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PERCEPTIONS OF SAUDI RECENTLY GRADUATED UNPLACED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY TOWARD THEIR PREPARATION

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, my parents, wife, kids, brother, and sisters, who have been great supporters throughout my Ph.D. journey.

To all my friends who have supported me throughout my graduate studies.

To all the special education teachers, the faculty members, and the professionals in the field of special education.

To all the students with intellectual disability and their families.

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ABSTRACT

The Saudi Ministry of Education and Saudi universities have taken significant steps toward meeting the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 by reviewing the performance of teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities to improve the quality of teacher preparation, including for those who teach students with intellectual disability (ID). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of recently graduated unplaced teachers (RGUTs) specializing in ID toward their preparation, and to identify how these programs can be continuously improved. Five themes emerged based on the analysis of their responses in the interviews: (a) the RGUTs' motivations to become special education teachers; (b) the RGUTs' perceptions of the programs' coursework; (c) the RGUTs' perceptions of their field experience; (d) the RGUTs' perceptions of professional development preparation in their preparation

programs; and lastly (e) the RGUTs' recommendations for teacher preparation programs. Implications, limitations, and future research are also provided.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Special education teacher preparation is a fundamental contributing factor in successfully educating students with disabilities, including those with intellectual disability (ID). Preparing special education teachers is a more complex process than preparing general education teachers due to the fact the special education teacher candidates are required to learn how to teach and work with a more diverse group of students who might exhibit a range of behavioral and learning challenges across various settings compared with general education teachers (Mamlin, 2012; Spooner et al., 2010). Effective special education teacher preparation means that such a teacher is capable of meeting and working with a student's family and other school professionals in school settings. This is necessary to determine whether or not a student is eligible for the receipt of special education services, as well as developing an appropriate Individual Education Program (IEP) for students in terms of their strengths and needs. Furthermore, it is important to note that special education teachers are more likely than general education teachers to work with students with medical problems, which makes them the first person to deal with, and provide help, in a variety of student situations such as seizures and other medical concerns (Mamlin, 2012).

In addition, special education teachers are required to develop and meet specified instructional objectives, including meeting accommodation needs and making modifications for students with disabilities. It can be seen that the quality of special education teachers is an essential factor in judging and assessing special education teacher preparation programs. Therefore, it is important for institutions to provide such programs to evaluate and continually

improve the quality of their teacher candidates, so that they can ensure their efficacy when the teacher candidates graduate and begin to work with students.

History of Special Education in Saudi Arabia

Individuals with disabilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not receive special education services prior to the 1950s (Aldabas, 2015). In the first half of that decade, the parents of children with disabilities fought to obtain services and supports in order to meet their children's needs because the parents, until then, had been responsible for providing any educational services and assistance that such children needed (Al-Ajmi, 2006). The first special education service in the country was provided for blind adults in 1958 (Al-Ajmi, 2006; Aldabas, 2015; Alquraini, 2011a). In 1960, the Saudi government established the Ministry of Education, and in 1962 the Department of Special Education was founded to provide appropriate education and services for deaf and blind students in special day schools. By the first half of the 1970s, the Department of Special Education had established institutions and residential schools to provide appropriate education services for students with ID. In the 1980s, students with ID were placed in residential schools or special day schools. Consequently, they did not have the opportunity to be educated in inclusive classrooms in regular schools. Nevertheless, after 1990, five-day special education classrooms and resource rooms in public schools were established for students with ID (Aldabas, 2015).

The Impact of the Islamic Religion on Special Education

Special education and the education system in the Islamic world are influenced by Islam, based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Alquraini, 2011b). Due to the fact that the Islamic religion emphasizes the significance of diversity and equality among all individuals, it positively influences Saudi students to work effectively and to interact with other

students from different language and cultural backgrounds (Al-Ahmadi, 2009). Islam also, however, has an influence on the education system in terms of gender in most of the Islamic countries. For instance, female students in some Arab counties receive their education in middle and high schools in which they are segregated from male students. When it comes to Saudi Arabia, it is the birthplace of Islam and home to the two holy mosques in Macca and Madinah. Al-Ahmadi (2009) assumed that because of the fact that Saudi Arabia is seen as the center of the Islamic world, Islam plays a major role in education, and with regard to Saudi social values in general. Alquraini (2011b) also described how having the two holy mosques in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a positive impact on the view of education and the importance of receiving a high-quality education. As Al-Ahmadi (2009) also indicated that religious rules in Islam, in general, have led to the development of the civil rights of individuals with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, including ensuring their right to live with dignity and to benefit from welfare. When it comes to individuals with disabilities in Saudi society, Al-Mousa (1999) stated that when a family has a child with a disability, this disability is seen as a test from Allah (God) for his or her parents to see if they will have sufficient patience to go to Heaven.

The Development of Special Education Services in Saudi Arabia

Currently, there is evidence of a significant improvement in terms of delivering special education services for students with learning disabilities compared with previous years. It is essential to know that students with learning disabilities in Saudi schools are the only disability group which is placed and taught in general classrooms alongside their peers and receive special education services in the form of resource rooms (Alnahdi, 2014). Currently, it can be seen that the Saudi government, represented by the Ministry of Education, offers more opportunities for

students with disabilities to be placed in special education programs and institutions than was the case in the past (Aldabas, 2015).

In addition, Bin-Battal (2016) pointed out that the number of special education programs in general schools and special education institutions increased from 47 in the first half of the 1990s, to 4,796 in 2015. Bin-Battal also indicated that the number of students who are receiving special education and related services increased from 5,208 students in 1992 to 63,461 students in 2015. According to Al-Mousa (2010), most of the students with disabilities are currently taught in special education classrooms in regular schools. Al-Mousa also stated that about 92% of students with disabilities are in special education programs in schools, while only 8% are in special education institutions. In addition, the majority of students with disabilities who are provided with special education programs in regular schools receive special education services in terms of both resource rooms and separate classrooms.

Factors Influencing the Development of Special Education Services in Saudi Arabia

The following are the most significant factors that have influenced the development of special education services in Saudi Arabia:

1. Funding from the Ministry of Education: it should be noted that the Ministry of Education has paid substantial attention to the education of individuals with disabilities. After the Ministry of Education established the Department of Special Education, the number of students with disabilities who were following special education programs increased. This development also had a positive impact on the attitudes of Saudi people toward educating individuals with disabilities (Bin-Battal, 2016).

2. Specialized Cadre: the Saudi government brought together a group of special education leaders including professors from King Saud University who had graduated from other countries

that are more advanced in terms of special education such as the United States and the United Kingdom, and educational experts from Saudi school districts, to develop a plan to improve the teaching skills of the country's special education teachers. The government's plan also included professional development workshops to help initiate a new special education preparation program in some universities to increase the quality of special education teachers who were enrolling in these programs (Al-Medlij & Rubinstein-Avil, 2018; Bin-Battal, 2016).

3. Developing Educational Rights: the implementation of relevant regulations in Saudi Arabia has been one of the most important factors with regard to influencing the improvement of services for students with disabilities (Aldabas, 2015; Alquraini, 2011a; Alquraini, 2013; Bin-Battal, 2016). Since the 2000s, legislation and policies such as the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI) and the Disability Code have been enacted to deliver IEPs and high-quality services in education, and to encourage the rehabilitation of students with disabilities in special education programs in regular schools and institutions.

Education for Students with ID in Saudi Arabia

Until now, students with ID in Saudi Arabia have been taught, either in institutions or in special education classrooms in public schools (Alnahdi, 2014). The Ministry of Education has provided special education classrooms in regular schools for students with mild and moderate ID since 1990, but students with severe ID are still taught in special education institutions that are directed by the Department of Special Education within the Ministry of Education (Aldabas, 2015; Alnahdi, 2014; Alquraini, 2011a). In addition, the authors have pointed out that some of the students who are identified as having a severe ID are placed in special institutions that are controlled by the Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs, where they receive social and residential assistance.

According to Aldabas (2015), students with severe ID who are in special education institutions that are supervised by the Department of Special Education, receive communication and behavioral support, while students with mild and moderate ID in special education classrooms in public schools receive curricula that focuses on improving their academic, social, and behavioral skills. Aldabas (2015) pointed out that the Ministry of Education has developed such curricula as part of their special education programs, and these curricula are the same curricula found in general education, but with the additional provision of accommodations and modifications based on the students' disabilities and appropriate additional skill development such as using braille and sign language.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

The quality of special education services that are provided to students with ID depends on the quality of the special education teachers and how they were prepared in their programs. Lately, researchers have attempted to investigate and assess the needs of teacher preparation programs when it comes to producing effective special education teachers. Research has highlighted the point that preparing educators to teach students with ID is a complex process (Nagro & de Bettencourt, 2017). They found that there are many different factors that have a major role to play in developing effective special education preparation programs including such aspects as cultural and social backgrounds of the preservice teachers, the program and the university rankings, the number of years the preparation program has been available, and preparation of the faculty (Alquraini & Rao, 2018; Correa et al., 2004; Hadadian et al., 2012; Kea et al., 2002). Due to the fact that most special education teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia were established just 15 years ago, and their quality has not yet been investigated, the findings of this study could positively influence the preparation of special education teachers

in this country. Also, in the Saudi Vision 2030 (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2020, February), the Saudi government has as one of its goals to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings. The Saudi Ministry of Education has begun collaborating with Saudi universities to review and develop the teacher preparation programs in these universities. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide an opportunity for Recently Graduated Unplaced Teachers (RGUTs) specializing in ID to reflect on their preparation in Saudi universities. I found that addressing the RGUTs' perceptions and recommendations for their preparation programs could help in the efforts of the Ministry of Education and universities in Saudi Arabia to ensure high-quality teacher preparation.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID in Saudi Arabia with regard to their preparation?
2. How can the preparation of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia be continuously improved from the perspective of RGUTs of students with ID?

Operational Definitions

Intellectual disability (ID): Intellectual disability as used in this study is defined by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD): "Intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18" (Schalock et al., 2010, p. 5).

Special Education Teacher Preparation programs: programs located and designed in the departments of special education at Saudi universities to offer coursework, training, and

professional development for preservice special education teachers in order to make them well-prepared and qualified in teaching students with disabilities.

Recently Graduated Unplaced Teachers (RGUTs): teachers who graduated in the last three years from one of the special education teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities and certificated by the Saudi Ministry of Education to teach students with ID but who have not yet been placed in schools or institutes.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

This chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section is an overview of the history of special education teacher preparation in Saudi Arabia. The second section is about laws and regulations in preparing special education teachers in the United States and Saudi Arabia. The third section outlines professional standards in the preparation of special education teachers in the United States and Saudi Arabia (i.e., CEC, CAEP, ATE, and NCAAA standards). The fourth section reviews research on special education teacher preparation based on four major themes that emerged in my analysis of selected studies (i.e., coursework delivery, field experience and training, implementing technology, and home-school collaboration). The final section reviews research on the perceptions of special education teachers toward their preparation in Saudi Arabia.

History of the Preparation of Special Education Teachers in Saudi Arabia

The provision of special education teachers and other service providers was seen as one of the challenges when the Saudi government decided to establish institutes of special education and associated programs in schools. Therefore, the Ministry of Education had to hire special education teachers from other Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordon until the Saudi universities could prepare Saudi special education teachers to teach in those special education programs and institutions. According to Althabet (2002), the first group of special education teachers prepared in Saudi Arabia graduated in 1988 from King Saud University in Riyadh, which offered the first special education preparation program in the country beginning in 1985.

According to Althabet (2002), this was the only such program in the country in 1985. Althabet pointed out that another issue for this teacher education program was the lack of Saudi

faculty who specialized in special education. In the past two decades, however, teacher preparation in special education has taken great steps forward, with some universities and teacher colleges offering a one-year certificate or two-year diploma in special education for general education teachers who wish to specialize in special education. In the last 15 years, many of the Saudi universities have established undergraduate or graduate programs, or both, for preparing special education teachers (Hadidi & Al Khateeb, 2015). Currently, there are 23 Saudi public and private universities that offer a one-year certificate, a two-year diploma, Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D. degrees in special education in various disability areas of studies (Keller et al, 2016). Table 1 below shows the special education teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities. Here it can be seen that there are 23 special education programs leading to the bachelor's degree and seven programs leading to the master's degrees, whereas only one program offers a Ph.D. degree. In addition, there are 21 special education programs that prepare both male and female special education teachers, and two programs that prepare only female special education teachers.

Table 1

Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs in Saudi Arabia

University or collage	Type	Student gender in the university or college	Degrees offered
Al Baha University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and Master
Al Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Al Jawf University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Al Majma'ah University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Arab East Colleges	Private	Male and female	Bachelor and Master
Dar Al-hekma College	Private	Female	Bachelor
Jazan University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor

Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs in Saudi Arabia (continued)

University or college	Type	Student gender in the university or college	Degrees offered
King Abdulaziz University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and post-baccalaureate diploma
King Faisal University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
King Saud University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor, Master, and PhD
Najran University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and Master
Northern Border University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulazziz	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Princess Nora Bint Abdul Rahman University	Public	Female	Bachelor
Qassim University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and Master
Shaqra University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Tabuk University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor, post-baccalaureate diploma, and Master
Taibah University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Taif University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor
Umm Al Qura University	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and Master
University of Dammam	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and post-baccalaureate diploma
University of Hail	Public	Male and female	Bachelor and post-baccalaureate diploma
University of Jeddah	Public	Male and female	Bachelor

Requirements of Special Education Programs in Saudi Arabia

According to Hussain (2010), preservice special education teachers in Saudi universities are required to complete at least 128 credits hours in four years in order to obtain their degrees. In the first two years of their program, preservice special education teachers take coursework (at least 51 credit hours) in special education and other supported areas. In the last two years, preservice teachers complete the rest of the credit hours in their specialized areas (e.g., intellectual disability, learning disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and autism

spectrum disorder). In the last semester in the special education program, preservice teachers take field experience, teaching observation, and practicum coursework, either in special education programs in regular schools or in institutions that are supervised by the Special Education Department in the Ministry of Education (Alothaim, 2017).

Laws and Regulations in the Preparation of Special Education Teachers in the United States and Saudi Arabia

In the United States, the federal government involvement in teacher education, including requirements found in laws such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), led to state laws and regulations relating to teacher preparation. These federal and state laws placed pressure on teacher preparation programs to improve their services and outcomes when it came to preparing and training their preservice teachers. According to McCall et al. (2014), the NCLB of 2001 was important legislation that played a significant role in improving the quality of special education teacher preparation programs. This law highlighted the right of all students to receive appropriate education to meet their educational goals and to be educated in safe educational environments by highly qualified and well-prepared teachers (Scheuermann et al., 2003). The quality of special education and general education teachers was highlighted in the NCLB legislation. The term *highly qualified teacher* in special education was defined as a teacher "having a bachelor's degree, full state certification through various routes and content area expertise" (McCall et al., 2014, p. 51). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) replaced NCLB but retained many of its provisions. In addition, the IDEA (2004) indicates that teachers must be prepared to collaborate and be more effective with other teachers and professionals to develop instruction based on their grade-level standards. Teacher preparation was not clearly stated in IDEA, but this law emphasizes the

necessity for teachers to understand and be aware of their responsibilities from the beginning with an early request for diagnosis and following on from this to being expected to be an active member in the IEP process, as well as in discussions about other special education services (Zagona et al., 2019).

In the case of Saudi Arabia, there are two laws relating to the education of students with disabilities and special education services, including the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI) and the Disability Code. According to Alquraini (2011a), professionals from the Ministry of Education and some professors from King Saud University who had obtained their Ph.D. degrees in special education from the United States were asked to develop a new educational policy for students with disabilities in the country. They used the United States' Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 and the IDEA (1990) as models for the development of RSEPI. It is also important to note that the RSEPI is seen as the first education regulations dealing with students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. After that, the Disability Code was approved by the Saudi government (Alquraini, 2013).

It is essential to emphasize that RSEPI and the Disability Code did not explicitly emphasize the quality of teacher education, but they indicated the need for teachers who are specialized in teaching students with different categories of disabilities to develop meaningful educational goals based on the students' needs. According to Murry and Alqahtani (2015), the RSEPI includes 11 Articles that require schools to provide free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities. In addition, the RSEPI stated that students with disabilities should receive their education in the least restrictive environment as possible by providing accommodations, modifications, and related services from both special and general education teachers to meet the needs of such students in inclusive settings (Bin-Battal, 2016).

According to Alquraini (2013), the Disability Code is legislation that was approved by the Saudi government in 2000. The Disability Code ensures the rights of people with disabilities in different areas, including their right to receive free education, health, related services, training and rehabilitation services, employment, social support, and public services. When it comes to special education teachers and education services, the Disability Code requires the Ministry of Education to provide free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities and to employ special education teachers and related service providers in all of the educational stages (i.e., pre-school, elementary school, middle school, higher school). In addition, the Disability Code requires vocational and social habilitation centers to provide training and habilitation services for people with disabilities (Alquraini, 2013; Alquraini, 2014).

In 2008, Saudi Arabia also signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Bin-Battal, 2016). Although RSEPI, the Disability Code, and CRPD indicate that students with disabilities should receive their education in an inclusive environment, students with ID in Saudi Arabia still receive their education either in residential institutions or special education classrooms in regular schools (Alquraini 2011a; Bin-Battal, 2016). Also, special education teachers work primarily alone and do not have access to partners in the education of students with disabilities (i.e., general education teachers, students' parents, and social workers).

Professional Standards in the Preparation of Special Education Teachers in the United States and Saudi Arabia

In order to have well-prepared special education teachers, their preparation matters. In other words, the quality of the preparation programs plays a major role in the progress of preservice educators' teaching careers (Othman et al., 2015). Special education teachers, like

general education teachers, need to learn specific skills and knowledge in their preparation programs to be able to work effectively with their students. Therefore, there are sets of special education teacher preparation standards that teacher education programs should address. These sets of standards guide teacher education programs to produce special education teachers with dispositions, essential skills, and training to do an effective job. There are three sets of standards that guide the professional preparation of special education teachers in the United States, including the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) professional standards, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards, and the Association of Teacher Educators' (ATE) standards. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education recently established the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) standards to improve the outcomes of teacher preparation programs in Saudi Universities. In the next sections, I review these four sets of standards because each set provides critical guidance for the design of the curriculum for preparing excellent special education teachers.

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Standards

The CEC specified that qualified special education teachers are the teachers who have "mastered appropriate core academic subject matter, the knowledge and skills in the CEC Common Core and an appropriate area of specialization" (Mamlin, 2012, p. 19). It should be noted that CEC standards include specific skills and knowledge that preservice special education teachers should meet to be identified as well-prepared educators. There are two types of CEC preparation standards, including initial and advanced special education teacher preparation standards (Council for Exceptional for Children (CEC), 2015). Special education teacher preparation programs might use the initial or advanced CEC preparation standards to improve

their programs and assessments to demonstrate that their preservice special education teachers have met the standards (CEC, 2017).

Initial Preparation Standards.

The CEC initial preparation standards show what preservice special education teachers have to learn to begin their teaching careers. It is important to note that a special education teacher preparation program that works with students to help them meet these standards has to deliver a bachelor's degree in special education, opportunities to learn and demonstrate pedagogical skills in both coursework and field experience and preparation in the essential academic matter area (CEC, 2015). Table 2 shows the initial preparation standards and their focus areas.

Table 2

Initial CEC Preparation Standards

Standards Number	Initial Preparation Standard	Focus area
1	Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences	Learner and Learning
2	Learning Environments	Learner and Learning
3	Curricular Content Knowledge	Content Knowledge and Professional Foundations
4	Assessment	Instructional Pedagogy
5	Instructional Planning and Strategies	Instructional Pedagogy
6	Professional Learning and Practice	Professionalism and Collaboration
7	Collaboration	Professionalism and Collaboration

Source: adapted from Council for Exceptional Children (2015).

It can be seen that the initial preparation standards include seven general standards, including learner development, learning environments, curricular content knowledge, assessments, instructional planning and strategies, professional learning and practice, and collaboration (CEC, 2015; CEC, 2017; CEC, n.d.). Table 2 shows the first standard, which is

about the development of learners and how each student has a different way of learning. In other words, this standard shows to the students hoping to become special education teachers, the importance of understanding the different levels of learning between students which influence their growth and using this knowledge to deliver meaningful and interesting educational experiences for students with disabilities (CEC, 2015; CEC, 2017). Furthermore, special education teachers must understand the different characteristics of their students with and without disabilities and how that can influence their academic and social skills. Also, the standard states that special education teachers should realize that the students' values, beliefs, and traditions influence their relationships with each other (CEC, 2017).

The second standard highlights that special education teachers need to make a safe and inclusive learning environment in order to make the students with and without disabilities, who are from different cultural and language backgrounds, involved and active in the learning environment (CEC, 2015). This standard means that special education teachers implement specific teaching interventions and strategies to help their students adapt into different settings. The third standard is about the ability of special education teachers to use knowledge of general curriculums and goals and adapt them for their students with disabilities (CEC, 2015). Special education teachers must demonstrate that they can develop meaningful instruction for their students by collaborating with general education teachers.

The fourth standard of initial preparation standards is that student special education teachers use several assessment tools and data sources to make their decisions about the education of students with disabilities (CEC, 2015). This standard shows that special education teachers must be able to use different types of assessments, such as formal and informal assessments, to evaluate their students. In addition, special education teachers must understand

that, during the assessment procedures, they have to collaborate with school staff and their students' families in making decisions about the students' education.

The fifth standard indicates that special education teachers select, modify, and implement a range of evidence-based practice approaches to improve the learning of students with disabilities (CEC, 2015; CEC, 2017). It can be noted that this standard is about adapting instructional planning and strategies based on the individual's needs and strengths. Moreover, this standard states that special education teachers must use assistive technologies in their teaching, which would help them in the assessment procedure and preparing their lesson plans. The sixth standard specifies that special education teachers use their knowledge of the use of ethical principles and professional practice standards to direct their teaching, as well as their work with other IEP teams (CEC, 2017). For instance, special education teachers must understand that human issues and diverse needs are part of delivering special education services for students from different cultural, language, and social backgrounds.

The seventh standard states that special education teachers must understand that they collaborate with general education teachers, students' families, related services providers, and related agencies in their communities to deliver appropriate education that meets the needs of their students (CEC, 2015; CEC, 2017). It can be seen that special education teachers have to understand that they are only one member of the IEP team that provides special education services, so they should collaborate with the rest of the team to ensure the whole team is involved in the students' education. Overall, the CEC initial preparation standards include seven standards that are organized under four emphasis areas, which include students and learning, content knowledge and specialized foundations, instructional teaching, and professionalism and collaboration.

Advanced CEC Preparation Standards.

Since the teacher preparation standards can be different from program to program because of different factors, CEC has developed general preparation standards for advanced programs in order to address seven concepts as appropriate to the programs' roles. Table 3 shows the preparation standards for advanced program standards, including assessment, curricular content knowledge, instructional programs, research, leadership and policies, professional and ethical practice, and teamwork (CEC, 2015).

Table 3

Advanced CEC Preparation Standards

Standards Number	Advanced Preparation Standard	Focus area
1	Assessment	Learner and Learning
2	Curricular Content Knowledge	Content Knowledge and Professional Foundations
3	Programs, Services, and Outcomes	Instructional Pedagogy
4	Research and Inquiry	Instructional Pedagogy
5	Leadership and Policy	Professionalism and Collaboration
6	Professional and Ethical Practice	Professionalism and Collaboration
7	Collaboration	Professionalism and Collaboration

Source: adapted from the Council for Exceptional Children (2015).

It can be noted that the seven standards are organized based on five focus areas (i.e., learner and learning, content knowledge and professional foundations, instructional pedagogy, and professionalism and collaboration) (CEC, 2015; CEC, n.d.). The first standard of the preparation standards for advanced programs is about assessment. The assessment standard shows that special educators implement valid and reliable assessment tools to reduce bias. In addition, special educators select accommodations and modifications in their assessment

methods based on their students' languages and cultures, as well as other diverse needs to ensure there are no potentially biasing factors that influence the assessment procedures.

The second standard is about curricular content knowledge. Special education teachers must use their experience and knowledge of both specialized and general curriculums to improve the special education services and related services for their students in and out of schools. When it comes to the curricular, this standard highlights that special education teachers use their professional knowledge and education to adapt the selected curriculum for their students with diverse needs. The third standard of the preparation standards for advanced programs is about programs, services, and outcomes. Based on CEC (2015), specialists try to improve and advance general and special education programs and related services in school and at home. Additionally, they need to assess progress about meeting the vision, mission, and objectives of the special education programs, including related services. The fourth standard focuses on research and inquiry in the teacher preparation programs. This standard indicates that special education professionals use inquiry and research to evaluate and develop effective practices and interventions for students with disabilities.

The fifth standard is about providing effective leadership and policies to implement the programs' aims (CEC, 2015). Also, special educators must show respect for all students with disabilities, as well as support them to have high expectations about their educational progress. Furthermore, special educators aid appropriate education for students with disabilities and work to ensure that policy is supported by research evidence. The sixth standard states that special educators use a professional understanding of the field and specialized ethical principles to inform special education services and explain the responsibilities of all the specialists who work with students with disabilities. The main idea of this standard is that special educators design,

implement, and assess professional development. The seventh standard of the preparation standards for advanced programs is about the collaboration among the special education experts to advance programs' services and outcomes for students with disabilities. The special education specialists must play a major role in cooperation and collaboration with other related organizations to improve the quality of provided services and the professionals who work with students with disabilities.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standards

In 2013, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) approved a new set of teacher preparation standards (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), 2019). The CAEP includes five standards that are proposed to make the accreditation procedure more rigorous by having specific principles for program admissions (Heafner, 2014). Heafner pointed out that these principles also require the teacher preparation programs to demonstrate that their preservice teachers have a positive influence on student achievement. It is important to cite that the CAEP standards were developed based on two principles which include strong evidence that the programs' teacher candidates are capable and qualified teachers, and there has to be a clear indication that the programs' teaching staff have the ability to create a culture of evidence to help them provide and improve the value of their programs (CAEP, n.d.). It can be noted that the CAEP standards are guided by a vision of the education field based on teacher quality. Table 4 shows the 2013 CAEP standards and the indicators for each standard.

Table 4

2013 CAEP Standards

Standards Number	Preparation Standard	Indicators
1	Content and Pedagogical Knowledge	Candidate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions. Provider responsibilities.
2	Clinical Partnerships and Practice	Partnerships for clinical preparation. Clinical educators. Clinical experiences.
3	Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity	Plan for recruitment of diverse candidates who meet employment needs. Candidates demonstrate academic achievement. Additional selectivity factors. Selectivity during preparation. Selection at completion.
4	Program Impact	Impact on P-12 student learning and development. Indicators of teaching effectiveness. Satisfaction of employers. Satisfaction of completers.
5	Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Quality and strategic evaluation. Continuous improvement.

Source: adapted from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (2019).

Table 4 shows that the first standard of CAEP standards is the content and pedagogical knowledge standard which indicates that professional teacher education programs ensure that preservice teachers have a clear understanding and knowledge about the critical thoughts and values of their specialized areas and are capable to use discipline-specific programs accommodatingly to develop the education of all learners about the attainment of the education program and career-ready dispositions (CAEP, 2019). This standard emphasizes that providers

must make sure that preservice teachers are prepared to use research and technology to improve their knowledge about the teaching career of their majors.

The second standard is about clinical partnerships and practice (CAEP, 2019). The standard points out that specialists in the educator preparation program understand that effective partnerships and field experience are essential in educator education, so the preservice educators meet the required skills, knowledge, and have the personal characteristics to positively influence their students' growth. By having clinical partnerships, the provider will ensure that the educator preparation program delivers the opportunity for preservice educators to link the theoretical knowledge of the program coursework with the practice and training in the field. The third standard explains the student teacher's quality, recruitment, and selectivity. The teacher education program demonstrates that the quality of student teachers is an important part of its accountability from recruitment. In other words, the specialists in the educator preparation program specify that the progress of the preservice teacher quality is the goal of teacher preparation in both coursework and field experience. The provider must develop strategies and aim to support the completion of qualified student teachers from a wide variety of cultural and social backgrounds to achieve their mission.

The fourth standard describes the program's influence and how the providers demonstrate the influence of their preservice teachers on student education and growth in schools and the satisfaction of the preservice teachers with the efficiency of their preparation (CAEP, 2019). When it comes to the influence on student learning and progress, the program can use multiple measures to know if preservice teachers provide an expected level of student-learning development. In addition, the programs can use specific measures to find whether the preservice teacher believes that his or her preparation was effective. Finally, the fifth standard highlights

program quality assurance and continuous development. The educator preparation program continues a quality assurance procedure, including valid data from multiple methods (e.g., evidence of preservice teacher and graduate teacher positive influences on their students' education and growth) (CAEP, 2019; CAEP, n.d.). Also, this standard emphasizes that teacher preparation programs frequently assess performance against goals and related principles, results, and the impacts of selection criteria on the following progress and use these results to advance the program components and procedures.

Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) Standards

Another example of the published national standards that guide professional preparation of special education teachers is the Association of Teacher Educators' (ATE) standards. The ATE standards are broad standards that make them appropriate to use in all teacher preparation programs. The following list summarizes the standards of ATE.

1. Modeling good teaching.
2. Applying cultural capabilities and supporting social justice.
3. Engaging in scholarship.
4. Committing to professional development.
5. Delivering leadership in program advance.
6. Collaboration.
7. Advocating for high-quality education.
8. Contribution to the improvement of teacher preparation.
9. Contribution to the visions for teaching, learning, and teacher preparation (Mamlin, 2012).

The first standard, about good teaching, contains an emphasis on modeling. Preservice teachers have to model appropriate teaching behavior in order to adapt, adjust, and apply that behavior appropriately to different groups of students at different levels and in different styles. Preservice teachers must use research-based practice in order for teaching behaviors to be applied (Chróinín et al., 2013; Mamlin, 2012). The second standard indicates that teacher preparation programs must apply cultural competence and promote social justice in preparing teacher candidates. Teacher education programs need to prepare future teachers to work and teach culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse students (Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), 2007). In addition, preservice teachers need to have high expectations for all learners and understand that each student has a different way of learning and level of development. The third standard includes an emphasis on engaging in scholarship that develops the knowledge base related to teacher preparation (Mamlin, 2012). Offering scholarship opportunities for preservice teachers will give them the opportunity to create new knowledge in teaching their students across different educational communities.

Standard four shows the necessity of committing to professional development for preservice teachers. Accomplished teachers help preservice teachers with professional growth and reflect model teaching behaviors from their own teaching experiences (Mamlin, 2012). The standard highlights that learning from expert teachers help preservice teachers put knowledge and experience into practice in schools. The fifth standard includes an emphasis on delivering leadership in program development. Teacher education programs must deliver leadership, applying, and evaluating their approach and technique of preparing teachers, that are ground in a theoretical framework, research, and best practice. The main goal of this standard is to ensure

that teacher education programs provide leadership in developing and preparing their teachers based on local, state, national, and international standards.

Standard six focuses on collaboration between universities, schools, families, communities, and the relevant institutes to improve the quality of teaching, research, and learning in their societies. This standard shows that having professional relationships and collaboration between relevant stakeholders improves their competence and knowledge about teacher preparation programs. The seventh standard is about public advocacy and how the teacher preparation programs need to work and serve in advocating for high-quality education in their communities. Teacher education programs must be effective influencers in prompting governments and the decision-makers to make the needed changes in educational plans and policies to develop the mission of high-quality education in their states (ATE, 2007; Chróinín et al., 2013; Mamlin, 2012).

Standard eight focuses on the teacher education profession and the necessity of teacher education programs to share their responsibilities in the local and national organizations to improve the teacher education profession (ATE, 2007; Mamlin, 2012). For example, teacher education programs' responsibilities can be seen in hosting conferences about teacher education and developing resources, reports, and descriptions of the evolution of programs. Finally, the ninth standard emphasizes cooperation to design visions in teacher preparation programs by considering using technology, organized thinking, and world visions. Teacher preparation programs must create and adjust their visions to include new knowledge about global issues related to teaching practice and classroom settings and styles.

The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA)

In the case of Saudi Arabia, after the Saudi government provided large financial funds for teacher preparation programs in state universities, the Ministry of Education initiated a partnership with the Saudi National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA). The NCAAA is a self-governing national commission that sets public standards to develop a quality assurance process and to develop the colleges of education in Saudi Arabia (Al-Zoubi & Abdel-Rahman, 2013). According to these authors, the NCAAA aims to develop the quality of the educational outcomes of teacher preparation programs in the special education departments of universities in the Kingdom in order to prepare qualified teachers. It is important to note that, before signing the agreement between the Ministry of Education and the NCAAA, there were no stated Saudi policies or standards that all Saudi teacher preparation programs could use to ensure the effective preparation of their teacher candidates.

In 2011, the NCAAA developed 11 standards, including "vision and mission, administration of programs, quality of programs, learning and teaching, student activities and support services, learning resources, facilities and equipment, planning and financial administration, employment processes, research, and institutional relationships with society to help teacher education programs meet quality assurance goals and to evaluate their performance in relation to the standards" (Al-Zoubi & Abdel-Rahman, 2013, p. 1996). Currently, there are about 23 teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia that are required to meet NCAAA standards (Husain, 2010). The NCAAA standards are presented in five groups, including institutional context, quality of learning and teaching, support for students' learning, support infrastructure, and community contributions group. Table 5 shows NCAAA standards and their focus areas.

Table 5

NCAAA Standards for Teacher Preparation Programs in Saudi Arabia

Standards Number	Advanced Preparation Standard	Focus area
1	Mission and Objectives	Institutional Context
2	Governance and Administration	Institutional Context
3	Management of Quality Assurance and Improvement	Institutional Context
4	Learning and Teaching	Quality of Learning and Teaching
5	Student Administration and support Services	Support for Students' Learning
6	Learning Resources	Support for Students' Learning
7	Facilities and Equipment	Support Infrastructure
8	Financial Planning and Management	Support Infrastructure
9	Faculty and Staff Employment Processes	Support Infrastructure
10	Research	Community Contributions
11	Institutional Relationships with Community	Community Contributions

Source: adapted from the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (2012).

According to NCAAA (2012), the first group of standards indicates that a program's mission must clearly define its main purposes and priorities, as well as provide effective leadership and criteria to assess the quality of the program. The second group of NCAAA standards indicates that the program's staff must be well-qualified, and the learning outcomes need to be stated and detailed. The third group highlights that admission processes must be well-organized and fair, and the coursework must be adequate for the program's requirements. The fourth group of standards indicates that facilities and equipment that are related to teaching materials have to be accessible for all learners, and the financial funds must be adequate for the actual delivery of the program. It also indicates that the faculty must have an academic degree and teaching experience needed for their specific areas. The last group of NCAAA standards emphasizes that each teacher preparation program must develop research strategies that are

related to the program's mission, and the facilities and services of the program must be offered to support the community.

In a study by Al-Zoubi and Abdel-Rahman (2013), the authors evaluated the special education teacher preparation programs in 17 Saudi universities to identify the level of achievement of NCAAA standards in these programs. The authors pointed out that their sample was 17 chairs of special education departments who answered the survey. They found that only four standards were seen as the most important targets in the special education programs surveyed. These were student affairs, support services, employment processes, and learning and teaching, while five standards were the second most important targets, in the form of relationships with the community, research, management of programs, quality of programs, and facilities and equipment. Learning resources and planning and financial administration standards were, however, of a low level of importance.

In general, these sets of teacher preparation standards are guidelines for creating professional special education teacher preparation programs. These standards guide the teacher education programs to be professional and competent in preparing their teachers because they include four major areas in the work of special education teachers, including teacher coaching, research and inquiry into teaching and learning approaches, collaboration, and policies and laws as they relate to special education and social justice. These standards should be respected because they serve four important purposes in the field of special education. First, these professional standards help teacher preparation programs understand what they are expected to do in educating their preservice teachers and what are the most important contents that need to be considered in their programs. Without having these Kingdom-wide professional standards, each individual teacher

preparation program might focus on particular subjects based on the individual perceptions of the program's faculty.

Second, these standards are seen as powerful tools for special education teachers to ask and receive workshops and training programs in their schools to meet their needs and update their teaching skills (Conderman, 2005). They can also be used by schools as the basis for developing professional development programs to support their teachers and ensure that they have the skills they need to work effectively with their students. Third, having these professional standards will protect the field from decision-makers who are not specialized in special education, so they provide stability and predictability related to the special education teacher preparation because the field has its standards and policies (Mamlin, 2012). Lastly, these standards encourage teacher preparation programs to have partnerships with other organizations and administrations that work in the field of special education in order to benefit from each other's experiences to establish goals that drive toward preparing highly qualified teachers in the future.

Research on Special Education Teacher Preparation

This section of the literature review summarizes the overall findings of studies published between 2001 and 2019 that addressed the issue of special education teacher preparation. Keywords that were used as search terms for this literature review included special education teacher preparation, special educator preparation, preservice educator preparation, preservice special education teachers. These search terms were used to identify pertinent studies in the following electronic research databases: Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), JSTOR, Educational Research Complete, and Arab World Source. In addition, a manual search was used to identify relevant studies that were cited in reference lists. The following criteria were used to select the studies in the review:

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies researching special education teacher preparation programs in the United States.
- Original peer-reviewed studies published between 2001 (when NCLB was passed) and 2019.
- Studies involving empirical research.
- Studies involving participants including, preservice special education teachers or recently graduated special education teachers.
- Studies exploring specific issues or techniques for improving special education teacher preparation.

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies published prior to 2001
- Studies that only discussed general education teacher preparation.
- Studies involving participants including, in-service special education teachers or faculty and program supervisors.
- Studies that were not peer-reviewed.
- Studies that focused only on specific teaching interventions for students with disabilities, not dealing with preservice teachers.
- Studies that were reviews of research
- Studies conducted with preservice special education teachers or recently graduated special education teachers outside the United States.

The reviewed studies were organized into four major categories that emerged in my analysis of selected studies (i.e., coursework delivery, field experience and training, implementing technology, and home-school collaboration). The results of the reviewed studies are summarized based on these main categories as follows:

Coursework Delivery

During the first three years of the teacher preparation programs, preservice special education teachers take coursework in special education and other supporting areas, which makes delivering coursework the major component in preparing effective special education teachers. In a study by Morewood and Condo (2012), they examined the perceptions of a preservice special education teacher at West Virginia University with regard to the coursework and the program requirements and how that influenced her knowledge of how to teach her students in schools. The perception of this preservice special education teacher was examined through research-based frameworks that shape the types of knowledge needed for successful instruction. In general, the preservice teacher stated that coursework was beneficial in understanding teaching strategies, policies, and instructional practices during field experience. Nevertheless, she argued that the program needs to have coursework that focuses on educational settings, especially in inclusive settings.

Correa et al. (2004) also worked to explore the influence of a course in multicultural education on preservice teachers' concepts of this aspect of education. The participants in the study included 45 special education preservice teachers who were enrolled in a multicultural education course as part of five years teacher preparation program at a state university in Florida. Concept maps developed by the participants to identify common categories and written responses about these maps were used to identify the concepts they had developed and their thoughts toward the multicultural education course. The findings showed that after taking the multicultural education course, improvement in the participants' knowledge and their beliefs about multicultural education were found in both the concept maps and in the written responses. The authors also pointed out that one of the limitations of the study is that the researchers did not

collect a point-by-point reliability estimate of the coding method they used. Additionally, the researchers suggested the need for more research to understand the perceptions of preservice teachers about the links between disability and family diversity.

In addition, it is important to know that the teachers' characteristics and racial backgrounds play a major role in teaching students with disabilities and collaboration with other members in their IEPs. Kea et al. (2002) investigated the preparation of 43 African American preservice teachers to teach students with and without disabilities from a range of different cultural and language backgrounds. Three surveys of multicultural knowledge were used with these preservice teachers who were from a largest historically Black university in a southeastern state. The researchers found that more than 80% of the participants thought that they were highly capable of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students based on their own capability, not because of the coursework they received. In other words, they did not think that their programs prepared them well to teach culturally diverse students. The researchers also found that African American preservice teachers felt more prepared to teach students who were from their own race. Therefore, the researchers stated that there is a need for more coursework in the teacher education programs that focuses on how to teach students with and without disabilities from other racial, language, and cultural groups.

In another study, Carroll et al. (2009) aimed to understand the impact of courses where the preservice teachers studied together with adults with ID as part of a Career and Community Studies (CCS) program at the College of New Jersey. The authors wanted to describe how 12 preservice special education teachers who enrolled in an inclusive liberal learning program saw their experience. The interview method was used to ascertain how the participants saw this experience. The findings showed that all the participants considered taking this course as a

positive academic experience. In addition, they found that having group activities and discussions helped them know how to build the classroom community and create relationships with individuals with intellectual disability. Furthermore, this experience also helped preservice teachers improve their expectations about the social and learning abilities of individuals with intellectual disability.

In a further study, Stites et al. (2012) examined preservice teachers' perceptions with regard to their needs related to inclusive education and the coursework that focuses on inclusion in their preparation programs. They researched 120 preservice special, early childhood, and general education teachers in two universities. Interviews and surveys were used to identify the participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy with regard to teaching in an inclusive setting. The results showed that preservice teachers expressed needs for a coherent understanding of inclusion, and they stated that they needed additional training to be better prepared to teach in an inclusive classroom. In addition, Stites et al. argued that teacher education programs need to make more effort to deliver a more coherent conceptual framework to support the improvement of both coursework and field experience regarding inclusion.

In general, the previous studies aimed to understand the perceptions of preservice special education teachers with regard to implementing coursework focuses on inclusion, teaching strategies, policies, instructional practices, and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Two studies (Correa et al., 2004; Kea et al., 2002) showed that more efforts need to be made in preparing teachers to teach students who are from different cultural and language backgrounds. Also, three studies (Carroll et al., 2009; Morewood & Condo, 2012; Stites et al., 2012) indicated the need to make more efforts to develop coursework focuses on teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting.

Field Experience and Training

Across all teacher education programs, field experience is an important opportunity for preservice teachers because it gives them the opportunity to practice and implement the skills and knowledge that they have obtained as a result of the program's coursework (Zhou, 2003). Therefore, it is essential to understand the perceptions of preservice teachers who were enrolled in practicum courses with regard to their experience in schools, and what concerns or challenges they may have faced that could usefully be addressed in the future. In a study by Ricci et al. (2017), the researchers aimed to identify the perceptions of preservice special education teachers with regard to co-teaching during their field experience. The participants in the study were 57 preservice special education teachers (12 males and 45 females) who were enrolled in a ten-week semester program at the Saturday Learning Center at Southern California University. A survey, open-ended comments, and the preservice teachers' supervisors' ratings were used to determine the preservice special education teachers' beliefs and perspectives with regard to co-teaching and working together with other teachers.

The findings showed that the field experience had positive impacts on the preservice special teachers' collaborative and co-teaching capabilities. The participants indicated that there was a positive development in their collaborating and co-teaching capacities, especially in terms of planning instructions and using useful materials. In addition, the preservice teachers' supervisors informed the researchers of meaningful gains in their student teachers' ability to co-teach and collaborate with other teachers during their field experience. In open-ended comments, the participants stated that they were aware of personal improvement as effective teachers and communicators with students and other professionals in a school setting.

Recchia and Puig (2011) also explored the possible challenges and education opportunities that self-contained settings offer preservice special education teachers in a practicum course in the Early Childhood Special Education Teachers Preparation Program at Columbia University. The researchers aimed to ascertain five preservice teachers' perspectives with regard to their field experiences through an analysis of these teachers' weekly teaching journals. Recchia and Puig found that a self-contained setting encouraged flexible thinking about teaching students with disabilities and improved the preservice teachers' understanding of the continuum of services. The participants also expressed that they became better prepared to teach students with disabilities when they trained in a self-contained setting. In another study, King-Sears et al. (2012) examined the self-ratings of preservice teachers engaged in their culminating instructional activity prior to graduation, in four universities in the eastern states. Surveys were used with 98 preservice teachers (34 special education preservice teachers and 64 general education preservice teachers). King-Sears et al. found that the special education preservice teachers had higher self-ratings than the general education preservice teachers when it came to teaching students with disabilities. Therefore, King-Sears et al. indicated the need for general education teacher preparation programs to prepare their students to work with students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

In addition, Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) analyzed preservice teachers' evaluations of cooperating teachers to identify some ideas for the professional improvement and support of cooperating teachers. The participants in the study were 389 preservice teachers who were enrolled in master's degree programs in the areas of elementary education, special education, or secondary education. Online surveys, including open-ended qualitative evaluations, were used to obtain the preservice teachers' evaluations of cooperating teachers. The findings showed that an

effective cooperating teacher is the one who has time for one-on-one mentoring, provides feedback in formal and informal ways, and allows the preservice teachers to use new teaching strategies.

When it comes to the cooperating teachers, O'Brian et al. (2007) also assessed differences in the perceptions of preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers with regard to field experiences. The researchers examined the perceptions of these two groups with regard to their relationships during the early field experience of the preservice teachers. They used evaluation forms, interviews, and observations with nine cooperating and preservice special education teachers as data sources. They found that the relationships and roles based on communication and trust between preservice teachers and cooperating teachers are particularly important to the preservice teachers' development. Based on the findings, the researchers suggested that more training is needed for both the cooperating teachers and the preservice teachers in order for them to be able to work with one another and increase the preservice teachers' development.

Similarly, Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) aimed to understand the beliefs of preservice special education teachers with regard to collaborating with general education teachers in an inclusive setting. By using reflective journals, semi-structured interviews, and team meeting observations with 12 preservice teachers in a southeastern teacher preparation program, they found differences in how these preservice special educators defined collaboration, based on their school's setting. The researchers found that the preservice teachers faced some challenging situations when they were involved as collaborators when it came to planning instruction, as well as some difficulties related to an absence of understanding with regard to their role in the co-teaching model. Also, some of the participants indicated that collaborating with general education teachers as part of their training was a positive experience. In addition, the researchers

found that when a general education teacher and the preservice teachers worked together as a team, more adapted teaching and academic support were delivered.

In another work, Hadadian et al. (2012) provided a professional perspective with regard to a training model that focuses on teaching students with diverse needs as part of the field experience of preservice teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. The survey method was used with 21 preservice teachers to identify their perceptions with regard to their field experience at the Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD). They found that the use of a training model during the participants' teaching experience was critical in improving the preservice teachers' linguistic and cultural awareness and their fluency. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that future specialists can use and adapt this training model for preservice special education teachers in preparing them for working with students with diverse needs who are identified with other categories of disabilities.

In general, most previous studies have aimed to ascertain the perceptions of preservice special education teachers with regard to field experience and training programs during fieldwork focusing on inclusion, co-planning, and co-teaching students with disabilities in inclusive setting (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; King-Sears et al., 2012; Ricci et al., 2017). These studies suggested the provision of more opportunities for special education preservice teachers to work and cooperate with general education teachers due to its positive influence on the performance of the preservice teachers in terms of collaboration and co-teaching teaching skills. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both special and general teachers need to receive training and professional development to help them develop their teaching skills and knowledge and to become aware of their roles and responsibilities before they go to their field experience

and begin working with other professionals in the school setting (Hamilton-Jones & Vail, 2014; Lee et al., 2011).

When it comes to teaching students with diverse needs, the work of Hadadian et al. (2012) showed that more effort needs to be made in training teachers to teach students who are from different cultural and language backgrounds, and to help them link their theoretical knowledge with regard to teaching students with diverse needs with teaching practices during their coursework and field experience. In addition, two studies by O'Brian et al. (2007) and Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) indicated the significant role that well-qualified cooperating teachers can play a major role in field experience, especially in terms of providing support and feedback to preservice teachers and evaluating their performance. It can be seen that the quality of the preservice special education teachers' experiences in schools might influence their decision on whether or not to remain in the field of special education. Therefore, preservice special education teachers should receive high-quality support and assistance during their field experience.

Implementing Technology

The 1997 amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the reauthorization of IDEA (2004) both require IEP team and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) teams to use assistive technology in order to help children and students make a success of their education (Mamlin, 2012). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that teacher education programs should highlight the different and diverse applications of technology that are available when they prepare student teachers, in order to make them well-prepared for using technology in their schools. It is also important to be aware that when it comes to teacher preparation, specialists and faculty would be remiss if they do not see that implementing technology as a positive development in terms of special education teacher preparation in the 21st century. In a

study by Scheeler et al. (2012), the authors examined the effects of using cameras and Bluetooth TM to provide immediate remote feedback to four preservice teachers with regard to their performance in the classroom. They found that immediate feedback delivered through this system was effective in improving the targeted behaviors and techniques of all preservice teachers included in the study. This work provides an excellent example of the effective use of technology in a supervisory context. It can be seen that using advanced technology such as this communication system gives supervisors the opportunity to provide immediate and helpful feedback to preservice teachers without interrupting the lesson, and for modeling appropriate techniques for preservice teachers.

In a similar study, Ludlow et al. (2007) examined the effectiveness of a distance education model that uses audio-conferencing for preparing teachers of students with ASD. It does this through the provision of online classes and online supervision during the practicum experience in the special education program at West Virginia University. Ludlow et al. pointed out that the program includes coursework such as research-based and current best practice, and field experience in the area of working with students with ASD. The participants were 18 preservice special education teachers who had enrolled in this program. Preservice teacher satisfaction forms and surveys were used in collecting data. The results showed that the model is successful and met the state's certification needs for teachers. The participants stated that the coursework and the field experience were linked, and this helped them in their teaching experience in the field. Ludlow et al. also pointed out that, in general, the online model system using Blackboard Vista and Wimba Live Classroom worked successfully.

In addition, McDonnell et al. (2011) compared the efficiency of a distance and an on-campus teacher preparation program for preservice special education teachers of students with

severe disabilities at the University of Utah. The number of participants in the study was 32 preservice teachers (5 males and 27 females). Fifteen of these participants were enrolled in a distance teacher preparation program, and 17 were enrolled in an on-campus teacher education program. They used two quasi-experimental research designs. The researchers pointed out that "a pre-post nonequivalent control group design was used to assess the effects of distance learning strategies on student performance measures where pre-post scores were available" (p.113). Also "a posttest only with nonequivalent groups was used to assess the effects of distance learning strategies on measures where only posttest scores were available" (p. 113). The researchers also used the Computer User Self-Efficacy (CUSE) scale to collect their data, and SPSS to analyze it. They revealed that there was no difference between the knowledge of the preservice teachers in the distance and the on-campus teacher education cohorts. They found that both models of education have equal effect in preparing preservice special education teachers.

In a further study, Falconer and Kraft (2002) wanted to determine the advantages and disadvantages of using two-way audio/video conferencing technology with student teachers as part of their field experience. They used interviews with two preservice teachers, two cooperating teachers, and supervisors' field notes to determine the effectiveness of using technology in teacher education. In general, they found that using technology is beneficial for field-based students in terms of receiving immediate feedback, as well as in contacting their supervisors who are on campus. Nevertheless, Falconer and Kraft stated that technical problems could be seen as a limitation when it comes to using this system.

In general, the studies reviewed in this section aimed to determine and compare the teachers' perceptions with regard to the effectiveness of using an online teaching model and an on-campus model in preparing special education teachers. Most of the previous studies have

supported the use of technology tools for providing feedback and for mentoring preservice teachers during their field experience (Falconer et al., 2002; Ludlow et al., 2007; Scheeler et al., 2012). When it comes to field experience, the reviewed studies also indicated that technology could be useful in providing immediate feedback and for students to contact on-campus staff. These studies also indicated that online courses could be seen as a possible solution for classes that have a large number of students, as well as when universities cancel face-to-face courses for a variety of reasons. For example, currently, universities in the US and in other countries have switched to online courses due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, the work of McDonnell et al. (2011) showed that there is no difference between the preparation of the preservice teachers in the distance and the on-campus teacher education cohorts.

Home-School Collaboration

Having effective collaborative skills is one of the essential skills that special education teachers need to develop in order to meet their students' needs. Today, effective collaboration between school and home is required more than ever because such collaboration helps assure parents that students are receiving well-coordinated support to meet their needs. In addition, it demonstrates respect and equality among teachers, school personnel, and families. In addition, school-home collaboration is important because schools currently have students from different cultural, linguistic, social, and ethnic backgrounds, and such collaboration is also legally required by IDEA (2004). According to Olivos (2010), the advantages of collaboration are seen as being mutually beneficial for students, educators, and families. Research indicates that students' learning is influenced by collaboration and by the actions emanating from both homes and schools (Brabour & Brabour, 1997; Friend & Cook, 2007). Therefore, Brabour and Brabour (1997) stated that the educational progress of those students whose parents are involved in their

education and often take part in school meetings is more likely to be greater than that of students whose parents are not involved in this way. Furthermore, they pointed out that collaboration between schools and homes ensures the provision of all types of support that students need to grow into functioning adults.

In a study by Patterson et al. (2009), the researchers wanted to find out how the participation of the family affects preservice teachers' thoughts about the value of teacher-parent collaboration and educational decision-making when these families are involved in case-based instruction. The authors explained that "The Family as Faculty program has been funded by grants from the Office of Special Education Programs through the FDOE and BEESS" (Patterson et al., 2009, p. 42). Since its beginning, this program has delivered important learning and knowledge opportunities for 1,645 in-service and preservice teachers. The participants in this study were 89 preservice teachers who had enrolled in a special education program at a state university. According to the researchers, the preservice teachers applied Individualized Education Programs (IEP)-related instruction as they joined the IEP meetings with the families of students with disabilities. The researchers assessed two sources with regard to the teachers' responses (a Belief Survey and written comments). Their findings showed that the communication between preservice teachers and parents in IEP meetings seemed to strengthen the preservice teachers' beliefs, which led to an increase in support for positive teacher–family collaboration, and a reduction in some attitudes that do not support such collaboration. In addition, the participants' awareness and understanding of the parents' role, and their readiness in terms of cooperating, appeared better after having this learning experience.

In another study, Mulholland and Blecker (2008) also drew attention to the fact that there is a lack of research with regard to preservice special education teacher training in terms of

family involvement and school-home collaboration. Through an interview assignment as one part of the coursework requirements in a teacher preparation program, 90 preservice special education teachers were asked to interview the parents of students with disabilities and ask them questions related to the special education services their children receive in their schools, as well as perceptions of their role in their children's learning. The interview questions included general information, meeting the needs of their children in terms of their education, and investigating numerous parental attitudes toward their children's learning. The preservice participants were then asked to meet with the researchers in group discussions to talk about their reflections after interviewing these parents. The participants were also asked to write comments about their reflections and what they had learned from the interviews. In general, Mulholland and Blecker found that the participants believed that meeting with the parents of students with disabilities helped them understand the families' concerns about their children's education, especially in developing IEP goals. Also, based on the participants' comments and feedback, the parents indicated that it is important for them to be involved in IEP meetings and be given the opportunity to share their opinions with regard to the IEP goals, and to be involved in decision making. Furthermore, the findings showed that valuable opportunities had been missed in earlier years in the teacher education program under consideration by not providing time for the preservice students to interview and learn from the families of students with disabilities and from each other during group discussion.

In a similar study, Werts et al. (2002) aimed to determine the perceptions of 21 preservice teachers with regard to the effectiveness of three workshops designed to help them develop effective lesson plans based on their students' IEPs, and to effectivity collaborate with the students' parents. The participants in this study were enrolled in a practicum coursework

offered by the Special Education Teacher Preparation Program at Appalachian State University, which is developed to culminate in licensure in learning disabilities (K-12). Each of the three workshops aimed to deliver important information through activities and by joining IEP meetings. In addition, the special education preservice teachers in this study had the opportunity to talk with students' parents, general education teachers, and the special education director for the western region of North Carolina, so that they could experience IEP meeting procedures. After the preservice teachers finished the practicum coursework, each was interviewed. Werts et al. used semi-structured interviews to determine the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the workshops and how they had influenced their knowledge of teacher-parent collaboration. The preservice teachers indicated that this series of workshops showed them a different view of the importance and challenging of engaging in the process of school-home collaboration than had been taught in their programs' coursework. In addition, most of the preservice teachers specified that the IEP meetings that included students' parents were most effective in training them for collaborating with other IEP members and for developing appropriate lesson plans for each student.

The studies reviewed in this section deal with preservice special education teachers' perceptions with regard to collaboration and the need for teacher preparation programs to prepare students to effectively collaborate with students' families and other staff in school settings (Mulholland & Blecker, 2008; Patterson et al., 2009; Werts et al., 2002). In general, the findings indicated the need for preservice special education teachers to be well-prepared and willing to work as a part of a collaborative team, which includes students' families, other teachers, professionals, and related service providers in schools. These studies also emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of the families' role in their children's learning, and their thoughts

about the value of teacher-parent collaboration as important factors in ensuring effective school-home collaboration. They also indicated that these can be met by having a good relationship and communication with each family (Patterson et al., 2009). In addition, these studies showed that focusing on school-home collaboration in teacher preparation will help these teachers demonstrate respect and equality among students' families and other school staff.

Summary

Based on this literature review, four themes emerged in the form of coursework delivery, field experience and training, implementing technology, and home-school collaboration, as being the most important components in teacher preparation. These components must be taken into account with regard to special education teacher preparation in order to provide effective programs that produce qualified and capable special education teachers. In addition, there are skills developments in relation to several content areas that teacher education programs should consider in terms of their coursework and field experience. These include multicultural education, inclusion, co-teaching, and collaboration with cooperating teachers and students' families. Although the collaboration between preservice teachers, supervisors, and cooperating teachers is beneficial, preservice teachers should have a clear idea of what the cooperating teachers' role is in terms of their field experience. Teacher education faculty should work with student teachers to help them understand that they are working with the cooperating teachers as special education teachers, not as educational assistants. Additionally, delivering professional development and implementing technology for preservice teachers as part of the field experience process would be useful in improving their performance.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that effective collaboration between school and home is required more than ever because collaboration helps ensure that students receive well-

coordinated support that meets their needs, as well as demonstrating respect and equality among educators and families. In addition, school-home collaboration is important because schools currently have students from different cultural, linguistic, social, and ethnic backgrounds, and such collaboration is a legal requirement. Finally, when it comes to professional standards in the preparation of special education teachers, it can be noted that the findings of the previous studies showed how it is important for teacher preparation programs to meet these standards (e.g., collaboration with the community, modeling good teaching, applying cultural capabilities, and committing to professional development) to provides critical guidance for the design of the curriculum for preparing highly qualified teachers.

Research on the Perceptions of Special Education Teachers with Regard to their Preparation in Saudi Arabia

Examining teachers' perceptions is one possible way to determine the quality of the teacher preparation programs because teachers who are enrolled in or have graduated from such a program will be able to assess the needs and strengths of their program from a personal perspective. In the case of Saudi Arabia, a few researchers such as Althabet (2002), Alothaim (2017), and Hussain (2010) have investigated the perceptions of special education teachers with regard to their preparation. In the first study, Althabet (2002) investigated the impact of the ID major in the Special Education Programs at King Saud University on the effectiveness of special education teachers who have graduated from this program. In collecting the necessary data, Althabet created a survey that included 36 items covering four major themes: coursework, internship, evaluation, and teaching skills. Moreover, three open-ended questions were asked about the teachers' strengths and weaknesses, and about any recommendations. A total of 255 teachers participated in Althabet's study. The researcher found that teachers of students with ID

who graduated from this program had a slightly positive attitude to the overall preparation program. The responses with regard to the open-ended questions indicated that the length of the internship during the last semester of the program was the weakest aspect of their preparation program. In addition, the majority of the participants stated that practical experience in the field should be more than one semester. In addition, the participants indicated that some courses such as teaching methods for students with ID, and skills of adaptive behavior for students with ID should be included in the program.

In the second study, Alothaim (2017) used semi-structured interviews to investigate the perceptions of special education teachers of students with ASD in Al Qassim, Saudi Arabia, with regard to their knowledge, teaching skills, and preparation for teaching students with ASD. The study aimed to answer two questions. First, the extent of the knowledge of the Saudi special education teachers with regard to ASD, and how these teachers worked with their students with ASD. Second, what these teachers believed they needed in order to succeed in teaching their students. Alothaim interviewed seven special education teachers for the purposes of the study. Alothaim developed "three themes from the analysis: (a) participants' perceptions of their teacher preparation programs, (b) post-BA learning, and (c) the reality of teaching students with ASD" (p. 66). The results showed that most of the participants had positive perceptions with regard to the theoretical knowledge provided in their preparation programs. The vast majority of participants talked positively about the professional learning experiences that they had received throughout the program. Nevertheless, the teachers commented that their preparation programs focused on the theoretical rather than the practical aspects, which led to a lack of preparation in terms of practical skills. The participants claimed that their programs did not provide enough

time and training during the practicum to help them become more familiar with students with ASD and the school environment.

In addition, Hussain (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of the learning disabilities major in a special education teacher preparation program at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. According to Hussain, 160 teachers of students with learning disabilities received surveys dealing with five themes: coursework, quality of field experience, classroom applications, lecturers' teaching skills, and the teachers' education experience. Hussain used ANOVA to define whether or not the independent variables, including participants' gender, teaching experience, or learning disabilities as the first choice of concentration, predicted their perspectives with regard to their preparation program. Hussain found that there was no statistically significant difference in perspectives by foretold independent variables in terms of their genders, teaching experiences, or learning disabilities as the first choice of specialization.

Hussain (2010) found that 59 teachers from who participated in their study decided to become special education teachers of students with learning disabilities because of their personal interests, while 39 teachers chose this major because there was a guarantee of jobs in Saudi schools. Twenty-six teachers argued that they become special education because there were limited majors to study in their university. The remaining 25 teachers specified that they decided to become teachers of students with learning disabilities in order to help their children with their education, and it was a relatively new major at that time. In general, the results showed that most of the participants agreed that their preparation program has been effective. Nevertheless, they claimed that the program's coursework for special education teachers and the faculty's teaching skills subscales were not as effective. The participants also indicated that they did not receive enough coursework in teaching math, reading, and spelling, so the preparation program for

special education teachers should develop coursework in these subjects, as well as in learning disabilities teaching methods. Although the teachers of students with learning disabilities expressed that their preparation program was effective, they strongly agreed that the length of the internship was insufficient. The participants also indicated that during field experience, their supervisors needed to be more involved and more available in terms of visiting and helping them in the school setting.

The findings of all the studies considered in this section showed that most of the participants had positive views with regard to the theoretical aspects of their preparation programs. The authors found that coursework and internship need to be improved to incorporate the practical aspects of the school environment. In addition, they found that the programs' supervisors should spend more time visiting their preservice teachers at school and help them improve their teaching skills by giving them support and feedback about their work with their students. It can be seen that each researcher chose a specific major in special education in their study. For example, Althabet (2002) explored the effectiveness of preparing teachers of students with ID in the Teacher Preparation Program at King Saud University, while the work of Alothaim (2017) was on the autism spectrum disorder major in the Al Qassim region. In the study by Hussain (2010), the author evaluated the effectiveness of the learning disabilities major in the Special Education Teacher Preparation Program at King Saud University in Riyadh. In addition, the setting of the studies by Althabet (2002) and Hussain (2010) was in the King Saud University in Riyadh while the work of Alothaim (2017) was in the Al Qassim region.

Need for More Research

After reviewing the literature, I found that there is a lack of research investigating perceptions of (RGUTs) toward their preparation. In the case of Saudi Arabia, existing studies on

special education preparation programs have only been conducted on a particular teacher preparation program or a specific region. Therefore, I found that there is a need for more research to investigate the preparation of RGUTs, specialized in (ID), who graduated from the other 22 Saudi teacher preparation programs. Therefore, this study provided an opportunity for RGUTs specializing in ID to reflect on their preparation in Saudi universities.

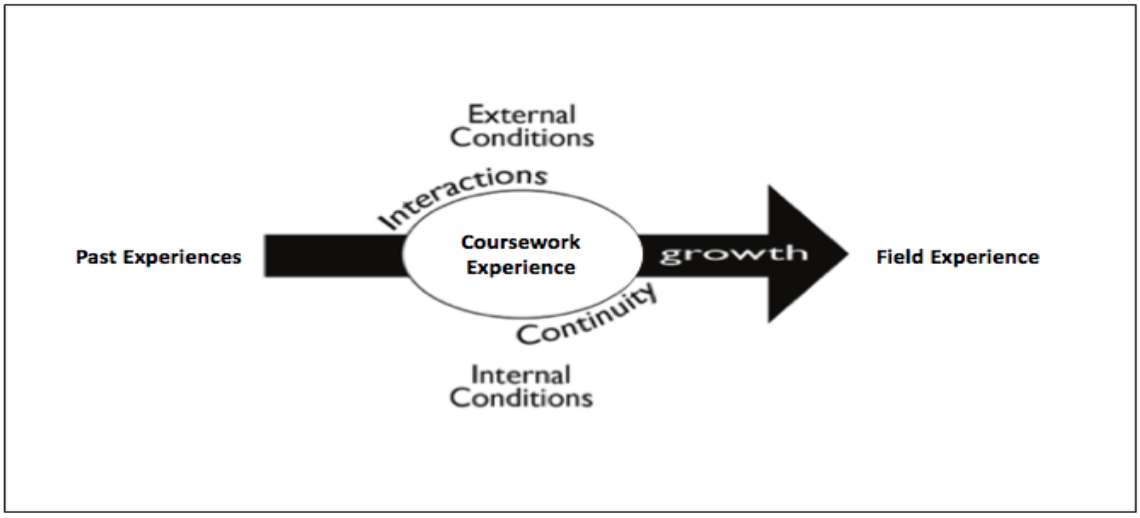
Theoretical Framework

In the last three decades, researchers have found a relationship between preservice teachers' teaching experience, the theoretical knowledge that they obtained from their preparation programs, and their perceptions with regard to their preparation in these programs (Schmidt, 2010). Therefore, as Schmidt pointed out, Dewey's theory of experience has been used to frame the research questions about the preservice teachers' perceptions with regard to their preparation programs. I also used the theory of experience, in particular, because the concept of experience is the focus of Dewey's work relating to the philosophy of education. According to Roth and Jornet (2013), the concept of experience is a "category of thinking, a minimal unit of analysis that includes people (their intellectual, affective, and practical characteristics), their material and social environment, their transactional relations (mutual effects on each other), and affect" (p. 107). In addition, Roth and Jornet argued that “both Dewey and Vygotsky conceived of experience as a category for understanding learning and development, that is, as the minimum analytic component that retains all the features of the whole” (p. 109). They pointed out that Dewey used his learning philosophy to develop a theory of experience, with suggestions for revealing some of the procedures that the learner uses in education based on his or her experiences.

According to Schmidt (2010), Dewey assumed that while all learners indisputably have experiences in schools and universities, the learner's development is influenced by the quality and the value of such experience. Therefore, Dewey evaluated the quality of the experience based on two principles: interaction and continuity. The interaction principle reflects that learners make meaning and obtain value from a specific experience when cooperating with other people in this experience. The continuity principle reflects that the influence of experience is a growing one, with each experience being informed by previous experiences, and these experiences shaping subsequent experiences. Figure 1 clarifies Dewey's theory of experience and how every experience changes the preservice teachers' experiences in ways that affect what might be learned from subsequent experiences (Krutka et al., 2017; Schmidt, 2010).

Figure 1

The Change of Preservice Teachers' Experiences Based on Dewey's Theory



Source: adapted from Krutka et al. (2017).

Figure 1 shows that when it comes to special education teacher preparation programs, engaging in coursework is seen as one experience in the program, while the other experience is the preservice teachers' teaching experience in the last year of the program. Both experiences are

influenced by the teacher's past experience, and the knowledge gained in their own early education (e.g., volunteering in schools, observing teaching experiences, working as teacher assistants). It also can be seen that what preservice teachers learn from a particular experience in the future will be affected by current experience (e.g., field experience and coursework experience) and by prior experience (e.g., students who volunteered in schools at an early age. In addition, the principles of continuity and interaction state that each preservice teacher may hold different levels of skill acquisition, and obtain different learning from the same learning experience.

Based on Dewey's theory of experience, understanding how preservice teachers interact with their past experiences, coursework, and teaching experiences would help the program faculty incorporate the influence of these experiences on their students' development. In other words, each preservice teacher creates continuity, and derives her or his own meanings from these experiences. In addition, it is important to be aware that understanding the procedures by which each teacher creates knowledge from his or her coursework and field experiences could help the teacher preparation program designers create sufficient coursework and student's teaching experiences that give an equivalence between what faculties and supervisors think they teach and coach, and what these preservice teachers learn. It should be noted that the theory of experience would be valuable in revealing possible explanations for similarities and dissimilarities in the programs' coursework experiences, and the field experiences that each preservice teacher values. Therefore, I found that Dewey's theory of experience is an effective framework for identifying the RGUTs' perceptions toward their preparation in their universities, based on these experiences, which would lead to an increase in the understanding of faculty and

decision-makers with regard to teacher candidates' knowledge, which in turn would help them in designing and developing their programs.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID with regard to their preparation involving the special education teacher preparation programs that currently operate in Saudi universities, in order to address the needs of preservice teachers enrolling in these programs, and to identify how these programs can be continuously improved from the perspective of these teachers. The research questions addressed were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID in Saudi Arabia with regard to their preparation?
2. How can the preparation of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia be continuously improved from the perspective of RGUTs of students with ID?

Methodology

In this study, the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID toward their preparation were explored by conducting qualitative research as defined by Creswell (1998):

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p.15)

In addition, Corbin and Strauss (2015) defined qualitative research as "a form of research in which a researcher(s) or designated coresearcher(s) collects and interprets data, making the researcher as much a part of the research process as participants and the data they provide" (p. 3). In this study, I made use of a qualitative approach because using such an approach gives the researcher the opportunity to directly collect meaningful data relating to the participants'

experiences in terms of their personal, learning, social, and cultural contexts (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a researcher, the qualitative approach also gave me the opportunity to connect with the participants in the study to see the issue of the teacher preparation from their point of view (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Additionally, the qualitative approach was appropriate for the purpose of this research because this form of research focuses on providing an opportunity to hear the voices of people who have lived this experience, in that no one else could know more than they do, rather than evaluating their performance using pre-determined measures or using a quantitative approach (Lapan et al., 2012). In the following sections, I explain how the participants in this study were selected in terms of the inclusion criteria that these participants met, as well as the data collection method, and the recording system that I used. I also address how the data were managed and analyzed, as well as the ethical considerations that I considered during the research process.

Selection of Participants

To ensure that the participants were members of the target population considered in this study, the selection criteria were: special education teachers who had graduated in the last three years from one of the special education teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities, who have been recently certificated by the Saudi Ministry of Education to teach students with ID, but who have not yet been placed in schools or in part or full-time employment in special education institutes. The particular reason for this circumstance is to ensure that the wait-time for placement, which could be a few years, does not impact on how RGUTs perceive their preparation programs, and to ensure that they still remember each aspect of coursework and field experience that they were involved in their preparation programs.

To ensure I had a sufficient number of participants to explore the variety of issues faced by such individuals, I used social media, in the form of a Twitter page entitled *Saudi Teachers*, to contact them. After securing IRB approval, I posted the recruitment letter on this page. I asked teachers who met the inclusion criteria if they were willing to participate in this study. I explained that this study would provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their preparation in Saudi universities, and how the findings of this study could positively influence the quality of the preparation of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia in the future. I included my UNM email and phone number in the recruitment letter and asked them to contact me if they had any questions about the research project. When the potential participants agreed to participate in the study and it was determined that they met the inclusion criteria, they were asked to sign a consent form. Nine teachers (5 males and 4 females) who graduated from eight teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities agreed to take part in this study.

Data Collection and Recording

Interviews were used in this study to collect the relevant data from the participants. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the interview is a research method that consists of a pre-determined conversation, mostly between two people, but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one person with the intention of gathering information from the other person or group of people. According to Cohen et al. (2018), the interview is a flexible method for data collection because people are familiar with using this type of method, and both interviewer and interviewee can use multi-sensory channels (i.e., online, phone interviews, verbal, non-verbal, visual, oral, and written channels). According to Seidman (2006) and Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009), interviews are one of the most useful research methods for understanding the opinions and perceptions of a person or a group of people with regard to a particular issue. Interviews can

also be used in research to learn from participants about experiences or events that the researcher cannot see, or because they had happened in the past (Lapan et al., 2012; Seidman, 2006). Therefore, using interviews as the chosen research method helped me obtain data with regard to the perceptions of RGUTs toward their past experiences in their teacher preparation programs.

In addition, I made use of interviews, in particular, because I was able to control the time of the interview. Also, I was able to get complete answers for a particular issue, as well as explanations about a complex issue by asking follow-up questions. I used phone interviews with all of the participants for two reasons. First, the participants were in different cities and regions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Second, because the coronavirus pandemic has brought the world to lockdown, I thought that the participants would be more comfortable with a phone interview instead of an in-person interview. I used a semi-structured interview format where some topics and questions were selected based on the research literature and on related studies. In this type of interview, the same topics were covered with each interviewee (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). After I covered all the questions, the participants had the opportunity to talk about anything else related to the topic (see Appendix A).

According to Seidman (2006), to have a reliable record of what the interviewees say during interviews, the researcher has to transform the oral answers into a recorded or written text for analysis. Seidman wrote that the main technique for creating text from these interviews is by recording and then transcribing the interviews. When it came to data recording tools, I used digital audio-recording of the interview, given that this is the most common technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used this technique because it ensures that everything the interviewee says is recorded, and that I did not miss any of what had been said.

Data Management and Analysis

Transcription

After I finished interviewing all the RGUTs, I listened to each interview at least twice. I then transcribed the interviews in Arabic and translated the Arabic transcripts into English. When I transcribed the interviews, I replaced the participants' names with pseudonyms, and I did not include any personal information that could be used to identify that person. When it came to the transcription protocol that was used in this study, I used the Transcription Key for Intrevistas Bilingües Research Project Protocol to transcribe all the recorded interviews (Scherba de Valenzuela, n.d.). The basic elements of this transcription protocol included using pseudonyms for the participants while transcribing, typing exactly what had been said by the interviewees and the interviewer without correcting grammar and sounds errors, as well as without using punctuation as is used in formal writing, because they have different use in this system of transcription, and typing "XX" to show any unintelligible sound (see Appendix B).

Translation

After completing the transcriptions of all the interviews and before data analysis, I translated the Arabic transcripts into English. To ensure that my translation of the Arabic transcripts did not change the contents of the interviews or the meaning of the participants' answers, I worked with a Ph.D. candidate concentrating in applied linguistics and speaks Arabic as a first language to look over the translated transcripts. This Ph.D. candidate did not have access to any personal information of the participants.

Data Analysis

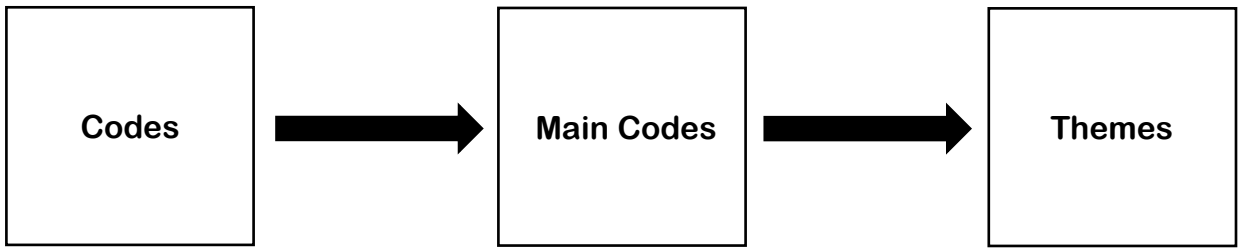
According to Glesne (2016), data analysis involves organizing what the researcher has observed, heard, and read in order to describe, compare, link, and create explanations of the

information provided by the participants. The form of data analysis that I used in this study was thematic analysis. Dawson (2009) pointed out that this form of analysis is extremely inductive because the themes are developed from the data and are not influenced by the researcher's thoughts. After I completed transcribing the interviews and translating the Arabic transcripts into English as explained in the previous section, I used manual analysis to code each transcript. This involved segregating data into categories using codes to develop themes across all the interviews, and to establish common meanings and comments across the interviews.

A code in this context is defined as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language- based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). After working on identifying codes throughout the entire set of transcripts, I examined and combined these codes to identify general themes across these codes. Saldaña (2016) also defined a theme as "an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytical reflection" (p. 15). At this stage, I went back over the marginal notes and tried to collect codes that had common views and points that went together to form main codes. I then repeatedly read these main codes and looked for ways of merging them in terms of meanings that match particular themes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Data Analysis Process



Member Check

To increase the trustworthiness of this study, after I came up with the emerging themes, I worked with my dissertation advisor to look over the code-theme relationships to make sure that these represent the common notes and comments provided in the conducted interviews and transcripts. Additionally, I conducted member checking with all the teachers who participated in the study to get their opinions about the comments and notes that I had identified based on the transcripts. By email, I sent my comments based on their interviews to each participant and asked for their feedback about what I planned to write. After considering the feedback of my dissertation advisor and that of the participants, I developed the final look of the themes, each of which are discussed in the findings chapter.

Ethical Considerations

Most people have been involved in interviews at some point in their daily lives. However, when it comes to research interviews, there are some ethical considerations that must be considered by the researcher. These ethical principles guided my conduct and use of the teachers' interviews, and the principles are summarized as follows.

Informed Consent

One of the important ethical issues in interview research is that of informed consent, with the interviewee being well-informed with regard to the subject of the research (Cohen et al., 2018). When the participants agreed to participate in the study and met the inclusion criteria, I asked them to review and sign the consent form. The consent form was in Arabic, attached as a pdf link with the research participation request, and I asked them to save a copy for their own use and send me a copy of the signed form. The form included details of the purpose of the study, the data collection method, and the benefits of sharing their opinions and perceptions with regard to

their preparation. I explained to them the types of questions they would be asked during the interviews, and I informed them that they had the right to refuse to answer any question if they felt that they did not want to do so. I informed them that I would conduct member checking with them to get their opinions about the comments and notes that I planned to come up with based on the interview. I also informed the participants that participation in this study was voluntary. Additionally, in the consent form, all of the teachers were informed that they would not receive potential benefits from taking part in the research, but generally the findings of this study could positively influence the quality of preparation of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia in the future (see Appendix C).

In addition, the participants were informed that there were no known risks associated with participation in the study, but that some of the participants might feel discomfort when answering some questions relating to their preparation. In addition, the consent form indicated that the participants would be assigned a pseudonym, and that the recorded interviews would be deleted after transcribing and analyzing them. I also asked them if they had any questions related to their participation or wanted to have additional information about the research. Where necessary, I stated that I would provide them with more clarification and explanation with regard to any concerns they might have. The participants also acknowledged their consent to an interview by identifying their preferred day and time to undertake the interview.

Data Storage

To ensure that the documents and data (i.e., consent forms, audio recordings from the interviews, transcripts, and notes when coding the transcripts) are saved and locked, I put the data documents for each participant in a subfolder and put all of the participants' subfolders in one folder in my personal laptop. I created a password for this folder to ensure that the data were

in a locked folder, so that no one had access. After I had created a locked main folder that contained all the documents, I made additional copy of this folder and saved it on my OneDrive account in case I lose the folder that I had on my password-protected personal laptop. The only doc file that linked participant pseudonyms to their personal information was in a locked folder on my password-protected home computer to ensure that identifiers were stored separately from project data. It was used only for the purpose of classification and member checking, and it was deleted after data analysis. Finally, after I finish this study, I will keep all the documents in a secure box in my home, and they will be destroyed in two years' time.

Confidentiality

Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants is an important principle of interview research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Confidentiality is a way of protecting a participant's privacy, and it means "not disclosing information from a participant in any way that might identify that individual or that might enable the individual to be traced" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 130). Confidentiality means that the researcher is not allowed to discuss a participant and show other people any information relating to the participant that can be used to identify that person. Therefore, the participants' informed consents indicated that the participant would not be identified. I worked to ensure the participants' privacy by using pseudonyms and not showing any information in these forms that revealed that participant's identity (i.e., names, emails, or other contact information). In the data storage and analysis stages, I also used the same pseudonyms to name the subfolders containing the documents (e.g., digital audio recordings, originals notes, transcripts, and codes and themes forms) for each participant, in order to conceal their identities during the analysis process. In addition, after the recorded interviews had been transcribed and analyzed, the recorded interviews were immediately destroyed by deleting them.

Finally, when discussing the merged themes in the results chapter, pseudonyms were also used to ensure the participants' privacy, including the cities in which they lived, and the teacher preparation programs they had graduated from.

Participant Withdrawal

According to Seidman (2006), it is important to inform the participants that they have the right to drop out of the study at any time during the interview or the research process. Therefore, the interview consent form informed the participants of their right to refuse to answer any of the questions at any time, and to even ask the interviewer to turn off the recording device for some of their answers, especially if they felt uncomfortable, or if unexpected events happen during the interview process. They were also informed about their right to withdraw from this study as long as their request came no later than one month after completion of the interview. The participants' contact information and the data obtained would be deleted immediately after receiving the withdrawal request, however, I did not receive any such request from my participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

As I explained in Chapter three, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID toward their preparation in the special education teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities as a means to address the needs of preservice teachers enrolling in these programs, and to identify how these programs can be continuously improved from the perspectives of these teachers. My two research questions were as follows: What are the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID in Saudi Arabia with regard to their preparation? How can the preparation of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia be continuously improved from the perspective of RGUTs of students with ID?

As clarified in Chapter Three, the interviews in this study were conducted with RGUTs who had graduated in the last three years from one of the special education teacher preparation programs at a Saudi university. Further, they had been recently certificated by the Saudi Ministry of Education to teach students with ID but had not yet been placed in schools or special education institutes. Nine teachers (five males and four females) who had graduated from eight teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities agreed to take part in this study. Table 6 shows demographic information about the participants. As mentioned in Chapter three, a voice recorded phone interview was used with all nine RGUTs. The interviews were undertaken in December 2020. This chapter will report the findings from these interviews, including the themes and sub-themes across these interviews.

Table 6

Participant Demographics

Teacher Name	Gender	Years Since Graduation
Amani	Female	One year
Bander	Male	Two years and six months
Faris	Male	Less than three years
Fatima	Female	Two years and six months
Halah	Female	One year
Khalid	Male	One year and six months
Maha	Female	Two years
Rashid	Male	One year
Sami	Male	Six months

Based on the analysis of the nine teachers' responses to the interview questions, five themes emerged: the RGUTs' motivations to become special education teachers; the RGUTs' perceptions of the programs' coursework; the RGUTs' perceptions of their field experience; the RGUTs' perceptions of the professional development preparation in their preparation programs; and finally, the RGUTs' recommendations for teacher preparation programs. Under each theme, I found several sub-themes. The five themes and their sub-themes are explained below.

The RGUTs' Motivations to Become Special Education Teachers

Motivation is defined as "the process that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behaviours" (Cherry, 2010, para. 1). This theme describes the motivations of the participants to enroll in the special education teacher preparation programs and to be special education teachers. One of the interview questions asked was how they had decided to become a special education teacher. The participants' responses showed that they had a variety of motivations that led them to become special education teachers. I found some of the motivations to be noteworthy and repeated across all the interviewed teachers, so they were used as sub-themes under the theme of

RGUTs' motivations to become special education teachers. Three sub-themes emerged under this theme: (a) job guarantee; (b) influenced by previous experiences; and (c) more income.

Job Guarantee

Five of the participants argued that because more than 20 special education teacher preparation programs were established in the last 15 years, there is a need for more special education teachers in schools. They stated that they want to be special education teachers because there is a guaranteed job, and they will be placed in schools as soon as they graduate. For example, Halah said she had decided to become a special education teacher for the following reason:

> Basically, to find a job. I see that the field of special education is kind of new and schools need us. When I finished my high school, I had several majors that I could study, like languages and translation, home-economics, early childhood, and special education. But my idea was that I did not want to study something that is not needed, so I chose special education.

The same question was asked to Sami, who graduated from one of the universities in the south of Saudi Arabia. Sami found that the special education teachers who graduated from his program were placed in a school after a few months of their graduation. He said:

> Because it was a new major here in my university; I mean, at that time they had just established the special education department, a few years before I applied to the university. And also, a friend of mine, he's now a special education teacher who also graduated from this program; it didn't take him three months to work in the school. Yeah, he told me to finish my degree as soon as possible, there is a need for this major.

Similarly, Fatima said, “I applied to the special education program because it was just established, and we were the first group who were enrolled in the program, which would help us to find work after graduation." Bander also noted that he decided to enroll at the teacher education college in the special education teacher preparation program instead of marketing college. This was because he learned there is a lack of special education teachers in schools, so he would work in these schools after he obtained his degree. He stated that:

> First of all, I was planning to study something about computer science or something about programing, but I couldn't because my GPA in high school was low, so I had to choose between going to teacher college or marketing college. I chose teacher college, and special education particularly, because based on what I was told by my sister, it is needed. She is also a special education teacher, and yeah, she said they need more teachers.

Khalid gave the same reason that led him to become a special education teacher. He noted that the number of special education programs for students with ID is the highest among other special education programs for students with other disabilities such as ASD, learning disabilities, and visual impairment. Therefore, he decided to specialize in ID, so his chance of employment was higher than that of other special education teachers of students with other disabilities. He said:

> Honestly, I decided to be a special education teacher and work with kids with ID because, before applying to my program, I heard that there are many special education teachers who didn't wait a long time before they got their jobs. I mean, especially teachers who specialized in ID because there are many programs for kids with ID in schools compared with other disabilities.

Influenced by Previous Experiences

Two participants said they decided to become special education teachers because they had experienced working with individuals with disabilities. These experiences influenced their decisions to become special education teachers. For instance, Amani worked in a special education organization in her city and she found that this experience motivated her to learn more about special education and to serve individuals with disabilities. She said:

> I wanted to be a special education teacher because I had experience working with them when I was in high school. I worked with an organization for individuals with disabilities and I would say that working with these people makes me feel that I did something good for my community, especially for these people.

Maha also claimed that she wanted to be a special education teacher because she had experience of dealing with a child with a disability, her brother. She said,

> Actually, I have a brother with Down syndrome, and I found how hard it is when you have a child with Down syndrome, especially for my parents and me as the oldest sister; so I wanted to learn more about this syndrome in order to help my brother as well as other kids who have this syndrome.

She also stated that when she learns more about her brother's disability and has deep knowledge of the field of special education, she will also be able to help her parents work with him.

More Income

Two participants stated that they decided to become special education teachers particularly because special education teachers get high incomes. Rashid noted that he decided to be a teacher because he wants to work for the state rather than for private business. He particularly chose special education because he would have a higher income than other teachers.

He said, “I was told that special education teachers get a high income, like about 20% if I'm correct, higher than other teachers, I mean, general education teachers.” Similarly, Faris pointed out that although his teacher preparation program was seen as a new program in his university at the time he finished his high school degree, the main reason he decided to become a special education teacher, however, was because of the high income that special education teachers get.

The RGUTs’ Perceptions of the Programs’ Coursework

The theme of RGUTs’ perceptions of programs’ coursework has two sub-themes: (a) methods and ID coursework delivery, and (b) the lack of linking theory with practice in coursework. When asking teachers about their coursework, it came as no surprise that coursework is one of the most important components that teachers perceived in their preparation. The participants had different perceptions of the coursework they received based on the type and the focus of each coursework. Under the following sub-themes, I will explain the participants’ perceptions of their programs’ coursework.

Methods and ID Coursework Delivery

One of the interview questions concerned their experience with the program’s coursework, so I asked them about this experience, and they stated that they receive at least two courses focused only on ID. Some participants mentioned a course called *An Introduction to ID* in their preparation, and they made positive comments about this course. Two of them said that they found this course useful, especially in the first two years of their preparation, in understanding the definition of ID and the characteristics of individuals with ID, which helped them have a clear idea about this category of disability before they made their decision to specialize in ID in the third year of their preparation program. Maha pointed out that she learned about ID from an ‘introduction to special education’ course which included a chapter focuses on

ID, as well as from another coursework, which was only about ID; they were both in her second year in the program. She said,

> I didn't specialize in intellectual disability like from the beginning. I had two years about special education in general. And I would say having a course about introduction in intellectual disability really helped me choose this major like when we're asked to sign for the specific majors like by the end of that year. It gave me an idea about intellectual disability.

Maha also mentioned that having an introduction course in special education helped her not only learning about ID, but also about other categories of disabilities. She said, “I feel that having this introduction course was very good, not just because it helped me learn about the basics in ID and Down syndrome, but also because it was like an overview on all disabilities."

Also, Khalid noted that he learned a lot from the introduction to special education and the introduction to ID course. He found it helpful when it came to the theoretical knowledge of ID. He stated that, “I finished the first year of the program and, I want to be honest with you, I was lost; I mean, by that time, I hadn't decided which students I wanted to work with until I took this course." Khalid pointed out that this course helped him learn about the causes of ID, the history of ID, and how individuals with ID could learn whenever they received the necessary supports. He also said that this course was useful as a basis for his preparation before he got advanced coursework in the last two years of his program. Halah also received this course and had a positive view of it. She found this course useful, not only for her as a special education teacher, but also for students’ parents as a guideline for them. When I asked about her experience of any coursework focused on ID, she talked about the introduction to ID course and said, “I think, overall, that the coursework, especially the specified coursework on intellectual disability, was

excellent and, honestly, I think it will be very useful for families to learn about their children's disabilities." It can be seen that teachers who received an introduction course in ID found it helpful, especially because it was offered at the beginning of their preparation, which helped them learn about the basic issues associated with ID such as the history, definitions, causes and characteristics of ID.

In addition, I asked all the participants what they thought of the methods course that focuses on teaching students with ID in their preparation programs. Most of them reported a lack of methods coursework in their programs. I asked them about any coursework they received that focused on classroom management, teaching social skills for students with ID, and positive behavior interventions and support for students with ID. They indicated that there is a lack of methods coursework that is specified for teaching students with ID in these areas. Many of them noted that the only methods coursework they received was about teaching reading and writing to students with ID. I asked Sami to tell me about any coursework he received that focused on classroom management or teaching social skills for students with ID. He said:

> For classroom management, no I didn't. And course on teaching, like in particular skills, I think I did take one about teaching academic skills to students with ID. I mean, it focused on both reading and writing skills like in the last year of the program.

Sami also talked about his concerns about teaching math to his students because he did not have the opportunity to receive training in teaching math to students with ID as coursework. He said, "since we talked about that, can you believe that like now I'm a special education teacher, but I didn't know or like get practice on teaching math, like IEP's goals on math." He expressed about his unpreparedness in teaching this subject. A similar example was provided by Rashid. I asked him about his experience with positive behavior interventions coursework. He said, "I didn't

have this course, but I remember we had ABA coursework? I do not know if you mean this one?" It was clear that Rashid, although he is a graduated special education teacher, still does not have a clear idea about positive behavior interventions. When I asked him about this ABA coursework, he said it was all about how to develop behavior interventions only to reduce students' negative behaviors.

Amani was the only participant who said she received coursework focused on positive behavior interventions and teaching social and communication skills. She pointed out that she feels that the teaching social and communication skills coursework was one of the most important courses on her program due to the inability to teach these skills before working on other academic skills. She said:

> Teaching social and communication skills coursework was useful, especially when I was working on field experience. I think it is impossible to teach them how to write without working on the way they communicate with me and other students.

Khalid, Faris, Bander and Fatima provided another example of the lack of methods coursework in special education teacher preparation programs. Khalid, Bander and Faris said they did not receive any of these courses, and Fatima said she had not had coursework focused on classroom management and positive behavior interventions; however, she learned about teaching social skills to students with ID in a general coursework as a chapter of that coursework. She said, "I didn't take coursework about classroom management and behaviors interventions, but we did take coursework on teaching both social and academic skills to students with ID." Maha and Halah also supported the view of the absence of specialized ID courses in behavior interventions for students with ID in their preparation programs. Maha indicated that she did not take classroom management coursework, but she took a behavior interventions course, it was about

other disabilities, not only for students with ID. She said, “I did take something about behavior interventions, like in general, in the third year, and they like included all disabilities not just ID.” She contended that her program did not offer teaching social skills coursework, but she took another one, which was about teaching academic skills. When I asked her about this coursework, she said:

> Honestly, I don’t think I learned about that, but I remember we took a course focused on teaching academic skills for students with ID, but it was like theoretical coursework, so we didn't practice teaching these skills at schools. Yeah, I think it would be a nice to practice these skills in schools to make sure we’ve learned how to teach them.

Halah also pointed out that she did not take coursework on classroom management and behavior interventions, however, she agreed with Fatima about learning teaching social skills as a part of another course. She said:

> We had a course focused on strategies and approaches for teaching students with ID. Yeah, and I remember we had it, but it was something about teaching different skills. I'm not sure about social skills. I don't know; I mean, I don't think we had a course that was about social skills, but we learned how to teach that with other skills.

It can be seen that although these participants graduated from different teacher preparation programs, their responses showed that there is a lack of methods coursework focused on teaching students with ID in these programs. Participants stated that their programs’ coursework was about special education in general, even after they specialized in ID in their second year, which all of them did.

Lack of Linking Theory with Practice in Coursework

This sub-theme describes the issue of putting theory into practice in coursework, and whether the participants had the opportunity to link the theoretical knowledge they obtained with the practical aspect. Most of the participants indicated that their programs' coursework focused only on the theoretical aspects and there was an absence of applying practices in their coursework. They stated that they had never worked or practiced what they learned in their coursework with real students until they enrolled in field experience in the last semester of their preparation program. Sami said he was enrolled in an ABA course and assumed that coursework was only about information. He said he was asked to make up a behavior intervention without working with a real student. He also argued that coursework would be more useful if he had the opportunity to practice what he learned about ABA in school with real students. He said:

> I did take an ABA course, and in that course, I remember, it was all about how to develop interventions to deal with students' negative behaviors, but it was in papers. I mean there was no practice for this intervention. And I remember we had a discussion with each other, like a group of students, about how it could be more useful if it was linked with practice.

Sami also stressed the need for putting the theory into practice within the same course and not waiting for a few years until these preservice teachers enrolled in their field experience. He claimed that because he did not practice what he learned about ABA in the same semester as taking that course, he had not remembered everything about ABA when he was in the field experience. He said, "to be honest, by the time I had the teaching experience I hadn't memorized everything about ABA, and that's why I said it would be better if we practiced at the same time." Maha also spoke about the lack of application practices in her program's coursework. She said

that one piece of coursework was about teaching reading and writing skills to students with ID. She claimed that although it was a methods course, it was only about theoretical information. She said, "we took a course focused on teaching academic skills to students with ID, but it was like theoretical coursework, so we didn't practice teaching these skills at schools." Amani also supported the perceptions of Maha and Sami about the lack of linking theory with practice in their coursework. When I asked her about the IEP coursework, she said she was asked to make up an IEP goal and work on developing lessons for these goals. She stated that making up an IEP goal was not useful because she thinks every student has different strengths and needs, so she would develop the appropriate goals and lessons based on these skills. She said, "the issue with that course was we didn't get practice in working with real students; we were asked to make up IEP goals, without even considering the students' needs and that is not what special education is about." In addition, Rashid and Bander provided another example of the need to link theoretical learning with practical aspect in coursework. Rashid emphasized the need to have a real student when developing behavior interventions in his ABA coursework. It was also difficult for him because he had to pick a random behavior and determine behavior interventions for this behavior. He said,

> Making up behaviors and interventions was very hard for me. When I compare it with working with real students, because if I have students with behavioral problems, I do not need to make up all of that work because I already have a behavior to work on.

Rashid also talked about the importance of linking the theoretical work with practice to evaluate the outcomes of this work. He said, "working with students isn't just useful for having practice, but also to evaluate the work of these interventions; how we can do that without applying them in schools?" It can be noticed that because he did not practice the theoretical feature with real

students in the classroom, he missed an important component of that coursework, which is evaluating the effectiveness of the delivered behavior interventions.

Bander also talked about the absence of linking what he learned in coursework with practice in school during the years of receiving coursework. He contended that he saw himself as less prepared than his sister, who is also a teacher but from another teacher preparation program in Saudi Arabia. He said because his sister had the opportunity to work in classrooms from the first year of her program, her experience of working with students and school staff is better than his. He said:

> My sister is also a teacher but from another university…where she used to go to school from the first year for practice. I wish I had gone to that university too. Now, when I compare my knowledge with hers, I would say she has a better background than me about working in schools because she has more experience, like four years of experience. Why not let students visit schools to observe classrooms from the first year, at least once or twice a week every semester?

Khalid was the only participant who stated he had the chance to link the theoretical knowledge of teaching math with real students in schools. He said:

> I remember in one semester I had a class about teaching strategies, like how to teach math for students with intellectual disability; the professor who taught this class… worked with three schools to see if we could do the final project, which was working on one IEP goal on math, and it was about the basic math problems in the elementary level. And yeah, we did that; we worked with kids in the last three weeks in schools.

Khalid found that this coursework was one of the most useful experiences for him in his preparation program. He said, “we were three groups in three schools, and I would say it was one

of the useful things I had in the program." Based on my interviews with these teachers regarding putting theory into practice in coursework, it can be said that the participants perceived that the coursework in the programs they graduated from was too theoretical and did not focus sufficiently on applying teaching practices in schools. Most of the participants in this study indicated that the coursework they received in their preparation programs concerned information about ID and special education in general, rather than ensuring the opportunity to implement the obtained knowledge in the classroom.

The RGUTs' Perceptions of their Field Experience

This theme highlights the participants' perceptions of one of the important components in teacher preparation programs, which is the field experience in schools. During the interviews, I asked the participants whether they enrolled in a field experience during their preparation and they indicated that they had enrolled in this practicum course. Four sub-themes emerged under the theme of the participants' perceptions of their field experience: (a) length of field experience, (b) unclear expectations, (c) role of supervisors in field experience, and (d) collaboration with cooperating teachers. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss each sub-theme.

Length of Field Experience

When asking the participants about their field experience, six participants noted that the length of the field experience was insufficient. They said their field experience was only one semester, which they expressed that it was too short to practice all the theoretical knowledge they obtained in their coursework. They stated that teaching experience needs to be more than one semester in order for them to have more familiarity with teaching students with ID and to be well-prepared to begin working in schools as in-service teachers. Maha noted that her field experience was too short compared with the years she spent in taking coursework. She pointed

out that enrolling in a teaching experience for only one semester was not enough to practice what she had learned in the program's coursework. She said, "my field experience was in a special education institute, and it was only one semester, and I want to say it was very short." Similarly, when I asked Bander to describe his field experience, he said:

> My field experience was the most important and hardest experience in the program because I found myself in the school without even a pre-meeting with my supervisor. I had to work on students' IEPs goals and use worksheets for more than one student in different skills and do all of that in one semester.

Bander suggested more semesters for field experience to know more about students before working with them. He said, "I wished it was more than one semester because honestly one semester is not enough even to get to know your students." Sami also complained about the limited time for field experience in his program. He declared that, although he had one semester for field experience, the actual time that he spent in schools working with students was less than a semester. He said, "taking schedules and placing us in schools took them about a month before we went to school." As a way of showing the level of significance of having the opportunity to work and teach students with ID, Sami stated that teacher preparation programs could offer the last two years only for field experience and the first two years for coursework delivery. He said, "it was very short, but I learned a lot from this experience." Sami also added that, " I think it's better to make it at least two years to learn more and have more experience working with kids." Similarly, the view of Amani also showed that field experience was appreciated but also seen to be too short. She said:

> My teaching experience was exactly three months which in no way covered all the activities and knowledge that I have learned in the last three years in only three months.

> It's kind of strange, and I'm saying that because it's more important than some coursework, like coursework about Arabic and the English language where we spent years of lectures which were only about that.

Amani remarked that being in schools and working with students with ID is more important than enrolling in elective coursework such as Arabic and English language coursework. Rashid also supported the view of the insufficient length of field experience in teacher preparation programs. When I asked him about this experience, he responded:

> I was shocked by the reality of working in the classroom and how special education teachers do everything in that program. So, it took me a while to know the students and how the teacher who I worked with handles all of that work by himself, but there was not that much time as it was only four days in the last semester.

It can be noticed that Rashid agreed with Bander when he stated that more time was needed to know all the students in the classroom. He also voiced his concern about the reality of teaching in the school and the additional time he needed to know more about the work of the cooperating teachers with his students and the classroom environment before he engaged in his field experience. In addition, Khalid spoked about the short time he had to work with students with ID in his field experience due to his enrollment in other coursework. He had to finish his field experience early to study for his final exams. He said, "I did not go to the school like for the whole semester because I had to study for my finals." He also added an additional problem with field experience when he talked about the limited opportunities that he had to work with students with ID. He said:

> It was four days, but I had only two hours in a day because I was placed there with three of my colleagues. Two of us used to go early in the morning, and I, with one of them,

> used to go there after 10:00 because there were only two classrooms, and they had to place us in different schedules.

It was clear that although Khalid's field experience was four days every week, he did not work for a full day in the school due to the limited availability of classrooms for these preservice teachers.

Unclear Expectations

Some participants reported that unclear expectations about the requirements of field experience is one of the difficulties that could keep qualified preservice teachers from demonstrating competence in the classroom. Three participants specifically noted that, when they were placed in schools for field experience, they did not have a clear idea about the work they were expected to do until their supervisors later visited them in schools. Maha said that she was nervous for the first two weeks of her experience due to the absence of instructions and expectations about her work in the classroom. She said:

> I didn't know what I was supposed to do until my supervisor visited me. It was about two weeks after I got my placement. I was very nervous about those two weeks because I didn't know what I should do with my students and also the cooperating teacher did not have a clear idea about my field experience, so I waited until my supervisor met with me.

It seems that neither Maha nor the cooperating teacher who she worked with were notified about the field experience requirements, so she lost two weeks of this experience. Amani also identified times when she and her peers were confused about their field experience requirements. She said, "we talked with the supervisor about our work in the school because we were confused about what we were asked to do; like there was no syllabus before meeting with her and going to school." She also talked about how not receiving the syllabus for field experience in her program

made them concerned about the assignments' grades and requirements as well as about the due date for these assignments. She said, "I want to mention how it is important to have a syllabus for the assignments due date, not just about the grades, but also about how many hours we need to be complete in the school." In addition, Bander had a similar perspective toward the absence of directions in the beginning of his field experience. He argued that he did not have any meeting with his supervisor before he went to his placement. He stated that "my field experience was the most important and hardest experience in the program because I found myself in the school without even a pre-meeting with my supervisor." He added that he perceived this teaching experience as the most significant in his preparation, but also as the hardest one due to the lack of delivered directions.

Role of Supervisors in Field Experience

During the interviews, I asked the participants how they would describe the role of their supervisors in field experience. The majority of them had positive perceptions toward the role that their supervisors played in the field experience. They indicated that their supervisors were always supportive and willing to provide feedback about their performance in schools. For example, Faris noted that he had two supervisors in his field experience who were a professor and a teaching assistant. He said they used meet with him before and after school to review the forms that he used with students as well as to provide support while he was teaching. When asked about their roles, he responded:

> They used to meet with me before or after class to take a look at my forms or worksheets and see if I had any questions. They were very helpful; I remember one day the teaching assistant worked with my students to teach me how to get their attention at the beginning of the lesson, you know, like modeling.

Halah and Amani also talked positively about their supervisors. Halah said, "my supervisor was the best thing in my experience in the school." When I asked her if she could explain why she thought her supervisor was the best in this experience, she responded,

> She was always available to support me or to answer my questions. When I had any issue related to the school or the cooperating teacher, I talked with her and she was willing to talk with them.

Amani was asked the same question about the role of supervisors in field experience, and she also emphasized that her supervisors' comments and feedback improved her performance in the classroom. She said, "I see meeting with my supervisor after teaching lessons is the only useful thing because she gave me feedback in each meeting and that really improved my performance with my kids." She thought her performance improved from one week to another, and the only factor that influenced this improvement was the feedback provided by her supervisor in these meetings. Another example about the positive perspectives toward the supervisor in the field experience was given by Sami. When I asked him to describe the role of his supervisor, he described it as perfect. He said, "he was perfect, my supervisor was a professor who specialized in intellectual disability and that helped me a lot in my teaching experience." Sami argued that his supervisor had a Ph.D. in ID, and he thought it was helpful for him to be supervised by a faculty member with a Ph.D. in ID. Nevertheless, he voiced his colleagues' concerns about their supervisors who were teaching assistants with a concentration in different disabilities such as ASD or deaf and hard of hearing. They thought the capabilities of these supervisors in supervision would be more valuable if they were concentrated in ID. He said:

> Some of my colleagues in that school had teaching assistant supervisors, and some of them specialized in learning disabilities or hearing impairment, so they didn't like that because they didn't know as much as my supervisor did.

Nevertheless, two participants showed negative perceptions toward their supervisors in field experience. For example, Fatima agreed with Sami about the disadvantage of being supervised by teaching assistants. She said she was placed in a special education program in a public school, where her supervisor was a teaching assistant which was not helpful. She thought it would be better if she worked with a professor in her teaching experience due to the lack of supervision experience that the teaching assistant had. She stated that:

> My supervisor used to meet with us every other week, but I think it's not a good idea to have a teaching assistant as my supervisor. I mean my supervisor was a teaching assistant and I think she didn't have the experience that would help me. I didn't benefit from her.

Khalid also talked negatively about his professor, and he argued that he would rate him two out of five. When I asked him why he gave him only two out of five, he responded "he had about twenty students, so he didn't have time to observe and work with each one in one week." Khalid claimed that working with twenty preservice teachers limited the time that this supervisor could spend with each one of them. Therefore, this supervisor was not able visit these preservice teachers in their schools to observe them and provide feedback every week.

Collaboration with Cooperating Teachers

When the participants were asked to describe the part that the cooperating teachers played in the field experience, most of the responses were negative toward their role. They argued that the cooperating teachers did not have a clear understanding about the field experience requirements and the role that they should play in the preparation of preservice

teachers. For instance, Maha pointed out that when she got her placement for field experience, the cooperating teacher did not understand her position in this training experience until they met with the supervisor. Maha said the cooperating teacher thought Maha's job in the classroom was to observe her while she was teaching students. She said, "I had the feeling that she felt that I was here to observe her when she was working with students." Maha also emphasized the significance of working with qualified cooperating teachers as well as the collaboration between them and the program's supervisors to develop a clear plan for the field experience. She said, "I think she needs to meet with my supervisor to come up with a clear idea about what they need me to do because I was lost between them." Faris also spoke about the lack of collaboration between him and his cooperating teacher in the classroom. When I asked him about the activities they used with the students in the classroom, he responded, "I was working individually with my supervisors and my students so there was no collaboration between us even when I finished my field experience, he didn't ask me about the worksheets I used with his students." It is clear that this teacher not only did not collaborate with Faris and his supervisors for Faris's learning, but also neither the teacher nor his classroom students benefited from the forms and worksheets that Faris prepared for his students.

Amani and Fatima also supported the negative view toward the role of the cooperating teachers in the field experience. I asked Amani about how she saw the cooperating teacher that she worked with and she mentioned an important point in field experience, which is the lack of evaluation forms for the performance of preservice teachers. She stated that in the field experience, the cooperating teacher controls twenty points in the course's grading rubric, so when the cooperating teacher wanted to evaluate her work, she did not know how to do this evaluation due to the absence of evaluation standards or guidelines for field experience. Amani said, "in the

last week of my field experience, when she wanted to assess my work, she didn't know how to do that." Amani also highlighted the need to have a field experience handbook for both preservice teachers and cooperating teachers. She said, "and again I want to say with the syllabus for teaching experience, they need to have a guideline book or something like that for the classroom teachers, so they know what the teaching experience is about." Fatima also indicated the need for more efforts to help cooperating teachers understand the requirements of field experience and the teacher preparation program's expectations about their role in preparing preservice teachers. She stated that due to the lack of the cooperating teacher's knowledge about her role in the classroom, she was asked to teach lessons from the beginning of her teaching experience. She said, "the teacher didn't know what I am here for or what I'm asked to do." Fatima also said. "she thought I am here to take some of her classes." Another example of the negative perspectives toward the role of the cooperating teacher in the field experience was given by Khalid. He spoke negatively about the collaboration with his cooperating teacher. He claimed that collaboration with the cooperating teacher occurred only in the first week of his teaching experience, however after that, each one of them worked individually with a group of students. When I asked him about the role that this teacher played in his teaching experience, he responded:

> He was not available all the time. I learned from him in the first week but after that I had to work with them by myself although I was told he would be with me working in the classroom together for one month, but that didn't happen.

Sami was the only participant who reported a positive perception toward cooperating teachers. When asked about his cooperating teacher, he described him as an expert teacher. He said:

> He was an expert teacher. I worked in his classroom with another preservice teacher, and he used to talk with us every Sunday to let us know what we were going to work on this week. I mean every week I was informed about what I was going to teach.

Sami pointed out that this teacher used to meet with him and his colleague at the beginning of every week to inform them what they were going to teach students that week. I also asked him about what he found the most useful in the field experience, so he said the cooperating teacher was the most useful one since he worked and received feedback from him during the day.

The RGUTs' Perceptions of the Professional Development Preparation in their Preparation Programs

Professional development is seen as an aspect of teacher preparation which can be used to develop the teaching skills and competencies of RGUTs. The training opportunities, such as workshops and professional development, for special education teachers play a significant role in the way they teach and work to ensure their students' achievements (DuFour al., 2010). Therefore, I asked the participants whether they had attended any opportunities for professional development during their preparation, and what professional development they thought they needed to attend before they begin working in a school setting. Based on the data analysis, two sub-themes emerged under the theme of RGUTs' perceptions with regard to the professional development in their preparation programs. The two sub-themes were: absence of professional development and the types of professional development needed for RGUTs.

Absence of Professional Development

When I asked the participants if they had been provided with any professional development during their preparation, Bander was the only participant who said he had attended a professional development opportunity as part of his preparation program. He said that this

professional development opportunity aimed to teach him how to create teaching materials and worksheets for particular IEP goals. He said:

> Yes, I have. It was a three days' workshop and on the last day we made posters to show instructions on how to make teaching materials for specific goals. I mean it was about how to create worksheets and forms to show that they do not have to be on fancy paper or bought from stores.

Nevertheless, all the other participants said they had never attended any type of professional development as part of their preparation program, or in the schools where they were placed for field experience. When interviewing Khalid, I asked him if he had had the opportunity to attend any professional development opportunities, however, he said that he had never seen any announcement for professional development for students in his program. In fact, the professional development opportunities that were offered in the program were only for the faculty members teaching in the program. He said, "I remember I read a few times that they had professional development for the faculty in the department." The same question was asked to Rashid, and he said he had not attended any workshops or training programs. When he was asked about this he responded: "no, I haven't, they don't offer professional development." Maha also agreed with Khalid and Rashid about the absence of any professional development for preservice teachers in their preparation programs. She stated that she had never attended this form of training. When I asked her if her program had offered these types of workshop, she said:

> In the program? No, they didn't have any workshop or anything like that, but yeah, I think this is very important. We need more training such as how to deal with other staff in the school because, honestly, I didn't see anything about that in the coursework. I mean they

> do not have to be in the program, but how about working with professional development centers with a program certificate?

It is clear that the focus of some of participants' preparation programs is only about delivering coursework and providing teaching experience, without any concern as to the effectiveness of professional development in terms of preparing well-qualified teachers. Several participants also emphasized the need to receive professional development with regard to particular skills to allow them to work effectively with their students and their families, as well as with other special education services providers, before they begin working in schools. Examples of the professional development that the participants highlighted a need for are discussed in the following section.

Types of Professional Development Needed for RGUTs

During the interviews, I asked all participants about what professional development they think they needed to receive before beginning work in schools. Several suggestions with regard to professional development were provided which the participants thought would prepare them to work effectively in the classroom. For example, Faris shared the need for a professional development module to learn more about how to deal with epilepsy and cases of seizure in the classroom. He noted that he had been told that one of the students in his field experience had epilepsy. Consequently, he voiced concern about this, due to the fact that he was not shown how to deal with epilepsy situations. Faris said:

> It took me a long time to get familiar with working with a student with severe disabilities who also has epilepsy. When the teacher told me this student had epilepsy, honestly, I was worried. I mean an attack happens when the teacher is not in the classroom, what should I do? So, having professional development about how to deal with that would be very useful.

In addition, Rashid highlighted the need for delivering professional development that focuses on transition services for special education teachers, in order to show them how to prepare their students with ID for adult life. Rashid argued that he never heard about transition services in his preparation program, so he thought it would have been helpful if he had been trained with regard to this form of service. When asking him what professional development he thinks he needs, he said:

> How about something to help teachers understand the transition services available for students after high school? I mean, I hear about that, but to be honest I don't know what type of services they are. I mean like how I should provide or include them in the IEP if I was placed in a high school. Like, how I prepare them for adult life.

Amani also stated that she needs to attend professional development on how to use and benefit from the school's learning resources. She said, "I want to know about the school environment and how to ask the school staff how to deliver resources and teaching materials for my classroom." She pointed out that she wanted to know about the process about how to request these kinds of materials from the school administration, and what they could offer to the special education programs in the school.

Three participants suggested that professional development should focus on the collaboration between the IEP members. For example, Bander emphasized that he and other school staff who are engaged in providing services for students with ID need to understand their rights and responsibilities so that they can effectively collaborate with each other and with other special education service providers. Therefore, he thought special education teachers and other staff delivering special education services should attend a workshop focusing on IEP members' collaboration. He said, "I think a workshop on the relationship between teachers in school would

be good; I mean teachers and other staff in school really need to know their roles when it comes to special education services." Khalid also supported the importance of school-home collaboration with regard to the students' achievements. He argued that during his field experience he had never seen any aspects of the role of parents in their children's education. He said, "when I took part in the field experience, I didn't see anyone working with him, even the parents." He also said, "I do not know, but I think this teacher needs to understand that these parents have work to do with him as IEP members." Khalid stated the need for professional development with regard to school-home collaboration, not only for him, but also for other special education teachers, because he thought some special education teachers ignore the importance of parents' involvement in their child's education.

Fatima also talked about need for training to improve her communication skills, especially when communicating with parents in order to have meaningful teacher-family collaboration. When I asked her what professional development you need, she said, "I need a workshop on how to collaborate with the other IEP members because, unfortunately, I didn't have the opportunity to meet with the students' parents or the other special education providers in the school." It should be noted that the suggestions for professional development on the part of Fatima, Khalid, and Bander, indicate the absence of modules for preparing special education teachers to collaborate with other IEP members. In fact, they mentioned that they had never attended IEP meetings or cooperate with students' parents.

The RGUTs' Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs

The participants were asked whether they had any recommendations with regard to their preparation programs as a means of continuously improving the preparation of teachers of students with ID. Most of the participants had such comments and recommendations. Therefore,

under this theme, I will describe the participants' recommendations. These are categorized as: (a) delivering subject-specific methods coursework, (b) offering additional application practice opportunities, (c) selecting well-qualified faculty members for supervision, and (d) partnering for professional development.

Delivering Subject-Specific Methods Coursework

The participants' responses to the interview question regarding their recommendations for their preparation programs showed that methods coursework focusing on teaching students with ID was seen as one of the critical issues that needs to be addressed. Some participants expressed that they did not receive sufficient coursework which focused on particular topics related to teaching this group of students. For example, Fatima argued that she engaged in a great deal of unnecessary coursework about other disabilities and other related issues. Therefore, she suggested delivering coursework focusing only on teaching students with ID, such as classroom management and behavior intervention, instead of the other courses. When asking her about her recommendations for her preparation program, she said:

> I just want to say that we had a lot of courses in the first three years of the program including courses focused on different categories of disabilities and we had to take all of these courses. So, I think it would be a good idea to have like only course as an introduction of all disabilities, so we don't have to take coursework about each disability, and at the same time providing more courses about intellectual disability like behavior intervention and classroom management.

Fatima also suggested offering at least one special education course in the first year of her program, the preparation year, where she took only general coursework such as academic writing and Microsoft computer software use (e.g., Word and PowerPoint). She claimed that receiving a

special education course in the first year would help students learn the basics in this field. She said: "I think it will be a good idea to have like at least one special education course to know the basic knowledge about the field and also to decide whether or not to continue in this major." Faris also agreed with Fatima in offering specialized coursework in ID instead of general and elective courses such as Arabic language and Islamic culture that he thought teachers do not need in their work. He did not specify what kind of methods coursework his program should deliver, but he talked about the need to deliver specialized coursework in ID in general. He said:

> I think I took a lot of general courses like Arabic language and Islamic culture, and I think they're not important for me as a teacher because I already took them in high school. So, I see it would be good idea to have more specialized coursework or more field experience instead of these courses.

In addition, Rashid and Sami also suggested specific methods coursework with regard to their preparation programs. Rashid recommended delivering a course focusing on transition services alongside the professional development on the same topic that he already mentioned that he needs to receive before working in schools. He said, "I would recommend the same thing about the transition services; like it would be useful to have a course about that." He also recommended that teacher preparation programs offer specialized course on social studies. In addition, Sami claimed that the courses he received in his program focused only on teaching writing and reading for students with ID. Therefore, when I asked him what recommendations he may have for teacher preparation programs, he said, "as I said, I did not learn about teaching math, so a course on teaching strategies for math like learning activities or how to create teaching techniques to get the students' attention is needed." He stated that he is not prepared to teach math for students with ID, and wanted future special education teachers in his program to be well-prepared in this

particular subject to be able to develop and apply appropriate teaching practices in the classroom to inspire their students.

Additional Application Practice Opportunities

When I asked the participants about their recommendations for their preparation programs, the vast majority suggested offering more opportunities for preservice teachers to practice their theoretical knowledge in schools. They specified that these teaching practice opportunities could exist during preservice teachers' enrollment in coursework, or by offering more semesters for field experience. For instance, Maha recommended as great as possible an increase in the time given to both field experience and application practice in coursework. She contended that the coursework in her program focused only on theory without providing the opportunity to put the theoretical knowledge into practice. She said: "we took a course focused on teaching academic skills to students with ID, but it was like theoretical course, so we didn't practice teaching these skills at schools." Therefore, when asked about recommendations for teacher preparation programs, she argued that teacher preparation programs need to ensure preservice teachers have sufficient time to engage in schools early in their preparation. She said:

> They need to link the theoretical knowledge in the coursework in the first three years with the practical knowledge in schools I mean from the beginning. Like if we have a course about IEP, we should have more time to practice what we learned in this course even if it is in the first year. And also, the field experience needs to be at least one year not just one semester.

Sami and Bander also agreed with Maha on the need to have additional time for application practice. To ensure students received practice opportunities in the classroom, Sami recommended field experience to be two years instead of one semester. He said, "I think it's

better to make it at least two years to learn more and have more experience working with kids." Another recommendation on the issue of application practice was provided by Bander. He stated that because he had never been in a classroom working with students with ID until the last semester of his preparation, he was shocked when he was placed in the school, and it took him too much time to get familiar with the realty of working in schools. Therefore, he pointed out that preservice teachers should have more time in schools working with other teachers and professionals in a school setting, to get know their students and the school environment. Similarly, Rashid highlighted the need for teacher preparation programs to deliver additional practice opportunities when he talked about the advantage of offering some courses specializing in teaching students with ID. He said:

> Offering specialized coursework would be super beneficial for them, and it's important to have the coursework in both theoretical and practical aspects. I mean not just focusing on that in lectures but also with more coaching in schools.

Halah also supported the idea of giving time during coursework enrollment for putting theory into practice. She declared that "some courses should include practice like why don't we implement the final project in the school?" She suggested coursework that has a final project such as reading and writing IEP goals or behavior interventions, to be applied in the classroom with real students. Furthermore, Amani agreed with Bander's suggestion that offering more semesters for field experience would help preservice teachers learn more about the reality of work in schools. When asking about her recommendations to continuously improve teacher preparation in her program, she pointed out the need to develop an observation course in schools to help preservice teachers know how in-service special education teachers work with their students before the preservice teachers enroll in their teaching experience. Based on the

participants' responses regarding their recommendations for their preparation programs, providing more opportunities for application practice is one of the significant concerns that needs to be addressed in these programs.

Selecting Well-Qualified Faculty Members for Supervision

The high-quality of supervision during field experience was one of the issues that three participants emphasized in their recommendations. They talked about the need for their teacher preparation programs to have well-prepared supervisors who could help preservice teachers improve their performance, and to deliver clear instructions by providing a handbook to guide preservice teachers to meet the program's expectations. For example, Sami and Fatima suggested more involvement in supervision by qualified faculty members as supervisors who have Ph.D. degrees with a concentration in ID. They argued that being supervised by teaching assistants or professors who are not specialized in ID would be less beneficial compared with supervisors with Ph.D. degrees in ID due to the limited experience unspecialized teaching assistants or faculty may have in working with this group of students. Fatima said: "my supervisor was a teaching assistant and I think she didn't have that experience that would help me." In addition, Amani stressed the need to have a course syllabus for preservice teachers to provide them with clear directions about their work during field experience. In addition, Amani spoke about the efforts that need to be made to ensure effective involvement not only on the part of qualified supervisors as Sami and Fatima suggested, but also of cooperating teachers in the placement settings. Referring to the needs of cooperating teachers, she said, "they need to have a guideline book or something like that for the classroom teachers, so they know what the teaching experience is about." She indicated that providing a cooperating teachers' handbook containing

evaluation standards, would help them know their roles in coaching preservice teachers, and how to evaluate preservice teachers' performance.

Partnering for Professional Development

Two participants suggested the need for special education teacher preparation programs to develop partnerships with professional development institutes to provide preservice teachers with additional education and training to allow them to grow and develop their teaching skills. They also argued that having partnerships with these institutes would help preservice teachers gain additional knowledge and experiences that would prepare them for becoming competent teachers in the future. For example, when asking Khalid what recommendations for the decision-makers in teacher preparation programs he would suggest, he said, "having like a partnership with some professional development centers like Al-a'aon centers to work with them in like developing training programs and workshops for their students." He also argued that cooperation with professional development institutes would provide a great opportunity for preservice teachers to collaborate with the families of students with ID. Maha also suggested a partnership with professional development institutes to receive related training when she talked about the absence of professional development in her program. She said, "how about working with professional development centers with a program certificate?" Maha highlighted that such a partnership would develop her teaching skills, and support her curriculum vitae with the addition of a training certificate. Khalid and Maha saw that the success of preparing qualified special education teachers requires teacher preparation programs to work with professional development institutes to provide preservice teachers with the evidence-based practices and training they need.

Summary

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to provide an opportunity for RGUTs who specialize in teaching students with ID to reflect on their preparation in Saudi universities, in order to address the needs of preservice teachers enrolling in these programs, and to identify how these programs can be continuously improved from the perspective of these teachers. In this study, five themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) the RGUTs' motivations to become special education teachers; (b) the RGUTs' perceptions of the program coursework; (c) the RGUTs' perceptions of their field experience; (d) the RGUTs' perceptions of the professional development preparation in their preparation programs; and (e) the RGUTs' recommendations for teacher preparation programs. The findings showed that most participants wanted to become special education teachers because there is a need for more teachers in special education programs in schools. They argued that the special education major was seen as a new major in the colleges of education in their universities at the time they applied to these schools. In addition, two of the participants stated that they decided to become special education teachers because they were influenced by previous experiences with individuals with disabilities, such as a family member with Down syndrome or volunteering in related organizations, while two teachers said they chose this option because special education teachers get a higher income than do other teachers. The findings also showed that the participants perceived the ID coursework in their programs positively, however, they stated that there was a lack of methods coursework and putting theory into practice in these programs. Therefore, they recommended offering particular methods coursework such as classroom management, positive behavior interventions and supports, and teaching math and social skills for students with ID, as well as providing additional

teaching opportunities to link theoretical aspects with practical aspects during both coursework enrollment and field experience.

When it came to field experience, most of the participants made positive comments about the role of their supervisors in delivering feedback and providing support during their teaching experience in schools. Nevertheless, they argued that more effort needs to be made with cooperating teachers in schools in order to improve cooperating teachers' knowledge about their own role in teacher preparation during field experience. Although the vast majority of participants expressed positive perceptions of their supervisors' role in field experience, two of them recommended more involvement by qualified supervisors who have Ph.D. degrees with a concentration in ID. They also recommended developing teaching experience handbooks for both preservice teachers and cooperating teachers to guide their collaboration, and make this experience more valuable for preservice teachers. The findings also showed an absence of professional development opportunities for preservice teachers in their programs. Consequently, some participants suggested that teacher preparation programs need to collaborate with professional development institutes to provide a wide variety of professional learning and training opportunities to promote preservice teachers' professional development.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This chapter begins with a brief review of the purpose of this study, the participants who took part in the study, and the methodology used. I then provide the findings and discussion, followed by the possible implications and suggestions with regard to special education teacher preparation in Saudi Arabia. Finally, I identify the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide an opportunity for RGUTs specializing in ID, to reflect on their preparation in Saudi universities. The guiding research questions were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID in Saudi Arabia with regard to their preparation?
2. How can the preparation of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia be continuously improved from the perspective of RGUTs of students with ID?

Nine RGUTs (5 male and 4 female) who graduated from eight teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities agreed to participate in this study. I used semi-structured interviews to investigate the perceptions of these teachers with regard to their preparation for teaching students with ID. When it came to the data recording tool, a voice recorded phone interview was used with all nine RGUTs.

Summary of Findings

Aa explained in Chapter Four, five themes emerged based on the analysis of the nine participants' responses: (a) the RGUTs' motivations to become special education teachers; (b) the RGUTs' perceptions of the programs' coursework; (c) the RGUTs' perceptions of their field

experience; (d) the RGUTs' perceptions of the professional development in their preparation programs; and (e) the RGUTs' recommendations for teacher preparation programs.

As clarified in Chapter Four, five of the participants argued that they wanted to become special education teachers because there is a lack of teachers in special education programs in schools in Saudi Arabia, so they assumed that they would be placed in schools as soon as they obtained their degrees. In addition, while two of the participants intimated that they had decided to become special education teachers because they were influenced by previous experiences in working with individuals with disabilities, two teachers said that they chose this specialism due to the fact that special education teachers get a higher income than do general education teachers. The findings also showed that while the participants viewed the ID coursework in their programs positively, they also made comments about the lack of methods coursework and the limited linking of theory with practice in their preparation programs. When asked about their field experience, most participants made positive comments about the role of their supervisors in providing comments and feedback to improve their performance in the classroom. Nevertheless, the RGUTs described the role of the cooperating teachers in their preparation negatively, and argued that the cooperating teachers had limited knowledge about their own role in field experience. They also stressed that the length of field experience was insufficient to allow them to put into practice the theoretical information they obtained in the coursework. Lastly, the findings showed an absence in their programs of training and professional development opportunities for preservice teachers.

When the participants were asked for recommendations they might have for teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities in order for these programs to be continuously improved, they suggested offering specific courses (e.g., classroom management, positive

behavior interventions, and teaching math and social skills for students with ID) and providing further opportunities to link theoretical aspects with practical features when engaged in coursework, as well as more semesters for field experience. Additionally, they suggested that teacher preparation programs should make more effort when it comes to working with cooperating teachers in schools, to increase the latter's understanding of cooperating teachers' role in supporting preservice teachers. In addition, they stated there should be more involvement on the part of experienced and knowledgeable supervisors who have Ph.D. degrees with a concentration in ID, to support preservice teachers during their field experience. They also mentioned the need for grading rubrics and student teaching experience handbooks for both preservice teachers and cooperating teachers to support the opportunity to work as a team. Finally, two participants recommended that teacher preparation programs should partner with professional development institutes to provide additional training and workshop opportunities for preservice teachers to ensure that such teachers have the competencies needed for their careers at schools in the future.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, I will discuss the findings of this study and connect them with the related studies discussed in Chapter Two. Based on the research questions, I will discuss the emerging themes' findings under two categories: RGUTs' perceptions with regard to their preparation, and RGUTs' recommendations for teacher preparation programs. The theory of experience guided this study as a conceptional framework. As explained in Chapter Two, I will use Dewey's (1963) theory of experience to understand the RGUT's perceptions of teacher preparation in their programs, based on two principles (i.e., the interaction and continuity principles). The interaction principle shows how preservice teachers can create knowledge and meaning from a particular

experience as they interact with their environment, such as a school or a classroom in their preparation programs, and with individuals in these settings such as the program's faculty, or their supervisors and cooperating teachers in the field experience setting. The principle of continuity suggests that the outcome of an experience is cumulative, which means that every experience is influenced by previous experiences, and these experiences will influence future experiences (Schmidt, 2010). For example, the continuity principle could address how the coursework experience of the preservice teachers as part of their preparation program, was influenced by any prior experience, such as working in special education organizations or having a child with disability, and how this experience influenced their field experience or might shape their future experiences after they were placed in school as an in-service teacher. Therefore, as I discuss the findings related to my research questions in the following sections, I will address whether or not these findings are associated with the theory of experience.

RGUTs' Perceptions toward their Preparation

The findings showed that the motivations that led the participants to enroll in special education teacher preparation programs were the guarantee of a job due to the lack of special education teachers in schools, the possibility of higher income, and the influence of previous experiences with individuals with disabilities. This finding is similar to that of Hussain (2010) who noted that 39 teachers who participated in their study chose to be special education teachers of students with learning disabilities because there was a guarantee of jobs in Saudi schools, while 25 teachers specified that they decided to become teachers of such students in order to help their children with their education, and because it was a new major at the time when they were enrolled in the program. This finding also reflects the suggestions of the theory of experience, that prior experiences on the part of some participants in interacting with experts in the field of

special education, such as teachers from within their families, or specialists who work in related organizations, influenced their knowledge about the need to have more special education teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This finding is also consistent with the theory of experience, and with the interaction principle in particular, when one of the participants claimed that, because she has a brother who is identified with Down syndrome, she decided to become a special education teacher to learn more about how to deal with her brother's disability, as well as to help her parents in interacting and working with their child. Overall, the participants had different motivations for becoming special education teachers because of their different prior experiences interacting with individuals who are related to the field of special education, such as children with disabilities, teachers, and specialists in special education organizations.

During the first three years of the teacher preparation programs, preservice special education teachers take coursework in special education and other supporting areas, which makes delivering coursework the major component in preparing effective special education teachers. Nevertheless, the participants reported that there was a significant lack of methods coursework in their preparation programs for teaching students with ID. Most of the participants made negative comments particularly about the methods coursework in their programs, and stated that they did not receive courses such as classroom management and positive behavior interventions, as well as ID courses focusing on teaching math and social skills. The findings of Althabet (2002) and Hussain (2010) with regard to studies which were conducted in Saudi Arabia, also supported the lack of methods coursework in Saudi universities, such as is the lack of these courses that was found in the teacher preparation program offered by King Saud University. The participants in these studies indicated that there was a lack of certain methods courses such as those dealing with teaching academic and adaptive behavior skills for students

with ID. Hussain also claimed that preservice teachers of students with learning disabilities in this program did not receive enough coursework in teaching math, reading, spelling, and science. This finding is similar to the findings of related studies conducted outside Saudi Arabia. For example, Stites et al. (2012) examined 120 preservice teachers' perceptions with regard to their program's coursework that focuses on preparing them to teach students with disabilities in inclusive settings. They found a lack of inclusion coursework being offered, so they suggested that more effort should be made to develop methods coursework in teacher preparation programs, to better prepare their preservice teachers for teaching in an inclusive classroom.

In a similar study, the findings of Kea et al. (2002) also corroborated the lack of methods coursework in teacher preparation programs. They investigated the preparation of 43 African American preservice teachers to teach students from a range of different cultural and language backgrounds, with and without disabilities. The participants in the study claimed that they did not think that their preparation programs prepared them to teach culturally-diverse students. Therefore, the researchers indicated that there is a need for more coursework in teacher education programs that focuses on teaching students from a range of racial, language, and cultural groups. However, the finding regarding the lack of methods coursework in teacher preparation programs in this study is inconsistent with that of Morewood and Condo (2012) who examined the perceptions of a preservice special education teacher with regard to their programs' coursework and requirements. They found that methods courses were beneficial in terms of understanding teaching strategies, policies, and instructional practices during field experience. Based on this finding, it is fair to argue that the lack of methods coursework in teacher preparation programs led some of the participants to contend that they had not been prepared to

teach students with ID in particular subjects such as math and social studies, and for working with their students in transition services.

In addition, the participants reported an absence of putting theory into practice when undertaking coursework as part of their teacher preparation programs. This finding supports those of Alothaim (2017), in a study which was also conducted in Saudi Arabia. Alothaim investigated the perceptions of in-service special education teachers of students with ASD with regard to their knowledge, teaching skills, and preparation for teaching such students. Alothaim found that coursework in teacher preparation programs focused on theoretical information without concern for the practical application in schools, which led to a gap between coursework and field experience. The participants' comments about the lack of attempts to link theory with practice in schools are also consistent with those of another study mentioned in Chapter Two. In a study by Hadadian et al. (2012), the researchers argued that more effort needs to be made to prepare preservice teachers to teach students who are from a range of cultural and language backgrounds, and to help them link their theoretical knowledge with regards to teaching students with diverse needs, with teaching practices during their coursework and field experience. Based on the participants' complaints about the lack of attempts to link theory with practice in their coursework, the importance of providing practical application opportunities in the classroom during coursework enrollment can be seen. Zhou (2003) contended that an effective teacher preparation program includes both theoretical and practical aspects.

The findings about the lack of coursework putting theory into practice, and lack of methods coursework in the theme of RGUT perceptions toward their programs' coursework, are also compatible with the postulates of the theory of experience, that state the importance of interaction for learners in order for them to have a meaningful experience. The theory of

experience strongly supports the findings and those of the reviewed studies that emphasize the need for preservice teachers to interact with real students in the school setting to link the theoretical information they obtained in coursework with practice, to gain adequate levels of learning in both the theoretical and practical aspects. Schmidt (2010) pointed out that to ensure meaningful learning, students' new knowledge needs to be linked with practical experience, because the university classrooms do not ensure meaningful learning in terms of classroom management. These findings are also aligned with the theory of experience in the importance of providing more consistent opportunities to gain in-depth knowledge in particular skills with regard to teaching students with ID, that cannot be learned only from one experience such as a course or field experience. For example, the participants complained about the lack of methods coursework such as in teaching math and with regard to behavior interventions. They argued that not receiving these courses negatively influenced their performance in field experience, and would also influence their work in teaching students with ID in the future. It is clear that this finding is strongly supported by Dewey (1933) and Dewey (1963), who stated that what students would learn from a future experience is shaped by their recent and prior experiences.

The length of field experience was also one of the concerns raised by the participants. They pointed out that their field experience was only one semester, which they found to be too short. Some of the interviewed teachers argued that having only one semester for field experience was insufficient compared with the years they spent on coursework. Moreover, some of these teachers indicated that their field experience was actually less than one semester, due to the time their programs took to find schools for their placement, giving them their teaching schedules in these schools, or because they were enrolled in some courses during field experience, meaning that they had to complete this teaching experience early, in order to study

for their final exams. Therefore, the participants highlighted the importance of providing more semesters for field experience, an aspect which I will discuss in the RGUTs' recommendations section. A similar pattern to this finding was obtained by Althabet (2002) and Hussain (2010). Althabet (2002) found that teachers of students with ID perceived the length of the field experience during their preparation as the weakest aspect of the Special Education Teacher Preparation Program at King Saud University. Hussain (2010) also reported that although special education teachers who obtained their bachelor's degrees from King Saud University expressed that their preparation to teach students with learning disabilities was effective, they strongly agreed that the length of the teaching experience was insufficient. Teachers' concerns about the short time they were given in field experience, not only in King Saud University, but also in the other universities from which the participants of this study graduated, prompt considerable attention to this issue.

In addition, the most surprising findings in this study were the participants' positive comments about the role of their programs' faculty supervisors during field experience. I found this finding to be unexpected, comparing this finding to those of older studies (i.e., Alothaim, 2017; Althabet, 2002; and Hussain, 2010). The participants in the older studies perceived the work of their supervisors negatively. For example, the participants in the older studies complained about the lack of supervisor visits to their school, which meant that there was a lack of feedback aimed at improving their performance. However, many of the interviewed teachers in the present study argued that the role of their supervisors was one of the most useful aspects of the field experience. They contended that the program supervisors were supportive and made themselves available to meet with the students before or after teaching the lesson, in order to provide comments and feedback about their teaching. It is possible that this change in the

teachers' perceptions toward their programs' supervisors was because of the new group of faculty members who have lately returned to Saudi universities after having obtained their Ph.D. degrees from countries that are more advanced in the field of special education such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and also because of the dissemination of the research results of the earlier studies.

Nevertheless, the participants' positive comments about the role of their supervisors in some ways lend support to the findings of Scheeler et al. (2012) who noted the effective role that supervisors played in providing immediate and relevant feedback for four preservice teachers allowing them to improve their teaching skills via using technology in a supervisory context. The researchers pointed out that the program supervisors provided a helpful direction by modeling appropriate techniques for their preservice teachers in their classrooms. Although the participants in the present study showed positive perceptions toward their supervisors, some of them talked about the unclear direction they were given when they began field experience. Two teachers argued that their program did not offer a handbook or grading rubric for field experience, which meant that there was a lack of instruction about what they were being asked to do, and what their program expectations were about this teaching experience. This finding shows the importance of having a guideline book or having pre-practice meetings with preservice teachers to help both parties understand the field experience requirements, and to see if either party had any concerns that needed to be addressed.

When it came to field experience, it is also important to state and discuss the negative perceptions that the participants had about their cooperating teachers' role in their preparation. Most of the interviewed teachers argued that their cooperating teachers did not have a clear understanding about their own role or the role of the preservice teachers with regard to the field

experience. For example, some participants pointed out that when they began their teaching experience, their cooperating teachers thought that these preservice teachers were in the classrooms only to observe them, not to teach and practice what they learned as part of their program. Another example is that some participants expressed a lack of collaboration between them as preservice teachers and the cooperating teachers.

The participants' negative perceptions toward the cooperating teachers in the field experience highlight both the need to select well-qualified cooperating teachers who are willing to collaborate and provide support for the preservice teachers in the classroom as well as the need to provide ongoing preparation and support of the cooperating teaching. Overall, this finding is in accordance with the findings reported by Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) and O'Brian et al. (2007) in Chapter Two. Sayeski and Paulsen (2012) analyzed preservice teachers' evaluations of cooperating teachers who worked with them in their teaching experience. They found that an effective cooperating teacher was the one who as available for one-on-one mentoring, delivered formal and informal feedback, and allowed the preservice teachers to apply new teaching approaches. O'Brian et al. (2007) also studied the perceptions of preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers with regard to field experiences, and found that the relationships and ways of communication between these teachers were the main factors that influenced the preservice teachers' learning. Therefore, O'Brian et al. mentioned the need for more training for both the cooperating teachers and the preservice teachers, in order for them to be able to collaborate with each other.

Additionally, a few of the participants complained about the lack of collaboration, not only between the preservice teachers and the cooperating teachers, but also between the program supervisors and the cooperating teachers. They argued that due to the lack of collaboration and

communication between program supervisors and the cooperating teachers, the cooperating teachers did not have clear instructions to guide them during field experiences. Therefore, the participants recommended that teacher preparation programs develop a field experience handbook, not only for preservice teachers, but also for the cooperating teachers, to help them become aware of their responsibilities in this experience. I will discuss this issue further in the RGUTs' recommendations section.

When it came to the theory of experience, I found that my findings with regard to the RGUTs' perceptions toward their field experience are aligned with the theory of experience. All of the participants talked about the importance of having meaningful collaboration between them and their supervisors and cooperating teachers, and between supervisors and cooperating teachers themselves, to ensure an adequate field experience. The collaboration between these individuals can be seen as an example of the interaction principle in Dewey's' theory of experience, which states that learners can create meaning from a specific experience when they interact with the environment of this experience, which is a school or classroom in this case, and with individuals in such an environment (e.g., supervisors and cooperating teachers). In addition, Dewey (1963) wrote that different learners might ascribe different value to, and obtain different knowledge, from the same learning experience. I found Dewey's writing about the different value that individuals may obtain from the same experience helpful in explaining why all the interviewed teachers did not have the same perceptions with regard to their field experience. Although these participants had technically similar field experiences, they gained different value from the experience, because of their different previous experience in terms of their programs' coursework, and in interacting with individuals with disabilities.

In addition, the lack of professional development during teacher preparation programs was one of the issues that the participants addressed in the present study. Eight of the nine teachers who participated in this study reported they did not receive any form of professional development during their preparation programs. This finding supports the findings of Alothaim (2017), from an earlier study which was carried out in Saudi Arabia. Alothaim found that teachers of students with ASD who took part in his study did not have the opportunity to attend any professional development courses in their preparation programs. Alothaim reported that some teachers of students with ASD claimed that they had attended professional development courses or training programs only after they graduated, and began working in their schools. They indicated that these professional development opportunities were delivered by the Ministry of Education or private institutions, not by their teacher preparation programs. Based on this finding, it is noteworthy that although national and international professional standards in the preparation of special education teachers (i.e., CEC, CAEP, ATE, and NCAAA standards) emphasize the importance of delivering professional development opportunities in teacher preparation programs as one of the fundamental components in teacher preparation, the RGUT participants reported that their university programs had not offered professional development courses for their preservice teachers.

The participants' perceptions with regard to professional development in their preparation showed there was insufficient training opportunities in these programs. As a result, they expressed their need to attend specific professional development courses such as ones involving collaboration with other teachers in a school setting, teacher-family collaboration, transition services, and the rights and the responsibilities of IEP members in children's education. This finding is consistent with what has been found in previous studies carried out outside Saudi

Arabia, such as those of Hamilton-Jones and Vail (2014) and Lee et al. (2011) who reported the need for additional professional development opportunities alongside program coursework to help teachers develop their teaching skills and increase their knowledge about their roles and responsibilities in the school environment. Based on the participants' comments about the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities in their programs, it can be appreciated that providing professional development courses for teachers would help not only the student teachers learn how to have meaningful collaboration with other teachers and special education service providers in schools, but would also be useful for preservice teachers to bridge the gap between field experience and the theoretical coursework they receive, when these professional development courses include co-planning and co-teaching models and teaching lessons activities.

I also found that the finding with regard to the lack of professional development courses in teacher preparation programs is compatible with the postulates of the theory of experience which emphasizes that the interaction between different learning experiences (i.e., program coursework, field experience, and professional development courses) creates meaningful educational experience, and fosters continued learning. Schmidt (2010) suggested that teacher preparation programs should provide more learning opportunities than they do, and consider different types of experience that would allow preservice teachers to interact with different individuals from different educational backgrounds, as they progress through their programs. Therefore, the participants' comments about the need for professional development courses in these programs can be seen as one of the learning opportunities that would allow preservice teachers to foster continued learning, and interact with different professionals in the field of special education.

RGUTs' Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs

The participants in this study gave several recommendations with regard to improving the quality of preparation for teachers of students with ID in Saudi universities. For example, most of these teachers suggested that teacher preparation programs should offer specialized methods coursework that focuses on teaching students with ID. They highlighted specific courses that should be delivered as part of these programs, such as teaching math and social skills with students with ID in mind, behavior interventions, and classroom management courses. They also expressed that they are not prepared to work with students in these areas due to the lack of such courses. The findings of other studies conducted in Saudi Arabia such as those of Althabet (2002) and Hussain (2010), support this suggestion, in that the participants in these studies also indicated the need for methods coursework in their preparation programs. The participants in Althabet (2002), who were preservice teachers of students with ID, suggested a number of courses such as teaching methods for students with ID in particular, and indicated that instruction in the skills of adaptive behavior for this group of students needs to be included in their teacher preparation program. Hussain (2010) also investigated the perceptions of teachers of students with learning disabilities with regard to their preparation in King Saud University, with the participants indicating that they did not receive enough preparation for teaching math, reading, spelling, and science, and suggested more coursework in these subjects as a consequence. This suggestion also aligns with those of Kea et al. (2002) and Stites et al. (2012) who also suggested that preparation programs should develop methods coursework relating to the teaching of students with disabilities who are from a range of cultural and language backgrounds, and also provide coursework that focuses on co-teaching and inclusion, to prepare preservice teachers for work in an inclusive setting.

In addition, the participants' recommendations include the provision of additional opportunities for preservice teachers which allow them to link the theoretical information provided in coursework with their practice in schools. Therefore, they suggested that teacher preparation programs should allow preservice teachers to work with real students when they practice teaching IEP goals, or when developing behavior interventions for students with ID during coursework enrollment. They argued that considering both theoretical and practical aspects in coursework would be particularly beneficial in producing well-prepared teachers. The interviewed teachers also complained about the short time they were given for field experience - only one semester - so they suggested that these programs should have at least one year involving teaching and practicing in schools. In related studies conducted by Althabet (2002), Alothaim (2017), and Zhou (2003), the researchers also suggested that to ensure meaningful preparation for preservice teachers, they should spend more semesters in schools to allow them to put their theoretical knowledge into practice, and to allow them to acquire the skills needed to effectively teach students with disabilities after they obtained their degrees. Based on this finding, it is clear that, in order to have well-qualified special education teachers to teach different subjects (e.g., math and social skills) for students with ID, and be well-prepared to deal with students' challenging behaviors, teacher preparation programs should develop methods and specialized coursework in these areas. In other words, it is important to deliver coursework that includes specific teaching skills and behavior interventions based on the characteristics of ID. Additionally, these findings emphasize that preservice teachers need more practical experience in schools in order to become familiar with working with students with ID and the school environment, to be qualified teachers in the future.

Furthermore, although they had positive comments about their supervisors, some participants stressed the need to increase the quality of supervision during field experience. They suggested more involvement on the part of qualified and expert supervisors with Ph.D. degrees in ID, instead of teaching assistants or other supervisors who are not specialized in teaching students with ID. When it came to field experience supervision, they also suggested that these programs should make more effort to encourage collaboration between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers in the classroom. Most of the interviewed teachers argued that they did not collaborate with their cooperating teachers due to the lack of understanding for these teachers about their roles in training preservice teachers. Theretofore, they suggested a handbook for cooperating teachers to help them understand their role in the preservice teachers' preparation, and to encourage them to engage in more collaboration. A similar conclusion was reached by O'Brian et al. (2007), who noted that cooperating teachers' support through collaboration, encouragement, and delivering individualized coaching, is an important component of effective preparation.

The participants also stated that when they began their field experience, they did not receive clear instructions about the requirements of this experience. Consequently, they suggested the creation of a field experience handbook to guide them to meet the program expectations and to cope with the field experience assignments. Based on the many recommendations for field experience, it can be seen that this teaching experience was perceived as one of the main weaknesses in terms of their preparation. This finding is in agreement with Althabet (2002) who reported that field experience, especially its short length, was the greatest weakness in teacher preparation at King Saud University. From these findings, it is clear that more attempts need to be made by teacher preparation programs to increase the quality of field

experience, such as selecting well-qualified supervisors and developing useful handbooks for both preservice teachers and cooperating teachers, to improve their understanding of the requirements of field experience and the need for cooperating teachers to effectively collaborate and work with preservice teachers to improve their learning outcomes.

Additionally, one of the most surprising findings to emerge from the data was that, out of nine teachers in this study, only one teacher had attended a professional development course. Two participants strongly recommended a partnership between teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities and professional development institutes to provide preservice teachers with additional training and coaching opportunities to enhance the personal growth and development of these teachers. This suggestion appears to be well-substantiated by other studies such as those of Garrett (2017) and Lee et al. (2011). In the Garrett study, the researcher addressed the need for additional workshops and training opportunities about inclusion, for new general education teachers, special education teachers, and school administrators. Therefore, Garrett suggested that school districts collaborate with professional agencies to help new teachers become equipped and well-prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Lee et al. (2011) also recommended that school districts develop a successful communication channel with teacher preparation programs to provide support for in-service special education teachers in order to develop their teaching approaches, and to deliver effective and efficient teaching modules. Based on this suggestion, it can be inferred that effective professional development as part of preparation programs is an essential component in teacher preparation, alongside the other preparation components (i.e., coursework and field experience). In other words, the findings reported in this dissertation show that teachers are looking to professional development course as an important approach for supporting them, in conjunction with the program's coursework and

field experience, in terms of understanding and refining the pedagogies required to teach students with disabilities. Consequently, a great deal of attention must be paid to the importance of delivering this form of course for preservice teachers as part of their preparation.

In addition, the findings with regard to teachers' recommendations for their programs strongly support the theory of experience which emphasizes the importance of preservice teachers being able to reflect on their educational experience in order to address their needs, and concerns about their programs' needs, to assist both to create continuity and meaning from their preparation experiences, given that this would help to continually improve teacher preparation in the best way possible in the future. Dewey (1963) stated that opportunities on the part of students to reflect on their educational experiences could help them create continuity and draw meaning from those experiences. Overall, I found that using the theory of experience as a conceptional framework in this study was useful for me to ascertain some important clues about how differently each of the participants learned from their prior experience and from their educational experience (i.e., in terms of coursework, field experience, and professional development) provided by their preparation programs, and how these experiences interacted to influence each other. The theory of experience also showed how the interaction, or lack of interaction, of the participants with other individuals (e.g., supervisors, cooperating teachers, and students' families) in the preparation programs and school setting, shaped their learning. Therefore, I highly recommend that decision-makers in teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities consider the role that the principles of the theory of experience (i.e., interaction and continuity) should play in improving the quality of the educational experiences provided by these programs, something which would positively influence the learning outcomes.

Implications of Findings

The results of the present study suggest some practical applications for teachers, special education teacher preparation programs, and schools, which can help improve the performance of preservice and in-service special education teachers in Saudi Arabia. In the following sections, I explain these possible implications and suggestions, followed by the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Suggestions for Teacher Preparation Programs

In the previous section, the participants provided several recommendations for their preparation programs such as the need for methods and practical coursework, more semesters for field experience, and professional development opportunities in specific matters, which I think would help develop these programs' outcomes since they were given by individuals who had at least four years of experience learning in these settings. Alongside the participants' recommendations, I also have a few suggestions. Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities need to involve their students in the social community in Saudi Arabia. I found that preservice teachers do not have the opportunity to interact with the families of students with disabilities and other individuals who work in the field of special education. Therefore, preservice teachers need to meet with the students' parents and specialists in special education organizations to share these individuals' personal experiences in raising and working with children with disabilities. This would help these teachers understand the parents' views and concerns about their children's education from the parents' point of view, and this would also help prepare the teachers to work collaboratively with their students' families in the future. Consequently, one possible way to help preservice teachers effectively interact with these individuals is by establishing student organizations in these programs, with the aim to

organize local conferences that include preservice teachers, families, and also special education experts in some international events such as the international day of persons with disabilities and Down syndrome.

It is important to understand that cooperating teachers play a significant role in teacher preparation because preservice teachers spend almost the entire field experience semester working with these teachers. Therefore, when teacher preparation programs place their preservice teachers in schools, these programs need to consider the quality of the cooperating teachers to ensure that preservice teachers work with well-qualified teachers who provide sufficient feedback and support to improve their performance. It is also important for decision-makers in teacher preparation programs to understand that not all expert and skilled teachers can be effective as a cooperating teacher because other important skills such as social and emotional skills need to be considered. According to Lewis (2017), "being a cooperating teacher is recognized by many as having a strong social component that includes qualities such as nurturing, forming relationships and being emotionally available during the stressful time of learning how to teach" (p. 11). Therefore, to ensure the professional growth of preservice teachers, I suggest teacher preparation programs work in partnership with schools to ensure that only teachers who meet these criteria work as cooperating teachers. Also, teacher preparation programs should make more effort to prepare and support cooperating teachers to help them understand that they are essential partners in teacher preparation programs by delivering workshops and training courses about supervision and cooperating teachers' roles in field experience.

In addition, I found that teachers did not mention the use of technology during their preparation, which can be seen as negative in the 21st century. Therefore, I suggest teacher

preparation programs should encourage their faculty members to use different applications of technology and websites in their instruction. I think the advantage of using these applications would not only help the faculty in teaching their students in the university, but also would help in preparing preservice teachers to use technology in their schools. One participant complained about the lack of feedback on his forms and worksheets by the program's supervisor during field experience because of the high number of preservice teachers that the supervisor had. Field experience supervisors could use various technology applications (e.g., OneNote, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom) to review students' work, deliver feedback, and discover if their students have any concerns in a more timely manner.

Suggestions for Schools

Schools can play a major role in teacher preparation, especially for teachers who are new to the field of special education and do not have sufficient knowledge about the school environment, policies, rules, or do not have the experience in working with other teachers, students' families, and professionals in a school setting. Therefore, I suggest schools have a professional development plan that begins by asking teachers about their needs, what training the teachers require to meet these needs, and how they can be suitably prepared to begin their career. For example, schools could use teacher surveys for professional development opportunities to address needs and identify the professional development courses these teachers should attend.

In addition, to ensure the effectiveness of professional development opportunities for teachers, including through webinars, workshops, and other training opportunities, it is important for schools to consider the quality of the individuals who present them. Therefore, I suggest schools in Saudi Arabia create a professional learning community with teacher preparation programs in the universities to develop a common vision or plan that aims to improve teachers'

performance in these schools, and which can keep them up-to-date about the latest teaching approaches supported by current research. Lee et al. (2011) pointed out that teachers are the product of the collaboration between teacher preparation programs and schools. In addition, schools could deliver professional development courses to their teachers by working in partnership with school districts. Through this form of collaboration, schools could ask school districts for support that could include professional development workshops and a yearly training plan for their teachers and other professionals in a school setting.

Suggestions for Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers, especially new teachers, should know that there is no perfect teacher preparation program that fully equips them at the beginning of their teaching career. Therefore, teachers should consider continuing education programs that are offered in settings outside their universities and schools, such as private and state professional development institutes. Here, they could find additional learning opportunities and training courses that can help improve their knowledge about teaching students with ID, and the field of special education in general. Webinars and teaching conferences are also another great opportunity for accessing professional development courses that are in or outside the teachers' home cities. For example, universities across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recently offered a wide variety of online professional development events for teachers. I highly recommend this learning opportunity for the professional growth of teachers as they are organized by faculty members in Saudi universities and experts in teacher preparation.

Using technology for self-learning can also be an option that helps teachers meet their needs and develop their teaching skills. This is because, particularly in the 21st century, the use of technology is playing an increasingly influential role in accelerating teacher’s ability to access

online teaching resources and knowledge related to their field and interests. Self-learning is a great opportunity that allows teachers to improve their performance and encourages them to nurture a greater sense of this form of learning because they do not need to travel to attend professional development courses in person. Furthermore, many of these online self-learning resources are free, so they do not have to pay to learn. Interaction with expert teachers is also another model for professional growth. According to Jin et al. (2019), interaction with expert teachers and giving feedback to new teachers are associated with improving the teaching performance of new teachers. Therefore, preservice teachers and beginner teachers should consider the importance of interaction with expert teachers in school settings, so they can learn from them and apply this learning when teaching their students and collaborating with students' families and other professionals in the school.

Limitations

This study explored the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID with regard to their preparation in special education teacher preparation programs that currently operate in Saudi universities, and how these programs can be continuously improved from the perspective of these teachers. The target population of the study was RGUTs specializing in ID, so RGUTs specializing in other categories of disabilities, in-service, and preservice special education teachers were not included in this study. Future research should consider RGUTs of students with other disabilities (e.g., ASD, deaf and hard of hearing, and learning disabilities), in-service, and preservice teachers of students with ID. The present study used interviews as the method of gathering data. Therefore, the nine teachers interviewed in this study may not have generated all possible ideas. To address this limitation, future researchers might consider a survey instrument

to gather data from a greater number of teachers who currently teach in schools, or preservice teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs.

In addition, the participants obtained their preparation from a small number of programs, eight out of 23 teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia, so the perspectives of teachers who graduated from the other 15 programs were not gathered. Therefore, to ensure that future research includes teachers from every university in Saudi Arabia, researchers might consider collecting data from all 23 universities by recruiting participants or obtaining the contact information of teachers who graduated from these programs. Another limitation of this study was the data recording tool used when conducting the interviews. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all participation involved a voice recorded phone interview, with the participants in different locations in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, an in-person interview could be used in future research instead of a phone interview due to its advantage in recognizing additional emotional and behavioral reactions (e.g., showing interest or discomfort with the interview questions), which may not be grasped when using a phone interview.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research might focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the strengths and needs of teacher preparation programs from the view of faculty members in these programs. For example, questions might be asked about faculty perspectives on the effectiveness of using or not using NCAAA standards on the teacher preparation in these programs. Furthermore, future research could also focus on a comprehensive evaluation that covers the contents of the program's coursework (e.g., specialized and supporting areas coursework) and the textbooks, assignments, and requirements for each course. When it comes to field experience, future research could also consider the experiences of cooperating teachers when mentoring preservice

teachers, and their recommendations for developing learning outcomes from field experience. Future research could also compare the performance and outcomes of teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities with other countries that have more advanced preparation programs, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In addition, the teachers' social, cultural, and economic backgrounds could also be considered in future research to understand how these factors might influence the preparation of teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

The preparation of special education teachers is a fundamental factor in educating students with disabilities. In the past two decades, the Saudi Ministry of Education and Saudi universities have taken great steps to improve the preparation of special education teachers. These steps include establishing additional teacher preparation programs, developing professional teacher preparation standards, offering scholarship opportunities for university graduates to continue their education in overseas countries that are more advanced in preparing special education teachers, and reviewing the outcomes of teacher preparation programs in order to address the needs of these programs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of RGUTs specializing in ID toward their preparation in Saudi universities; to address the needs of preservice teachers enrolling in teacher preparation programs in these universities; and to identify how these programs can be continuously improved from the perspective of these teachers. Nine teachers (5 males and 4 females) agreed to participate in this study. By using phone interviews with the nine RGUTs, five themes emerged based on the analysis of participants' responses: (a) the RGUTs' motivations to become special education teachers; (b) the RGUTs' perceptions of the programs' coursework; (c) the RGUTs' perceptions

of their field experience; (d) the RGUTs' perceptions of the professional development in their preparation programs; and (e) the RGUTs' recommendations for teacher preparation programs.

The first theme showed that the participants' motivations to become special education teachers were either because there is a lack of special education teachers in schools, their wish to help members of their family or communities identified with disabilities, or the possibility of receiving a higher income. The second theme's findings showed that although a few participants indicated that they received some courses focus on ID, all of the interviewed teachers complained about the lack of both methods coursework and opportunities to put theory into practice during coursework enrollment in their programs. The third theme focused on field experience in teacher preparation programs; the findings showed that the length of field experience was too short. The participants had positive comments about the role of their supervisors, however, they argued that cooperating teachers had limited knowledge about their role due to an absence of collaboration with the programs' supervisors. They also talked about the lack of having clear expectations and instructions about their field experience, so some participants suggested developing a handbook for preservice teachers and cooperating teachers to guide them during this experience.

The findings of theme four also showed an absence of training and professional development opportunities for preservice teachers in these programs. Lastly, findings under the fifth theme included recommendations by the participants that teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities should be continuously improved. These participants suggested offering specific courses (e.g., classroom management, positive behavior interventions, transitions services, and teaching math and social skills for students with ID), opportunities to put theory into practice in the program coursework, and more semesters for field experience. They also

suggested that there should be greater effort in providing specific professional development courses (e.g., school-home collaboration, rights and responsibilities of special education teachers, and transitions services) for preservice teachers in these programs. Finally, I believe that the voices of these RGUTs could help in the efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Education and universities to meet the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 because these voices provide valuable input for continuously improving teacher preparation for teachers of students with ID in Saudi Arabia. The RGUTs' direct recent learning experiences, thoughtful analyses and perceptions, and considered recommendations can contribute to future efforts to design changes and help shape new directions in preparation of teachers. Students with ID and their families need highly competent and committed special education teachers in order to achieve their potential and build satisfying family lives. I hope that this research contributes to that future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

The initial interview questions for teachers who participated in this study

Demographic questions:

- From which university did you obtain your degree?
- How long ago did you obtain your degree?
- If you are currently employed, what is your current work?

Main interview questions:

1. How did you decide to become a special education teacher?
2. How was your experience in your teacher preparation program?

   Follow up questions and probes for this question:

   - Can you give me an example of that?
   - You mentioned…. What stands out in your mind about that?
3. Tell me about the program's coursework.

   Follow up questions and probes for this question:

   - Tell me about any coursework you received that focused on positive behavior interventions and supports for students with ID.
   - Tell me about any coursework you received that focused on classroom management or teaching social skills for students with ID.
   - Can you give me more details about that coursework?
   - What stands out in your mind about that coursework?

- How did you use these interventions with your students with ID in field experience?
- Tell me about how you benefited from this coursework in your field experience.

4. What did you find more useful in the coursework you received in your program?

Follow up questions and probes for this question:

- Can you explain why you see this coursework is useful in teacher preparation?

5. Tell me about your field experience.

Follow up questions and probes for this question:

- Tell me about some of the activities you used with your students with ID during your field experience.

6. How do you describe the role of your supervisor and cooperating teacher during field experience?

Follow up questions and probes for this question:

- How did others (e.g., faculty, supervisor, and cooperating teacher) respond to that?

7. What did you find most useful in the field experience?

Follow up questions and probes for this question:

- Can you explain why you see this is useful in teacher preparation?

8. Tell me about any additional professional development you have attended during your preparation.

Follow up questions and probes for this question:

- Can you give me more details about this training or workshop?
- What other professional development you think you need to attend before you begin working in schools?

9. What recommendations do you have to continuously improve the preparation of teachers of students with ID in Saudi Arabia?
10. Do you want to talk about anything else related to your preparation?

General follow-up questions and probes:

- General follow-up questions and probes:
- Can you explain what you mean by……?
- You just told me about…. I would also like to know about….
- I am not quite sure I understood…. could you tell me more about that?
- What is your experience with ...?
- Can you give me more details about that coursework?
- You mentioned…. What stands out in your mind about that?

Appendix B

TRANSCRIPTION KEY FOR INTREVISTAS BILINGÜES RESEARCH PROJECT

Prepared by Julia Scherba de Valenzuela Ph.D.

1. Use participants' pseudonyms as you transcribe, including for anyone mentioned on the tape (e.g. other family member, therapist, teacher), other than the researchers. If you haven't been provided with
   a pseudonym for someone, contact Susan or Julia so they can come up with one for that individual. Do not make one up yourself.

2. Type EXACTLY what you hear and type everything exactly as you hear it. Don't clean up the grammar or what sounds like an error. Use conventional spelling for regionalisms, as below:

   - *'cause*
   - *ain't*
   - *wanna*
   - *'kay*
   - *gonna*
   - *y'know*

   If you don't understand what someone says, listen to it a couple of times, then back up a bit and play it through (sometimes that helps) and then, if you still can't understand it, put XX, to indicate an unintelligible utterance.

3. When one person talks, keep typing in the same paragraph. Don't hit the paragraph return until a new person starts talking.

4. Don't use punctuation like you would when you write. When transcribing, punctuation has very specific meanings. For example:

   - Put a period at the end of a phrase that <u>sounds like</u> someone is ending a sentence, when their voice goes down at the end of a sentence.
   - Put a question mark at the end of a sentence which <u>sounds like</u> a question, when their voice goes up at the end of the sentence. It doesn't matter whether it is a question, grammatically. And, if a question doesn't sound like one, where someone's voice doesn't go up at the end of the sentence, don't put a question mark.
   - Don't use dots (...) to indicate that someone trailed off. I will need to use that later to indicate that I deleted part of a quote. Instead, if there is a pause, use a comma.
   - Use a comma to indicate a very significant pause, like where you might feel like you need to use dots (…) but can't because of our previous rule. Don't use a comma for grammatical purposes if the person hasn't actually paused in their speech.
   - Use a dash to indicate when a word is broken off. For example, "w- what" would indicate that someone started to say 'what' but only started it, but then said it again.

- If two people talked on top of each other, put a square bracket ([) at the beginning of when the overlap occurs for the person who is talking and then, put the end bracket (]) at where the overlap starts. You will then do a paragraph return and type in what the second person said who was talking over the first person. That will also be in square brackets. Look at the example below to see how that works.
- If someone is talking along and doesn't stop their flow of conversation but someone else interjects, then you use the = sign to link two parts of the transcript. This tells us that the first person didn't have a break in the conversation, but lets you also indicate where the second person was talking interjecting without overlapping.
- Use double parentheses to indicate a description that you are including. For example, is someone laughs or pounds the table, or snaps their fingers, you would include it as ((laughing)) ((pounds table)) ((snaps fingers)) ((claps hands))
- Use all caps when someone uses a HUGE emphasis on a word.
- If there's a break in the recording, like when the tape is turned over, use double slashes to indicate that. (see below)

Example One

1 Barb: ((laughing)) XX
2 Julia: Yeah people used to say that they a::, thought I was a::, talkative, 'till they met my family
3 Barb: Oh really. XX
4 Julia: Okay well hopefully this will re- yeah I think its recording, yeah
5 Barb: We can play it back in a second and see if it's
6 Julia: Yeah, well, it's pickin' up. The little monitor's going
7 Barb: Okay [XX]
8 Julia: [Okay, thanks] this: makes it a lot easier for me to transcribe if I'm not taping questions, uhm do you want to see a copy of the questions I'm gonna ask?
9 Barb: Yeah yeah
10 Julia: It makes it easier to follow along.
11 Barb: [okay]
12 Julia: [This is] very open ended and we'll just, go though 'em, and, ((chuckles)) and, if it's okay with you I'd like to interview you:, two more times and then come back to you at the end. for some. member check.
13 Barb: M'kay
14 Julia: So, to see if any of your, ideas about this change, through the whole process like the thirs time, the third time I'll interview you would be a:fter, the external reviewers co:me
15 Barb: Oh okay
16 Julia: So.
17 Barb: And- the purpose to interview us? Why are you interviewing us

Example Two

1 Julia:((microphone noise)) I'm gonna move this closer to you so XX don't get a lot of uhm, fan ((noise in background))
2 Beth: Okay. That's not gonna hurt the, computer. Bill dropped something on it yesterday. ((laughing))
3 Julia: Okay, and you said were, both enlightened and confused. Can you tell me a little more about that?
4 Beth: Uhm, it seemed to me that THIS particular OGS review

Example Three

1 Julia: Okay. Today is, September 19th I believe? Is that right?
2 Chris: Uh huh.
4 Julia: September 19th and I'm interviewing Christine Mitchell for the second round of questions,=
4 Chris: M'kay.
5 Julia: =uhm, prior to the OGS visit. Which will happen next week. WELL, [Dr. Mitchell=]
6 Chris: [((laugh))]
7 Julia: =what do you see as the purpose of this OGS review.

Example four

1 Julia: Yeah. So you know a part of me- you know today ((inaudible sentences for about 45 seconds)
2 //
3 ((end of side 1 of tape))
4 //
5 Julia: So- so it's just kind of uhm, to bring out uhm, what kind of data do we want to

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Interview

I am Marwan Alatawi, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Special Education at the College of Education and Human Sciences, University of New Mexico. I and my faculty advisor, Prof. Ruth A. Luckasson, are conducting a dissertation research project as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education. The purpose of the research is to provide an opportunity for recently graduated unplaced teachers specializing in intellectual disability in Saudi Arabia to reflect on their preparation in Saudi universities. You are being asked to participate because you are a special education teacher who graduated in the last three years from one of the special education teacher preparation programs in Saudi universities, who has been certificated by the Saudi Ministry of Education to teach students with intellectual disability, but who has not yet been placed in schools or institutes.

Your participation will involve a voice recorded telephone interview. The telephone interview should take about 60 minutes to complete. The interview includes questions such as *How did you decide to become a special education teacher? Tell me about the program's coursework. How was your experience in your teacher preparation program? What would you see that was most useful in the field experience? What recommendations do you have to continuously improve the preparation of teachers of students with ID in Saudi Arabia?* After completing the interview, I will do member checking with you to get your opinion about the comments and notes that I will come up with based on this interview. Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. You also can withdraw from this study as long as your request comes no later than one month after completion of the interview, and your contact information and the data obtained will be deleted immediately after receiving the withdrawal request.

Your real name and personal information will be known only to the researcher, which means there are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. In addition, after the recorded interview has been transcribed and analyzed, this recorded interview will be immediately deleted. Your responses in the transcript will then be de-identified, and a pseudonym will be used. There are no known risks in this research, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Data and information collected for this project will not be used or shared for future research, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name and your university's name.

There are no direct benefits to teachers participating in an interview, and no payment will be offered for participation. However, the findings from this project will provide information on perceptions of Saudi recently graduated unplaced special education teachers of students with intellectual disability toward their preparation, which could positively influence the quality of preparation of special

education teachers in Saudi Arabia in the future. If published, results will be presented in summary form only, and quotes with pseudonyms will be used.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please feel free to call me, Marwan Alatawi, at +966556850429 or contact me through my email address Malatawi@unm.edu. You can also contact with my faculty advisor, Prof. Ruth A. Luckasson, through her email address ruthl@unm.edu or at (505) 277-6510. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, please contact the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

By signing below, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Adult Participant	Signature of Adult Participant	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Research Team Member	Signature of Research Team Member	Date

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