responses showed their attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. The participants also discussed their experiences with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. However, the participants might not have spoken directly about their perceptions of their self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section addresses the study's theoretical and empirical implications. A successful inclusion classroom environment requires general and special education instructors to work together to carry out their assigned tasks and duties (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). The literature has focused on teachers' perspectives on inclusion in school environments. Negative and positive attitudes can affect all students' success in the inclusion classroom, regardless of impairment. In the inclusion classroom, attitudes affect the learning environment and educational possibilities provided to students with exceptionalities (Ginja & Chen, 2021). The theory of self-efficacy was the theoretical framework used in this study to understand the participants' attitudes

toward instructing children with special needs in the inclusion classroom environment. Inclusion involves integrating students from special education and general education into a general education classroom (Edwards et al., 2019). Teachers in general and special education have differing opinions about working with students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. The fundamental goal of a general education teacher is to provide an equitable classroom environment for all students. General education teachers are experts regarding curricular content delivery. The participants in this study described the role of the special education teacher as working with children with special needs to support and address their learning and assist them in achieving their academic and personal objectives. Special education teachers are experts in delivering specialized instruction for learners with exceptionalities. The participants described special education teachers as responsible for handling the behavioral challenges of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms due to their knowledge and skill set. Moreover, teachers base their attitudes toward inclusion on their experience, competence, and resources and pupils' global needs (Olsson et al., 2020).

How educators treat students with impairments can affect students' success in an inclusive environment (Nilsen, 2020). Numerous rules and legislation require that special and regular education educators teach students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). Per educational policy, all teachers must meet their students' academic demands, and students with unique learning needs should learn in inclusion classrooms to the extent practicable. Teachers who apply evidence-based inclusion methods can provide a vibrant learning environment for all students (Mieghem et al., 2020).

The literature has shown the advantages and disadvantages of including students with impairments in the classroom. This study filled a knowledge gap regarding general education

teachers' views on the inclusion classroom environment. Additionally, this study found that socialization was a main benefit for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom setting. The participants felt that inclusionary practices enabled students with disabilities to feel valued and included in the learning process. Also, the participants believed that inclusive classrooms enabled students to bond with their peers and learn from each other. However, some participants described the lack of support and trained staff as challenges to educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment.

The inclusion classroom environment has increased in popularity over the last 10 years. In 2018, more than 60% of all children with disabilities attended general education classes with students without impairments for at least 80% of the school day (Gilmour, 2018). Although PreK–12 instructors educate students with diverse learning needs in inclusion classrooms, many consider their training insufficient to address the needs of learners with exceptionalities (Manrique et al., 2019; Van Steen & Wilson, 2020; Yu & Park, 2020). Somma (2020) noted that educators who receive professional development and training feel confident in their ability to teach in the inclusion classroom. Self-efficacy can also impact a teacher's job satisfaction (Hopman et al., 2018). This study's participants understood the importance of adapting and growing through experience. The participants felt their perspectives of teaching in the inclusion classroom would improve if they received training and resources to effectively teach students with disabilities. The participating teachers noted that the lack of professional development opportunities made them feel ill-equipped to handle the challenges of the inclusion classroom, which affected their teaching performance.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations are the potential weaknesses of a study out of the researcher's control. This study's limitations include the participants' gender, age, and ethnicity; teacher experience; teacher knowledge of inclusion programs; teachers who refused to participate; and a lack of clear instructional guidelines for program delivery. There are limitations in the teachers' demographics for each data source: individual interviews, the focus group, and lesson plan review. Future scholars can address the study's limitations, recommendations, and implications.

Individual Interviews. Nine participants were women, and only one was male. Low et al. (2020) found that female teachers had more positive attitudes about the inclusion classroom environment than male teachers due to women's more emotional nature. Perrin et al. (2021) attributed teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion classroom to gender, finding that women had more favorable attitudes toward inclusion than men.A limitation of this study is the inclusion of the lesson plans. Many participants were not teaching in the inclusion classroom environment during the study; therefore, the analysis could not include those participants' lesson plans.

All participants had at least 7 years of teaching experience. Teaching experience affects educators' attitudes toward teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. Teaching experience and age can impact attitude, as younger educators or those with less teaching experience have more favorable views of inclusion. Teacher self-efficacy could also impact attitudes, as educators with more confidence in their teaching abilities tend to have more favorable attitudes toward inclusion. The results of this study could have been influenced by the experiences shaped by the teachers' perception of inclusionary practices in their district.

Administrators, special education teaches, paraeducators, and district personnel were not part of this study; therefore, their perspectives remain unknown.

Focus Group. The focus group's limitations include experiences, training, and program delivery in the same school. Although the participants' responses appeared cohesive, some teachers had more to say, resulting in greater differences in the answers to the questions. This limitation could have resulted from the participants' different school types, grade levels, subject areas, and experiences.

Lesson Plan Analysis. Analyzing the lesson plans in this study was difficult. In one case, three teachers collaborated on a lesson plan. The lesson plan format also differed by school or district. One school did not require the teacher to outline any modifications for the special education teachers; therefore, these lesson plans did not present any information on accommodations for students with disabilities. Two schools had different terminology and no explanation for modifications; therefore, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing the lesson plans was unsuccessful. Lesson delivery and evaluation types differed across subject areas. The analysis did not include all participants' lesson plans, as some were not teaching in the inclusion classroom environment during the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are purposeful decisions to limit or define the study's boundaries. The delimitations in this study were the inclusion criteria to participate. Delimitations are aspects of the study that the researcher can control, such as the participant's age, experience, and other characteristics. The study was delimited to all qualifying teachers of different ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds. The teachers could opt to participate. All participants had at least 1 year of experience teaching in the elementary inclusion classroom environment. The sampling approach

was criterion sampling, which involves intentionally selecting participants who meet predetermined criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling elicited elementary educators with a valid teaching license and a graduate degree who had taught in the inclusion classroom environment for at least 1 year. The study did not include elementary general education teachers without graduate degrees and thus did not capture these teachers' attitudes regarding educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. Chadwell et al. (2020) found that teachers with advanced degrees felt better prepared to teach students with disabilities. The setting was Georgia.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following are recommendations for future research based on the study's findings, limitations, and delimitations.

1. A recommendation is to conduct a transcendental phenomenological study on special education teachers' attitudes and efficacy regarding students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment. Special education teachers provide specially designed instruction for students with disabilities who learn in the inclusion classroom environment. In this environment, special education teachers modify instructional tasks, provide accommodations for instructional assignments, and deliver differentiated instruction to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). General and special education teachers need frequent opportunities for effective collaboration. Therefore, scholars can contribute to meeting the needs of the students by gaining insight into special education teachers. This study's participants voiced the need for all educational stakeholders to have increased opportunities for professional development and effective collaboration and training to effectively work in the inclusion classroom environment.

2. Researchers could focus on the most effective strategies, training, and professional development opportunities that enable general education teachers to succeed with inclusion. The participants in this study voiced their thoughts on how to effectively teach students with extreme behavioral challenges in the inclusion classroom environment. The participants noted that teachers need proper training and knowledge in various areas, such as managing physical aggression, providing emotional support, developing effective strategies, differentiating instruction, and supporting diverse student needs. The participants indicated that teachers working in inclusion classrooms need proper training and support to ensure the best outcomes for all students.

3. A study on the attitudes and efficacy of general educators with dual certification in special education could show their unique perspectives of educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Special education teachers modify instructional tasks, provide accommodations for instructional assignments, and deliver differentiated instruction to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities (Woodcock & Faith, 2021). Special educators deliver specially designed instruction, whereas general educators are content pedagogical experts. An educator with dual certification could have the unique experience of both skill sets in the inclusion classroom environment. A general education teacher should be competent in five areas: "instructional practices, organizational practices, social/emotional/behavioral practices, determining progress and collaboration teamwork" (Finkelstein et al., 2021, p. 239). These areas enable educators to promote an effective and evidence-based inclusion classroom environment.

4. Scholars could study the shared lived experiences of students without disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. Research on the perceptions of students without disabilities and their ability to interact, socialize, and learn with their peers with disabilities could show the benefits and challenges of the inclusion classroom environment. The participants described socialization as important for students with disabilities, noting the shared the benefits of an inclusive environment where students with disabilities do not feel singled out by others. A study that includes the attitudes and perceptions of students without disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment could enable stakeholders to improve the experiences of all learners. Kozleski et al. (2021) found that students with and without disabilities formed positive peer partnerships and bonds beyond academic lessons when encouraged by educators in the general education classroom environment.

5. Scholars should not analyze lessons plans. Lesson plans, even those from the same district, may vary in effectiveness and quality. The study could have had more effective triangulation with individual interviews, transcripts, and journaling. It was not possible to coordinate the findings among the three areas of interviews, focus groups, and lesson plans due to the sparsities and inconsistencies within the lesson plans. Each area of the research should be a standalone study.

Conclusion

Methods and experiences can influence teachers' attitudes toward an inclusion classroom environment. The relevance of inclusion classroom education and instructor attitudes regarding the success of students with disabilities is indisputable. This study was an in-depth exploration of teachers' attitudes toward inclusion learning environments. The study included a historical, sociological, and theoretical background summary to address educators' concerns with teaching pupils with special needs in the inclusion classroom environment. Next, the study presented

problem and purpose statements on teacher attitudes toward students with exceptionalities in the inclusion classroom environment. The goal of the study and the research question was to explore the attitudes and effectiveness of general and special education teachers.

In an inclusion classroom environment, teachers' performance could affect how students with and without special needs behave (Edwards et al., 2019). Teachers and paraprofessionals could benefit from this study's findings by learning teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion classroom environment. Special and general education teachers could develop positive perspectives on inclusion if teacher preparation programs provide informative coursework and helpful fieldwork. Additionally, preservice programs could implement evidence-based instructional techniques to benefit children with and without disabilities. The findings of the research should be beneficial to IEP team members, general and inclusion classroom teachers, and school officials.

Due to these academic challenges, teachers might feel concerned about the supports students in special education receive in elementary inclusion classrooms (Kuyuni et al., 2020; Lübke et al., 2019; Salvolainen et al., 2020). Teacher attitudes could impact the successful integration of students with disabilities into inclusion classrooms. Edwards et al. (2019) indicated the need for the fullest possible inclusion of students with and without disabilities in regular classrooms. Teachers should provide rigorous academic experiences, regardless of students' preferred learning styles. Yu (2019) found that teachers' views about the inclusion classroom could impact students' academic achievement. According to Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017), how teachers see their responsibilities regarding children with special needs could affect student performance in an inclusion classroom environment. This study presented the shared lived experiences of educators in the inclusion classroom environment, and the findings

contributed to the literature on the benefits and challenges of teaching in the inclusion classroom environment. The study provided a rich understanding of general education teachers' attitudes, experiences, and efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background, career, and training opportunities through your current position. (SQ1)

2. What are your perceptions of your teaching abilities as it relates to educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

3. Please describe the benefits of having students with disabilities being taught in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

4. Please describe the challenges of having students with disabilities being taught in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

5. Please describe a typical day in the inclusion classroom environment. (SQ1)

6. How do you feel about teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ2)

7. Please describe how teacher preparation courses taken prepared you with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. (SQ2)

8. Please describe the professional development or training opportunities that prepared you to teach students with disabilities (mild and moderate) in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

9. Please describe how a student with mild disabilities can be academically, behaviorally, and socially successful in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

10. Please describe how a student with moderate disabilities can be academically, behaviorally, and socially successful in the inclusion classroom environment. (CRQ)

11. What are some challenges you have experienced as a general education teacher within the inclusion classroom environment?

12. Why do you continue serving in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

13. If there are challenges with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment, how do you suggest those challenges can be appropriately addressed? (SQ1)

14. How can administrators support your role as a general education teacher to better educate students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (CRQ)

15. What professional development and training have you had that prepared you to work with students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

16. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with disabilities that we have not discussed? (SQ1)

Appendix B

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Please state your name and which school you are associated with, and please describe your role as a general education teacher. (SQ2)

2. What are some successes you have experienced as a general education teacher within the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

3. What are some challenges you have experienced as a general education teacher within the inclusion classroom environment? (SQ1)

4. Please describe your experience at IEP meetings when placement decisions are discussed and outlined for students with disabilities. (SQ1)

5. What, in your opinion, is the best way to effectively educate students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment? (CRQ)

6. How would you describe the responsibility of a special education teacher who teaches in the inclusion classroom environment? (CRQ)

7. Please describe the thoughts and feelings you experienced when you learned you would be teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. (SQ2)

8. Please describe your thoughts when addressing the needs of students with disabilities in your lesson plans. (SQ2)

Appendix C

Screening Questions for Research Participants

Your Name:
Contact Phone Number:
Email Address:

1. Have you taught (or are you currently teaching) students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom setting as a general education teacher at the elementary school level?
Yes or No

2. Do you hold a valid teaching license in Georgia?
Yes or No

3. Do you hold at least a graduate degree?
Yes or No

Appendix D

Recruitment – Social Media Facebook

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to explore the lived experiences elementary-level general education teachers have teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. To participate, you must be a general education teacher that teaches (or who has taught) in the inclusion classroom environment at the elementary school level, hold a valid teaching license in Georgia, and hold a graduate degree. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an individual digitally recorded interview (45-60 minutes) via MS Teams. Participants will also be asked to participate in a digitally recorded focus group (45-60 minutes) via MS Teams, provide 4 prior weeks of lesson plans (within the current school term), and review recorded interview transcripts. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ to schedule an interview. Participants will be provided with informed consent prior to participating. Participants will receive a $40.00 gas card as compensation.

Appendix E

Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study Regarding Teachers' Attitudes and Efficacy Toward Students with Disabilities in an Inclusion Classroom Environment

Principal Investigator: Kimberly L. Edwards, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must have taught or are currently teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment as a general education teacher at the elementary school level, hold a valid teaching certificate in Georgia and hold at least a graduate degree. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the attitudes and efficacy of elementary-level general education teachers that teach students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in one digitally recorded individual interview via Microsoft Teams concerning your attitudes and efficacy of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. This interview will be recorded and should last 45-60 minutes, but pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality. Participants will have the option to have the camera off during the interview if preferred.
2. Participate in a focus group with other general education elementary-level teachers that teach students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment (or have taught students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment). The focus group will be digitally recorded via Microsoft Teams. The focus group will be recorded and should last 45-60 minutes, but pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality. Participants will have the option to have the camera off during the focus group if preferred.
3. Submit 4 prior weeks of lesson plans (within the current school term) to explore the usage of adaptions, strategies, and accommodations in planning for students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. The lesson plans will need to be returned to me (at least one week after the focus group).
4. Review the transcription of the interviews to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include identifying the successes and barriers that general education teachers have with educating students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. The results of the study may provide a platform for providing professional development opportunities or inservice trainings for educational team members. Participation in this study could bring positive change of practices, attitudes, and experiences of teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment. While your participation may have potential benefits to education and society as a whole, you may not receive any direct benefits from your participation.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Individual interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer with password protected files. After three years of the publication of the results, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee the study team will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the individual interview, focus group interview, 4 prior weeks of lesson plan submission (within the current school term), and review of the interview transcription, each participant will receive a $40.00 gas card that will be mailed to your home address. Any participant who chooses to withdraw from the study after beginning but before completing all study procedures will receive a $15.00 Amazon gift card.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you (apart from focus group data) will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kimberly L. Edwards. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ███████ and email ██████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Janet Deck, at ███████.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and video record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix F

Questions for Member Checking Interview

1. Is the transcript about your lived experiences with teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom environment complete?

2. Does the analysis accurately describe your attitudes and efficacy toward teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?

3. Is there anything that I misinterpreted?

4. Is there anything else that has not been included that would further explain your attitudes and efficacy with teaching students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom environment?