

To be or to do: Effective Characteristics of Teachers of Children with Developmental Disorders and Disabilities

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Abstract

This study reports on the results of a qualitative phenomenographic study that aims to determine the effective characteristics of teachers of children with developmental disorders and disabilities in Jordan, and to identify the best practices that can be implemented in the field of special education in Jordan. To achieve the objectives of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with (35) university students receiving training in special education centers within the requirements of field training. The researcher transcribed and manually collected participants' experiences and responses using phenomenological and thematic analyses. The results of the main research question showed two sets of characteristics: there was a clear consensus on the role of personal and moral characteristics of teachers on the one hand, and on the professional and academic qualities on the other hand. The results of the second question showed some considerations related to professional practices during the service. The results of the study indicate the need to reconsider the policies and mechanisms of admission to higher education programs and emphasize the importance of in-service vocational training, which ensures continuous, appropriate and effective education for children with disabilities.

Keywords: Autism, developmental disabilities, effective teacher, phenomenographic analysis, qualitative.

أن أكون أو أن أفعل: الخصائص الفعالة لمعلمي الأطفال ذوي الاضطرابات والاعاقات النمائية

صفاء العلي

الجامعة الاردنية ، الأردن

ملخص

تشير هذه الدراسة إلى نتائج دراسة نوعية صورية تهدف إلى تحديد الخصائص الفعالة لمعلمي الأطفال ذوي الاضطرابات والإعاقات النمائية في الأردن، وتحديد أفضل الممارسات التي يمكن تنفيذها في ميدان التربية الخاصة في الأردن. لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة أجريت مقابلات شبه منظمة مع (35) طالب جامعي يتلقون تدريبهم في مراكز التربية الخاصة ضمن متطلبات التدريب الميداني. نسخ الباحث وجمع تجارب المشاركين وردودهم يدوياً باستخدام التحليل الظواهري والتحليل الصوري. أظهرت نتائج السؤال البحثي الرئيسي عن مجموعتين من الخصائص: فقد كان هناك إجماع واضح على دور الخصائص الشخصية والأخلاقية للمعلمين من جهة وعلى الصفات المهنية والأكاديمية من جهة أخرى. في حين أظهرت نتائج السؤال الثاني بعض الاعتبارات المتعلقة بالممارسات المهنية في أثناء الخدمة. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى ضرورة إعادة النظر في سياسات وآليات القبول في برامج التعليم العالي وتؤكد على أهمية التدريب المهني في أثناء الخدمة، والذي يضمن التعليم المستمر والمناسب والملائم والفعال للأطفال ذوي الإعاقات.

الكلمات الدالة: التوحد، الإعاقات النمائية، المعلم الفعال، التحليل الصوري، النوعي.



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Introduction

Serving children with disabilities is highly demanding and requires highly qualified teachers who can manage the challenging and stressful loads that vary based on disability type and severity (Johnson & semmelroth,2013). Teachers of children with disabilities need to tolerate many variables related to the disability, students' maladaptive behaviors, work load, time and resources, large effort and low productivity, salary and more; all of these constitute the main sources of teacher stress, which also influence teaching quality and learning outcomes (Ghani, Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2014). Teacher quality is a very serious issue when it is related to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); the teachers of those children need to handle many difficult variables, for example, challenging behavior, aggressiveness, self-injuries, stereotypes and frustrating outcomes (Mazin,2011).

Teacher quality, which defines the differences among teachers, according to Kennedy (2008), is a significant factor influencing learning (Goldhaber,2010); there is a personal factor that makes teachers effective. The question of what made your favorite teacher your favorite was investigated in a qualitative study by Kredl and Colaninno (2017). The findings of that study suggest that three categories contribute to the best teachers: professional qualities, personal qualities, and relational qualities.

According to a study conducted by Raufielder, Nitsche, Bneitmeyes, Kebler, Herrmann and Regner (2016) using semi-structured interviews administered to 86 students without disability in Germany bad and good teachers are defined by personal characteristics, the students in this study prioritized personal traits (humor, empathy, assertiveness) over academic traits. Nedelcea (2010) tried to detect whether teacher effectiveness is correlated with the personality and emotional quotient of Romanian teachers in the field of special education; Nedelcea's result agreed that teachers working with students with disabilities seem to be different from teachers working with students without disability. A study demonstrating the same results, which were revealed through mixed method research in Tanzania, explores newly qualified teacher pedagogy in lower primary classes; two participants in this research indicated that the personal qualities of teachers working with disabled students play a vital role in a difficult learning environment; these qualities were: patience, heart, love, ability to be motivated, changing teaching strategies (Westbrook & Croft,2015).

Indicators of effective teachers and whether professional standards are important for teacher effectiveness in special education were investigated by Woolf (2015); participants in that study stated that there were special characteristics of special education teachers, and they prioritized ethical characteristics, communication, instructional strategies and collaboration. In line with this result, Mazin (2011) revealed the best predictors of teacher quality for ASD students; this study suggested three major predictors: knowledge, skills and personal teacher characteristics.

Conscience and internal desire are considered the main factors motivating the teachers of students with disabilities to display the best practices: altruistic love based on moral values and the desire to help, mercy and humility are indicators of future teachers of student with disabilities (Pavenkove, Pavenkove and Rubtcova, 2015). While the definition of teacher quality is still unclear, Kennedy (2008) explains that to understand the meaning of teacher quality there are many different dimensions that should be explored, including teachers' attitudes, values, personality traits, knowledge, and classroom lessons and students' learning activities.

Recommendations from Lawson and Cruz (2017) and Sledge and Pazey (2013) explain that we do not have a clear vision of how the quality of special education teachers should be evaluated; they suggest future research focused on the best qualities to evaluate and measure teacher practices.

Based on qualitative methodology, the author of this study will explore the ways participants experiencing different phenomena using phenomenographic method (Beaulieu,2017; Kettunen, Vuorinen, & Sampson, 2015; Khan,2014). The phenomenographic study involves open-ended interviews in which participants are asked to describe their 'life-world' where the phenomenon is experienced (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002), Dall'Alba (2000) mentioned that research focuses on people experiencing or understanding different features of their reality as "pure" phenomenographic research. The aims of this study are to answer the following questions:

- whether there are specific characteristics of effective teachers working with ID/ASD?

- How these characteristics can be ensured for all teachers in special education centers from the point of view of participants?

Method and procedures

Methodological Background

Phenomenography is a qualitative research approach that has been designed to find out how people experience a phenomenon, particularly the ways of experiencing different phenomena (Beaulieu, 2017; Dall'Alba, 2000; Khan, 2014; Prosser, 2000), ways of seeing them, knowing about them and having skills related to them with it commonly used in educational contexts to explore subjective experiences of teaching (Lindner & Marshall, 2003; Ornek, 2008; Khan, 2014; Beaulieu, 2017). Dahlin (2007) suggests that phenomenography can best be understood as a research framework designed to highlight and describe variations in experience or variations in the ways people see a phenomenon and 'by learning about how the world appears to others, we will learn what the world is like, and what the world could be like' (Dall'Alba, 2000).

Phenomenography study accepts holding a variation of qualitative conceptions of people. Which means that a range of different ideas and meanings evident of participants are identified in order to develop collective meaning on the variation of meaning (Loughland, Reid & Petocz, 2002). Phenomenography methodology is the description and analysis of experience at a collective level that is the focus "with the aim to find all the qualitatively different ways of seeing the phenomena" (Thune & Eckerdale, 2009, p. 340). Phenomena provides an analytical system to detect student differences in their views. Results from this approach can lead to action research for adapting to fit a variety of student population, phenomenography research outcomes will come out in a limited number of categories (Beaulieu, 2017; Kettunen, Vuorinen, & Sampson, 2015).

Participants

Phenomenographic methods follow the concept of saturation. Saturation is about conducting interviews until the input draws repeated and continuous patterns and there is no more to be added by conducting more interviews. (Beaulieu, 2017; Sandbergh, 1997). In this study we interviewed forty undergraduate special education students in their last academic study year in Jordan. The data from five students were excluded for issues of truthiness and the weak qualitative content of the responses; thus, the final sample consists of (35) participants (2 males, 33 female) aged between 21-22, except for one participant aged 30 who is married and has children. All the selected participants are in their last academic year and were registered in a practicum course, which is a compulsory course for all students studying special education. This course requires that the students to attend special education centers five hours per day. Informed consent in writing was obtained from participants included in the study, and all of them assured that their participations and responses were voluntary and anonymous. (see Appendix A for more information on participants' demographic data).

Data collection tools

Conducting phenomenography in educational research for data collection and analysis, requires Interview the participants, semi-structured interview, is the preferred method (Akerlind, 2005; Prosser, 2000). The aim of the interview is: To have the participants reflect on their experiences and then relate those experiences to the interviewer in such a way that the two come to a mutual understanding about the meanings of the experiences of the (or of the account of the experiences). (Ornek, 2008; Khan 2014; Beaulieu, 2017).

To collect the targeted data, the researcher developed an open-ended question instrument regarding effective characteristics in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher interviewed five random Ph.D. students (working in the field of special education) who were asked who is the effective teacher? The initial responses resulting from the first phase provided good insight into interview protocol, the final revision of semi-structured interview, reviewed by ten assistant professors of special education for content validity. (see Appendix B provides the semi-structured interview protocol). The author of this study administered the interviews in the last month of the second semester of 2018 to ensure that all the

participants had enough valid experience and accurate observations. Participants were individually interviewed for 20-40 minutes by author of this stud.

Data Analysis

Analysis approach in this study drew upon qualitative methodology of phenomenography (Khan,2014; Prosser, 2000), and thematic analysis as explained by Braun and Clark (2006). Phonomyography analysis identifies similarities and differences in the way the participants perceive effectiveness, It involves identifying the ways in which the phenomena is experienced by participants and allows for grouping the experiences (Beaulieu, 2017), Sjöström & Dahlgren (2002) stated seven steps to explain the procedure of data analysis in phonomyography research. These steps are as follows:

- Familiarization, which means the researcher becomes familiar to the material by means of reading through the transcripts. This step is important in making corrections in the transcripts.
- Compilation of answers from participants to a certain question. The researcher should identify the most significant elements in answers given by participants.
- Condensation, or reduction, of the individual answers to find the central parts of a dialogue.
- Preliminary grouping or classification of similar answers.
- Preliminary comparison of categories.
- naming of categories.
- Contrastive comparison of categories.

The first step includes reading the transcript data many times to become familiar with the data and to ensure data saturation. Then, general initial codes are applied to the effective characteristics of teachers, which are supported by participants' phrases and expressions. Next, the initial reduction of the individual answers to find the central parts of a dialogue are reviewed many times so that relevant classification of similar answers emerged. Finally, the naming of categories was revised to ensure valid and reliable patterns. The author of this study preferred to discuss the themes that emerged horizontally because they believe these conceptions are equally important in relationship to one another.

The strongest coherent themes justified by the study procedures were used in the semi- structured interviews, which were prepared with the goals of the study in mind. A large amount of data was collected due to substantial sample size and many aspects of sample homogeneity, including academic level, age, education level, and duration of experience. This homogeneity contributed to obtaining consistent due to the clear, robust data that enhanced the credibility and consistency in the results regarding the development of the categories and themes.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In addition to the abovementioned procedures regarding homogeneity and sample size, which played a vital role in enhancing the credibility of the data, we verified the data using the intercoder reliability check (two researchers independently code interview transcripts and compare). Author of this study reviewed the responses and tried to derive the patterns indicated by these data. The results of the review showed agreement on the general themes. In addition, five participants reviewed the results of the transcribed data, which researchers recorded, and checked whether the written words and phrases consistently reflect their responses to the interview questions. The participants didn't make any changes to the data transcripts (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Linger, Pugach & Richardson, 2005).

Results

After collecting, recording, understanding, and transcribed the data, we reviewed the data and organized them, so that they could be grouped into general categories reflecting the major specific patterns, then we read the reviewed patterns multiple times and finally developed the themes .The data analysis showed a clear consensus among all the participants (n = 35) who regarded the personal characteristics of effective teachers to be the main factors determining the characteristics

of effective teachers of children with intellectual disabilities and children with autism spectrum disorder, which were considered the most important factor in achieving a highly qualified education.

Category A: Personal Characteristics

Within this pattern, themes emerged describing the effective personal characteristics, including personal psychological characteristics and moral characteristics.

Theme I: Personal psychological characteristics. All participants (n = 35) agreed on the need to have the psychosocial characteristics that characterize effective teachers and enhance the quality of education and care provided to children with disabilities due to disability variables. Participants prioritize these types of personality characteristics from the first class: patience, endurance, flexibility, love of children, cheerful, optimistic and positive personality seeking change for the better, sympathetic and affectionate with children with disabilities. All these references to psychological and personal themes appeared in participants' phrases. Nari states that.

"Your success as a teacher of an autistic child means having the ability to tolerate boring repetition and routine when you deal with a child on daily tasks, and you must also expect that after that great effort you will feel like you did nothing".

Abrar explains the importance of tolerance: *"It may be difficult to agree on a description of the characteristics of an effective teacher when dealing with an autistic child, but it is certain that everyone will realize the importance of patience and the ability to tolerate the many challenging behaviors that these children exhibit. I choose to study special education, but now I doubt that I will be a special education teacher; I could not handle the frustration of the inability of children to accomplish, ah what I did myself..."*

A real situation of teacher impatience was described by Rahi: *"It bothered me to see a teacher with the ability to teach effectively who was losing her temper over simple issues related to the behaviors that the children with intellectual disabilities showed".*

"Your success as a teacher of an autistic child is determined by the amount of endurance and patience that you have, not only in frustrating situations but also in situations where you may sometimes laugh at the behavior of the children", added Rahi. agree with Reen expressed her feeling and the need to be calm by stating that

"I was depressed in the first two weeks I attended the center for ASD; Aamir came near me and bite me and repeated it every day more than once. I could not bear it".

Jana explained the personal side of teaching: *"Working with children requires characteristics that all teachers do not have in their nature. It is not a question of the degree to which you are academically qualified. Endurance, patience and calm are the most important factors, based on my experience in the field. My child threw himself on the floor every day, broke games, hit me".*

All the participants (n = 35) agreed on the priority of patience, endurance and calm for the teachers of children with disabilities. The participants mentioned justifications for many of the problematic characteristics of children with disabilities, particularly those with autism, as well as the slow progress, workload, principals' policies.

"It's hard for a teacher who does not love children to be creative with them", Reen opined. Abi agreed by saying that

"To be effective means to understand the characteristics of these children and to love them and to believe in your ability to change with them".

Mlak explain the important role of love in helping teachers handle many maladaptive behaviors, saying *"If you do not like children, you cannot tolerate their difficult behavior, such as spitting, playing their noses, putting their hands in their underwear, and engaging in some sexual behaviors. The kids smiled at me and waved to me when I entered the center. They certainly felt I loved them".* Fnon summarized love as a characteristic:

"The ability to deal with these children means that you take on the role of a mother".

Some participants addressed compassion as something every effective teacher need. Hebo (who has a sister with ID) states

"The teacher has to be compassionate with these children. I remember my sister when dealing with them. I treated them as I would like others to treat my sister. I was working with them."

Six participants in this study had a relative with a disability, and agreed with Hibo that this was the reason for their studies of special education

The importance of fun and its relation to some variables appeared in Ahood's opinion: *"The ability of a teacher to have fun within the institution indicates satisfaction; satisfaction is linked to increased effectiveness, and the institution's principal is responsible for this"*.

Reen stated that.

"the calmness of the children when they interact with you and their needs and their interaction and smiles and their desire to stay near you is an indication of the love you give them; otherwise, these indicators would not appear." Participant (n=15) agrees with Reen.

Theme II: Ethical characteristics. The extracted data addresses the important role of the moral characteristics of all teachers, which becomes more significant when working with children with disabilities. The participants in this study value the importance of the moral qualities of teachers of children with disabilities, such as the level of religious faith, honesty, respect for the privacy of children, and sensing their feelings, which participants justify for reasons related to disability variables, such as being unable to express or defend themselves, not knowing their rights, and being unable to express their dissatisfaction or resentment. Participant (n=10) emphasizes the importance of morality and the awareness of the existence of God as a characteristic of effective teachers of children with disabilities.

Mrak says that *"one of the most important characteristics of teachers of children with disabilities is the fear of God"*.

"The fact is that without religious conviction, which prompts me to be kind, honest and honest with these children, and behave professionally, I feel that I could not work with these children in the future",

Similarly, Eman states that *"the teachers should feel with them and realize that they are suffering even if they do not express their feeling"*.

"Children with intellectual disabilities display many difficult behaviors, such as hitting, spitting, beating their classmates, chaos and endless screaming. You have to remember that you are dealing with a child", according to Eslam.

Most participants (n=30) agree that a camera should be available in all classes of children with disabilities. Not everyone fears God, which is difficult to measure.

Frah explains that *"I am sure that without the camera in this class, the teacher would have resorted to physical punishment"*. *"She loses her temper quickly and uses a low-pitched voice for fear of the camera"*, Farah added. Maryam adds that unconditional acceptance of children with disabilities is important:

"People tend to pay attention to the most beautiful and pleasant, but the teacher must realize that educational needs are the teacher's responsibility, regardless of their characteristics". Three other participants shared this opinion.

Fonon miserably stated that, based on her experience in training, *"In my view, the effective teacher is not the one who has the ability to teach effectively, but is rather the one with the correct ethics. So, I see an effective teacher with specific children who receives gifts from their parents and does not make the same effort"*.

Category B: Professional and Teaching Characteristics

The results of the participants' data analysis revealed a clear focus on characteristics related to teaching experience, professional development and behavior management skills.

Theme 1: Teaching strategies and professional development. All the participants in the study agreed that there are characteristics related to teaching strategies that define effective teachers. Working with children with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders necessarily requires continuous development, a desire to learn new practices, attempts to experiment with new teaching strategies, planning, playing with children for teaching purposes, and educating in accordance with the different needs of the students.

"I truly did not see a teacher, but it seemed to me, it was a robot who was teaching in ritualistic and routine way every day," says Hiba.

"Every child with disabilities has a special world. You have to understand this world so that you can deal with it appropriately and ideally."

"When I see a teacher come down to the ground and teach children through play, using various teaching activities, I can say with confidence that it is one of the indicators of effective teaching that we are looking for," Yasei mentioned".

This is the teacher you see playing with the children who does the best with the hope of helping them to learn," Nor mentioned".

The teacher with whom I trained had nothing to learn; she used the same tools and repeated the techniques even if they were not useful, and despite the fact that I saw her design and prepare educational tools, she never used them. I do not know if she was doing that to keep herself away from the children or to satisfy the principal, "Abrar said with an angry tone.

For Lina, *"An effective teacher is one who has precise observation skills and the ability to distinguish the differences among the students, specifically among the ASD children; each of these students has their own language for communication."*

Lina stresses that *"the teacher who seeks to develop himself by diversifying his methods and working hard to attract the child's attention in any way is effective "*.

Theme II: Understanding and managing behavior. Most of the participants in the study (n = 28) agreed that what distinguishes teachers of students with intellectual disabilities and students with autism disorder is their ability to understand and manage the behavior of children, and the participants who have been trained with the autism class demonstrated the importance of these characteristics and skills significantly and pointed out that the inability of the teacher to possess these features not only reduces his/her effectiveness, but directly and indirectly effects serious issues related to the safe educational environment for the child and others. Participants mentioned the importance of the teacher's ability to identify and support the needs of each autistic child, which most participants viewed as keys to students' responses in addition to using ignoring effectively, understanding, correct practices, and appropriate punishment procedures.

*"One of the distinguishing features of the autistic children's teacher is the ability to discover the key that wakes the child. The student I trained never responded to me until I noticed her reaction when she heard a song. She used the as a way to make her responses "*Njood said.

This is also confirmed by Sarah who trained with a child who autistic and says that *"every child has a key and characteristics that distinct him/her from others, and the effective teacher is the one who discovers that key."*

"My teacher gave the lesson effectively, but I was surprised by her inability to control the students' behavior," Frah stated miserably. "She screamed a lot and resorted to punishment frequently".

"When I used negative punishments with my child, he started laughing continuously to a degree that made you mad, but thank God, I had the ability to ignore it, but when I was provoked, I had to leave the classroom"• Mah said.

The second research purpose of this study is to identify the procedures that can be used to ensure the characteristics of effectiveness for all teachers of children with developmental disabilities and autism disorders in the special education centers; this was derived from the first research question in this study based on the participants' perspectives and experiences in the field of special education.

The participants' data and statements were reviewed and revised so they could be classified into Categories, which in turn were formulated into the main themes of the findings for this research question. All the participants' data were linked to the procedures that could be used before, during and after the preparation of the special education teacher.

Category C: Preservice Procedures

The best way to ensure the availability of effective characteristics and high-quality educational outputs of teachers of students with disabilities is to ensure that teachers are prepared in advance. A set of procedures and decisions that can be relied upon resulted from this study. Some of these procedures are related to the admission procedures in higher institutions, which should include providing applicants with awareness and guidance regarding the nature of working with these children, whereas the other procedures are related to the process of academic preparation in institutions of higher education and to reconsidering some courses in special education programs, with focus on practical courses.

"Honestly, I did not know that working with children with disabilities is like this. What we have learned is totally different from what it is like in the field," said Aseel.

"It was my choice to study special education, but I did not know what it would be like. If all the centers of special education are like the center where I trained, I will regret that I studied that major".

"When I joined the practicum course, I felt like I did not know anything about it," Eman stated. He added that *"our studies in the university lacked a practical component."*

Category D: In-Service Procedures

Participants expressed a range of measures that could be taken to ensure not only effective teaching but also an effective education system. Some participants mentioned the importance of having an evaluation system during the teacher's apprenticeship period, which is usually three months long, aimed at revealing to what degree the teacher displays ethical, personal and professional qualities. This could be accomplished by observing the teacher in his interactions with children with disabilities, noting the teaching strategies, motivation, and desire for teaching and creativity, productivity and the children's outcomes. Some participants addressed the importance of monitoring the reactions of children with disabilities, as a predictor of effective teachers.

"Teacher practices in the classroom alone are the rule to be relied on to judge the effectiveness of the teacher of children with disabilities," says Yasmin. *"You can see the strategy, the variety of methods being used in the class and play with the children and, most importantly, the children's reactions, for instance, their smiles,*

the calmness of the children, their needs, their interactions, and their desire to stay near you all indicate the love you gave to them".

However, Lina disagrees, saying that "the reactions of autistic children towards the teacher" are indicators of the teacher's effective knowledge. *"Autistic children's responses cannot be relied upon as an indicator of effective teachers. The teacher in my class was very negative and used punishment frequently, and the child still likes her; instead, the educational practices the teacher practiced during his trial period should be noted."*

All the participants agree that physical characteristics such as height, weight, skin color, beauty level, and age cannot be relied upon as variables in judging who is an effective teacher. However, there seems to be a clear relationship between the presence of a disabled relative that motivates the characteristics of effective teachers, specifically with regard to moral and personal psychological aspects.

"The teacher in my class had 39 years of experience and was married, but when the administration refused to give her leave she acted unprofessionally," says Lina.

"The teacher has to be compassionate with these children; when dealing with them, I remember my sister. I treated them as I would like others to treat my sister," says Heba.

Six participants in this study has a relative suffering from a disability.

"I studied special education because I have a sister who suffered from speech and language disorders. At the time, I knew about the special education teacher".

"What made me study special education was that I had a cousin with Down syndrome. I was small, and I was afraid of him".

"My love for these children came from my love for my younger brother who suffers from an intellectual disability, and my brother was the reason I decided to study special education," said Sarah, a Saudi student.

The participants strongly emphasized the relationship between the principal's system and the increase or decrease of opportunities for the emergence of effective characteristics of teachers. This includes a fair, positive principal's system that evaluates teachers' efforts systematically and continuously monitors performance within classrooms. However, after field training at this center, I loved to work with these children more."

Malk mentions a situation that reflects the impact of the principals on teachers' behavior and emotions: *"When the teacher in my class was quarreling with the staff, she came to the class angry, starting to reprimand students for the simplest problems".*

Jumana said *"I chose to study special education and to train in this center to reinforce my competency, but the principals do not take into account the pressure that the teacher faces with these children. I was only allowed ten minutes to have my meal".*

"My training in this center made me hate working with these children; there is no educational system, and the administrator's staff at the center is biased towards some teachers. I never felt the benefit of training," says Jumana (who trained in a charity center for intellectual disabilities). *I will not work with children with disabilities in the future".*

Jumana added in that "the teacher's papers are not an indication of his/her effectiveness; this is what I saw".

Rahaf trained in the same institution where Jumana was trained. "It was my choice to study special education, but I did not know what it means. If all the special education centers are like this, I would regret it because I studied this major," Rahaf commented.

"The center where I have been trained follows a unified system that is consistent with what the teachers expected. It is good in some areas, but it has negative effects because it does not give the teacher the flexibility to innovate and to diversify into new strategies, and the number of students in the classroom makes you feel exhausted "she added.

"Despite my restricted system, my experience at this center was fantastic and its standards are ideal, I enjoyed working there," said Rahaf who earned an A in field training course.

The participants also pointed out that it is the responsibility of the center to reduce the pressure on teachers in relation to the number of children in the classroom. The participants estimated that in order for teachers to effectively teach the students, especially children with autism, the ratio should be one teacher for every two children with autism. In addition, it is important to reduce the burden on teachers through periodic rest during the day and by shifting between teachers to ensure that the same teacher is not subjected to the same level of behavioral tension with children with severe disabilities and challenging behavior. The words of the participants reflect the importance of in-service vocational training programs, which aim to increase the effectiveness of teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to manage behavior and increase their moral beliefs.

Mona remembers the attitude of one of the teachers: "the teacher said to me: you must scream until they respond to you".

"Working with children with autism disorder has affected my mental wellbeing," Noor said, adding "I do not know how parents can bear their child".

"I never expected the emotional load in the field of special education" Salsabel mentioned miserably.

"Teachers must know that their disagreements with administrators and colleagues does not mean that they can infringe on the students' right to learn," says Maryam.

"After I taught my students the color red, and while I was walking with her in the corridors of the center, I asked her about the red color everywhere," one of the teachers told me, don't tire yourself, as you did nothing"

Finally, all participants agreed that the camera essential in all classes for children with disabilities. According to the participants, the internal factors of religious and moral play a role in the classroom practices of the teacher, and since the measurement and availability of this variable is difficult for everyone, participants pointed out the importance of the camera.

Discussion and Implication

This study aimed to develop indicators of characteristics that define effective teachers of children with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. The results of this study showed that the participants agree on the existence of major patterns that determine the characteristics of the effective teachers of children with disabilities. The results of the study showed that there are two main Categories. The first is personal characteristics', which include both personal psychological characteristics and ethical characteristics. This result is consistent with many studies suggesting the importance of personal characteristics in all their dimensions and the characteristics of effective teachers.

The other main Category is professional characteristics that have resulted in characteristics related to teaching strategies and professional development, and characteristics that represent the teacher's effectiveness in managing behavior (Naveel, 2010). These results were consistent with the results of Mazin (2011), Ghani, Ahmad and Ibrahim (2014), and Ruppap, Roberts and Olson (2018). The results of this study also suggest the importance of behavioral management, especially with children with autism.

The characteristics of children with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders require a different kind of

teacher (Zhang, Wang, Losinki & Katsiyannis, 2014). The characteristics of the effectiveness of these teachers have dimensions that may be quite different from those of nondisabled children's teachers (Kennedy, 2008). However, relying on these indicators for children with disabilities takes a different form; the type of educational accountability is different in special education centers than in regular education schools, which means that the internal self-control resources of teachers should be considered the best predictors of effective teachers. The findings of this study may be contrary to what is theoretically expected among the majority of educators who judge the effectiveness for teachers of nondisabled children based on the extent of their specific educational qualifications and achievement outputs (Benedict, Thomas, Kimerling and Leko, 2013) and ignore the idea that these competencies are less beneficial unless they are accompanied by personal, psychological and moral characteristics particularly when working with children with disabilities (Bradova, 2013), which are the main factors for being giving and loving, working hard, and avoiding feeling disappointed (Pavencova and Rubtcova, 2015).

There is no doubt that the teaching strategies and the motivation to improve, are the characteristics that would define effective teachers of children with disabilities. This is demonstrated by the results of this study in the second main category, which the participants expressed through a variety of characteristics: variety of classroom activities, planning, teaching that is suitable for students' needs, playing as a teaching strategy, awareness of individual differences, and keeping students on task (Dostson, Floyd, Dukes & Darling, 2014; Gabdulkhakov, 2016; Woolf, 2015).

Whitaker (2003) considers teacher education a vital role in preparing effective special education teachers and qualifying them to face the multiple challenges expected in the workplace in the field of special education, which would help them to achieve personal satisfaction and professional success, which in turn reinforces their decision to remain in the field for many years.

These research findings provide insight into the definition of the characteristics of the effective teachers of children with intellectual disabilities and autism disorder based on real observations and experiences. The following are recommendations of procedures and practices, which would support and ensure these characteristics for all preservice and in-service teachers:

- Reconsidering course plans of special education program in higher education to include additional practical courses, assignments and ethical practices at all academic levels.
- Regular workshop trainings for teachers of children with autism should be regularly administered.
- Behavior modification plans should be followed and supervised by a committee inside the organization to ensure ethical practices. Reconsidering the admission process. Students who will be admitted to special education programs should be required to fulfill one of the following conditions: indicate that he/she was a volunteer for at least three months in a special education center or present evidence that he/she has a close relative with any kind of disability.
- Stakeholders should consider many factors linked to effective teachers, such as:
 - The number of children per teacher in each class; the ideal ratio is 1: 3 for children with ASD and 1:4-5 for children with ID.
 - Teacher job satisfaction
 - Stress management during work.
 - Positive environment and staff appreciation play a vital role in reinforcing effective teachers and education.
 - Finally, lifelong effective teachers of children with ID/ASD requires a particular teacher personality and certain ethical features that are enhanced by a supportive professional environment, and systematic training program.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical Approval. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of Interest. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Appendix A

Table .1: Participants' Demographic Data

Demographic Data	Centers for ASD N=20*4	Center for ID N=15*3
Gender		
Male	2	0
Female	18	15
Age		
21-22	19	15
Older than 22	1	0

Appendix B

Table 2: Semi-structured interview protocol.

1. Who is the effective teacher according to your experiences in the field?
2. Are there specific characteristics related to effective teachers?
3. Based on your experience in the field, could you support these characteristics with real examples?
4. How does the absence of these characteristics affect the education of persons with disabilities?
5. How can these characteristics be ensured?

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