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College of Education and Human Sciences

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Abstract

Teachers' Perspectives of Professional Development on Inclusion of Students with

Disabilities in Mainstream Classrooms

by

Niocie Shonella Browne

MA, Walden University, 2013

BS, University of Guyana, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Professional development (PD) enhances teachers' effectiveness and fosters a more favorable disposition towards inclusive education. However, some teachers have expressed a sense of inadequacy in their readiness to instruct students with disabilities within inclusive classrooms due to a perceived deficiency in training. The perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on PD to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms were examined. The study was grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory, which focuses on the idea that the level of knowledge and beliefs determine how a person feels, thinks, and behaves. A basic qualitative research design was adopted for this study. Semistructured interviews were used to collect data from nine participants at an English-speaking international school in Taiwan who teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms for at least two years. The interviews were transcribed and coded using descriptive codes. Inductive thematic analysis was used to identify prevalent themes observed from the data. The findings from the research revealed that teachers believe in mainstreaming students with disabilities; however, it was found that teachers have limited PD training to meet the needs of these students. To better support students with learning disabilities, teachers prefer small group PD sessions with a trained facilitator that focuses on teaching strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to support students with learning disabilities. This study can affect positive social change by providing administrators with insight into the PD needs of teachers to help make informed decisions about what is needed to support teachers and students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter Ameerah Brianna Browne and my mother Carol Browne. You have been my top cheerleaders throughout this process. Your excitement and encouragement gave me the will to finish this journey even when I felt like giving up.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background	2
Problem Statement	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Question	4
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Nature of the Study	6
Definitions.....	7
Assumptions.....	8
Scope and Delimitations	8
Limitations	10
Significance.....	11
Summary	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review	13
Literature Search Strategy.....	14
Conceptual Framework.....	14
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts.....	17
International schools for K12.....	18
Professional Development for Inclusive Classrooms	24
Mainstreaming Students with Disabilities	29

Summary and Conclusions	34
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	36
Research Design and Rationale	36
Role of the Researcher	38
Methodology	39
Participant Selection	39
Instrumentation	41
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	42
Data Analysis Plan	44
Trustworthiness.....	46
Credibility	46
Transferability.....	47
Dependability and Confirmability	48
Ethical Procedures	49
Summary	50
Chapter 4: Results	51
Setting	51
Demographic Data	52
Data Collection	53
Variation in Data Collection Plan	53
Data Analysis	54
Results in terms of the Research Question	60

Theme 1: K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan believe in mainstreaming students with learning disabilities.	60
Theme 2: K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan have limited professional development training to teach students with learning disabilities.	62
Theme 3: K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan prefer professional development with a trained facilitator.	65
Theme 4: K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan need professional development on teaching strategies for students with learning disabilities.	68
Discrepant Cases	71
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	72
Credibility	72
Transferability.....	73
Dependability and Confirmability	74
Summary	74
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	76
Key Findings.....	77
Interpretation of the Findings.....	77
Literature Review.....	79
Conceptual Framework.....	82
Limitations of the Study.....	83

Recommendations.....	84
Implications.....	86
Conclusion	92
References.....	94
Appendix A: Interview Questions	114
Appendix B: Permission Letter to Director	117
Appendix C: Recruitment Letter.....	118

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data.....	52
Table 2. Sample of Coding	55
Table 3. Codes and Examples of Raw Data.....	56
Table 4. Category of Codes	58
Table 5. Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 1	61
Table 6. Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 2	63
Table 7. Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 3	66
Table 8. Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 4	69

List of Figures

Figure 1. Themes That Emerged from the Data Analysis 59

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

According to the International School Consultancy (ISC) Research (2023), a United Kingdom provider of English-medium K-12 international school data, trends, and intelligence, there has been a 60% increase in the number of international schools, a 60% increase in teachers, and a 53% increase in the student population. Further, 92.20% of these international schools reported admitting students with disabilities or disorders of reading, writing, or math place them in mainstream classrooms (ISC Research, 2020). Teachers' needs and expectations are not generally considered when discussing or planning for professional development (Cooper et al., 2020). According to Horan and Merrigan (2019), professional development policies often do not align with practices, which make it challenging for the needs of teachers to be met efficiently. However, the literature provides limited information on professional development for inclusion in international schools. Cooc (2019) revealed that there is a link between professional development needs and school leadership. Therefore, the findings from this research could guide administrators of international schools in planning professional development that targets the needs of teachers.

This chapter provides details of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework, and the research question that guided this research. The nature of the study and its significance is addressed. Key terms used in the study are defined and the major assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations of the research are outlined. Finally, the main points in this chapter are summarized.

Background

Mainstreaming students with disabilities has been a significant area of focus worldwide (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2022; Mayumi Hagiwara et al., 2019; Sumayang et al., 2022). When students are placed in mainstream classrooms, they are afforded a more positive learning setting compared to when they are forced to work in separate special education classrooms (Leijen et al., 2021; Stankovska & Memedi, 2020; Sumayang et al., 2022; Young et al., 2019). However, most teachers reported feeling inadequately prepared to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms because they lack skills and adequate training (Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Johnstone, 2020; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Horan and Merrigan (2019) found that professional development increases teachers' efficacy levels and causes teachers to have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021; Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). International schoolteachers have reported a high need to receive professional development training in special education and inclusive education of students with disabilities (Ahmed et al., 2021; Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Cooc, 2019; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Kurth et al., 2021; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021).

Over the past 2 decades, there has been an increase in the number of schools that are educating learners with disabilities in general education classrooms (Supriyanto, 2019). International schools around the globe are also part of this phenomenon, with 92% of international schools admitting students with disabilities (ISC Research, 2020). Hutchinson and Campbell (2022) noted that teachers generally have positive attitudes toward inclusion. The gap in practice that I addressed in this study was that most teachers

are unprepared to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms because they lack skills and adequate training (see Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Johnstone, 2020; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Professional development and training for teachers play an important role in providing quality education for students with disabilities (Cooc, 2019). However, teacher professional development for disability inclusion is an underresearched topic (Ahmed et al., 2021; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021).

Problem Statement

The problem I addressed in this study was that in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan, K-12 teachers receive limited professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Although many international school administrators indicated that they provide some form of professional development for teachers, whether online or face-to-face, 67.96% noted the need for professional development related to inclusive educational pedagogy (ISC Research, 2020). Teachers may have concerns about the disconnect between the limited in-person or online professional development programs offered by administrators and the needs of mainstream K-12 teachers in inclusive classrooms (International school teacher, personal communication, January 16, 2022).

In an independent study conducted by Cooc (2019) using secondary data on 121,173 teachers from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013, it was found that about one-quarter of the teachers reported a high need for professional development in inclusion preparedness. Findings from ISC Research (2020) revealed that 45.63% of international schools expressed the need for external expertise to guide longer-

term planning and professional development. Meanwhile, 67.96% noted the need for professional development related to inclusive educational pedagogy. The extent to which teachers receive adequate professional development training to teach is an essential aspect of educational instruction (Chitiyo et al., 2019a; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

Often, the professional development offered to teachers has little effect on their skills to teach students with special education needs (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Knowing how teachers perceive their professional development opportunities and which areas need more targeted professional development is important (Cooc, 2019). Since 92.69% of international schools have some involvement with inclusive education, administrators have the task of ensuring that teachers are prepared to meet the needs of those students (Ahmed et al. (2021). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

Research Question

What are the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?

Conceptual Framework

The study was grounded in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, previously named social learning theory. The essence of Bandura's social cognitive theory focuses

on the idea that the level of knowledge and beliefs determine how a person feels, thinks, and behaves (Bandura, 1993). Bandura's social cognitive theory aligns with the study because I aimed to examine teachers' perspectives on the professional development that they receive on inclusion for students with learning disabilities. Through Bandura's self-regulatory mechanisms, teachers could change their actions based on their perceptions.

Key elements of Bandura's social cognitive theory include that a person's self-efficacy beliefs play a significant role in determining their behavior by influencing their level of motivation (Wulfert, 2019). Teachers' level of motivation can be influenced by their perspective on the professional development they are receiving to teach students with learning disabilities. Chitiyo et al. (2019a) found that teachers are more motivated and committed to professional development when they are part of the process of identifying what they feel is beneficial to them. Teachers with more training had significantly higher perceived efficacy levels compared to those who had received little or no training (Horan & Merrigan, 2019). Participation in professional development training also causes teachers to have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021; Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Other studies discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrates in further detail how the conceptual framework was applied and articulated in previous research and how the current study benefits from this framework.

The research question also aligns with the conceptual framework because it asks participants to share their perspectives on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Ravitch and Carl (2020) mentioned that interviews are designed to collect data about participants' experiences, beliefs, and

opinions on a specific issue. Therefore, the data collection method aligns with the conceptual framework of the study. Teachers' perspectives were developed based on their experiences, which ultimately influenced their behavior and actions.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative research paradigm was selected for this research, where I aimed to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), qualitative research is used when the researcher is interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved and understanding how they interpret their experiences surrounding that phenomenon. I chose the qualitative approach because it aligned with the purpose of the research, the research question, and the data collection and analysis procedures. Qualitative research data is often collected at the site where participants experience the problem being studied, and the researcher collects the data themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All the participants for this study were teachers at an English-speaking international school in Taiwan, and I conducted the semistructured interviews.

I used a basic qualitative research design for the study. A basic qualitative research design is used to investigate participants' subjective opinions, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to a phenomenon (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). The basic qualitative research design was chosen because ethnography, case study, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenology did not align with the focus of my research, and the kinds of data that was obtained do not fit those approaches. Data for this research was collected from

interviews of teachers at an English-speaking international school in Taiwan who teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached. Semistructured interviews were conducted with participants, and an inductive thematic analysis was used to identify prevalent themes observed from the data. Ravitch and Carl (2020) stated that inductive analysis is centered on the data collected and does not incorporate any preexisting categories. The aim is to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The data was coded, and recurring patterns or common themes that characterize the data were identified and coded into a composite synthesis (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019)

Definitions

Inclusive Education: Inclusive education is described as all students being educated together in mainstream classroom settings with their peers without disabilities (National Council for Special Education, 2019).

International School: An international school is any privately operated school that delivers a curriculum other than the host country's national curriculum wholly or partly in English to some or all students between ages 3 and 18 in a country where English may or may not be an official language (ISC Research, 2023).

Learning Disability: "A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], n.d).

Professional Development: “Professional development is a process that begins with teachers’ college; continues throughout a teacher’s professional life; and is affected by a teacher’s characteristics, teaching contents (what they teach), and teaching strategies/methods/approaches (how they teach)” (Sancar et al., 2021, p8).

Assumptions

The first assumption I made in this study was that all participants in the interview answered the questions honestly and have a vested interest in participating in the research since no incentives were given for participation. This assumption was necessary because the integrity of the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the responses depends mainly on the honest perspective of participants during the interview. Another assumption was that the semistructured interviews would be sufficient to gather data to investigate the perspectives of teachers on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Further, it was necessary to assume that the research questions were appropriately phrased to obtain the perspective of participants. Since the purpose of the study is to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers, interviews were the only appropriate tool for collecting data. A fourth assumption was that all participants had a similar understanding of professional development, learning disabilities, and inclusion because teachers who participate in the interview may have taught in different international schools or countries.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study involved K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan who teach students with learning disabilities in

mainstream classrooms. The boundaries for this study were based on the focus of the research on the perception of K-12 international schoolteachers regarding professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. I decided to research this topic because of my experience teaching in international schools for the past 13 years. During this time, I have experienced teaching students with different types of disabilities in mainstream classrooms but not having the necessary professional development to support my instruction.

The first delimitation was that the participants are limited to international schoolteachers with at least 2 years of experience teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Since the research focuses on students with learning disabilities, I only recruited teachers who are currently teaching or have taught students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms in an international school. Classroom teaching assistants were not included in this study as part of the participant pool. The second delimitation was that the findings are only applicable to teachers in the international school setting because international schools have different practices and procedures than public schools. Further, participants were only selected from a single English-speaking international school; therefore, the findings may not be generalized. Ravitch and Carl (2020) noted that qualitative research does not emphasize generalizations; instead, it focuses on small purposeful samples to gain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon.

Despite the delimitations, the study's findings may be transferable to other international school settings. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that the findings of

qualitative research can be extrapolated rather than generalized. Applications of the findings of the research could be considered in other situations with similar but not identical conditions (Patton, 2015). Since participants in the research shared their experiences from different international school settings within which they have worked, readers could extrapolate from the findings based on their similar positions in international schools.

Limitations

I conducted this study using a basic qualitative research design which typically uses larger samples than other qualitative approaches (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the study focused on one international school in Taiwan, the first significant limitation was small sample size which could limit the range of opinions and ideas. However, interviews were conducted until saturation was achieved. Further, since convenience and purposeful sampling was used, only the perceptions of the teachers who participated in the study would be revealed, which would not represent all teachers within the study site. However, Ravitch and Carl (2020) explained that if the selected sample directly represents the target population or can provide first-hand information about the study topic, the findings can be reliable and applicable outside the sample itself. Therefore, all participants in the interview were directly involved in teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms for at least 2 years.

The second limitation was the lack of varied evidence to support the problem. For this research, the primary evidence was the data gathered from the semistructured interviews with teachers. The third limitation was that there are different types of

international schoolteachers. Rey et al. (2020) classified international schoolteachers as the *ex-pat*, *the local*, and *the adventurer*. Each group of teachers has different purposes and goals for teaching in international schools, so their perspectives would differ depending on which category they fall; however, in this study I clustered international-schoolteacher types together.

Significance

This study could potentially affect positive social change for teachers, administrators, and students with disabilities in international school settings. As more international schools move towards inclusion for students with disabilities, the findings of this study would help international school administrators better understand the professional development needs of teachers. International school administrators in Taiwan can work together to plan appropriate professional development programs that align with the needs of teachers. Cooper et al. (2020) examined teachers' views about and the expectations they hold for their professional development, and noted that the professional development teachers receive to support their professional learning is not always what they want or value. A professional development framework should provide teachers with adequate knowledge of teaching methods, individualized instruction, classroom management, evaluation methods, research, and collaboration (Ali, 2020; Sancar et al., 2021). Yet, Cooper et al. (2020) noted that teachers' needs and expectations are not generally considered when discussing or planning for professional development. Consequently, when teachers are well-trained, students with disabilities will be able to learn more and reach higher academic standards. Further, as teachers become more

equipped with the proper training, more students with disabilities could have the opportunity to have access to international education in mainstream classrooms.

Summary

The problem I addressed in this study is that in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan, K-12 teachers receive limited professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The purpose of the study was to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development they are receiving to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. This study is important because 92.69% of international schools deal with inclusion for students with disabilities at some level (see ISC Research, 2020), and administrators would better understand the professional development needs of teachers from the results of the study. Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory was used as the conceptual framework to address the research question which seeks to find out the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. A basic qualitative research design was used for this research, and data was collected from nine K-12 teachers using semistructured interviews.

Chapter 2 reviews the current literature related to the study. The review presents detailed findings from other studies related to international schools for K-12, professional development for inclusive classrooms, and mainstreaming students with disabilities. This chapter also shows how the conceptual framework has been applied in previous research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teachers in international schools have reported a high need to receive special education and inclusive education professional development training to support them in teaching students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Ahmed et al., 2021; Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Cooc, 2019; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Kurth et al., 2021; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). In 2019, before the pandemic moved many schools online, the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) hosted a global survey on the status of inclusion in international schools. The survey results showed that 67.96% of international school teachers reported the need for professional development related to inclusive educational pedagogy (ISC Research, 2020). The problem to be addressed through this dissertation is that in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan, K-12 teachers receive limited professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development they are receiving to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

The professional development offered to teachers often has little effect on their skills to teach students with special education needs (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Therefore, it was important to know how teachers perceive their professional development content and which areas need more targeted professional development (Cooc, 2019). Based on the problem, purpose, and research question of the study, I examined three major areas in the literature review: international schools, professional

development, and mainstreaming students. The first section of this literature review chapter describes the literature search strategy. The second section covers a review of the conceptual framework for the study, and the third section provides a literature review related to key variables and concepts. The final section of this chapter consists of a summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature review, information was gathered using the Walden University Library Database and Google Scholar. ERIC, EBSCO, and ProQuest Central databases were used to locate articles for this literature review. Reviewed Google Scholar articles were also used to find articles related to the literature review. In addition, other references and books listed in the references were sources of information gathered to enhance the literature review. The research material was limited to those published between 2019 and 2023, with exceptions for notable or seminal works. The key search terms were *teacher perceptions, special education, students with disability, international schools, inclusion, inclusive education, mainstream classroom, and professional development*. These terms were chosen because they are related to the problem, purpose, and research question of the study. After the research provided no new information and the same authors appeared, I assumed that saturation was achieved.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, which was previously named social learning theory. In his seminal work, Bandura theorized that a person's level of knowledge and their beliefs govern how they feel, think,

and behave (Bandura, 1993). Wulfert (2019) noted that Bandura's social learning theory describes the psychological processes that govern how human behavior develops, how it is maintained, and through what processes it can be modified. People make decisions and changes to how they function based on their beliefs about their capabilities to control themselves and events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1993). Through Bandura's self-regulatory mechanisms, people could change their actions based on their perceptions. According to Wulfert (2019), one's self-efficacy beliefs play a significant role in determining their behavior by influencing their level of motivation.

In a study conducted by Graf et al. (2021), the social cognitive theory was used to understand how self-efficacy, environmental factors, and goal motivation impact the way older adults acquire and maintain risk taking behavior. The researchers explored how behavioral factors (self-efficacy and risk taking), cognitive factors (goal motivation), and environmental factors (age and gender) influence the perceptions and actions of older adults in relation to sexual risk behavior. Graf et al. explained that behavior could be predicted because cognitive self, behavior, and environment are interconnected factors that can determine a person's actions. My study explored teachers' perspective on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities. Like the study conducted by Graf et al., I examined cognitive factors like teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and confidence in the context of professional development and their attitudes toward inclusive education.

The social cognitive theory was used to examine factors that contribute to special education teachers' persistence in their careers (Scott et al., 2022). Like the study conducted by Graf et al. (2021), the relationship between behavioral factors (decision to remain in the field), personal factors (motivation and passion for working with students), and environmental factors (financial compensation and school climate) related to self-efficacy were considered in this study. The findings of the study revealed that special education teachers' persistence to remain in the career is dependent on the interaction between environmental and personal factors.

The social cognitive theory was also used by Subban and Round (2022) in a study that focused on teachers' perceptions of teaching and managing behavior within open-plan classrooms. Subban and Round (2022) examined how environmental factors, such as interactions with other teachers and students, affect teachers' attitudes toward teaching within open-plan classrooms. They also examined vicarious reinforcement, which involves teachers unconsciously adopting positive behaviors they observe from other teachers that are effective. If these behaviors prove to be successful in improving student outcomes, teachers would more likely accept the open-plan classroom setting and work to enhance their skills. In my research, the environmental factor considered was the international school setting. My study examined how the international school environment influenced teachers' beliefs (cognitive) and their attitudes (personal) toward inclusive education. According to Bandura (1977), observational learning, intrinsic reinforcement, and modeling influence behavior. Further, when people feel they are

successful, they are more likely to be successful because they would work hard despite challenges.

The studies discussed above illustrate the broad applicability of the social cognitive theory in understanding how different factors interplay to shape educators' attitudes and behaviors in diverse educational contexts. The interconnected relationships between different factors were analyzed to determine teachers' perspectives. What people believe about their competencies is related to their level of performance (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, understanding teachers' perspectives of professional development can help both teachers and administrators plan effectively to improve teachers' performance which ultimately impacts students.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Based on the problem, purpose, and research question of the study, I examined three major areas in this literature review: international schools for K-12, professional development for inclusive classrooms, and mainstreaming students with disabilities. Over the past decade, there has been a swift surge in the number of international schools (ISC Research, 2020). Consequently, it becomes imperative to scrutinize these institutions regarding their teaching staff and leadership. Furthermore, it is essential to conduct research into the realm of professional development, as a substantial proportion of educators express their sense of inadequacy in terms of skills and proper training for instructing students with disabilities within inclusive classrooms (Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Johnstone, 2020; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Additionally, it is worth noting that the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream education has garnered

significant global attention (Mayumi Hagiwara et al., 2019), with a noteworthy statistic indicating that 92% of international schools now enroll students with disabilities (ISC Research, 2020).

International Schools for K-12

The term *international school* does not have a single definition. Machin (2019) explained that since most international schools are new, it is difficult to find a single definition that describes all international schools. Further, many international schools have similar characteristics to private, fee-paying schools that often cater to families living and working in a foreign country (Agustian, 2021). A multiplicity of schools refers to themselves as international schools and are governed by a wide range of institutional practices (Kelly, 2022; Machin, 2019).

A generally accepted description of international schools is any privately operated school that delivers a curriculum other than the host country's national curriculum wholly or partly in English to some or all students between ages 3 and 18 in a country where English may or may not be an official language (ISC Research, 2023). Kostogriz et al. (2022) noted that international schools could be privately owned for-profit institutions that provide a pathway into prestigious Western universities for children from affluent and global middle-class families. However, the lack of a single umbrella to shelter all international schools influences the way in which international schools enforce their policies and practices (Agustian, 2021). For example, Agustian (2021) noted that international schools often use their admission policy to exclude students who are unable to afford the high tuition fees or students with disability and special education needs.

International schools can be classified into three different types (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). Type A schools are called traditional schools, which mainly cater to the needs of expatriate students. Type B schools are referred to as ideological schools, which emphasize the promotion of peace and intercultural understanding through education. Type C schools are the nontraditional international schools whose student body consists of a significant population of elite host country students. These students are pursuing a higher quality education, or in the case where the host country is not an English-speaking country, they are interested in learning in English to attend universities in other English-speaking nations. Type C schools can be bilingual schools that deliver a combination of internationally recognized and local curricula to students.

As of 2022, there is a total of 13,180 English-medium international schools around the world enrolling 5.8 million students aged between 3 and 18 and employing 571,000 teaching staff (ISC Research, 2023). These international schools offer a range of programs, curriculums, and assessments to cater to the needs of specific communities (Mahfouz et al., 2019; Wright & Mulvey, 2022). Some of the programs and curriculum include advanced level (A Levels), advanced placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP), common core, secondary school diploma, and high school certificate (Mahfouz et al., 2019; Wright & Mulvey, 2022).

International schooling has entered a transitional phase (Bunnell, 2020). Initially, international schools were considered K-12 grade educational organizations supported by the home country government agencies, parent groups, or even private businesses to serve expatriate students (Mahfouz et al., 2019). However, Merritt (2021)

and Agustian (2021) noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of children from the host country, often from affluent families seeking higher education and social status standards. Merritt (2021) and Bunnell (2020) noted that the purpose of international schools has changed over the last 10 years, and Machin (2019) stated that international schools are a product of their evolving environment. International schools provide families with the opportunity for their children to study a Western curriculum in an English-speaking school and write internationally recognized exams which create opportunities for children to pursue studies globally (ISC Research, 2023). Even though there are still a few traditional and ideological international schools, these nontraditional type schools have seen the most significant increase (Bunnell, 2020; Hornberg, 2021; Merritt, 2021).

International Schoolteachers

International schoolteachers (ISTs) are teachers who spend their careers moving to different countries to teach at different international schools, or they may rotate between their home country and international teaching at different stages of their careers (Bright, 2022; Tarc et al., 2019). Even though most ISTs are certified teachers, some are nonqualified (Bright, 2022). Bailey and Cooker (2019) described ISTs using three conceptual lenses: accidental teachers, third culture teachers, and topology of international schoolteachers. Accidental teachers refer to those who have not received formal teacher training but decided to explore teaching for nontraditional reasons, such as the desire to live in another country, or they are trailing spouses who desired a job and chose to teach because it was available. Poole (2019) also found that some nonqualified

international schoolteachers become teachers as a means to an end or for the sole purpose of supporting themselves financially because of their inability to find similar employment in their home countries.

Third-culture teachers are those who do not see themselves as professional teachers in their home country but as belonging to a third culture of teachers in an international school (Bailey & Cooker, 2019; Tan et al., 2021). These teachers have the perception that teaching in international schools requires them to adapt to a new culture, become more open-minded, and build relationships with other teachers and parents from different countries who share similar experiences living abroad (Mello, 2022). However, Poole (2019) found that some of these third-culture teachers struggle to adapt to international schools because of the coexistence of multiple cultural experiences that sometimes result in culture shock. Further, Bailey and Gibson (2020) explained that since international schools offer access to the host country's elite students, this adds another dimension to the cultural diversity within the school.

Teachers in the third conceptual lens of the topology of international schoolteachers expressed different ongoing reasons for remaining in the teaching profession that was linked to their professional and general identity (Bailey & Cooker, 2019). Some of these reasons included the desire to be globally mobile, making a difference in the lives of students, or connection to the location by personal interest, marriage, or children. Tarc et al. (2019) described these teachers as part of a growing global middle-class of international schoolteachers who may choose to spend their entire career teaching in different international schools in different countries.

On the other hand, Rey et al. (2020) classified ISTs as the expat, the local, and the adventurer. Rey et al. (2020) description of expat teachers is like Bailey and Cooker's (2019) conceptual lens of an accidental teacher. Expat teachers are people who moved to a different country because of personal circumstances. Often, they are traveling with a spouse or family. Teaching may not be their first career choice for the expat teacher, but they decided to choose teaching because there are limited employment opportunities in the host country (Rey et al., 2020). Local teachers are teachers from the host country that have transitioned to an international school from the public or private sector. Adventurer teachers are typically White, trained teachers from Anglo-Saxon countries and are primarily young and unaccompanied by a spouse or children. Poole (2022) described this group of teachers as "globe trotters" who have a thirst for adventure and travel and who use teaching to facilitate their adventures while being gainfully employed. Even though ISTs were placed into different categories by different authors, they often shift categories along their professional trajectory (Bailey & Cooker, 2019; Rey et al., 2020).

It is general practice to hire teachers from the country of origin of the school's curriculum; however, some international schools are choosing to diversify and hire teachers from different countries and from the host county (Coutet, 2022; Kostogriz et al., 2022). Kostogriz et al. (2022) further explained that the need for a mobile teaching workforce from different countries has increased due to the growing trend to provide bilingual and dual curriculum education in international schools. Despite the category ISTs fall into or the purpose for which they were hired, they all benefit from elite social connections and a better standard of living, but they also face professional, cultural, and

linguistic challenges that can be difficult to overcome (Bailey, 2021; Bunnell & Poole, 2021).

International School Leadership

Qualifications, role models, mentoring, and experience play a pivotal role in international school leaders' route to leadership positions (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Kelly, 2022; Park et al., 2022). Since international school faculty are considered to be part of the globally mobile workforce (Hutchings, 2022; Rey et al., 2020), schools feel they would not benefit from investing in future leaders, so there is no system in place to identify potential leaders and groom them throughout their careers to take up leadership roles (Bailey & Gibson, 2020). As a result of their mobility and the lack of consistency with policies and practices within schools, international school leaders sometimes struggle to understand their leadership role within their particular international school setting (Kelly, 2022; Machin, 2019). Creating effective externally designed professional development leadership programs can support a pathway for international school leaders to guide their practice (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Kostogriz et al., 2022).

International school leaders face several unique challenges in their effort to manage a school in a foreign country and meet the needs of staff and faculty from various backgrounds (Merritt, 2021; Outhwaite, 2021; Park et al., 2022). One challenge of international school leaders is a need for more networking (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Lazenby et al., 2022; Outhwaite, 2021). International schools are often detached from the host nation schools, follow a different curriculum, and often operate in a different language (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Outhwaite, 2021). Transiency of faculty and students,

cultural differences, and business and marketing concerns are other challenges of international school leaders (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Kelly, 2022; Nguyen & Springer, 2021).

The leadership style of international school leaders plays a significant role in determining how they manage the cultural diversity that comes with international schools (Jackson, 2023; Park et al., 2022). Considering cultural diversity, Adams and Velarde (2021) noted that it is necessary for international school leaders to create a safe learning and working environment for students and teachers. Park et al. (2022) also mentioned the need to integrate international mindedness in the curriculum and create inclusivity policies and programs that address diversity.

Professional Development for Inclusive Classrooms

Based on the review of 156 articles, Sancar et al. (2021) provided the most inclusive definition of professional development. Professional development is typically characterized as an ongoing journey that commences during an educator's initial training in a teaching institution, persists throughout their career, and is influenced by various factors, including the teacher's individual traits, the subject matter they instruct, as well as their pedagogical techniques, methodologies, and instructional approaches (Sancar et al., 2021). Professional development can be offered in different forms (Lay et al., 2020; Sancar et al., 2021; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Some of these include mentoring, coaching, research activities, courses, workshops, conferences, seminars, and networking (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2021; Impedovo, 2021; Richter et al., 2022; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021).

Teachers benefit from being active participants in identifying and designing the professional development that is beneficial to them (Akcaoglu et al., 2023; Chitiyo et al., 2019a; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Kurth et al., 2021). According to Chitiyo et al. (2019a), teachers were more motivated and committed to professional development by being part of the process of identifying what they felt was beneficial to them. Further, teachers preferred professional development opportunities where they could collaborate in teams and learn with their colleagues in the same environment (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021; Meyer et al., 2022; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021)

Similarly, teachers' needs and expectations are not generally considered when discussing or planning for professional development (Cooper et al., 2020; Sancar et al., 2021; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). In a study where Cooper et al. (2020) examined teachers' views about and the expectations they hold for their professional development, it was noted that the professional development teachers receive to support their professional learning is not always what they want or value. A professional development framework should provide teachers with adequate knowledge of teaching methods, individualized instruction, classroom management, evaluation methods, research, and collaboration (Ali, 2020; Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021; Sancar et al., 2021).

Most teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms because they lack skills and adequate training (Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Johnstone, 2020; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Horan and Merrigan (2019) explored the impact of professional development on teachers' perceived levels of efficacy to teach inclusively. Horan and Merrigan (2019) found that teachers with more training had

significantly higher perceived efficacy levels compared to those who had received little or no training. Participation in professional development training also causes teachers to have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021; Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021).

For teachers to be able to teach students with disabilities competently, it is necessary for them to have practical and effective professional development programs that emphasize educational growth and improvement of their instructional practices (Ali, 2020; Gesel et al., 2021; Horan & Merrigan, 2019). Cooc (2019) noted that it is necessary to determine which teachers would benefit most from the opportunities before providing professional development programs. This is important because professional development can be offered in different forms to meet the specific requirements of different teachers (Akcaoglu et al., 2023; Ali, 2020).

Effective professional development opportunities help teachers become more aware of their knowledge gaps so they can make more informed decisions about further professional development needs (Cooc, 2019; Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021). For this reason, consistency is important for professional development to be effective (Collins, 2019; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Johnstone, 2020; Kurth et al., 2021). Providing teachers with one-off professional development programs would not significantly impact their instructional capabilities (Collins, 2019; Henry & Namhla, 2020; Li et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to provide regular follow-up sessions to ensure the success of teachers (Collins, 2019; Li et al., 2022).

The process of developing teacher expertise in working with students with disabilities in inclusive contexts and understanding how those programs prepared teachers to provide special education services in mainstream classrooms was explored by Kurth et al. (2021). The findings of the study revealed that the opportunity for ongoing pre- and in-service professional development is one factor that supports the development of teachers who work with students with disabilities. Ali (2020) also discussed the need to design professional development programs that meet the needs of in-service teachers in inclusive education settings.

However, teacher professional development needs differ within schools and within countries (Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020; Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Therefore, there is no generic professional development implementation guideline (Donath et al., 2023). For example, international school teachers in Japan and Korea expressed a higher need for professional development compared to teachers in the USA, Canada, England, and Australia (Cooc, 2019). Many countries do not have established policies that allow for the implementation of professional development opportunities to support teachers who teach students with disabilities in general education classrooms (UNESCO, 2020). Therefore, Cooc (2019) suggested that professional development should be examined based on the context of the school and the needs of teachers.

Teachers' perceived barriers to professional development were examined by Lopes and Oliveira (2021). The authors compared teachers working in classes directed mainly to special education needs students (SENS) and teachers working in classes with few or no SENS. Even though both groups of teachers agreed that there are no relevant

professional development opportunities, teachers that work mainly with regular students complained significantly more about the lack of opportunities (Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Irrelevant content, inadequacy of in-service training, administrative functioning, and heavy workload are some barriers to professional development (Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021; Phetla & Newman, 2020). Horan and Merrigan (2019) also found that there is often a disjuncture between professional development policies and practices which makes it challenging for teachers needs to be met efficiently.

In a study conducted by Asiri (2020), the author examined teachers' concerns and the required professional development for adopting an inclusive education system. This study was unique as it explored the topic based on gender. Asiri (2020) found that more than 80% of teachers indicated that they needed immediate professional development in inclusive education through training, seminars, and workshops. These findings were also support by Sumayang et al. (2022) who highlighted the needs of teachers related to the lack of training and support from administration. Professional development can address teachers' concerns about their lack of knowledge and skills to implementing inclusive education (Donath et al., 2023)

There is a link between professional development needs and school leadership (Cockpim & Somprach, 2020; Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020; MacLeod, 2020). Teachers, who teach students with disabilities in schools with stronger leadership, require less professional development than those who teach in schools with weak leadership (Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020). Teachers' academic excellence gained through professional development is dependent on the school principals' effective leadership

practices (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Ghavifekr & Ramzy, 2020; MacLeod, 2020).

Further, Ahmed et al. (2021) stated that when school leaders fund professional development programs for their teachers, it has a significant impact on teachers and the outcomes of students with disabilities.

Mainstreaming Students with Disabilities

For over two decades, many countries have been educating learners with disabilities in general classrooms (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Kart & Kart, 2021; Supriyanto, 2019). However, the term inclusive education is a matter of ongoing debate (Agustian, 2021; Kinsella, 2020; Siuty, 2019). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) described inclusive education as all students being educated together in mainstream classroom settings with their peers without disabilities (National Council for Special Education, 2019).

Inclusive education can be examined from two perspectives: inclusion and full inclusion (Leijen et al., 2021; Tiernan, 2022). Inclusion refers to including students with special education needs in mainstream classrooms. In contrast, full inclusion was used to describe situations where all students were educated together in the mainstream classroom regardless of their disability (Leijen et al., 2021; Tiernan, 2022). Hosshan et al. (2021) offered a similar description of inclusion using the categories of partial and full inclusion. Students with special education needs are placed into either group depending on their academic performance and acceptable behaviors. Therefore, if their academic outcomes and behavior are considered insufficient, they are not accepted in the full mainstream classrooms.

There are different definitions of inclusive education and practices related to students with disabilities, and each is implemented differently (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021; Hutchinson & Campbell, 2022; Nilholm, 2021). Cooc (2019) and Buli-Holmberg et al. (2022) noted that the disparity in inclusion could be a result of differences in the country's history and its position on disability and inclusion. The ISC Research (2020) also highlighted the same findings and further went on to state that it is important for each institution to at least have a common language with regard to inclusion.

Mainstreaming students with disabilities has been a major area of focus throughout the world (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2022; Mayumi Hagiwara et al., 2019; Sumayang et al., 2022). When students are placed in mainstream classrooms, they are afforded a more positive learning setting compared to when they are forced to work in separate special education classrooms (Leijen et al., 2021; Stankovska & Memedi, 2020; Sumayang et al., 2022; Young et al., 2019). In order to help students progress in mainstream classrooms, it is necessary to have evidence-based practices that can be implemented to provide the necessary support for both teachers and students (Mayumi Hagiwara et al., 2019; Sumayang et al., 2022,).

In a study conducted with 232 teachers, 60% supported the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Chitiyo et al., 2019a). However, teachers who teach students with disabilities stress the importance of knowing effective instructional strategies and making curriculum adaptations to meet student needs (Ali, 2020; Finkelstein et al., 2021; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021). Hosshan et al. (2021) found that students with LD in the mainstream classroom felt more supported when they were in

peer-seating groups because other students in the group helped them adapt to and participate in the mainstream classroom both academically and socially.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), 95% of school-age students served under IDEA in fall of 2020 were learning in mainstream classrooms. However, Kart and Kart (2021) and Dell'Anna et al. (2021) noted that little research is done to examine the effects of inclusion on students without disabilities in inclusive settings. Based on a literature review, it was noted that before the secondary level, students without disabilities experienced mostly positive or neutral effects of inclusion on academic achievement (Edwards et al., 2019; Kart & Kart, 2021; Rhoad-Drogalis & Justice, 2020). However, for students at the secondary level, it was found that there were neutral or negative effects on academic achievement in inclusive classrooms because of a lack of successful inclusion practices and teacher competence (Kart & Kart, 2021; Katz et al., 2021; Krammer et al., 2021). However, Kart and Kart (2021) and Dell'Anna et al. (2021) found that students without disabilities primarily benefited from being in inclusion classrooms with students with disabilities.

Inclusion in International Schools

A report that summarized the results of the third global survey on the status of inclusion in international schools was presented by ISC Research (2020). The survey was designed to determine the trends regarding the status of inclusion in international schools worldwide. The findings of the survey showed that 92.69% of international schools reported involvement with inclusion, ranging from beginning the process to being well on their way but still learning. Further, 92.20% of international schools reported admitting

students with disabilities or disorders of reading, writing, or math (ISC Research, 2020).

However, Mayumi Hagiwara et al. (2019) found that more research emphasized including students with more extensive support needs.

The ongoing debates on inclusive education are often related to the divide between mainstream and special needs schools (Agustian, 2021; Kinsella, 2020). However, in international schools, the debate has been between whether students' admission should be based on parents' ability to pay tuition fees or if learning assessments should be adjusted to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities (Agustian, 2021). In an effort to remain competitive, international schools often change their admission policies to accommodate different types of students with varying levels of disabilities (Poulin III, 2019). Therefore, the extent to which inclusion or mainstreaming is offered in international schools depends on what the school is capable of or is willing to provide for students (Agustian, 2021; Pletser, 2019).

Educators' Attitude Towards Inclusion

Inclusive education increases sensitivity, empathy social development, and students' academic achievement (Mubarak, 2022; Sumayang et al., 2022). However, educators' attitude toward inclusion is an extremely relevant part of the debate surrounding inclusion because it determines the success or failure of inclusion (Finkelstein et al., 2021; Mubarak, 2022; Page et al., 2019; Russell et al., et al., 2022; Stavroussi et al., 2021). Even though teachers' attitude toward inclusion is generally positive, it must be noted that attitude is dependent on teachers' view or interpretation of

inclusion and the amount of training they have in this area (Hutchinson & Campbell, 2022; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Sumayang et al., 2022).

International schools with the best inclusive programs also have strong leadership in the top management positions (ISC Research, 2020). According to Horan and Merrigan (2019) and Lacruz-Pérez et al. (2021), teachers play a major role in providing an inclusive environment for students. In mainstream classrooms, teachers are the driving force in creating opportunities for students with disabilities to interact with other students and form learning networks (Finkelstein et al., 2021; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Simón et al., 2021).

The literature revealed inconsistent results related to the factors that influence teachers' attitude inclusion. However, some factors that influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion that were mentioned are experience, training, qualification, and self-efficacy (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Mubarak, 2022; Page et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2022). According to Page et al. (2019) and Mubarak (2022), teachers with no related qualifications or sufficient training to teach students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms have a less positive attitude toward inclusion. However, Russell et al., (2022) found that teacher training does not necessarily relate to more positive attitudes. However, teachers' level of self-efficacy was found to have a more positive relationship with inclusion attitudes (Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2022). Further, teachers at the early stage of dealing with inclusive educational practices or those with limited experience, also have less positive attitudes towards inclusion (Stavroussi et al., 2021).

Teachers' attitudes and confidence could be improved through empowerment with professional development programs and courses related to instructional practices for addressing diverse student learning needs (Drigas & Mitsea, 2021; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Mubarak, 2022; Stavroussi et al., 2021). In addition, Russell et al., (2022) found that resources and funding are important factors to consider to improve teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. However, it must be noted that resources and funding do not necessarily equate to effective inclusion (Russell et al., 2022).

Summary and Conclusions

In summarizing the major concepts established in the literature, it was found that over the last decade, a rapid increase occurred in the number of international schools globally. However, to date, there has yet to be a single definition or umbrella under which all international schools fall. A wide range of institutional practices governs international schools since they do not belong to any nation and educate for no particular system of power. The literature revealed that there are different types of international schools with different target populations and philosophies. Since these schools do not have a unified system by which they operate, they all have different policies and practices related to inclusive education or mainstreaming and professional development.

Several authors discussed teachers' perceptions of professional development in relation to the inclusion of students with disabilities. However, there were limited findings on the topic of learning disabilities since most of the literature focused on inclusion related to more severe forms of disabilities. In addition, even though inclusion,

inclusive education, and mainstreaming were discussed widely in the literature, few articles were found that focused specifically on international schools.

The outcomes of this study address a notable void in the existing body of literature concerning inclusion and professional development within the context of international schools. In these institutions, educators receive an annual professional development allowance, granting them the autonomy to select and finance their chosen developmental programs. Nonetheless, participants have shed light on the inadequacies of this professional development framework.

Firstly, participants have expressed a strong preference for collaborative professional development opportunities, conducted with their colleagues. They highlight the significance of uniform training experiences to ensure the consistent implementation of procedures and strategies across all classrooms. Secondly, participants shared that the allocated professional development allowance often falls short of covering the expenses associated with attending in-person developmental sessions. As a potential remedy, some participants have proposed redirecting these funds towards hiring proficient facilitators who can conduct tailored professional development sessions with educators.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methodology that was used in this study, the research design, the research questions, and the role of the researcher. The chapter also provides a description of how the participants were selected, the data collection procedures, data analysis, and procedures for ethical protection of participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale for using the basic qualitative design. I also describe my role as the researcher, the participants, the methods for data collection, and the data analysis procedures. Further, I discuss measures taken to mitigate ethical concerns and ensure the trustworthiness of this research.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question in this study was "What are the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?" I focused on K-12 teachers who teach in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan. This target group was chosen based on the focus of the research on the perception of K-12 international schoolteachers regarding professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Professional development in the context of this research refers to any continuous learning that teachers participate in to improve their knowledge or skills to teach students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. These continuous learning sessions can include workshops, seminars, courses, training programs, conferences, mentoring, and coaching. Students with learning disabilities would be any student with a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using

language, spoken or written (IDEA, n.d.). These students may have deficiencies in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations.

A basic qualitative study, also referred to as a generic qualitative study, was used for this research. The basic qualitative study was chosen because I sought to inquire into and interpret teachers' perceptions about the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. A basic qualitative study is used when a researcher is interested in how participants interpret their experiences and make sense of their lives (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The basic qualitative study requires the use of semistructured or fully structured interviews or questionnaires with open-ended questions since the focus is on the external and real-world experiences of participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Other research designs were considered for this research, but those designs did not support the purpose of the research or align with the research question. Narrative research focuses on collecting data from the life stories of one or two persons and reporting those experiences in collaboration with the researcher's story (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The narrative research was not chosen because I was focused on exploring teachers' perspectives so their life stories and my story is irrelevant to the research. The phenomenological study describes what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon to describe a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This design was not chosen because it does not align with the research question, which asks for participants' perspectives. Grounded theory was not chosen for this

research because I was not seeking to generate a theory based on teachers' perspectives (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Ethnographic research focuses on developing a complex, complete description of a culture-sharing group by studying the meaning of behaviors, language, and interaction among members through day-to-day observations of the group and interviews with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research design was not appropriate because the research is not related to studying culture-sharing groups or developing descriptions of groups. Case study research did not align with the research because I was not exploring a real-life bounded system over time, and the research did not involve multiple sources of information (see Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary instrument of qualitative research and has the most important role throughout the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Before starting the data collection, I was responsible for determining the most appropriate research design, developing criteria for selecting participants, and creating open-ended interview questions. During the data collection stage, I was transparent in the participant selection process, and served as an unbiased interviewer by presenting open-ended questions and allowing the participants to answer without pointing them in any specific direction. I also prepared a list of follow-up questions that served as prompts to elicit holistic descriptions of experiences from participants (see Roberts, 2020). Researchers can increase the credibility of their findings and reduce bias by preparing the interview questions before the interview and avoid including questions that focus on what is predetermined to be important to the researcher (Roberts, 2020). Preparing the interview questions provide

structure and ensure that all participants are asked the same questions (Yeong et al., 2018). I also played the role of a data analyst, and I was fair and impartial when gathering themes from the data. Organizing a system to document procedures and memos added credibility to the qualitative data analysis process and findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collected in the interview were transcribed precisely and was solely used when coding to determine common themes.

I am an international educator who teaches students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms, so I am part of the target population for this research. However, I remained mindful of my own perspective on the issue being addressed and did not interject my beliefs as a teacher at any stage. Even though I conducted this study in my work environment, I am new to the staff and have only a few interactions with teachers outside the High School Mathematics department. Further, this study focuses on K-12 teachers; therefore, there was a wide range of participants with whom I have had no previous interactions or relationships. Teachers were not incentivized to participate in the interview, so participation was voluntary. The names and identities of participants were confidential, so teachers felt comfortable sharing during the interview.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participants for this study included K-12 international schoolteachers with at least 2 years of experience who teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. For this research, teaching assistants were not considered as part of the sample because some are not qualified teachers and may not have enough experience in

international school settings. In addition, teaching assistants do not have access to the same professional development opportunities as full-time teachers. The participants were selected from an English-speaking international school in Taiwan using purposeful and convenient sampling. The site was appropriate because all students with learning disabilities are educated in mainstream classrooms, which means that all teachers teach these students at some point. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that when purposeful sampling is used, the researcher seeks the best information-rich cases for the study, which produces the best data, and the research findings will be a direct result of the cases sampled. Since the purpose and research question of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that purposeful sampling be used to select participants from whom you can learn the most as you seek to discover, understand, and gain insight.

A convenience sampling strategy was used because all participants were selected from a single site and accessible within the site. Convenience sampling is not always recognized as a valid purposeful sampling strategy because the researcher is selecting the most convenient cases, not necessarily the best cases (Leavy, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). However, this research was focused on selecting participants from a single site, so the best cases were selected from that site. This sampling strategy is justified because it aligned with the purpose and research question of the study.

Qualitative research generally uses small sample sizes, but there is no rule to determine a specific number (Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015). Sample size depends on the

purpose of the research, the depth and breadth of the research question, and the level of saturation (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Since all the participants in the research were selected from a single site, and only one research question was explored, a sample size of nine participants was used to meet saturation.

Instrumentation

The data for this research was collected through interviews with K-12 international schoolteachers (see Appendix A). Ravitch and Carl (2020) mentioned that interviews are designed to collect data about participants' experiences, beliefs, and opinions on a specific issue. When using interviews, the researcher can create open-ended questions before the interview and include follow-up and probing questions based on the discussions that develop from the open-ended questions (Guest et al., 2017). The data for this study was collected from interviews that consisted of open-ended questions about teachers' perspectives on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Additional follow-up questions were asked depending on the participant's response. Semistructured interviews were conducted to give participants the opportunity to share their perceptions in a comfortable and confidential environment. Ravitch and Carl (2020) mentioned that interviews allow researchers to understand how people make meaning of and interpret their own experiences by speaking directly with those who have knowledge of or experience with the phenomenon being researched.

The interview questions were developed surrounding the nature and purpose of the research and the research question. Since the interview was the only data collection

tool for this research, it was necessary to invest a significant amount of time to carefully craft the questions to elicit the most information from the interviewees. Namey et al. (2016) mentioned that individual interviews are time consuming because the researcher must meet with each participant separately. However, it is essential to dedicate time to this process to collect the data. After preparing the interview questions, I checked for veracity by conducting a preinterview with someone who has previous experience with qualitative data collection to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and that they measured what I intended them to measure. I also sought feedback about possible leading or closed questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After receiving approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) with approval number 05-02-23-0287258, I sent the director of my school an email requesting a meeting to discuss the use of the school to conduct my research (see Appendix B). During that meeting, I explained the purpose of the research, the process by which teachers will be selected, and the criteria for selection. To select participants for this research, I requested a few minutes at the weekly faculty meeting to provide an overview of the study to all teachers. I explained to the teachers that they can only participate if they teach students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms and if they have been teaching at an international school for at least 2 years. I also outlined how their contributions will be beneficial to them, the students they teach, and me as a student of Walden University. After this, an email was sent to all teachers with the overview that was previously discussed and the criteria for participation (see Appendix C). Teachers

were asked to email me if they are interested in volunteering so I could provide additional details. After 3 days, I sent follow up emails to specific teachers who I thought could make valuable contributions to my research. In that email, I directly asked those teachers to volunteer as participants for the interview. The teachers who met the criteria for participation were selected and provided with more information for the interview procedures.

Once the participants were selected, I used my Walden email address to send an email that thanked participants for agreeing to participate in the interview, provided more details of the research, their participation, and the informed consent form. Participants were asked to return a signed copy of the consent form. They were also informed that the interviews will be 45 to 60 minutes long and recorded on my computer and my telephone. Participants were not offered any monetary reward or gifts for participating in the interviews.

The next step was to email each participant to arrange a time and location for the interview that would be convenient for them. All interviews were conducted within 9 days but no more than two interviews were conducted on the same day. Interviews were conducted via Google Meet. Semistructured interviews were conducted during the participant's planning block, after school, or on the weekend.

Before each interview session began, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. To encourage open and honest responses during the interview, participants were told that no identifying information would be used in the study to protect their identity and confidentiality. They were also reminded that the

interview would be recorded and transcribed. Participants were informed that I would be taking notes during the interview. At the end of the interview, I informed participants that I would share a summary of the interview transcript for them to make any additions or corrections before I begin the coding process. This ensures a high level of trustworthiness in the data. I then confirmed the contact information for the participant. Participants were informed that I would provide them with a summary of the dissertation upon completing the research. I closed the debriefing procedure by thanking participants and reassuring them of the confidentiality of the information they provided.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings and it is one of the most important stages of qualitative research (Raskind et al., 2019). Even though there is no single approach, rule, or formula to analyze qualitative data, many guidelines are available to make meaning of the process (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Miles et al. (2014) noted that data collection and analysis should be done simultaneously to allow the researcher to generate strategies for collecting new data based on the analysis of existing data. Since no more than two interviews were conducted per day, I incorporated one day between interviews for initial analysis. This process helped to guide my follow-up questions as patterns emerged from the data analysis.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed into text. I read the transcript thoroughly, then sent a summary of it to the interviewee to ensure that it represented what they intended to convey to me during the interview. The interviewee was allowed two

days to review and return the transcript with any addition or corrections. If the transcript was not returned within this time, I used it as initially transcribed.

The next step in the process was to begin the coding process, which was done manually since no software was used. One of the challenges of qualitative analysis involves the process of filtering through raw informational text to determine what is inconsequential and what is significant in order to identify significant patterns that reveal the essence of what the data represents (Patton, 2015). To begin sifting through the data, the transcripts were reread. However, this time a highlighter was used to highlight significant phrases or passages that related to the research question and the conceptual framework. Following this stage, descriptive coding was used to code the data. Descriptive coding uses a word or short phrase to summarize a section or topic within the data (Saldaña, 2013). The coding methods used in this research all lead to categories and themes necessary for further data analysis. Discrepant cases within the data were reported and explained thoroughly.

In the next stage I used inductive thematic analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Hierarchies were constructed by clustering similar codes or categories gathered during the coding phase to create a thematic landscape of the data (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Finally, the data was interpreted to answer the research question in relation to the problem and purpose of the study. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) noted that during the interpretation stage, the researcher makes analytical conclusions about the data based on the codes and themes.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important element in qualitative research. The integrity of the research findings and interpretations relies greatly on the establishment of trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Trustworthiness for this research was measured using four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

The credibility of a research examines how closely the research findings relate to reality (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Amin et al. (2020) recommended using prolonged engagement and persistent observation as techniques to increase the credibility of qualitative research. Prolonged engagement allows researchers to consider the different factors that can influence the data, while persistent observation is the process of scrutinizing data to determine the issues that are more relevant to explore in detail (Amin et al., 2020). Amin et al. (2020) advised qualitative researchers to invest time at the research site and with participants to foster the trustworthiness of data. In their seminal work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that spending time at the research site helps qualitative researchers become more familiar with the culture within that site which allows for a deeper perspective when collecting and analyzing data. Quality time should be spent building relationships with potential interviewees to encourage more genuine dialogue and candidness during interviews (Amin et al., 2020). Since I am an employee at the site and I have some degree of relationship with the potential participants, it created an advantage in the area of trustworthiness. However, as a researcher, I was cognizant of potential personal or participant bias during data collection and analysis.

Another technique to increase credibility is conducting member checks, which is the process of soliciting feedback about the findings from participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). After each interview, a summary of the transcript was sent to the interviewee for them to check for accuracy and correct presentation of what was discussed during the interview. Participants were asked to make corrections or additions before returning the transcripts. As part of the member check process, Amankwaa (2016) encouraged researchers to document discrepant cases and cases that follow a pattern. These cases were documented during the coding process and were placed in a different category. These cases were thoroughly discussed when interpreting the data to present the finding. Data saturation was also considered to ensure the credibility of this research. In his seminal work, Guest et al., (2006) noted that when conducting qualitative research, data saturation generally occurs after 12 interviews are analyzed. Since all the participants in the research were selected from a single site and only one research question was explored, the sample of nine participants was sufficient to meet saturation.

Transferability

Transferability of a qualitative research measures how the findings of the study can be applied to context outside the study situation (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Small samples drawn using purposeful sampling of participants who can provide information-rich data and from whom you can learn the most about the phenomenon being studied enhances transferability (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Patton (2015) also suggested variation in sample selection. Participants in this research were selected from K-12 teachers to have a broad perspective of teachers within the site.

Ravitch and Carl (2020) suggested using open-ended questions that solicit detailed responses from participants during interviews. All interview questions were carefully crafted and reviewed before the interview and possible follow-up questions were created before the interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to provide detailed and thick descriptions of what the participants shared. Different coding methods were used to code the data to gather themes that accurately represent the findings. Detailed descriptions were provided for the participants and how they were selected. The research site, data collection, analysis, and interpretation procedures were also explained in detail.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability, in the general sense, deals with getting the same results if the study is replicated. Since human behavior is not consistent, dependability in qualitative research speaks to the notion of whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Confirmability refers to how well the data matches what the participants presented (Creswell, 2018). Dependability and confirmability can be achieved by auditing the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this research, the audit trail was supported by providing a detailed description of the sampling procedures, the data collection process, the coding techniques used for data analysis, and the inductive thematic analysis process used to determine the findings and interpret the results. Ravitch and Carl (2020) also suggested the use of a research journal or records memos to document the different stages and processes while conducting the research.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures were respected and observed at every stage of this research. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed several procedures for dealing with ethical issues, which were implemented in this research. Before starting the data collection procedures, I sought and gained IRB approval with approval number 05-02-23-0287258. After approval was granted, Walden university procedures were followed to gain access to the director of the site and the potential participants. Each potential participant within the site was provided with details of the study before being asked to volunteer. After the list of participants was finalized, they were provided with a consent form which they were required to sign before participating in the interview. Participants were reminded that their participation is voluntary and can withdraw at any stage. In addition, participants were informed that their identities will be protected at all times. After the interviews, a summary of the transcripts was sent to participants to verify that the information collected exactly represented what they wanted to convey during the interview. They were given the opportunity to make corrections to the transcript before the data analysis. During the data analysis stage, participants' contributions were honored, and all responses were coded, even if it was a discrepant case. After the study was completed, participants and the director of the school would be sent a copy of the findings of the research. All data collected for this research was stored in a secure folder on my computer and on an external hard drive which is password protected. The data would be permanently deleted after five years.

Ethical issues related to disparity in power can arise from conducting research with colleagues (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Even though the research was being conducted in my work environment, I am not in a position of power at the site. In addition, my perspective was not considered in this study, and I was cognizant of any biases throughout the process. In addition, the data collection and analysis were elaborately discussed and transparent.

Summary

A basic qualitative study also referred to as a generic qualitative study, was used for this research. Convenience and purposeful sampling was used to select nine K-12 teachers who teach students with learning disabilities in an international school in Taiwan and have at least 2 years of experience. Semistructured interviews were conducted with the participants to gather qualitative data to answer the research question for this study. Interviews were transcribed and coded using descriptive coding, then inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Trustworthiness for this research was measured using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical procedures were respected and observed at every stage of this research.

Chapter 4 displays the demographic data for the participants. The data collection, analysis, and findings of the research are presented. Evidence of trustworthiness techniques addressed in Chapter 3 is also discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

International schools are part of a global movement to engage in inclusive education, with more than 90% of international schools reporting involvement by admitting students with disabilities (ISC Research, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The research question used for this study was "What are the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?"

This chapter contains six sections. In the first section, I present the participants' demographic information and describe the setting of the study. The second section focuses on the location, frequency, and duration of data collection and the number of participants. The third section outlines the process of moving from codes to categories and themes, while the fourth section presents the data results to answer the research question. The fifth section shows evidence of trustworthiness, and the final section summarizes the chapter.

Setting

The setting for this research was a K-12 English-speaking international school in Taiwan. All participants in the research were international school teachers who taught students with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. For this study, no personal or

organizational conditions were present that affected the interpretation of the results and presentation of the findings.

Demographic Data

A total of nine persons were interviewed for this study, of which four were females, and five were males. The participants had a wide range of teaching experience in international schools. Their experience ranged from 2 to 14 years of teaching in one to six schools. All participants said they taught students with learning disabilities throughout their international school careers. Two of the nine participants had a special educational certification related to English Language Learners (ELLs), and one participant had a master's degree in special education (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Data

	Number	%
Gender		
Male	5	56
Female	4	44
Ethnicity		
Black		
White	2	22
Asian	2	22
Years teaching in international schools and years teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms	5	56
1-3		
4-6	1	11
7-9	5	56
Over 10	1	11
Special Education Certification	2	22
Yes		
No	3	33
	6	67

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using semistructured interviews with a total of nine participants. All participants were taken from the same English-speaking international school in Taiwan. The interviews were conducted via Google Meet so participants could choose where they felt most comfortable conducting the interview. As the interviewer, I conducted the interview either from home or in the closed conference room at the international school. All interviews were conducted over 9 days, with no more than two interviews per day. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded on Google Meet, and a transcript was generated at the end of the meeting.

Variation in Data Collection Plan

A few changes were made to the data collection procedures discussed in Chapter 3. Firstly, I initially planned to conduct all interviews within 3 weeks, but I completed the interviews over a period of 9 days. I maintained my plan of not conducting more than two interviews on the same day. Further, the interviews were initially scheduled for the conference room on the site; instead, all interviews were conducted via Google Meet, and the participants chose a location and time that was convenient for them. In my data collection plan, I mentioned that interviews would be recorded on my computer and telephone, but I only used my laptop to record the interviews. Before conducting the interviews, I did several tests to ensure that the recording and transcript on my laptop were efficient. As a result, I decided against using my telephone to record the interviews.

Apart from these variations, no other unusual circumstances were encountered in data collection.

Data Analysis

After completing the interviews, the transcripts were stored in an encrypted folder on a password-protected computer. To begin the data analysis process, I replaced each participant's name with a number and renamed each file using the participant's number, for example, "Participant 1 or Participant 2." I then read each transcript twice and made the necessary corrections. Member checks were done to increase credibility by soliciting participant feedback about the findings (see Ravitch & Carl, 2020). To this end, a transcript summary was sent to the participants to check for accuracy and correct presentation of what was discussed during the interview. Participants were asked to make corrections or additions before returning the transcripts. Once the transcripts were returned, I read each multiple times to become more comfortable with the interview responses.

Codes

Each transcript was coded on a separate two-column table using different colors for each participant. Codes were developed by identifying similarities within the transcript. Statements and excerpts were extracted from the transcript and copied into column one of the table, and initial codes were assigned to each excerpt or statement. The coding was done entirely by hand since no other qualitative data analysis software was used to interpret the data. Table 2 shows a sample of part of the code table for Participant 1 to describe further how the data was coded.

Table 2*Sample of Coding*

Code	Raw data
Strategy	I think it would be really helpful to have teaching strategies for students with processing disorders.
Identification	Having a firmer understanding of certain strategies that can be incorporated when the push-in teacher can't be there. Not all of the international schools that I worked at even acknowledged students with learning disabilities. I was not informed of any of their needs until issues arose in the classroom.
Assistance	When I didn't have any push-in support, it was just me with like 23 or 24 kids. Students needed a lot of support
Pedagogy	How I can adequately support student and their needs Having a better understanding of students' different processing needs Better understanding of what are effective or appropriate modifications based on student needs If you know a modification is that a student has additional time, you can better support them without them feeling ostracized Having a firmer understanding of what some of these students are and are not capable of

Table 3 presents a compilation of all the codes created during the coding process and a one-line excerpt from a participant.

Table 3*Codes and Examples of Raw Data*

Code	Raw Data example
Time	I think the biggest challenge is just time, because it's hard to find the time to make really engaging lessons.
Plan	I could anticipate certain things and plan for them
Collaboration	A school-wide approach to professional development would allow teachers who are already working together to collaborate as they develop their skills
Organization	My current institution is set up in such a way that we don't often get too many new students.
PD Frequency	We'll have that meeting near the beginning of the year and kind of feel like we don't really have another meeting unless there's like a problem.
Support	I'm not really getting a tremendous amount of support
Fairness	Students in general seem pretty aware of the students with like different abilities
PD Budget	We have a monetary budget at the beginning of the year for PD
Strategy	I think it would be really helpful to have teaching strategies for students with processing disorders.
Inclusion	It's quite good for everybody to be in the same class because it makes the classroom richer and makes the students more

Code	Raw Data example
	educated and empathetic
Facilitator	Hire outside speakers to come into the school and have different sessions
Pedagogy	Having a firmer understanding of what students are and are not capable of
Assistance	When I didn't have any push-in support, it was just me with like 23 or 24 kids.
Culture	Meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities should be part of the mission and culture of the school
Sharing Knowledge	I think the strength in professional development is being able to talk to other teachers and kind of share stories, share experiences
PD Organization	Very informal type professional development
Training	I think there's still a lot of work to do to really train teachers well and to support all our students as they need to be supported.
Diversity	I'd like to think about students with learning disabilities as diversity, and a reflection of real life
PD Content	PD should be student-centered and focus on pedagogy.
Identification	I was not informed of any of their needs until issues arose in the classroom.

Categories

The categories for the codes were analyzed by clustering similar codes. After coding each transcript, all the codes were combined into a single table to aid the process of identifying patterns. Repeated codes were combined in the same row, and the excerpts were color-coded to represent different participants. Similar codes were grouped into categories to determine themes and each category was given a name which describes the category. Irrelevant codes that did not align with the purpose of the study were removed, and codes related to discrepant cases were grouped separately. The codes in each category were analyzed to determine themes. Table 4 shows how the codes were grouped into categories and the name used to describe each category.

Table 4

Category of Codes

Equity	Development	Networking	Pedagogical Focus
Fairness	PD frequency	PD Organization	PD Content
Inclusion	Support	PD Budget	Strategy
Culture	Training	Facilitator	Pedagogy
Diversity	Assistance	Sharing	Plan
Time	Organization	Knowledge Collaboration	Identification

Themes

After grouping the codes into categories, four themes emerged from the data. The first theme highlighted teachers' beliefs about inclusion and addressed the positive impact and benefits students with learning disabilities bring to mainstream classrooms. The second theme revealed that teachers have limited or no professional development training

to teach students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. The third theme focused on the professional development that teachers prefer to support them in mainstream classrooms. The fourth theme examined the professional development content area teachers need to better support students with learning disabilities. Figure 1 presents the four themes that emerged from the data.

Figure 1

Themes that Emerged from the Data Analysis



Discrepant Case

Discrepant cases were identified after analyzing the codes created from the transcripts. Discrepant cases tell a different story to the themes identified in the data analysis (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). As mentioned in Chapter 3, discrepant cases within the data were reported and explained thoroughly. Reporting discrepant cases enhances the

trustworthiness of the study. Discrepant cases were determined by looking at relevant codes that did not fit into any of the four categories used to create the themes. These cases were important to mention because further research could be conducted to explore these ideas in future studies.

Results in Terms of the Research Question

The data collected for this research were analyzed to answer the research question, “What are the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?” Four themes emerged from the data analysis that answered the research question. The themes are discussed in detail to show how the themes articulate the responses to the research question.

Theme 1: K-12 Teachers in an English-Speaking International School in Taiwan Believe in Mainstreaming Students with Learning Disabilities

Theme 1 addresses teachers' perspectives on including students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Participants were asked to talk about having students with learning disabilities and how they impact their classroom. Some codes used to develop this theme included fairness, inclusion, culture, diversity, and time. All nine participants spoke of the positive impact and the benefits of having students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Participants highlighted ways students with and without learning disabilities can benefit from an inclusive classroom. One participant stated that,

I 100% think students with identified learning needs make the classroom much richer. The kids are able to develop a different sense of empathy that they might not have developed, and it promotes a culture of acceptance and respect among the students.

Table 5 provides excerpts of participants' views from the interview related to Theme 1.

Table 5

Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 1

Participant 1: I definitely value the inclusion, but I think that we could support these students better if we have a better understanding of their needs and how we can approach teaching them. I think the contributions that they make to the class culture and environment are positive, and I think that they provide deeper learning for their classmates as well.

Participant 2: The students support each other, and there is allowance for more differentiation. Students learn by watching each other and helping each other, so those students who have difficulties can find solutions amongst their peers as well, so they feel more comfortable in that space. I've noticed that they often provide a kind of support. Sometimes it's through directly helping each other with their work or giving each other solutions.

Participant 3: I think the impact is mostly positive. I have small classes, so everyone feels comfortable, and they have this space to learn. I also think it adds a level of diversity to the classroom environment and students can actually learn from each other. I actually remember teaching first grade in one school, and I had two students who had learning deficiencies. I don't remember if they were diagnosed or not. But we did a lot of learning stations so that they could learn in small groups. It's a lot more time planning time, time in the class, and wait time, but the students feel more comfortable.

While participants hold inclusion in high regard, they feel that a deeper understanding of the specific needs of students with learning disabilities and more effective teaching approaches would enable them to provide better support. Participants believe that students with learning disabilities positively contribute to the class culture

and provide deeper learning for their classmates. Participants mentioned that students with learning disabilities create opportunities for a more authentic and rich classroom experience for students without disabilities. Students without disabilities can develop empathy, collaboration skills, and patience. On the other hand, students with learning disabilities can develop social and communication skills by interacting with their classmates without disabilities.

Participants mentioned that students have various expressive modes and ways of interpreting situations. Therefore, it is important for teachers to create a space where all learners can contribute meaningfully. They believe it is empowering to have students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms because it provides opportunities for teachers to further differentiate their lessons. Participants emphasized the importance of creating equal opportunities for students so that the classroom becomes a place where all voices are enabled to have power.

Theme 2: K-12 Teachers in an English-Speaking International School in Taiwan Have Limited Professional Development Training to Teach Students with Learning Disabilities

The first interview question asked participants to share the types of professional development opportunities the school provides for teachers teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Some codes used to develop this theme are professional development frequency, support, training, assistance, and organization. Table 6 provides participants' responses from the interview related to Theme 2.

Table 6*Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 2*

Participant 1: In my first year teaching here, we had a voluntary opportunity from the learning support department to complete an online professional development around inclusion, strategies, and ways to teach in an inclusive classroom. It ran for a couple of hours one weekend.

Participant 2: You know, I don't think I've ever had any professional development in teaching students with special needs.

Participant 3: Our school provides each teacher with a personal professional development budget that we can use as we see fit. So, I imagine if someone wanted to learn about that (learning disabilities) they would, they could pursue it on their own.

Participant 4: There is one that I am thinking about, but I don't know if I would call it a learning disability training. However, it was a professional development around our teacher education for students with needs centered on gender identification, transgender, sexual identity, and race. But as far as professional development for students with learning disabilities specifically or cognitive disabilities or physical disabilities, I don't recall receiving anything this year centered around that.

Participant 5: So part of it is like we have a PD fund every year so teachers could take some sort of class or course for neurodiverse learners. As far as the PDs that we have once a week, I would say there is probably only just been a handful of times. Maybe three or four times at the beginning of the year there were learning support discussions where we talked about students' concerns. But as far as like proper training, not so much.

Participants mentioned that they have never participated in any organized, professional development training related to teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Participants shared that there is no system of professional development in place to support, teach, or train teachers to support students with moderate to severe learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Some participants shared that informal sessions are sometimes held during the weekly meeting time, but there is often no follow-up after.

Participants shared that the school provides a personal professional development budget of \$750 to each teacher, which can be used as needed. However, participants have never used that professional development allowance to pursue training to teach students with learning disabilities. Participants mentioned that staff members are often charged with running meetings where they occasionally disseminate knowledge to the school staff related to students with learning disabilities. However, they felt this type of professional development is only organized when a specific student has a problem, or a particular teacher repeatedly complains about a situation. Some participants mentioned that these sessions happen once or twice yearly with someone from the learning support team. Teachers sometimes have the opportunity to exchange best practices based on what has been successfully implemented in the classroom. However, the participants view these sessions as infrequent and informal. They mentioned that the one-off sessions do not provide quality learning.

All nine participants expressed that there is either no professional development or limited professional development for teachers who teach students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The code PD Frequency was used in part to develop Theme 2. Participants mentioned that although there might be some training, it is not continuous. According to Participant 6,

At the beginning of the school year, teachers participate in 1 week of trainings and meetings in different areas. Sometimes we even focus on students with different types of disabilities, but we do not really have another meeting or follow-up unless there's a specific problem.

Participant 4 shared similar opinions and explained, “I think that professional development needs to be ongoing in the sense that it is not once a week for an hour, there should be like an intensive training, and it needs to be revisited often.”

Participants mentioned that there is a weekly professional development time on Wednesday for teachers and other professional development days throughout the year. However, they shared that the Wednesday professional development time is often spent in whole group information session meetings rather than professional development. On other professional development days, the topics chosen for professional development are often not relevant or related to students with learning disabilities. Participant 8 shared that “I think it would be a really good use of time to utilize some of that already built-in professional development time to offer continued learning to faculty and staff.”

Theme 3: K-12 Teachers in an English-Speaking International School in Taiwan Prefer Professional Development with a Trained Facilitator

During the interview, participants were asked to share some professional developments that would help them support students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. They were also asked to share their beliefs about their school's current professional development model. Further, participants were asked to share suggestions for improving professional development in their school to help prepare teachers to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Table 7 below provides a summary of participants views related to the discussions around the questions mentioned above. The excerpts of participants' views from the transcript are presented in Table 7.

Table 7*Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 3*

Participant 2: I think having PD as a staff or in departments might be helpful. In another school, we had a PD in our department, but it was not about learning difficulties. During that PD we were able to share our lesson plans with each other and we learned from each other. So I think that is better than working on something alone in an online training.

Participant 8: The current PD model is so individualized, which has its pros and cons, but because all teachers in the three divisions at some point have learners with disabilities, I think it would be beneficial for the school to offer a whole school sort of thing similar to what my last school did which was have speakers come into the school rather than sending individuals out.

Participant 9: We should find a proven research-backed program and we should invite somebody in to facilitate professional development within the divisions. After the training we could go back to our unit plans and lesson plans and implement what was learned for the needs of students.

Participants shared that when they participate in personal online professional development, it is less impactful than when they have sessions with other colleagues. Participants valued opportunities to have discussions where they can share ideas, strategies, experiences, and success stories. Participants believed that this type of professional development is more authentic and valuable. Participants talked about the importance of having a school-wide approach to professional development to build the school's identity and allow teachers already working together to collaborate as they develop their skills and understanding of how to support all students. Participants believed that even though teachers are allowed to use their professional development budget to do whatever matters to them, the school should have a cycle or a plan where they focus on professional development related to learning disabilities. Several participants suggested inviting an outside coach or a presenter to facilitate professional

development sessions with teachers. Participants believe that school-wide professional development reinforces the message that the school is inclusive, and administrators are working to develop teachers. Participants suggested having a professional development committee responsible for researching to identify the best speaker to come into the school to execute training programs with teachers and teaching assistants. The committee could also focus on finding suitable resources related to specific professional development for teachers. Participants shared that it is important for all teachers to receive the same message and practice similar approaches in the classroom to support students with learning disabilities.

Eight of the nine participants spoke directly about having grouped or school-wide professional development sessions. Five of those eight participants talked about inviting an outside speaker or specialist to conduct the sessions, and others suggested using teachers from within the school to conduct the sessions. Even though Participant 7 did not explicitly mention school-wide or department professional development, the participant mentioned, “They should hire people to come into the school and have different sessions so that you could be exposed to a lot of different strategies and ideas.”

Some participants had strong opinions about providing opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge with each other. One participant said, “The school needs to create and provide opportunities for teachers to step up and share their expertise with colleagues because I think teachers know a lot, but they oftentimes aren't asked to share. Another participant mentioned that “There might be teachers already on staff who might be comfortable and qualified to lead a professional development on teaching students

with learning disabilities.” Participants valued the idea of learning from each other in group settings.

**Theme 4: K-12 Teachers in an English-Speaking International School in Taiwan
Need Professional Development on Teaching Strategies for Students with Learning
Disabilities**

During the interview, the word strategy was used by participants 42 times. Six of the nine teachers directly referenced learning more teaching strategies to help better support students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Teaching strategy was discussed when participants were asked to share what professional development they think would help them to support students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Since most participants mentioned limited or no professional development at their current school earlier in the interview, they were asked to share the most helpful professional development they have participated in during their career. Some participants also talked about teaching strategies when they shared the challenges they face with having students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Table 8 below presents excerpts of participants’ views related to their discussion about teaching strategies to help students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

Table 8*Excerpts from Participants Related to Theme 4*

Participant 2: It would be nice to find teaching strategies that would be applicable to everyone, but that could be specifically helpful to that one person. For example, I use graphic organizers for all my students even though I initially only needed them for one student. For this student, I photocopied an example and they highlighted key sections so he could look at it, copy the format, and insert his own information. Whereas with other people, I didn't need as much prompting as that. So I want to learn what extra things I need to do with the strategies I'm already using, then I can also add new strategies that I learn.

Participant 3: I am always looking to find new strategies to help my students. I would look for the learning support teacher and ask her for strategies, but other than that, I tend to go to the same professional communities like ASCD or even a teacher group that I am part of, international teacher groups that I follow on Facebook, or, throwing a question on LinkedIn, or something like that to find ideas.

Participant 8: I think it would be really helpful to have strategies for students with processing disorders. I would like to have a firmer understanding of what some of these students are capable of, and like I said earlier, know certain strategies that I can incorporate when the push-in teacher can't be there. I want to explore how to better incorporate teaching strategies into partner or group work without it feeling burdensome on other students.

Participants believe that the most helpful professional development experiences are the ones that offer resources and strategies to assist students with various learning needs. They also emphasized the importance of participating in professional development that explores and demonstrates how to implement these strategies in the classroom.

Participants have conveyed a strong desire for professional development sessions that allocate sufficient time for in-depth exploration of teaching strategies. They emphasized the importance of delving into the intricacies by analyzing case studies, thoroughly comprehending how these strategies interconnect, and how they can be applied in classroom settings. Several participants articulated their interest in acquiring teaching

strategies that can be universally applicable while offering specific benefits to students with learning disabilities. They are eager to explore innovative approaches for implementing and maximizing the utility of the strategies already at their disposal. Participants have taken a proactive approach to finding teaching strategies by joining professional communities like ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), fostering connections with international teacher groups on social media platforms, or asking questions in open forums like LinkedIn. Further, participants mentioned using their common planning time to create opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.

Even though some participants did not mention teaching strategies directly, they made indirect references during the interview. Participants spoke about not understanding students' needs, which make it challenging to plan. For instance, Participant 6 said,

Having a better understanding of what effective or appropriate modifications are based on student needs would help with planning better lessons for the students. Having a firmer understanding of what some of these students are and are not capable of would also be helpful.

Another participant shared similar thoughts and expressed,

It would be nice to know what students' needs are and how I can support them during my lesson. I feel like I have a set of things that I usually do, but I want to add more to my kit. I've been talking with other teachers who taught the student before, and I am learning a lot from them.

Discrepant Cases

After analyzing the data, two discrepant cases were found. The first discrepant case was related to student misdiagnosis. Participant 9 explained, “There is no database approach to identifying students with learning disabilities. I think that international schools' approach to diagnosing and supporting students with disabilities needs to be elevated to incorporate an international mindset.” The participant further explained that students with language deficiencies are often misdiagnosed as having a learning disability and said that the same observation was trend was made in other schools. The participant said that when you teach in an English-speaking school in a country where English is not the official language, you often have many students who transfer from local public schools where they were learning in a different language. Participant 9 continued to explain that these students are sometimes labeled as having a learning disability when the student is struggling because of a language deficiency. Participant 9 suggested that “maybe the school can find a way to give students the entrance test in both English and Mandarin or have the Chinese teacher work with the students to help with translations.”

The second discrepant case was related to administrators' response to professional development. Participant 6 mentioned, “I think administrators are not emphasizing professional development for students with learning disabilities because there are only a few students with this problem. I do not know the actual numbers, but I would say on average there is probably only one or two students with learning disabilities in a class.” The participant continued to explain that if the school makes the decision to accept

students with disabilities, then they should also invest in the teachers to meet the needs of the students. To further elaborate the concern, Participant 6 said,

I think if you accept even one student who uses a wheelchair, then the school needs to build wheelchair ramps and have accessible classrooms and bathroom facilities; otherwise, do not accept the student. In the same way, if they accept students with learning disabilities, and are collecting the school fees, then they are required to provide the service to the students, and in this case, it is training for the teachers.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were all addressed in this study. This section discusses how evidence of trustworthiness was implemented in this study. There were no adjustments to any of the strategies presented in Chapter 3.

Credibility

Credibility was established in this research in several ways. First, all the participants eagerly volunteered to participate in the interview, and they were willing to share their honest opinions during the interview. Patton (2015) advised qualitative researchers to invest time at the research site and with participants to encourage more genuine dialogue and candidness during interviews. Since I am an employee at the site and I have some degree of relationship with the participants, it created an advantage in the area of credibility. However, as a researcher, I was cognizant of all potential personal or participant biases during data collection and ensured that the process was professionally executed.

Credibility was also established through saturation. According to Creswell (2018), saturation occurs when participants begin to repeat the same comments or opinions, and there are no new insights. Since the interviews were conducted over a short timeframe and the transcripts were read after each interview, it was easy to recognize saturation when the feedback received from respondents during the interview became relatively repetitive.

Finally, member checks were done to solicit feedback from the participants based on the interview. After each interview, a summary of the transcript was sent to the interviewee for them to check for accuracy and correct presentation of what was discussed during the interview. All the participants who returned the transcripts reported that the transcripts accurately represented what they intended to say.

Transferability

Transferability can be achieved from small samples drawn using purposeful sampling of participants who can provide information-rich data (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Even though the sample size was small, a broad perspective of teachers within the site was gained because participants represented K-12 teachers from each section of the school (Elementary, Middle, and High school). In addition, all questions asked during the interview were open-ended to solicit detailed responses from participants. The questions were carefully crafted and reviewed before the interview, and each interview was recorded and transcribed to provide detailed and thick descriptions of what the participants shared.

Dependability and Confirmability

An audit trail was used to guarantee the dependability of the study by ensuring that the results presented were consistent with the data collected. Detailed descriptions of the sampling procedures, the data collection process, the coding techniques, and the inductive thematic analysis process used to determine the findings and interpret the results were provided. In addition, I did a data audit to ensure that the data collection procedures were consistent with what was planned. The data audit revealed that there were minimal deviations from the plan. In addition, the transcripts were read multiple times to determine if the interview script was followed precisely. The audit also proved that the interviews followed the guide, except for follow-up questions guided by the discussions. Therefore, the possibility of bias and distortions was minimal.

Summary

This research addressed one research question: What are the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms? After organizing and analyzing the data collected from the interviews, it was evident that participants believe that students with learning disabilities positively impact their classroom. Teachers feel that inclusive classrooms provide diversity, allow for an authentic experience that prepares all students for the real world, and create a culture of acceptance and respect. However, they have not received adequate support and professional development to prepare them to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Teachers prefer group professional

development sessions with a facilitator and they need those sessions to focus on teaching strategies that can be applied to their lessons. These sessions would make it easier for teachers to manage the limited time they have to manage the demands of teaching students with disabilities alongside their regular peers in mainstream classrooms.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings from the data analysis to answer the research question. These findings are discussed in relation to the literature review conducted in Chapter 2 and Bandura's social cognitive theory, which is the conceptual framework of the research. Limitations, recommendations, and implications are described and discussed based on the findings of the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

International educational institutions have aligned themselves with the worldwide endeavor to embrace inclusive educational methodologies in catering to the needs of students with disabilities (Nouf et al., 2020). Approximately 92.69% of international schools have affirmed their commitment to inclusive practices, with 92.20% of these schools further confirming their enrollment of students with disabilities or specific disorders (ISC Research, 2020). According to Cooc (2019), it is evident that teacher professional development and training hold a pivotal significance in providing high-quality education for students with disabilities. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the realm of teacher professional development pertaining to disability inclusion remains an inadequately explored area within the scholarly discourse (Ahmed et al., 2021; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Consequently, it becomes imperative to gain insights into the way educators perceive their opportunities for professional growth and to identify specific domains within which more precise and targeted professional development is required (Cooc, 2019). Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The study was conducted using a basic qualitative research design. A basic qualitative research design is used to investigate participants' subjective opinions, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). I collected all the data from a single site using semistructured interviews.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings from the data analysis to answer the research question. These findings are discussed in relation to the literature review conducted in Chapter 2 and Bandura's social cognitive theory, which is the conceptual framework of the research. Limitations, recommendations, and implications are also described and discussed based on the findings of the research.

Key Findings

The findings from the research revealed that teachers believe in mainstreaming students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. However, it was found that they have limited professional development training to meet the needs of these students. To better support students with learning disabilities, teachers prefer small group professional development sessions with a trained facilitator. Teachers need professional development sessions to focus on teaching strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to support students with learning disabilities.

Interpretation of the Findings

The analysis of participants' transcripts from the interviews revealed four themes that form the basis of the findings for this research. The first theme shows teachers' beliefs on inclusion. The findings from the data analysis revealed that teachers believe students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms provide a positive impact on the learning environment. All nine interview participants expressed the different benefits of having students with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Even though teachers talked about some of the challenges they face, they all have a positive attitude towards teaching these students.

The second theme highlighted that teachers have limited or no professional development training to teach students with learning disabilities. Teachers also explained that when they do receive some form of professional development related to students with disabilities, it happens maybe at the beginning of the year, and it is often not revisited.

The third theme emphasized teachers' preference for grouped or school-wide professional development with a trained facilitator. During the interview, participants explained that each teacher is given a \$750 yearly allowance for professional development. If the entire sum is not used in a year, \$250 is rolled over to the following year, and they would have a maximum of \$1,000 for their professional development allowance. During the discussion about types of professional development, teachers explained that the allowance is insufficient because they often must travel outside the country to access in-person professional development opportunities, and the cost is usually above the allowance provided.

The fourth theme focused on professional development content that teachers need to support students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Teachers said they need professional development that focuses on teaching strategies that would help them support students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Learning about new strategies and how they can be implemented in the classroom can benefit all students in mainstream classrooms.

The findings of this study were interpreted in relation to the literature review and the conceptual framework of the research. The literature review was discussed in relation

to international schools, professional development, and mainstreaming students. The conceptual framework was grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory which focuses on the idea that the level of knowledge and beliefs determine how a person feels, thinks, and behaves (see Bandura, 1993).

Literature Review

Teachers benefit from being active participants in identifying and designing the professional development that is beneficial to them (Akcaoglu et al., 2023; Chitiyo et al., 2019a; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Kurth et al., 2021). According to Chitiyo et al. (2019a), teachers were more motivated and committed to professional development by being part of the process of identifying what they felt was beneficial to them. The findings from the research show that teachers prefer grouped professional development sessions.

Participants in the research talked about having conversations, being able to talk through ideas, sharing success stories and experiences, and learning from each other during group sessions. These findings are consistent with the findings found in the literature review. Teachers prefer professional development opportunities where they can collaborate in teams and learn with their colleagues in the same environment (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021; Meyer et al., 2022; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021).

Most teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms because they lack skills and adequate training (Chitiyo et al., 2019b; Johnstone, 2020; Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Asiri (2020) found that more than 80% of teachers indicated that they needed immediate professional development in inclusive education through training, seminars, and workshops. These findings were also supported

by Sumayang et al. (2022), who highlighted the needs of teachers related to the lack of training and support from the administration. The findings from the research revealed that teachers need more support to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Eight of the nine participants talked about not feeling supported and not receiving adequate guidance and training. Evidence from the literature review further found that for teachers to be able to teach students with disabilities competently, it is necessary for them to have practical and effective professional development programs that emphasize educational growth and improvement of their instructional practices (see Ali, 2020; Horan & Merrigan, 2019).

One of the themes from the research addressed teachers' need for more professional development related to teaching strategies to help them better support students with disabilities. Teachers also expressed the need not just to be provided with a list of strategies but also to spend time exploring how those strategies can be implemented in the classroom, which was mentioned as more important. Evidence from the literature review supports these findings. The literature review revealed that teachers who teach students with disabilities stress the importance of knowing effective instructional strategies and making curriculum adaptations to meet student needs (see Ali, 2020; Finkelstein et al., 2021; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021).

The next finding was related to professional development frequency. When discussing professional development, all participants mentioned that they receive limited or no professional development opportunities for teaching students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. They further explained that if they do receive

some professional development, it is not consistent. Many participants gave examples of professional development they participated in at the beginning of the school year, but it was not revisited or discussed. The findings from the literature review also supported these discussions. Consistency is important for professional development to be effective (Collins, 2019; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Johnstone, 2020; Kurth et al., 2021). Providing teachers with one-off professional development programs would not significantly impact their instructional capabilities (Collins, 2019; Henry & Namhla, 2020; Li et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to provide regular follow-up sessions to ensure the success of teachers (Collins, 2019; Li et al., 2022).

Inclusive education increases sensitivity, empathy, social development, and students' academic achievement (Mubarak, 2022; Sumayang et al., 2022). Teachers' attitude toward inclusion is generally positive. However, it must be noted that attitude is dependent on teachers' view or interpretation of inclusion and the amount of training they have in this area (Hutchinson & Campbell, 2022; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Sumayang et al., 2022). In a study conducted with 232 teachers, 60% supported the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Chitiyo et al., 2019a). Even though this research has a significantly smaller sample size, it should be noted that 100% of the participants support inclusion. The findings from the research show that teachers believe that students with learning disabilities have a positive impact on the learning environment. Results from the analysis revealed that teachers believe inclusion provides opportunities for deeper learning, a sense of empathy among students, a more authentic experience related to real life, and a culture of acceptance and respect.

Teachers' attitudes and confidence could be improved through empowerment with professional development programs and courses related to instructional practices for addressing diverse student learning needs (Drigas & Mitsea, 2021; Lacruz-Pérez et al., 2021; Mubarak, 2022; Stavroussi et al., 2021). The findings from the literature directly support what teachers said during the interview. Teachers believe that they would do a better job at supporting students if they received more support and training on how to better meet students' needs.

Conceptual Framework

The study was grounded in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. According to the theory, people make decisions and changes to how they function based on their beliefs about their capabilities to control themselves and events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1993). Through Bandura's self-regulatory mechanisms, people could change their actions based on their perceptions. The theory supports the findings from this research because it was found that teachers believe in mainstreaming students with learning disabilities. However, teachers perceive the professional development training to support them as limited or nonexistent. Eight of the nine participants talked about not feeling supported and not receiving adequate guidance to effectively meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Teachers believe that if they receive training, they could increase their effectiveness and improve their capabilities. These findings support Bandura's theory because teachers' lack of training makes them feel somewhat incompetent.

What people believe about their competencies is related to their level of performance (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, it was important to understand teachers' perceptions of the professional development they are receiving. Teachers who believe they are not capable of meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms placed more emphasis on the need for more support and training. Participants with special education certification felt more competent to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, and they expressed less need for training and support.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study was that the interviews were conducted over a 9-day period. In retrospect, I could have taken more time between interviews to conduct a more detailed analysis before the other interviews. The detailed analysis between interviews would have given me more ideas for follow-up questions during the interviews.

The second limitation was that I did not consider several aspects of the literature review when designing the questions. For instance, the literature review revealed a link between professional development needs and school leadership (Cockpim & Somprach, 2020; Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020; MacLeod, 2020). Teachers who teach students with disabilities in schools with stronger leadership require less professional development than those who teach in schools with weak leadership (Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020). Since all participants taught in other international schools, questions could have been included to determine teachers' perspectives of professional development in relation to school leadership.

The third limitation is that more questions could have been included to learn more about teachers' professional development experiences in other international schools in different countries. In the literature review I found that teacher professional development needs differ within schools and countries (see Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020; Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Cooc (2019) suggested that professional development should be examined based on the context of the school and the needs of teachers. Even though some participants shared experiences from other schools, this was not directly explored through the interview.

Another limitation of the study addressed in Chapter 1 was the small sample size, which could have limited the range of opinions and ideas. However, Percy et al. (2015) explained that if the selected sample directly represents the target population or can provide first-hand information about the study topic, the findings can be reliable and applicable outside the sample itself. Since all participants in the interview were directly involved in teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms, they provided first-hand information. Further, interviews were conducted until saturation was achieved.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future studies that can be made to researchers who may wish to replicate this study or a similar study. Firstly, future researchers could examine the link between professional development needs and school leadership. Evidence from the literature review showed a link between professional development needs and school leadership (see Cockpim & Somprach, 2020; Cooc, 2019;

DeMatthews et al., 2020; MacLeod, 2020). Teachers who teach students with disabilities in schools with stronger leadership require less professional development than those who teach in schools with weak leadership (Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020). Strong leadership can be explored in the context of the number of years an international school leader has served in the position at the same school. Rey et al. (2020) noted that international school faculty is considered to be part of the globally mobile workforce. As a result of their mobility and the lack of consistency with policies and practices within schools, international school leaders sometimes struggle to understand their leadership role within their particular international school setting (Kelly, 2022; Koini et al., 2022; Machin, 2019). Future researchers could consider schools with consistent leadership and schools with transient leadership to compare teachers' professional development perspectives. Parameters can be set to determine transient or consistent leadership. For example, consistent leadership can be defined as more than five years in the position, and less than five years can be considered transient.

Another recommendation is to explore teachers' perspectives of professional development based on country. Finding from the literature review found that teacher professional development needs differ within schools and countries (see Cooc, 2019; DeMatthews et al., 2020; Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Even though this might be harder to achieve, it would be interesting to know if teachers in certain countries have similar perceptions of professional development for students with learning disabilities.

There are different definitions of inclusive education and practices related to students with disabilities, and each is implemented differently (Holmqvist & Lelinge,

2021; Hutchinson & Campbell, 2022). Buli-Holmberg et al. (2022) and Cooc (2019) noted that the disparity in inclusion could result from differences in the country's history and its position on disability and inclusion. Future research could be conducted to determine teachers' perspectives of professional development based on how inclusion is implemented and the types of inclusive practices adopted by different schools or in different countries.

While conducting the data analysis for this research, one participant talked about students being misdiagnosed. That participant explained that many English Language Learners are considered to have learning disabilities, but in fact, they only have language deficiencies. In other cases, students are believed to have learning disabilities, but their parents refuse to have them tested because having a disability is not culturally accepted in that country. Therefore, future researchers can examine teachers' perspective of professional development based on whether they teach students who have been diagnosed with having a learning disability or if the students are just given the label of having a learning disability without any documentation or diagnosis.

Implications

This study can affect positive social change for teachers, administrators, and students with disabilities in international school settings. The findings from this study revealed that teachers believe they have limited or no professional development and that when they do receive training, it is often not continuous. It is also evident that teachers are interested in similar professional development content of teaching strategies. Teachers also indicated that their professional development allowance is often

insufficient to fund individual professional development opportunities. Since teachers reported the need for more group professional development, they can work together to pool their professional development funds to invite a specialist who can train them in the area of implementation of teaching strategies.

During the interview, participants discussed the benefits of sharing ideas, experiences, and stories with colleagues. Teachers can use common planning time to engage in these types of discussions, which could add to their knowledge and better help them meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Teachers who have taught the students before can share what they have done, and teachers currently teaching them can also share what strategies are working. Teachers can also come together to share their concerns with their department leaders, principals, and the director of the school to make a stronger call for support. Together, they can get more attention from the administration and get the type of support they need to do their jobs effectively.

Findings from the literature review determined that a professional development framework should be developed to provide teachers with adequate knowledge of teaching methods, individualized instruction, classroom management, evaluation methods, research, and collaboration (see Ali, 2020; Eroglu & Donmus Kaya, 2021; Sancar et al., 2021). For administrators, the results of this study can help them better understand the professional development needs of teachers. As an administrative team, they can work together with teachers to develop a professional development framework. Administrators can also collaborate with other international schools in the country to provide grouped

professional development sessions where teachers can collaborate with professionals outside the school. It is important to include teachers in this process for it to be successful. Teachers benefit from being active participants in identifying and designing the professional development that is beneficial to them (Akcaoglu et al., 2023; Chitiyo et al., 2019a; Horan & Merrigan, 2019; Kurth et al., 2021). That framework should be approved by the school board so that it can be implemented even if there is a change in leadership.

As teachers work together to create opportunities for themselves, and as administrators create opportunities to collaborate with teachers to design a professional development framework, students with learning disabilities will benefit from increased teacher expertise. When teachers are well-trained, students with learning disabilities will be able to learn more and reach higher academic standards.

Finally, as the school positions itself as an institution that is well-trained to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, it can create opportunities for more students to be enrolled to benefit from that education. Parents who are part of the globally mobile workforce and have children with learning disabilities will be more motivated to send their children to a school with a proactive approach to teacher training for inclusion. Elite host country families who have students with learning disabilities would also be more interested in schools with an active approach to preparing teachers to meet the needs of these students.

Implication A: More Support is Needed to Meet the Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities

An implication that emerged in relation to Theme 2 is that more support is needed to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. Eight of the nine participants shared the view of not feeling supported and not receiving adequate guidance to effectively meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. Participant 6 said,

I'm not getting a tremendous amount of support. If I have a particular challenge, issue, or question, I know who I should email and ask about it. But I feel like things aren't done proactively. It's more like any support I get will be in response to a particular issue that I have.

Another participant further explained that,

Every teacher uses their own strategies or ideas to support students, but there is often not a common approach. When things are functioning as they're supposed to at this school, you'll have a meeting early in the year to discuss these students who the learning support teacher flags. They may share IEPs and learning plans or data about the students and discuss plans to support the students in the classroom. When you're in a room with other people who have taught the student, you get valuable tidbits about things you can implement. But for me, this is more practical support rather than theoretical. It's more like this student has had trouble with X, so we did Y, but it is not a holistic approach.

On the other hand, one of the participants in a different division mentioned that “The learning support team is excellent and very involved. I feel confident going to them with my concerns about a particular student, having my voice heard, and feeling empowered to make decisions.” Each division has a different learning support team, so the difference in views could reflect how support is given by the team within their divisions.

Implication B: The Professional Development Budget Needs Expansion

During the interview, all participants mentioned that the current school provides a yearly \$750 professional development budget or allowance to teachers, of which \$250 can be rolled over to the next year if not utilized. Participants explained that to access the professional development allowance, teachers must first identify a professional development then submit a request to attend. The request should include the content and purpose of the professional development and how it would impact the students and learning in the classroom. If approved, the school would pay for the professional development, or the teacher can pay and then be reimbursed by the school. Participants also explained that sometimes the curriculum coordinator or division leader would suggest professional development opportunities for teachers, and they can register if they are interested.

However, six of the nine participants believe that the professional development budget is insufficient compared to the cost of accessing professional development. According to Participant 1, “The amount of the annual stipend is low. If you're attending an in-person professional development conference, you'll generally have to pay out of

pocket because the professional development fund cannot cover registration, accommodation, and flight.”

One participant shared that,

Earlier this year, I considered using my professional development budget to attend an EARCOS conference in Bangkok, but the \$750 was not enough. I could have added some of my personal funds, but I canceled instead. Next year, the money will roll over, and I will have \$1,000, so I will most likely attend next year.

Implication C: The Time to Manage the Demands of Teaching Students with Disabilities Alongside their Regular Peers in Mainstream Classrooms Needs to be Increased

Implication C was developed because a notable amount of participants talked about time management during the interview. Participants discussed time management in relation to teaching strategies. When Participant 1 was discussing the challenges faced with having students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, it was stated “I think it adds another level of complexity with the three or four students that had significant needs last year. Sometimes I just don't have the time to develop a modified curriculum that will address what students need most.”

When addressing some of the challenges experienced by having students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms, Participant 7 said, “One of my major challenges is not having clear goals, so I don't know what I'm aiming for with my students.” The participant further explained that most teachers teach to the middle because of the limited time available to plan. “We teach to the middle because that's who

we will reach the most. There is not enough time to address student's needs consistently and in a manner that you would expect to get positive results for their future achievement.”

Participant 6 said that

We need support at this school because you'll run out of hours to plan for inclusive classes. In this school, there's just one or two kids per class with disabilities, so the numbers are low. But these students need a lot of help accessing the curriculum, and we need to create that access, but it just takes a lot of time on our part sometimes.

However, another participant shared a slightly different view concerning time.

I would say having the time or at least using my time productively and being respectful of my time is important. With over 20 students in my class, it takes a lot to plan lessons that are engaging but also that address the standards or the academia that I need to address within that day. So, it is hard for me when I am asked to use the limited time I have to do things outside my job description because I need every bit of time I have.

Conclusion

Data results showed that while teachers generally believe that students with learning disabilities make a positive impact on the learning environment, the support to teach students with learning disabilities was insufficient. Professional development opportunities to support teachers to teach students with learning disabilities were limited or nonexistent. When teachers were provided some limited professional development

opportunities, it was often inconsistent, singular, and nonsequential. Teachers prefer group professional development training focused on implementing teaching strategies to best support students with learning disabilities in their mainstream classrooms.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Introduction questions

1. What is your current position at the school?
2. How long have you been teaching in international schools?
3. Within this time, how many years have you taught students with learning disabilities in your mainstream classroom?
4. How many international schools have you taught in?
5. Do you have any special education certification? If yes, can you please provide details?

Questions related to the research

1. Does your school provide professional development opportunities to teachers who teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms? If so, please describe the types of professional development that are available.
2. What do you think about the professional development provided to help you support students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?
3. What professional development have you participated in related to teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?

Possible follow-up:

- a) What was the most helpful/useful professional development session you attended? What aspects of this/these professional development experience(s) made it significant?

- b) What was the least helpful/useful professional development session you attended? Why was this/these experience(s) not helpful?
 - c) Given an opportunity, what would you change about those experiences to better align with your needs and interests?
4. How has the professional development that you have received affected how you teach students with learning disabilities in your mainstream classroom?
 5. What are some professional developments that you think would help you support students with learning disabilities in your mainstream classrooms?
 6. What role does professional development play in preparing you to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?
 7. How does having students with learning disabilities impact your classroom?
 8. What challenges do you face when teaching students with learning disabilities in your mainstream classroom?
 9. Please describe the procedure to access professional development opportunities in international schools where you have worked? (Please do not mention the name of the school)
 10. Do you believe the current professional development model in your school prepares you to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in your classroom? Why or why not?
 11. What suggestions do you have for improving professional development in your school to help prepare teachers to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?

12. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

Appendix B: Permission Letter to Director

Dear International School Director:

I am in the process of completing my doctoral degree at Walden University. To this end, I am seeking your permission to speak to the staff for 15 minutes at our weekly meeting on Wednesday. The purpose of the presentation would be to describe my research and invite teachers with experience teaching students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms to participate in an interview. Following the presentation, I would also like to send recruitment letters to the teachers who fit the criterion for my study. The recruitment letter will provide the information I presented in the presentation, along with details of the requirements for participation. Teacher participation is voluntary and will require one 45 to 60 minute interview. All responses shared with this researcher will be recorded, and all identifiable information, such as names of teachers or the school, will be replaced with pseudonyms.

Thank you for your time and consideration in allowing me to make the presentation to the staff and send the recruitment letters to teachers. If you have additional questions about any aspect of this research project, please do not hesitate to call or email me.

Respectfully,

Niocie Browne

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Dear Teachers,

I am completing my doctoral degree at Walden University and would like to invite you to participate in my study. My research aims to explore the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms. I will conduct one-on-one interviews to gather data from teachers to answer the research question: "What are the perspectives of K-12 teachers in an English-speaking international school in Taiwan on the professional development to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms?"

To participate in the interview, you must currently teach or have taught students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms in an international school for at least two years. If you meet the requirement and would like to volunteer to participate in a 45 to 60 minute interview, kindly email me at the email address below. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed, but all identifiable information, such as your name or the school's name, will be replaced with pseudonyms to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

If you agree to participate, I will email you a consent form explaining your rights as a participant in the study. I will also contact you to provide more information about the one-on-one interview process and to arrange a suitable time and location. Please feel free to email or call me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Niocie Browne