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Differences between Regular and Special Education Teachers
on Beliefs, Pedagogical, and Professional Knowledge & Skills

Ani Awakimian El-Hajj

A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Social & Behavioral Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in
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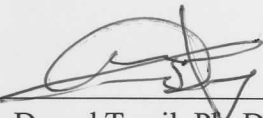
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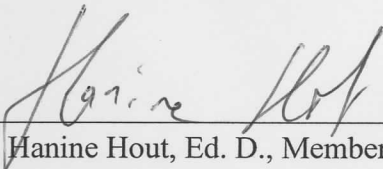
To my husband, Raymona, for his love, care and support

Ani Awakimian El-Hajj

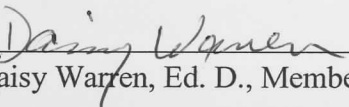
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Abstract

The present study investigated differences between the regular and the special education teachers using a self-analysis Questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as a tool for collecting data from three groups(N=120): The “regular group” which is the regular education teacher; the “regular-mixed group” which is the regular education teacher who teaches regular and special needs students in general education class; and the “special education group”. Special and regular education teachers rated 33 statements using “yes”, “no”, or “undecided”. It was hypothesized that the regular education teacher and the special education teacher differ in terms of beliefs about teaching philosophy, pedagogy, and professional knowledge and skills. It is hoped that this study might be a backbone to improve the education and teacher training programs to ensure the teaching of diverse and special needs students in inclusive settings.

Differences between Regular and Special Education Teachers on Beliefs, Pedagogical, and Professional Knowledge & Skills

This paper is a representative of a quantitative and qualitative study of the differences between regular and special education teachers in teaching students with special needs. The study was based on a questionnaire of elementary and middle school teachers, both regular and special educators in Lebanese schools. This section provides important reasons that seem worth studying about teachers and education. The first chapter of this paper presents the background of the study, highlights the problem of the study, represents its importance, and describes an overview of the method used. The chapter ends by specifying the limitations of the study and defining some key terms used.

Background of the Study

Each year the number of students identified as having different disabilities has increased in Lebanese schools. In order to help these students to improve in their primary, middle, or secondary levels, they would need an individual assessment, a focused approach, and special educational services to be provided by professionals based on reliable researches.

The number of students with disabilities has increased since 1975 due to the Lebanese Civil War. In 1982, the number of disabled students was 10,000 and it was looked at as a huge figure. After the Israeli war in Lebanon in year 1990, the number of students with disabilities has increased to 13,000 then to 15,000. As per Lebanon-Educational System article (2001), today we have more than 25,000 special needs students, which are identified as receiving special education services.

Rosenberg, Griffin, Kilgore, and Carpenter (1997) reported the shortage of special education personnel in special education programs. Bergert and Burnette (2001) also reported that 33,000 special education vacancies are filled by none fully certified teachers and 4,000 special educators' job remained empty. Thus, a rising demand for special education teachers has been expected. Due to huge shortages of special educators in the United States, "Children with learning disabilities and other disabilities across the nation are being taught by individuals without training, let alone certification"(Council for Learning Disabilities, 2002, p. 62).

Similarly, many schools in Lebanon have shortage of certified special educators to work with students with learning or other disabilities. According to "No Child Left Behind", an initiative by the U.S. Department of Education, the emphasis was on filling today's vacancies with "highly qualified teachers" rather than filling vacancies with non-qualified teachers (Otto & Arnold 2005; Singer, 1993).

This scenario is projected in Lebanon as well. Even though the shortage of teachers is common in the areas of mathematics, science, bilingual education, and special education, this study is focused on special education. In addition, the idea of special students to be in inclusive settings has been more practiced in Lebanese schools. More than half of the students with disabilities spent around 80% of the day in regular classes. As a result, discovering new ways to support inclusive classes is considered very important (Schwarber, 2006).

The present study aimed to look into the differences between regular and special education teachers. It identified the need for special educators by showing that regular education teachers' skills are not enough to deal with the rising problem of special needs students. It also

found ways to fill in gaps that exist in special education positions as a result of shortage of qualified special educators.

Therefore, through the use of the questionnaire, it is hoped that enough information will be found to support the improvement of teacher education programs and field work experience in Lebanon.

Statement of the Problem

The assumption of who is required to deal with this rising phenomenon, the regular education teacher or the special education teacher, is still debated. In the research of Gloria Ameny-Dixon (2004) on pre-service and alternative certification teaching programs, many public and private schools provided professional trainings for teachers on “what they need to become ready for classrooms with diverse and exceptional students”. The research was done based on the “No Child Left Behind” law of 2001 in the United States. This law ensures that students need to have great teachers to attain their potentials. Another reason for providing alternative certification programs is that modern schools are gradually becoming full of diverse students in terms of academic abilities, such as gifted or learning disability. Therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to be familiar with diverse learners and to apply classroom practices to meet all students’ needs (Ameny-Dixon, 2004).

In the Lebanese educational system, the question is still debated about who is required to deal with the rising problem of teaching students with special needs. The practices that are used in Lebanese schools are of three types. The first type is where special needs students receive educational support in regular education classes by regular education teachers who might, or might not, have enough experience to meet their special educational needs. The second type is

that students receive educational support in a pull-out program from the regular classroom where the special needs student is taught by a special education teacher. The third type is to place the student in the “least restrictive environment”, which means that the student stays in the regular education class, where a special education teacher comes in to give educational support.

The present study was intended to determine whether there is a difference between regular and Special Education teachers on the beliefs about teaching students with disabilities, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills.

Research Hypotheses

The present research attempts to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: To explore the differences between the regular mixed and the special class type of teachers on their beliefs about teaching students with disabilities;

Hypothesis 2: To explore the differences between the regular mixed and special class type of teachers and their pedagogical skills;

Hypothesis 3: To explore the differences between the regular mixed and the special class type of teachers and their professional knowledge and skills.

Purpose of the Present Research

The purpose of the present study was to answer the questions about the difference between regular and special education teacher’s beliefs in teaching, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills. This study used the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards in adapted and modified form to compare regular education teachers and special education teachers. Items that are included in the questionnaire were categorized into three groups: beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills. It included standards such as: *Beliefs of Students’ Individuality, Knowledge of Human Development,*

Adapting Instruction for Individual Needs, Multiple Instructional Strategies, Classroom Motivation and Management Skills, Interpersonal and Communication Skills, Curriculum Modification, Behavior Modification, Alternative Assessment, and Partnerships. In addition, personal qualities were also included, such as: *Patience, Creativity, Organizational skills and Resourceful, Teamwork Skills, Sense of Humor, Handling Stress, and Acceptance.*

The purpose of the present research is to examine the following issues:

1. The extent of differences between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher in terms of beliefs about teaching special needs students;
2. The extend of differences between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher in pedagogical skills;
3. The extent of differences between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher in professional knowledge and skills.

The Significance of the Study

In 1980, Renzulli suggested that the qualities of effective teachers of the gifted and talented students are of a complex combination of many qualities such as knowledge and skills, professional attitudes, teaching approaches and strategies, and personality characteristics.

In a first phase of a study investigating the qualities of effective teachers from the perspective of gifted students, Vialle and Quigley (2000) concluded a survey in Australia about the main characteristics of good teachers, which can be combined into three dimensions: the teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical skills, classroom management style, and their interpersonal qualities. The result of their survey, which was administered to gifted students,

regarded teacher's personal characteristics as essential in teaching, and the teacher's intellectual characteristics and teaching strategies are not linked with their personal characteristics. Students preferred their teachers to have qualities such as understanding, sense of humor, creativity, well organized, and helpfulness a similar study was conducted in the United States on preferences of gifted students for the personal characteristics and intellectual qualities of teachers. Lewis (1982) worked with gifted students in grades three to seven to identify successful characteristics of teachers and found that students agreed on 22 essential lists of teacher characteristics which included creativity, understanding, patience, and honesty.

Gross (1994) studied the importance of changing teacher attitudes of gifted students through in-service teacher training. He saw positive change in the attitudes of teachers towards gifted students after taking a course in gifted education. The importance of this study might be the first of its kind in Lebanon. It was conducted in Lebanese schools with special education programs, to investigate if there is a difference between two types of teachers: the regular and the special education teacher, with respect to *beliefs* about teaching, *pedagogical*, and *professional skills*. This study could be the ground work from which further research could be built upon it. If differences were to be found, the importance of this study will be to verify the importance of special education teachers in schools as resource teachers, first to regular education teachers, and then to parents. Their support, consultation, and training to the regular education teachers as well as parents to use techniques, ways, and strategies to help special needs students and this can be the stepping stone for all students.

Overview of Methodology

This research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative study using a questionnaire that included 33 statements that covered three major variables: Beliefs in teaching, Pedagogical skills, and Professional Knowledge and Skills. The questionnaire was adapted from a manual for teachers (Campbell, 1997).

The questionnaire was hand delivered to ten elementary schools in Lebanon that have special education programs, out of which the principals of three schools declined the participation of their teachers. The sampled population was 120 elementary or middle school regular and special education teachers regardless of their educational background. Three to four questions were omitted in the statistics because of incompleteness.

Definition of Terms

Elementary Teachers: Are individuals who are either fully or partly employed in a school setting to teach regular students how to read, write, and speak from levels one to six. (Boe Erling, Cook Lynne, 2006).

Special Educator: Is a teacher who works with individuals who are identified with learning and behavioral disabilities. They work closely with regular teachers, parents, and administration to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students with learning disabilities. A special educator can be resourceful, meaning: they search for information, materials, and resources from different sources (Brownell & Bishop, 2005).

Students' Individuality: This term refers to students' *physical, social, emotional, and cognitive* development that influence their learning.

Adapting instruction for Individual Needs: The teacher considers individual differences in learning and provides instructional choices that accommodate or adapt to students' needs (INTASC Standard #3, cited in Ameny-Dixon, 2004)

Multiple Instructional Strategies: The teacher uses variety of instructional approaches to help the student understand a lesson and be actively involved in learning (Newman, 2009).

Classroom Motivation and Management Skills: The teacher identifies students' interest and uses ways to increase motivation, encourage classroom interaction, and active involvement in learning (Newman, 2009).

Behavior Modification: A behavioral technique used by many special educators to mold the behavior of students in class such as use of tokens, and merits.

Communication Skills: The teacher makes use of verbal, non- verbal prompts, or the use of media to get students' attention and to promote their interaction in class (Newman, 2009).

Alternative Assessment: The teacher uses different ways of evaluating student progress to check their understanding of the material and to ensure students' intellectual, social, and physical development ((Newman, 2009).

Partnerships: The teacher forms relationships with school colleagues, parents and other professionals to exchange information of knowledge, to get advice, and to assist parents about their child's learning progress and growth (Newman, 2009).

Beliefs: The mental acceptance of and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something. In this study it is used as the value or hope given for the students' learning potential.

Pedagogy: Is the art or profession of teaching procedures, strategies, or techniques used in class.

Individualized Educational Plan: (IEP) is a written plan describing the special education program and/ or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007)

Professional Skills: It is a term given to the teachers' qualification about teaching.

Limitations of Study

The sample of teachers that was selected from different schools considered to be as insufficient (N= 40) per each group of teachers, thus this doesn't represent the population of all teachers in Lebanon. Unfortunately, Lebanon does not have enough schools offering special education programs. The survey was conducted in 7 schools in Lebanon in which 3 out of 10 school principals declined to perform a survey within their schools due to certain reasons. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to all schools with special needs programs in Lebanon.

Although the participants were asked to rate each statement based on their opinion, there will always be a percentage of error in the expected results; or the effect of social desirability factor. This means that may be many of the teachers, who responded to the questionnaire, chose to answer positively so that their lack of knowledge about teaching special needs students will not be evident.

In addition, there were more female than male teachers in the elementary schools that can have effect on the outcome of the study. The author of this research could not include participants from both genders equally.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Great teachers empathize with kids, respect them, and believe that each one has something special that can be built upon.”

Ann Lieberman

In this chapter, you will be introduced to a quick review of special education, its characteristics, and ways to help individuals become special education teachers. It will also cover the critical features of teacher education programs in enhancing special education. This section will also cite from previous research about comparing beliefs, pedagogy, and professional knowledge and skills. The chapter ends with stating the hypothesis of the study.

General Overview of Special Education

Every child requires support from teachers, parents, or friends to learn and gain full development from their experience in school. There are some children who require special attention that are beyond what one might receive in a regular setting. These children experience *language, communicational, academic, emotional, behavioral, or physical problems*. They have educational needs that should be met through *accommodations*, meaning adaptations or modified educational programs, and not through regular teaching. Thus, an educational program needs to be designed by special educators who can identify and plan a *curriculum* based on the child's performance level in a particular subject. These are the students who are identified or determined to receive special needs services in schools. The ministry of education defines those students as “exceptional students” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007).

Requirements to become a Special Education Teacher

Choosing to become a special educator in school, one needs to think of the following. Teaching students with special needs require: *patience, creativity, knowledge about disabilities, and time*. There could be other requirements that one might consider critical in teaching students with special needs, yet these are the most crucial (Wagaman, 2008).

Patience is required because according to Wagaman (2008) students with special needs demand more repetition and reteaching to learn a simple task than students without disability. Hence, a special educator working in the special education class should willingly repeat a concept or skill, rephrase words, and not surrender.

A second important requirement is *creativity*, which is considered necessary in teaching special needs classes. A special education teacher's job is to modify or plan a *curriculum* to help students with special needs easily acquire a new concept or skill. In other words, this is considered as "teaching outside the box". Wagaman (2008) believes that special educators need to be *creative* especially because there is no curriculum to follow. They need to develop a set of lesson plans each year and use different lesson plans with every child, because each student with disability has different learning style, different potential, pace, and an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). That is why understanding about each disability is essential and awareness is required from each special education teacher. For instance, students with Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) need different teaching strategies and modifications than students with a reading disability or mental retardation. Sometimes students with learning disability might have other disabilities such as reading or math disability. Thus, Wagaman thinks of lesson plans or ideas prepared by special education teacher as stored in a "tool box" in which the teacher adds new strategies when needed.

According to Wagaman (2008), special educators differ from regular teachers in many ways. First, teaching special students requires more time than it does to teach regular students.

As a special educator, one needs to carry out the same duties as general teacher such as, *grading, lesson planning, teaching, and parent conferences*. In addition to these requirements, special educators must also keep records of progress evaluation of each special student for the IEP, modify lessons and tests, participate in IEP meetings with parents, and screen students' strengths and weaknesses for special needs services.

In a study done by Stempien and Loeb (2002) and Eichinger (2000, cited in Stempien, 2002) a Stress Survey of Special Educators was used to examine the relation between *satisfaction and job demands*. Teachers of students with *emotional and behavioral disabilities* described feeling incapable of coping with the job demands such as dealing with students' problems, work overload, and tension to do tasks on time. This resulted in teachers feeling *unsuccessful, lowered self-confidence, frustration, exhausted, insufficiently prepared and job dissatisfaction* (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe 1978; Weiskopf, 1980, cited in Stempien & Loeb, 2002). The above research stated that there is a negative correlation found between levels of *stress* and *job satisfaction* among special education teachers (Stempien & Loeb 2002). Moreover, usually too much "paper work", change of laws, students' behavioral and emotional problems made thousands of Special Education Teachers (SET) respond to such frustration by moving into either regular education or leaving the job (Nougaret, Scruggs, Mastropeiri, 2005, Sack, 1999). Many teachers who described feeling lowered job satisfaction and leaving their career were among *less experienced* special education teachers (Stempien & Loeb 2002; Singer, 1993; Shreeve et al., 1986).

In a study of "Personal and Demographic Characteristics of Special Education Teacher" (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006), questions were raised concerning the reason for having such a huge number of shortages among special education teachers, and whether this shortage is due to students' disability characteristics or particular profession standards and duties (Olivarez &

Arnold, 2006). All these findings manifested that some special education teachers who faced difficulty in adapting to work challenges were among *least experienced* special educators, and that part of the special educators' job is to have continuous learning and development.

Characteristics of Special Education Teachers

The teaching profession in special education requires individuals who have certain characteristics that include: *good-humored, organization skills, accepting, creative, even-tempered, self-assured, intuitive, optimistic, and dedicated.*

According to Joy Hutton (2009), although special needs students differ from students without disabilities, they can still express feelings by smiling, laughing, or sharing a funny thought. Hence, the special educator's role is to use a sense of humor to refresh and stimulate learning.

The special education class should be physically and academically "structured", that is, arranged and prepared in a way to promote learning. The classroom arrangements should accommodate all special students' needs. In addition, the teacher is supposed to post the schedule of the day and activities in details using picture cues to help the student read and understand the next task. The special student will gradually get used to the transition of daily routine activities. Moreover, special education teachers also need to constantly appreciate students' effort and work regardless of their potential. They need to provide special attention or understanding to the uniqueness of each child, encourage them to try their best, and help them move a step forward. In other words, special education teachers need to value and accept each child the way they are and treat them as individuals (Hutton, 2009).

The sole most effective characteristics of special education teachers are to always find new and interesting ways to demonstrate and present lessons in special classes, as well as

prepare creative ideas to promote learning and enrich the classroom environment (Hutton, 2009).

Above all, *behavior management* is considered to be one of the most essential part in changing the unacceptable behavior of a student. From the first day of school, special students need to know and understand that there are rules to abide by and breaking any rule has its consequences. Teaching students with *academic, behavioral, social* or *emotional* problems need special education teachers who are consistent, firm, yet supportive at the same time (Hutton, 2009).

Furthermore, special education teachers should know how to respond to certain crisis. They need to be *even-tempered* and deal with any situation calmly. They need to have common sense and solve conflicts smoothly. Finally, they need to be *confident* or *self-assured* in their decisions, because if special needs students sense ambiguity then the teacher might easily lose control. Hence, special education teachers need to take the lead and be strong in their decisions.

Being an *intuitive* person is another important characteristic of the special education teachers. Working with special needs students especially with *communication, listening*, or *auditory discrimination* problems takes someone who is a good observant and involved with students. This is because special needs students lack the ability to express their concerns and feelings. It is the special education teachers' role to identify students' needs and address them right away (Hutton, 2009).

As a final point, it is essential for special education teachers to give hope and encouragement to special needs students to complete a simple task even when it becomes long and frustrating. They also need to be optimistic, and celebrate every attempt or success that special needs students may accomplish. After all, they are individuals who are dedicated and equipped to work with special needs students. They are able to identify the students' strengths

and weaknesses, work with the students for a period of time, help to build on their skills, and meet their needs (Hutton, 2009).

Does Teacher Education Programs Produce Better Special Educators?

Most Universities in Lebanon such as the American University of Beirut (AUB), Haigazian University, and the Lebanese American University (LAU) offer programs in general and special education to prepare potential teachers in educating young learners. There is constant urge to prepare professional special education teachers who are enthusiastic and have the ability to teach students with special needs. The teaching qualification requires a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education with teaching certification in general or special education. The advocates of Teacher Education reported that there's a positive relation found between teacher certification status and student success (Brownell, Ross, Colon, McCallum, 2005).

A study of classroom observation on fully certified Special Education Teachers (SET) found that certified SET were more successful in planning and providing lessons, creating, and encouraging classroom atmosphere more than partly or not certified teachers. In addition, it was determined that students in the classes of certified teachers did much better on Standardized Tests in reading and language than those who studied with non-certified teachers (Nougaret, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2005).

In the United Arab Emirates, a quickly developing Gulf Country, the university provides educational courses in teacher preparation to improve the services offered to special needs students. A study by Gaad (2004) examined how cultural, societal, and professional factors influenced pre-service teachers in choosing special education as a profession. The study found that the special education teachers' status is a main factor in looking for a career. Therefore, the cultural or social values and beliefs about special needs students might influence pre-service teachers in selecting special education as a profession. According to a pre-service teacher: "I

was hesitant whether or not to take that way as a profession, well, if every university student declined not to specialize in that field those kids would end up outnumbered with no one to care for them no matter what society or group of people say about the status of special educators, or students with disabilities” (Gaad, 2004, p. 6).

Therefore, there is an urgent need of professional special education teachers to work with special needs students. If the majority of college students refuse to select special education as a career then special students will be left as unsupported. However, besides the influence of social values on career selection, it is important to have at the university level requirements to prepare student teachers to work with special needs students. When college students enroll in education courses, they are required to cover a range of educational courses as well as field-work experiences that train them to reflect on their knowledge and practice teaching. Thus, teacher education programs would be effective if opportunities were created for the student teachers to apply their course-based knowledge in real classroom settings. Many studies found that teacher education programs can change teacher’s beliefs about teaching philosophy and instructional methods that can influence students’ achievement. However, additional studies are needed to support the fact whether a change in teachers’ beliefs influence classroom practices (Brownell, Ross, Colon, McCallum, 2005).

In general, special education requires a teacher training program to cover required course objectives in *Knowledge of Characteristics of Disabilities, Identification, Referral, Use of Instructional Methods, Strategies, Writing an Individualized Education Plan, Inclusion, and Designing a program for Exceptional Children*. These course objectives will provide knowledge about different learning styles and prepare student teachers to identify and apply effective ways in teaching students with special needs. Therefore, acquiring basic information on exceptional children is not enough; additional skills, strategies, and practices are mandatory

to become effective and professional special education teachers. In other words, it requires a lifelong professional growth and development (Gaad, 2004).

Special education teachers need to continuously develop professionally in teaching children with exceptionalities. Teachers who have chances to develop professional skills are more likely to feel *enthusiastic* and capable of facilitating student learning. On the other hand, lack of knowledge and experience in teaching special students might lead to the feeling of inactive. This is considered a dangerous act because it might make the students' situation even worse (Brownell & Smith, 1993).

Critical Feature of Teacher Preparation programs

Even though a strong relation was found between teacher education programs, classroom instructional methods, and students' outcomes, further research is still required to determine which program is more practical and effective in teacher preparation. Studies in special education teacher preparation are limited and in need of further research. Yet, important features of teacher preparation were identified by many faculty of special education. They require evaluation of the student teacher at the end of each program through direct or indirect assessments. The evaluation can be done either by observing actual teaching, or, by the use of ratings to determine both the effectiveness of the program and the quality of the student teacher (Brownell, Ross, Colon, McCallum, 2005).

A comparison with Regular Education Teacher

A study was done by Brownell (2005) to define effective practices in teacher education programs on regular and special education teachers. He included features that demonstrate 15 teacher education programs. Teacher educators and other professionals identified common features found between regular and special education teacher programs: both programs focus on the importance of theory and practice, field work experience, and response to the students' need

(Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum 2005). However, special education places more meaning on students' learning disabilities and use of variety of strategies to produce change in students' learning. Furthermore, general education programs focus more on teaching *content knowledge* and *skills* such as reading, mathematics, and science, whereas special education programs focus more on the use of different *instructional methods* or *strategies* for each disability, assessing students' progress, and writing an *Individualized Education Plan* (Brownell, 2005; Nowak, 2003).

Two theorists, Ashton and Webb (1986) extended Bandura's social learning definition of teacher self-efficacy to include two dimensions: the *general teaching efficacy*, the beliefs that teaching can impact students' achievement despite certain variables; and the *personal teaching efficacy*, the beliefs that teaching abilities can bring about student learning.

To conclude, although regular education teachers need to acquire basic information about exceptional children, additional skills, strategies, and practices are necessary to become effective educators and to promote change in students' learning and behavior. In other words, special education requires individual instructions and individualized plans. Thus, this study hypothesized that there are differences between regular and special education teachers in terms of beliefs about teaching, pedagogical skills, and professional knowledge and skills. Hopefully this study will help to provide answers to most of the questions raised and encourage fully qualified special education teachers to pursue their unique characteristics.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter places emphasis on the methodology and research design implemented to conduct this study. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research was done to collect the data. The chapter ends with specifying the statistical analysis of the results.

Participants

A questionnaire was given to general and special education teachers from seven Lebanese schools that offer special education services besides a regular curriculum. A sample of 120 elementary and middle school teachers (grades 1-8) participated in answering the Teacher Self-Analysis Questionnaire. All participants were given the same questionnaire. The majority of regular education teachers held license in teaching subject areas at the elementary level. There were few elementary teachers who had a bachelor's degree in areas other than education such as agriculture and business management, and were recently enrolled in the teacher certification program. Almost all special education teachers were certified to teach students with special needs. This means that they have covered courses in "characteristics of disabilities", "methods of assessment", "instructional methods", and "supervised field work experience". All participants were Lebanese citizens; only 5% were Armenians. They all speak English and Arabic. The majority of the participants in all groups were females. There were no male teachers found in the 3rd group, which is the special education group.

Instrument

This study used a questionnaire based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. The standards were adapted from Campbell et al. (1997) and were aimed to develop a professional portfolio for teachers. This Self-Analysis Questionnaire was used to evaluate certain characteristics and personal qualities in elementary

and middle school regular and special education teachers. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section included demographic information that asked for gender, age, class type, number of teaching years, educational level and Staff Development Training. The second section included 33 statements about beliefs on teaching skills, pedagogical skills, and professional knowledge to be rated as “yes”, “no” or “undecided”. The items in the questionnaire can be categorized into three factors: Teacher beliefs about students’ ability and teaching skills; instructional knowledge and skills; and professional knowledge and skills.

Procedure

The study was executed between March and June of the school academic year in 2009. It began in the mid of March and lasted approximately 12 weeks.

Three groups of teacher participants were included in the study:

Group1: Regular teachers in regular classes;

Group 2: Regular teachers with mixed groups of students, regular and special needs;

Group 3: Special education teachers with only special needs students

Forty teachers were selected in each group. The data was collected based on teachers’ response to the 33 statements. It was analyzed to provide information about differences between regular and special education teachers.

Participants included in the first group were regular elementary teachers working with regular students grades 1 to 8. Participants in the second group were also regular elementary teachers but teaching in mixed class, that is having students from both regular and special needs class. In the third group, the participants were special education teachers teaching in special education class. Participants from the second and third groups were mostly working with special students identified as having learning, reading disabilities, and behavioral problems such as hyperactivity or emotional disturbance. In all the cases, elementary and middle school regular and special

education teachers taught subject areas in Math, English/Reading, Science, and Social Studies, or in special areas such as fine motor, social, and cognitive skills.

This chapter deals with the outcome and analysis of data of this study.

First to analyze the variables such as age, gender, field of study, teaching years, school level, Special Education status, and professional background students were divided into two groups.

A series of one-way ANOVA analysis was applied to show the summary of results of each dependent and independent variable.

Table 1. (a) Descriptive of Demographic and Professional Variables on Types of school teachers, (b) Teaching Gender, Age, Teaching years, (c) Special Ed status, (d) Field and Grade taught.

Independent Variable	School			Pedagogical			Professional		
	N	Mean	Std.	N	Mean	Std.	N	Mean	Std.
School type/grade	638	3.335	0.682	144	3.334	0.681	1075	3.331	0.684
Special vs. Regular	134	3.330	0.680	313	3.337	0.680	1075	3.335	0.683
Gender	638	3.337	0.682	144	3.333	0.682	1075	3.336	0.683
Age	638	3.337	0.680	144	3.337	0.677	1075	3.333	0.680
Teaching yrs.	638	3.339	0.680	144	3.339	0.677	1075	3.334	0.680
Gender	638	3.333	0.678	144	3.337	0.680	1075	3.337	0.680
Sp Ed status	638	3.336	0.680	144	3.336	0.680	1075	3.336	0.680
Field	638	3.333	0.678	144	3.333	0.678	1075	3.333	0.678
Grade Taught	638	3.333	0.678	144	3.333	0.678	1075	3.333	0.678

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter deals with the outcome and analysis of data of this study.

Prior to analysis, the variables such as: age, gender, field of study, teaching years, grade level taught, Special Education course, and professional trainings attended were examined for data entry.

A table for multiple regression analysis was figured to show the summary of results of each dependent and independent variables.

Table 1 OLS Regression of Beliefs, Pedagogical and Professional Variables on Types of class teachers, Controlling Gender, Age, Teaching years, Major, Special Ed course, Training and Grade taught.

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Belief (N= 120)</i>			<i>Pedagogical (N= 120)</i>			<i>Professional (N=120)</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Mixed vs. Regular	0.391	0.236	0.002	1.118	0.136	0.000	1.073	0.185	0.011
Special vs. Regular	1.332	0.803	0.000	8.119	0.987	0.000	3.872	. 668	0.000
Gender	0.183	0.055	0.413	0.221	0.013	0.613	1.175	0.101	0.125
Age	-0.113	-0.107	0.180	0.385	0.073	0.022	-0.197	-0.053	0.496
Teaching -yrs.	0.042	0.249	0.002	-0.031	-0.037	0.227	0.148	0.253	0.001
Major	-0.043	-0.083	0.236	-0.069	-0.027	0.339	0.231	0.127	0.066
Sp Ed course	0.139	0.086	0.429	0.444	0.055	0.200	0.784	0.138	0.194
Training	-0.177	-0.113	0.088	0.158	0.02	0.434	-0.408	-0.074	0.248
Grade Taught	0.42	0.173	0.025	0.273	0.023	0.454	-0.593	-0.07	0.351

Analysis of Data

Analysis of data was determined based on the responses of “Yes”. In this study, a multiple regression statistical test was used to find the B coefficient, Beta, and significance of each variable. The data reduction was done by assembling items from the questionnaire into 3 categories: The dependent variable on Belief scale includes items 1, 10, 12, and 27. The second dependent variable, pedagogical scale, includes items 2,3,4,6,7,8,9,11,13,23,24,30,32, and 33. The third dependent variable, professional scale, includes item 5,14,15,16,17,18,19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 31. In this study, the reference category was Regular class-type of teachers. The P value between 0 and 0.001 is significant. The smaller the number, the higher is the significance. P is less than 0.05 to be significant. In a regression statistical test, three factors of dependent variables such as: Beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills were identified for three types of groups Regular, Regular mixed and Special. It also considered other variables such as age, gender, field of study, special education course, Educational training, years of teaching experience, and teaching years for the accuracy of the result.

Hypothesis Testing:

In order to test the three hypotheses in this study, a multiple regression comparison statistical test was performed among the variables of class type, age, gender, Major, Special Education course, teaching years, and Staff development training.

Hypothesis (1): predicted that in this sample the Regular Mixed class type of teachers will score lower than Special class type of teachers on Belief scale about teaching students with special needs.

In a multiple regression, a coefficient of .391 for Regular Mixed class type of teachers on belief scale was found. This means that the average level of Beliefs for Regular Mixed class type is about .391 points higher as compared to Regular class type, controlling for other

variables in the form. In addition, the coefficient of 1.332 for Special class in the Belief regression means that Special teachers working in special class have an average of 1.332 points higher on Beliefs scale than those of the regular teachers teaching in all regular class, controlling for other variables. Thus, Regular Mixed class type has a significant effect on the beliefs at .002. And the Special class type of teachers has more significant effect on the belief at 0.000. Therefore, this confirms hypothesis (1) that those who teach in a special class have stronger beliefs about teaching special needs students than those who teach Regular Mixed or Regular type of class. Other variable such as gender has no significant effect on the belief. Further, the number of teaching years also has a significant effect on beliefs at 0.002. In addition, the grade level taught, elementary versus middle school has a significant effect on beliefs at 0.025. However, the coefficient of Staff Development Trainings has negative sign and no significant effect on the beliefs about teaching special needs students. Furthermore, the regression of grade taught, elementary or middle school has a coefficient of 0.42 and has a significant effect on belief scale at .025. This means that the average level of Beliefs on the grade taught is .420 points higher as compared to Regular class type.

Hypothesis (2): predicted that Regular Mixed class type of teachers will score lower than Special class type of teachers on Pedagogical skills.

In a regression of pedagogical skills under Regular Mixed has a coefficient of 1.118 and has significant effect on pedagogical skills at 0.000. Similarly, the coefficient of Special versus Regular type of teacher is greater by 8.119. This means that the average of special class type teacher has 8.119 points higher than the regular class type. And the average of Regular mixed class type has average of 1.118 points higher than regular class type on pedagogical scale. In addition, age has a slight significant effect on pedagogical skills at 0.022. Both groups, Special and Regular classes, have significant effects on pedagogical scale at 0.000, yet the Special class

has standardized coefficient average .987 on pedagogical scale. This means that the special type of class has 6 times more effect than regular mixed on pedagogical scale. This result confirms the second hypothesis that teachers in Special class scores more on pedagogical scale than teachers in Regular mixed class.

Hypothesis (3): predicted that Regular Mixed or Special class type of teachers will have a slight difference on Professional knowledge and skills.

The coefficient of Regular Mixed class type is higher from the Regular group by 1.073 on professional skills. The Regular Mixed class type has a significant effect on professional knowledge and skills at 0.011. The coefficient of Special class type is higher than Regular class type by 3.872 on professional skills. The Special class type has an average 3.872 and has more significant effect on professional knowledge and skills at 0.000 as compared to Regular or Regular mixed class type. This confirms the third hypothesis which stated that Regular mixed class type of teachers differ from Special class in professional knowledge and skills.

Further, teaching years also has a significant effect on professional knowledge and skills at 0.001. This shows that the more teaching experience, the better knowledge and skills in teaching one may have.

The general results of the current study showed that Special class type of teachers scored higher on Beliefs, pedagogical, and Professional skills as compared to Regular mixed and Regular class type of teachers. In addition, the Regular mixed class type of teachers scored higher than Regular class on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills. However, the obtained results showed that other variables showed different significant effects on the three dependent variables: beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills. For instance, the age variable has a significant effect on pedagogical scale. In general, the teaching years has a significant effect on beliefs and professional knowledge and skills. The Major has a significant effect only

on professional skills which is not surprising. The grade taught also has a significant effect on beliefs. On the other hand, Training has a negative significant effect on belief and professional skills.

The chapter will include the following subheadings: 1. Introduction, 2. Statement of the problem, 3. Purpose of the study, 4. Significance of the study, 5. Scope of the study, 6. Methodology, 7. Results, 8. Conclusion, 9. Recommendations, 10. References.

The purpose of this research study was to predict differences between Regular, Mild and Special type of class teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities.

The main interest in this study was to know the effect of grade taught, class type, gender, and years of experience on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities. The study also wanted to know the effect of grade taught, class type, gender, and years of experience on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities. The study also wanted to know the effect of grade taught, class type, gender, and years of experience on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities.

Differences of class teachers regarding the different class type of students on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills was explored in depth. The results of this study showed that there were significant differences between Regular, Mild and Special type of class teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills. In addition, significant differences were found among the different grade levels and grade taught variables. On the other hand, a significant difference was not found in gender on beliefs and professional skills.

Concerning the Special class type of teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills, the results showed that there were significant differences between Regular, Mild and Special type of class teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter will tackle the following: restatement of the research problem, revision of the applied methodology in the study, summary of the results, and discussion. The end part of this chapter will cover research limitations, implications, and recommendations for further research.

The purpose of this research study was to predict difference(s) between Regular Mixed and Special type of class teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills in teaching students with disabilities.

The main interest in this study was because the author taught special needs students in a pull-out program, and, as a special education teacher, saw problems with the inclusion of special needs students. She also recognized the fact that regular teachers did not have enough direct contact with special needs students. These facts made this study possible; especially to explore the subject of teacher education for special needs students.

Differences of three variables representing the different class type of teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills was explored in depth. The results of this study confirmed and supported the entire hypotheses that there were differences between Regular Mixed and Special type of class teachers on beliefs, pedagogical, and professional skills. In addition, significant effects were found among age, teaching years, major, and grade taught variables. On the other hand, a negative significant effect was found in training on beliefs and professional skills.

Concerning the Special class type of teachers on beliefs scale, it indicated that the influence of Special education teachers' preparedness in special education has increased the

values and hopes about special needs students. The Regular mixed type of class in the presence of special needs students had developed better beliefs on teaching students with disabilities as compared to Regular types of teachers. This implied that the more teachers teach students with disabilities, the stronger their beliefs or values about teaching becomes. In addition, the direct contact of Special education teachers with the special needs students added additional influence on their beliefs about teaching special needs students. In contrast, the Regular mixed class type of teachers had less belief than Special education teachers in teaching students with disabilities due to the context of less direct contact with them because of pull-out programs.

Therefore, the data obtained from the current study supported the first hypothesis which was the difference between Regular mixed and special class type of teachers on beliefs. In addition, teaching years had significant effect on beliefs. The more teaching experience the better beliefs about teaching special needs students. On the other hand, controlled variable such as age and gender had no significant effect on beliefs. This means that whether it is a male or female teacher, young or advanced, had no influence on beliefs.

Training was another controlled variable that was considered essential in this study. However, the obtained data showed negative significant effect on belief. This meant that those who had training in the education field on beliefs in the last 12 months had negative effect on beliefs about teaching special needs students than those who didn't have trainings. This might imply that training will make individuals become more realistic and interfere on beliefs about teaching students with disabilities; or that training might have taken place before the 12 months period that the questionnaire specified.

Regarding the pedagogical skills, the results showed that Special class type of teachers have scored higher on pedagogical scale as compared with Regular mixed or Regular type of teachers. This result supported the second hypothesis which stated differences between Regular

mixed and Special type of class on pedagogical skills. This meant that on the pedagogical scale, the Special class type of teachers gave more importance to “how to teach” than “what to teach” because in the special education, the emphasis is on the instructional methods, individualized educational plans, and levels of disabilities, but not on the content knowledge. This supported the previous findings on the concept that general education teachers place emphasis on subject-matter pedagogy, whereas the special education teacher places emphasis on “generic pedagogy”, meaning instructional methods, individualized plans, and alternative assessment (Brownell, Ross, Colon, et. al., 2005). In addition, the controlled age variable also had significant effect on pedagogical skills. This meant that the more advanced in age, the better expert one becomes in terms of teaching strategies and methods of teaching. Therefore, the data obtained from the current study, supported the second hypothesis, which stated that there is a difference between Regular and Special class type of teachers in terms of pedagogical skills.

In the final testing of the hypothesis concerning the professional knowledge and skills, the results showed that teachers in both groups Regular mixed and Special class type of teachers scored higher than Regular group on professional skills. This meant that both groups tend to learn new skills and are devoted to professional growth and development, as well as have more willingness for professional knowledge and skills due to the demand in the field. The results supported the third hypothesis which stated that there are differences between Regular mixed and Special education teachers on professional knowledge and skills. Furthermore, other variables such as teaching years and major had significant effects on professional skills. This result is not surprising; it meant that the more experience teachers have, the better qualified they become.

Some discrepancies were found between Regular and Special education teachers, especially in terms of instructional methods and teaching procedures. This meant that collaboration is highly recommended between classroom teachers, special education teachers, and other professionals, such as speech therapists, the school counselor, the psychologist, and of course, parents. Turnbull, Trunbull, Erwin, and Soodak (2006) stated that "Although most research on how parent involvement affects student learning took place in general education settings, the findings help shape the many ways that families of children with disabilities and teacher can work together to support student learning" (p. 278). Therefore, teamwork is the most important and crucial factor in working together to promote learning and benefiting special needs students educationally.

The following recommendations are suggested for future research:

- 1- The use of valid and reliable measures to determine teachers' knowledge about specific disabilities in relation with instructional methodology used in the classroom and special needs students' learning outcomes.
- 2- Find ways to measure students' performance that could be influenced by the strategies used in the classroom.

The results of the current study were obtained from a sample of the Lebanese population. Participants of this study were from different schools in Lebanon. All the schools followed the same system and believed in the assumptions that "Students with disabilities have the right to an effective education, individualized instruction, reliable and research based instructional tools" (Heyward, 2003). Therefore, it would be interesting if a similar research can be done using special education centers instead of schools in Lebanon.

- 3- The population sample used in this study is considered to be small. It could be interesting if this study can be done again using a bigger sample, and from different areas of Lebanon.

This study provided an extensive investigation of how regular education teachers differ from special education teachers in terms of beliefs about teaching, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills. The questionnaire was carried by controlling all the possible variables to explore the differences between the two types of teachers. The analyzed results of the collected data showed that the regular teachers who participated in this study differ from the special education teachers in instructional methods, educational planning, professional skills, and beliefs about teaching. Furthermore, the results brought to a conclusion that if inclusive approaches are to be applied, meaning integrating special students in general education settings, special education teachers need to be well equipped, support the regular education teachers, and work collaboratively with professionals and parents for the benefit of special needs students in school settings. In addition, the results could help the practitioners as well as the paraprofessionals to have a closer look at the differences between different types of class teachers and understand them better. Finally, the contribution of this study could have a positive effect in reducing problems faced by all types of teachers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

March 31, 2009

To whom it may concern,

I would like to introduce to you Ani Awakimian, an MA student in Special Education at Haigazian University in Beirut.

Ani is required to write a research to complete the requirements for her MA in Special Education. She is trying to find out "If there is a difference in Education, Qualities, and Characteristics between the Special Education Teacher and the Regular Education Teacher."

Ani has a questionnaire consisting of 33 questions to be answered as a Yes, No, or Undecided that both special education and regular education teachers have to fill out. There are no names required, either of the school, or of the teachers. The only requirement is that the school has a special education program.

I hope that you will allow Ani to give out the questionnaire to the teachers in your school.

I really appreciate your help in giving Ani the opportunity to do her research, which could give her, and us as a University, an insight into what we can do to better prepare students to be either regular education or special education teachers of the future, and help the Special Needs students that Lebanon has in schools.

Thank you for your cooperation. I am sure that Ani will be more than glad to share the findings with you if you so require. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 03-389858, or email me at: daisy.warren@haigazian.edu.lb

Sincerely

Daisy Warren, Ed. D.

Assistant Professor
Education Department
Haigazian University
Tel: 01- 353010 #338

Letter Form

Appendix B

To the school Principal,

I am, Ani Awakimian El-Hajj, a graduate student in Special Education at Haigazian University in Beirut.

The purpose of this letter is to ask for an allowance and assistance to do my research study in your school.

The purpose of my research study is "To compare general education and special education teachers in terms of beliefs in teaching, pedagogical skills and professional skills in teaching students with special needs."

The phenomena of increased number of disability in schools and the rise of inclusion seems extremely unnoticed topic in Lebanon. Your teachers' opinion in this study would provide valuable information.

I really appreciate your help in giving me the opportunity to do my research which could give us an insight into how to improve teacher education programs, teaching practices and student-teacher relationships.

Thank you for your cooperation, I am glad to share the findings with you if you so require.

Your help is much appreciated!

Kind regards,

Ani El-Hajj

Appendix C

Teacher Self-Analysis Questionnaire

Demographic Information:

Please put (X) mark in each box

Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female
Age ☐ between 20- 24 ☐ between 25-28 ☐ 29 and above

Select the grade level that you teach:

☐ Elementary ☐ Middle School ☐ High School

Which best describes your **main** teaching profession?

☐ Classroom teacher (i.e. you teach all core subjects: math, language arts, social studies, science...)

OR

☐ Specialist teacher

Mark below your subject area assignment this year. Mark (X) one box

☐ Fine Arts (Art, Music, Drama, etc.) ☐ Reading Specialist
☐ Physical Education ☐ Special Education
☐ Speech, Communication ☐ Other, please specify _____

If you're a classroom teacher, please specify the type of class that you teach.

☐ Regular class ☐ Regular class mixed with special needs students

How many years have you worked as a teacher in this school? Number of years

What was your undergraduate major field of study?

Have you taken any course (s) in Special Education?

If yes, please specify.

Have you attended any Staff Development training, workshops or conferences in the past 12 months? Please specify.

Appendix D

Questionnaire:

This questionnaire is designed for an educational research purpose. Its purpose is to examine the way teachers differ in terms of their perceptions, beliefs and evaluation of their role as teachers. The results of this form will be examined only by the researcher. Please indicate your opinions about each statement below by circling the appropriate response.

Self-Analysis Items Responses [Y] yes [N] No [U] Undecided

- 1. Do I believe that all children can learn? [Y] [N] [U]
- 2. Do I have high expectations for myself and my students? [Y] [N] [U]
- 3. Do I have knowledge about different teaching strategies used with Special Needs students? [Y] [N] [U]
- 4. Do I design my instruction to accommodate a variety of student needs? [Y] [N] [U]
- 5. Can I easily identify the emotional, social, and educational needs of all students in my class? [Y] [N] [U]
- 6. Do I design lessons using a variety of instructional strategies that meet all students' needs including students with Special Needs? [Y] [N] [U]
- 7. Do I design alternative assessment for students specially who have Special Needs? [Y] [N] [U]
- 8. Do I use a variety of motivational strategies to fit every student in my class? [Y] [N] [U]
- 9. Do I use computer technology to produce instructional materials for students with and without Special Needs? [Y] [N] [U]
- 10. Do I actively involve parents in the educational decisions and activities used with their children? [Y] [N] [U]
- 11. Does my classroom arrangement accommodate students with different ability levels? [Y] [N] [U]
- 12. Do I appreciate students regardless of their disabilities or behavior problems? [Y] [N] [U]
- 13. Do I find new ways to explain and demonstrate subject matter to regular and special needs students? [Y] [N] [U]

Do I keep my wits and calmly deal with students who have intellectual, emotional, and learning difficulties in difficult situations? [Y] [N] [U]

14. Do I foresee the needs and concerns of students who lack the ability to communicate with me as a teacher? [Y] [N] [U]
15. Do I have strong interpersonal skills to deal with my students? [Y] [N] [U]
16. Are my communication skills effective to communicate clearly with all students including Special Needs? [Y] [N] [U]
17. Do I handle stressful situations well? [Y] [N] [U]
18. Can I easily see myself as a professional? [Y] [N] [U]
19. Am I a member in a professional organization for teachers? [Y] [N] [U]
20. Am I willing to learn new things and to change? [Y] [N] [U]
21. Am I willing to devote myself to ongoing professional development? [Y] [N] [U]
22. Do I modify the curriculum to meet the educational needs for special needs students? [Y] [N] [U]
23. Am I willing to continue my teacher education to improve my knowledge and skills? [Y] [N] [U]
24. Am I committed to basing my classroom practice on educational research? [Y] [N] [U]
25. Am I willing to invest time and energy in professional collaborations? [Y] [N] [U]
26. Am I willing to do more than what is “required” of me? [Y] [N] [U]
27. Am I willing to communicate my teaching philosophy and practices to parents and others? [Y] [N] [U]
28. Do I have the energy, sense of humor, enthusiasm, and outgoingness teachers need? [Y] [N] [U]
29. Am I a flexible person and able to deal with different situations? [Y] [N] [U]
30. Do I have organizational, managerial, and leadership skills? [Y] [N] [U]
31. Do I have a strong sense of self-efficacy as a teacher? [Y] [N] [U]
32. Do I know how to use behavior modification techniques? [Y] [N] [U]

Thank you for your participation