The Professional Development Experiences Of Special Education Teachers In Teaching Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

The current study explored how special education teachers perceive professional development in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder. From a qualitative perspective, 13 teachers have been online interviewed individually and in a focus group. Findings indicated that teachers went through several stages to develop professionally, starting with a bachelor's degree to reach expertise. In addition, teachers reported sources of professional development such as volunteering, self-learning, and teamwork. Findings also, suggested that high professional development results in fostering student learning and achievement and enhances teachers' persistence in reaching their education goals.

Keywords: special education teachers; Autism Spectrum Disorder; professional development; phenomenological approach; qualitative study

Introduction

Teaching the teachers, or professional development as it is officially known, assists those who serve in classroom settings to greatly benefit from professional development training programs as it is essential for competent educators, as a lack of in-depth training significantly lowers classroom performance (Shady et al., 2013; Cook & Schirmer, 2003). The relevant literature studies present the professional development of teachers in a variety of ways. Each experience that teachers go through that would enhance their attitudes, practices, and skills in teaching students is considered professional development. Formal experiences such as participating in professional meetings and seminars, obtaining mentoring, etc. and informal experiences such as reading scholarly publications and watching documentaries on academic subjects on television, etc. contribute to the professional growth of teachers (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Professional development is about educators becoming better learners, learning how to become better learners, and putting their knowledge into action for the growth of their students. (Avaols, 2011). Glatthorn (1995, 41) defines teacher professional development as ' the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and systematically examining his or her teaching'. It is critical to understand that professional development is the only technique available to school systems for enhancing the performance of educators and the only means by which educators can improve their performance and boost student progress (Mizell, 2010).

Teaching children and students with disabilities can be challenging for teachers who lack the necessary skills (Shady et al., 2013). Teaching children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), in particular, poses significant educational challenges since it can make teachers less confident in their abilities to collaborate with these kids in a variety of

situations (Klassen et al., 2011; Ruble et al., 2013; Anglim, et al., 2018; Rodden et al., 2018; Shaukat et al., 2019). Furthermore, studies report that educating students with ASD may be more stressful for teachers than teaching other students with special education needs (Jennett et al., 2003; Kokkinos & Davazoglou, 2009). Ruble et al. (2011) discovered strong relationships between physiological/affective states and self-efficacy among 35 teachers of students with ASD. In addition, instructors' susceptibility to stress and burnout was also connected with special education teacher turnover (Billingsley 2004). According to a qualitative survey of teachers, these difficulties make teachers feel insecure and anxious about the prospect of instructing a student with ASD in their classes. (Anglim et al., 2018). An assessment of stakeholders' viewpoints on the inclusion of students with ASD found that school personnel's knowledge and comprehension must be enhanced through professional development (Roberts & Simpson, 2016). In addition, the most challenging components of teaching in a special class, according to teachers, were handling difficult behaviours and designing an appropriate curriculum (Finlay et al., 2022). As a result of the previously mentioned challenges in teaching students with ASD, professional development is crucial for instructors working in the field of special education, as the demand for change and advancement in the teaching profession affects all fields within education and the educational sciences (Easterbrooks, 2011; Sawyer, 2015). The necessity for special education instructors to progress their careers is justified by the reasons listed below: Increased early diagnosis and educational opportunities, technology advancements like those in hearing aids and cochlear implants, and new pedagogical and instructional approaches based on empirical research have all contributed to an improvement in school-age children's requirements. (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Sawyer, 2015).

In addition to their own professional and personal growth, instructors should engage in professional development activities to improve the quality of the educational system, student learning, and school performance (Özdemir, 2013). According to Desimone (2009), efficient professional development can lead to teacher learning, changes in attitudes and beliefs, and subsequent changes in teaching methods. The ideal outcome of changing practice is higher student accomplishment.

An international shift away from traditional teacher development methods has led to a new emphasis on teachers as active learners who are supported by reflective practice (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Professional development has increased as a result of the emphasis on reflection and active engagement, which is theoretically supported by experiential learning which is similar to professional development, experiential learning is a process of personal transformation (Girvan et al., 2016). In addition, each learner's experience is different because they use their own prior experiences as a basis to interact with the novel.

Until now, little research has been conducted in Saudi Arabia on the professional development of special education teachers who teach students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of special education teachers' professional development in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder.

Method

The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to understand and explore the participants' experiences. Husserl (1931) initially defined and hypothesised phenomenology as a means to comprehend the context and meaning of the 'lived experiences' of individuals (research participants). According to Creswell and Poth (2017), phenomenology is most appropriate when the research problem involves a deep understanding of human experiences shared by a group of people. Giorgi (2010) defined phenomenology as the study of a particular

subject, and Giorgi (2012) argued that descriptive means require the use of language to convey the deliberate objects of involvement. Instead of attempting to predict results, as in the positivist paradigm, Qualitative research utilises the constructivist and interpretivist frameworks. By comprehending people's distinctive opinions and the significance associated with those viewpoints, interpretivism aims to advance knowledge (Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The most commonly cited justification for employing a descriptive technique is to provide plain explanations of experiences and perceptions (Sandelowski, 2010). A qualitative descriptive design may be the best choice because it takes into account how subjective the problem is and how different the participants' experiences are. It also shows the results in a way that matches or comes close to the language used in the original research question. (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Typically, researchers use a Investigate a phenomena from a naturalistic viewpoint and in its natural condition. (Sandelowski, 2000).

Sampling and participants

Purposive expert sampling techniques were used in the study. Expert sampling requires that the participants of a purposive sample be subject matter experts in a particular discipline (Etikan et al., 2016). In a purposeful method, the significance of readiness and openness to participate, as well as the capacity for clear, expressive, and reflective communication of experiences and perspectives, is critical to achieving the study's purpose (Thomas, 2022; Spradley, 1979). The researcher provided three incentives for participants to be included in the study: 1. have a bachelor's degree in special education.2-3 years of experience teaching students with ASD3. Full-time job teaching students with ASD at the time of the data collection. The researcher identified 13 special education teachers who met the sampling criteria. Table 1 summarises the demographic information. Names are pseudonyms to ensure participants' privacy.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Name	Age	Gender	Experience years	Degree	School level
Sami	32	Male	8 Years	Master	Elementary
Rami	30	Male	7 Years	Master	Elementary
Noreen	35	Female	12 Years	Bachelor	Elementary
Sara	33	Female	10 Years	Master	Elementary
Jamila	31	Female	8 Years	Bachelor	Elementary
Hanadi	31	Female	8 Years	Bachelor	Elementary
Juomana	30	Female	8 Years	Master	Elementary
Abeer	34	Female	10 Years	Bachelor	Elementary
Laila	33	Female	10 Years	Master	Elementary
Noor	34	Female	10 Years	Master	Elementary

Sahr	30	Female	7 Years	Master	Elementary
Yasmin	33	Female	9 Years	Bachelor	Elementary
Zahra	28	Female	6 Years	Bachelor	Elementary

Data collection

Three instruments were used to collect data on special education teachers' professional development experiences. Demographic questionnaire, online semi-structured individual interviews, and an online focus group interview were conducted to explore the phenomenon under investigation. The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The online method of interviews provides the opportunity for people from distant areas to take part in these kinds of studies, which increases the size of the study population that could potentially be included (Saarijärvi and Bratt, 2021). all interviews were audiotaped and saved in secured electronic files with passwords.

Data analysis

The research question and interests guided the analysis of the data. Based on the responses participants gave, data analysis was in progress. The data were analysed using a thematic approach. Using the Dedoose software and the recommendations for the inductive method by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Miles and Huberman (1994), all interviews and focus groups were subjected to a step-by-step thematic analysis. The data were analysed using an inductive method. This means that themes were found in the raw data, which was looked at without any predetermined categories. The researcher read the transcripts several times in the first step of thematic analysis to get a feel for the information. In the second step, emergent themes were found through a series of coding steps. First, open coding was used to come up with the initial codes. Next, the initial codes were put into groups based on how similar they were. In the third step, themes were made out of these groups. It involves putting together codes into big ideas that show the data accurately. Braun and Clarke (2006) say that "a theme captures something important about the data... and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set".

Trustworthiness

To mention validation and data trustworthiness, the researcher applied several scientific techniques. First, the researcher has full attention to his experiences as a special education teacher. Second, triangulation which means adopting different sources or methods of data collection (Stahl & King, 2020). The study utilized individual interviews and focus group to collect data. In addition, participants were chosen from different locations and sites. Finally, the researcher allows participants to check transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Findings

Three major themes were revealed from the data analysis. The journey to reach an essential professional development in teaching students with ASD was identified in this study. Teachers discussed several phases that have influenced their professional development, from studying for a bachelor's degree to developing expertise. The sources of professional development are also provided by teachers. Finally, teachers indicated the results of reaching a high level of professional development, which was reflected in their practices and students' learning.

Theme 1-The phases to professional development

Early college education role

Participants discussed their first learning experiences about autism as undergraduate students. They described the college as a theoretical part of a provider. All participants showed that they had no idea about autism before measuring in. Noor said, 'The special education department was new at that time'. 'I entered it because there was a shortage of teachers in that field, so I will get a job as soon as I graduate'. Sara added, 'The studying was limited to the courses, text books, and other academic references'. 'I didn't get so far'. Autism definitions, characteristics, and teaching programs were the participants' core knowledge in their undergraduate studies.

However, all participants argued that the consideration of studying the theoretical part wasn't enough to teach students with autism in a professional way. 'I had the knowledge about autism repeated over and over again', Abeer explained, 'but what I needed was a student with autism to work with, not exams, measures, or textbooks that was missed in college'. Sara agreed: 'I felt that I didn't know how to work with students with autism when I was in college... I had seen no cases of autism even in my practice term when I taught students with intellectual disabilities'. Yasmin reported that 'all the studying was theoretical and has no connection to the actual field actually, the reality was different. There wasn't any work—no application, nothing'. 'What happens in the classrooms is so different... we're talking about autism, which is a very unique and different case, so it was difficult to stand on the ground from the perspective of a teacher', Zahra explained.

The beginning of teaching practices

Most participants describe the beginning of

teaching students with autism as 'difficult' and 'shocking'. The teachers needed time to understand the students and how to work with and teach them. 'It was the least years of my performance', Sami said, 'the transition from bachelor and theoretical knowledge to practice... it was a struggle'. 'The stuff assumed that you are fully qualified, while the gap between what you know and how you do it is not easy to discover', he added. Juomana made it clear, 'It was a primitive practice... I knew it was weak and made a lot of mistakes I knew that I was going to have challenges and responsibilities. It was really difficult', Abeer said about the concept of early career in teaching students with disabilites'. I had students with autism and students with intellectual disabilities. You play the role of psychologist, you make the evaluations, and you stay with students all the time. It was a chaise. It was exhausting when you were working and didn't know how to teach', Sara said. the teachers were newly hired at that time, so what we did was 'daycare only'.

On the other side, the early struggles have promoted the teachers' performance eventually and developed their understanding of practical teaching with students with autism. According to Noor, it was 'impossible to forget the first years...I learned a lot about the students, who they are and what characteristics they exhibit, and I discovered new things about students who aren't the same as others'. Rami said, 'I was questioning everything I heard from experienced teachers. I knew that students with autism would take longer to respond, and I had to be present to see the feedback from the students'. Hanadi expressed, 'The first years made me learn more about students and benefit from different things, such as teachers, and my performance improved gradually'.

Feeling deficit

Teachers demonstrated that they felt at some points of teaching career that they lacked adequate performance and were unable to deliver high-quality teaching skills to students

with autism. Sami declared that 'however you felt that you made an effort, you feel that you still have something to do better'. Noreen blamed herself and others as well, saying, 'Unfortunately, I had an unqualified supervisor'. There is no teacher's guide to autism available from the Ministry of Education. I did everything at random'. didn't know if I worked with an individual or group style'. Laila mentioned, 'I was afraid the environment didn't support me; there was no teamwork, so I had to do all of it by myself. It is supposed to have better training in the university, working with a mentor at first, and knowing your rights as a teacher', Sara added, ' I didn't know who to work with the students; they cry all the time, the students become nervous, and you too'.

Experience matter

Teachers emphasised the importance of experiences that they went through and developed over the years of teaching in improving their professional practices. 'The cases that I had more than 100 students in the first three years gave me the way to understanding the students' behaviours, what works and what does not', Hanadi said. 'Of course, there is improvement for the better; if it was forty percent yesterday, it is eighty percent today; it became so easy to do... the most important factor is practicing with students you teach yourself', Abeer responded. 'Experiences after intensive training after our trails made development on my performance... I saw that on the kids; I saw it in the family and administration', Sahr suggested'. Experience means I've become so effective that I have efficacy and experience', Jamila stated.

The sources of professional development

Volunteering

One of the top sources that teachers describe for advancing their knowledge and practice in teaching students with autism is volunteering to serve students with disabilities in different locations and organisations as early as they involved into special education field. Noor mentioned 'I had one of the professors who I worked with who used to encourage me to go outside and volunteer in the field', Sami said. I formed a volunteer team to go to public schools and raise autism awareness, which made me feel like I belonged to people with autism. Rami added, 'I participated with volunteer teams in special education, which gave me good information about autism'. Sahr indicated that 'I join conferences and volunteer teams to learn about special needs from different initiatives'. 'Volunteering plays a significant role', Liala agreed.

Self-learning

Self-learning was one approach to enhancing teachers' professional practices in teaching students with autism. Teachers felt at one point that they had to accept the challenges and responsibilities of teaching students with autism. Teacher identified their own learning needs, establish their own learning objectives, locate the necessary resources, and assess their own knowledge. Jamila stated, 'I was very diligent; I tried to learn, search, and know that that helped me. But it doesn't mean there were no mistakes; the most contributing factor was self-learning. You have to teach yourself...Your own', Abeer said:' practices can teach you that there are no similar cases in autism... Just practice, and you'll know it. There are so many things that can help you learn about autism', Sara confirmed, 'but you have to push yourself to read and observe...don't depend on administration to promote you'. Hanadi said, 'I attended so many elective courses that weren't mandatory to me... I watched videos from foreign countries... I visited other centers to look for external experiences'.

The child as source of knowledge

Knowing and working with the children with autism sharpened the teachers' skills in the autism profession. The different cases, challenges, and levels of disabilities of the children enriched the teachers' understanding and enhanced professional growth. Sami described how 'every day I worked with them [children with disabilities], I discovered new things... I gained experiences from them because there are no significant similarities between cases, so each child is unique. Rami reported a similar concept: 'working with and observing children with autism makes me know the characteristics and individual differences. The first year I had four cases with autism, each totally different... the differences are what added to me'. Juomana gained the ability to work with and train children with autism as a result of the various cases with varying characteristics.

Teamwork

If team members collaborated positively, all teachers viewed teamwork as valuable for improving professional practices. In contrast, if the teamwork is limited or lacks coordination, the teachers' practices and efforts in teaching students with autism will suffer and struggle. Jamila said: 'Teamwork has its essence, and it makes a huge difference', she added: 'I believe that if the teamwork is incompatible, you cannot use your knowledge because extra work will keep you happy. Juomana said, 'The support that I received from administrators motivated me. It was high pressure, but I had solid support from my colleagues to push me to improve. 'I needed a clinical psychologist, so I contacted her, and she guided me', Noreen explained, my colleagues helped me with my individual education plan and how to write short and long goals. 'I'm not afraid to ask my colleagues', Hanadi said' I gain more experience in a variety of ways. 'When I was assigned to the center, there were experts in autism...' Noor agreed. 'They helped me from

scratch'.

However, the teamwork does not always provide the collaboration that it should, and it could restrain the members' development. Sahr mentioned that 'first, the administrative stuff was just personal effort because they weren't specialists in special education... and second, the teaching faculty weren't specialists in autism and had limited experience in autism'. Zahra reported that 'weak administration with limited teaching stuff can make teachers turnover and leave'. Yasmine said, 'It was chaos, no teamwork'. 'You are the nurse; you evaluate the child; you hold all the responsibilities'. Noreen said, 'We missed the teamwork in the first years'. I took all the cadmium and psychiatric parts. That isn't my job'.

The outcomes of professional development

The professional development that is acquired from teachers over the years with multiple factors produce desirable outcomes that impact the teachers' behaviors and affect students with autism learning as well. Here are the common outcomes were described by teachers:

Persistence

Teachers emphasised that the level of performance attained through professional development over the years has enabled them to be insistent when teaching students with autism in order to support their students' learning achievement. Yasmine stated, 'I saw the results—interactions and participation were not like before two years; now, if I have a child, I know how to deal with her'. I tried with him until I reached the appropriate practice. Hanadi reported, 'I tried with all the students in the centre... 'I took courses in supported services... and thus became a more knowledgeable expert'. Juomana added, 'You force yourself to work with different cases and figure out what approach is best for the child'. Sahr mentioned

that 'we worked to expand the centre; we applied the program 'firs trainer' for mothers'. 'The teacher's performance exceeded the family's expectations'.

Faster achieving

Teachers agreed that when they attain a considerable level of professional development, they achieve their goals with students faster. Jamila described it as 'reducing the time for me to not make the old mistakes like the first years'. I used to set a goal, then I discovered that wasn't appropriate or reachable... I became so accurate. 'So if your performance is developed, it's normal to see better results in kids'. Rami emphasizes the impact of his performance on students: 'I'm able to make the students respond faster'. I used to take my time responding at first'. Now, I know what every child wants and likes in terms of education'. Juomana indicated, 'For example, fostering I can give the students two goals instead of one, or four instead of two... 'We have a month to observe and prepare the child; now it will take me two to three weeks only'. 'Now I can see the results in two months... after one year, the student can attend public school in self-contained classrooms', Abeer agreed.Zahra 'I gain a better understanding of students' behaviours... I wasn't expecting faster responses'.

Motivations

Many factors, according to the teachers, fuel their motivation on the job. When these factors appear, teachers become motivated to work better. 'When we see the mothers happy from their performances, it gives us enthusiasm and passion to work and search more', Sahr said. Sami contended that motivation should come from 'within yourself and derives from within, then you will have motivation. 'I will pursue my education in doctrinal programs and build my own education program because there are none here in Saudi Arabia', Juomana added.

'Near the third year, I started to enjoy working with children with autism from evaluation to teaching'.

Improvements

The notion of professional development is all about fostering improvement in how teachers learn and apply knowledge in their practices. The factors and outcomes of the teachers' profession process were identified by teachers which made them observe and realize the improvement in their practices in teaching students with ASD. Teachers describe their performance when they reach an acceptable professional development level. Rami discussed, 'What I observed from the beginning till today about my professional development is how I work with the student—how to get the student to respond. I know what he wants. I can transfer the knowledge in a favourable way. 'I know the student level, whether he is advanced or beginning, and I know if he wants training or consultation on specific areas', Juomana said. Noreen noticed, 'It reflects on students' achievement... I am aware of the student's abilities and what might suit her, as well as her strengths and weaknesses'. can predict if she will accomplish the skill or not from the beginning'. Noor described 'changes in how to modify and manage behaviours... I didn't know how to do that in the beginning... I love the intervention practices in early childhood. 'My students wouldn't forget me; they always contact me. That is the positive impact every special education teacher wants'.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate qualitatively special education teachers' professional development in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder. To empower special education teachers to rethink their teaching approaches and engage them in analysing, planning, and implementing high-quality practices, they have to maintain a

sustainable professional development journey. The findings illustrate how the teachers developed their professional practices, what sources shaped that development, and the outcomes of that development.

Teachers reported that teacher preparation programs are primarily theoretical, ignoring practical aspects in classrooms, which lowers teachers' practices and puts them under more pressure when they meet students for the first time. Notion of highly qualified teachers has emphasized the need for reforms in teacher preparation programs (Borman et al., 2008). Despite the emphasis on and recommendations for strengthening the teaching profession by increasing requirements for teacher preparation, entrance, and professional development, teachers were still selected from the lowest ranks of college graduates, and student performance had not improved (Smith, 2008). Greater numbers of instructors with lower academic credentials have entered the labour force than teachers with superior academic credentials (Borman et al., 2007). To train teachers intellectually, the curriculum's focus had to be on content and subject matter as its base, to the exclusion of pedagogy.

Teachers in the study demonstrated difficulties in their early careers teaching students with ASD as novice teachers, which is highly expected. Some aspects of teaching can only be learned on the job, regardless of how well a teacher is prepared (Feiman-Nemser, 2001); unfortunately, many teachers do not remain in the profession long enough to achieve success due to early struggles and challenges (Burkman, 2012). Andrews and Quinn (2005) argued that offering support to new teachers not only helps with teacher retention but also helps new teachers become good practitioners as quickly as possible. According to Ewing and Manuel (2005), early successful experiences in teacher education are important motivators for remaining to teach. For instance, employee retention is connected with a sense of appreciation, the perception of accomplishment, and a sense of self-worth. (Blasé, 2009; Dyson et al., 2007).

Teachers discussed feeling deficits in teaching students with ASD and requiring different supports at one point or another in their journey of teaching development. It is commonly acknowledged in academic literature and the profession that the transition from pre-service education to the job is riddled with obstacles (White & Moss, 2003). In addition, literature about the career paths and routes of teacher educators is uncommon in the field of teacher education research in general. A significant number of studies on teacher education have centred on teacher standards and competences, professional experience and professionalism, and transitions into teaching (Mayer et al., 2011). In a variety of ways, professional networks, accessible resources, and the geographic location of schools influence the success or failure of newly certified teachers (Johnson et al., 2010; Sharplin, 2002).

The role of experience carries significant qualities in professional development among teachers. On measuring the knowledge of ASD, instructors with experience instructing a child with ASD scored significantly higher than those with no experience (Ballantyne, Gillespie-Smith, & Wilson 2021). Studies have shown that educators who work with children with ASD are more aware of the impairment than those who have not (Haimour and Obaid, 2013; Sanz-Cervera et al., 2017). This article argues that teacher education should give pre-qualified student teachers the opportunities to work with children with ASD in a positive environment. During training, this may include placing teachers in special education classrooms. This might grant instructors with extensive interaction experience with persons with ASD before they are enforced to manage their own classes. (Ballantyne et al., 2021).

For self-learning, reflection on practices is an integral part of the learning process. Postholm (2008) identifies reflection as the cornerstone of teacher learning and teaching practice development. Lempert-Shepell (1995) defines reflection as 'the ability

to make one's own behaviour an object of study: to regulate it through the capacity to consider oneself as the ideal other' (p. 434).There is a link between reflection and action, and Lempert-Shepell (1995) states that reflection alters the nature of action. A person who acts ceases to engage with the present action and instead considers the realm of possible acts. Variable is the structure of an activity (1995 p. 435). According to Lempert-Shepell, both co-organization and self-organization of activity material are necessary for boosting teachers' learning.

One of the most interesting findings of this study is the role of volunteering in professional development that teachers emphasized. Volunteering promotes the growth of certain abilities (Knepper et al., 2015) that are transferrable to the employee economy, thus increasing participants' future jobs (Păceşilă. 2015). Volunteering shares a significant role in the enhancement of competitive job markets in Europe (Bocănială, 2014) necessitate the enhancement of education and professional growth. (Hager & Brudney, 2004), and the growth of social solidarity (Păceşilă, 2017). Volunteers can gain practical experience in the field in which they have been formally educated. Despite the fact that participation in volunteer involvement cannot assure a paid position (Paine et al., 2013), volunteering provides individuals with the chance to acquire interview-required skills such as work teamwork, resource management, communication and networking, and project management (Janey et al., 1991). Moreover, volunteering should be regarded as a source of social investment (Wilkinson & Bittman, 2002; Handy & Mook, 2011; Pro Vobis, 2017) because volunteers have the chances to contact people from a variety of disciplines (Campaspe, 2015), thereby establishing a network of contacts. Research on volunteer professional development demonstrates the need of continuous, learner-centred professional development for volunteers' abilities to enhance learning experiences. (Hunzicker, 2011; Smith, 2013).

Importantly, there were clear indications from teachers that students with ASD themselves participate significantly in developing their professional practices. Even though the teachers reported learning and developing their profession through experiences with and observation of students with ASD, they emphasised the importance of having different cases that would enhance their understanding of ASD and sharpen their skills in teaching. Murphey (1993) reports that when teachers are open-minded to learning from their students, there is less ambiguity, allowing them to be more certain that what they are doing is appropriate for their specific students, and they can roughly determine how things are working from activity logs and make the necessary adjustments. Murphey (1993) adds that this lessens the anxiety that comes with worrying whether their lesson plan will work with this particular group before class. from a general education perspective, the benefits of teacher development, especially for newly certified teachers who may face challenges in their first few months of teaching, as well as the usefulness of student voice in maximising teachers' and pupils' potential (Demetriou & Wilson, 2010).

The role of teamwork quality has impacted the professional development of teachers in this study. Implementing teams in educational contexts is not a simple undertaking, and changing instructors' practices is much more challenging (e.g., Crow & Pounder, 2000; Fullan, 2002; Scribner et al., 2007).The process of working together as a team is fraught with challenges in a variety of domains, including but not limited to the following: communicating with other members of the group, establishing a relationship based on trust, recognising members of the group who do not contribute to it, and so on (Whatley, 2009). Even though teamwork is critical in the teaching field, challenges can reduce the positive effects of teamwork. According to team members, a lack of financing (Ysseldyke et al., 1981), opportunities, time, and organized decision making can all hinder collaboration

(Huebner & Gould, 1991; Bahr et al. 1999; Welch & Tulbert, 2000). A missing formal team training (Whitten & Dieker, 1995), a deficit of multidisciplinary team collaboration and confidence (Senior & Swailes, 2004), insufficient preparation for team meetings (Pfeiffer, 1980), and an ambiguity of shared team goals (Caple & Cox, 1989) have also been recognized as barriers to effective teamwork.

As the teachers mentioned, reaching a high position in professional development comes with desirable benefits for both teachers and students with ASD. According to the literature, 'well-structured PD can lead to successful changes in teachers' practice, school improvement, and gains in students' achievement' (Bolam & Weindling, 2006, 113). The teachers of students with ASD become very persistent in helping them reach their educational goals. The internal psychological parts of human development are critical and will be reflected in their practices. Educational psychology has focused on finding More empirically supported research evaluating the extent to which teachers' professional development improves their self-efficacy, knowledge, abilities, and teaching practice, as well as how TPD helps their personal, social, and emotional growth (Rodriguez et al., 2020).

Limitations

The study's methodology relies on the participants' ability to express their lived experiences regarding the phenomenology under investigation during the time period of data collection which have a significant impact on the findings. The volume of knowledge and contribution of each participant to this study varies depending on the rich experiences and ability to articulate his or her thoughts and interpretation. In addition**,** the professional development's sources and outcomes that were reported in this study are limited to what participants indicated and discussed, however, these findings may miss some influential factors that may contribute to professional development.

Conclusion

To conclude, professional development is a shared experience involve many stakeholders and ongoing process consists mutable stages through lengthy period of time Professional development benefits are well documented in the literature, and it has been established that teachers at various stages of their careers require some form of training to enhance their practice, particularly with challenging students in fields such as special education. Thus, it can be inferred that the professional development of special education teachers is a complicated social and cultural concept, a multipurpose system of related components, and an ongoing process of deepening knowledge, perfecting skills and competencies, and shaping attitudes and beliefs that begins at the point of initial teacher training and continues throughout all professional activity. Its goals are to enhance the teaching and learning process, academic achievement, and the professional community overall. To promote teacher development, educators should be actively engaged in their own learning. Professional development can be achieved through observing other instructors, applying what they have learned and seeking advice, assessing and evaluating students' progress, conducting and contributing to discussions, integrating new information into classroom management, and engaging in activities as students. Finally, the study's findings revealed many areas of future research suggestions should be considered. Special education preparing programs have to be examined and remoulded to meet the students' teacher demands in developing their practices. In addition, novice teachers should receive additional attention and supports from researchers to foster their professional growth.

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Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Name	Age	Gender	Experience years	Degree	School level
Sami	32	Male	8 Years	Master	Primary
Rami	30	Male	7 Years	Master	Primary
Noreen	35	Female	12 Years	Bachelor	Primary
Sara	33	Female	10 Years	Master	Primary
Jamila	31	Female	8 Years	Bachelor	Primary
Hanadi	31	Female	8 Years	Bachelor	Primary
Juomana	30	Female	8 Years	Master	Primary
Abeer	34	Female	10 Years	Bachelor	Primary
Laila	33	Female	10 Years	Master	Primary
Noor	34	Female	10 Years	Master	Primary
Sahr	30	Female	7 Years	Master	Primary
Yasmin	33	Female	9 Years	Bachelor	Primary
Zahra	28	Female	6 Years	Bachelor	Primary