

Fostering Creativity of Learners in Special Need Education (SNED) Program: Glimpse of Teachers' Approaches

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Abstract: This research explored strategies of teachers of educators to enhance the creativity of learners within the Special Needs Education (SNED) program. The narratives provided insight into both the strategies utilized and the challenges faced by teachers in nurturing creativity among learners in this program. A total of seven (7) teachers were selected as participants, all of whom worked with students with special needs. Data collection for this phenomenological study involved conducting in-depth interviews with participants. Thematic content analysis revealed that the strategies adopted by teachers included the following: Art-based learning approach and manipulative approach. The challenges identified in fostering creativity among learners in the SNED program encompassed issues such as temper tantrums and in-denial parents/parental issues. The insights derived from the findings suggested the necessity for behavior management training for special education (SPED) learners and the promotion of parental involvement in school. Ultimately, this study aimed to provide valuable insights into the strategies and challenges that teachers employed in the SNED program, contributing significant knowledge to enhance the quality of education in schools.

Keywords: *Fostering Creativity, Learners, Glimpse, Teachers' Approaches.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Fostering creativity in learners under the Special Needs Education (SNED) program is a vital aspect of ensuring inclusive and adaptive education. Teachers play a pivotal role in utilizing innovative approaches to nurture the creative potential of learners with diverse abilities. This study aims to explore the strategies employed by educators to promote creativity and holistic growth among learners in the SNED program.

The Deron School (2022) highlights the importance of Special Needs Programs in schools, which are designed to provide quality education to students with behavioral, learning, and physical disabilities. It points out the differences between special needs schools and traditional schools, emphasizing that traditional schools often lack sufficient funding, staff, and teacher experience to effectively support children with learning disabilities. In contrast, special needs schools customize their curriculum to address each child's unique needs, supported by an Individualized Education

Program (IEP) that outlines specific goals and strategies for the student's success.

Furthermore, OurKids (2023) describes the benefits and challenges of special needs schools and programs. While these schools provide tailored instruction, specialized support, and essential resources, they may also create issues such as lack of integration, difficulties transitioning to regular schools, and negative stigmas. The type of program plays a crucial role, with options ranging from dedicated special needs schools or classes to integrated or regular classes with varying levels of support. The choice of program depends on the student's needs: those requiring significant support may benefit from dedicated schools or classes, while those needing less support may thrive in integrated or resource-supported settings. Ultimately, special needs students require appropriate support, which can be delivered through various educational models based on their specific needs.

Meanwhile, the DepEd order no. 44 s. 2021 as cited in Salcedo and Chua (2022) aims to create a more inclusive

environment for all learners, including those with disabilities. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration among students, regardless of their differences, and integrating students with disabilities into mainstream or general education classes. The order advocates for identifying, accepting, and respecting these differences to ensure that all students can learn together in a welcoming setting. The paragraph also suggests that inclusion should begin in primary school and continue throughout the entire basic education curriculum for optimal results.

In fostering creativity of learners, Canva (2023) emphasizes the importance of fostering creativity in the classroom as part of students' daily activities. It explains that encouraging creativity can lead to long-term success by helping students improve self-expression and develop original ideas. Creative tasks are engaging, stimulating, and energizing, which can lead to better focus and overall satisfaction in learning. Fun activities, like incorporating music-related tasks, can effectively spark creativity and excitement in students of all ages.

Meanwhile, Curletto (2022) importance of creativity as a critical skill for success in school and life. Creativity enhances problem-solving, provides life satisfaction, and fosters a sense of purpose and enjoyment. However, modern children have fewer opportunities to develop creativity due to increased screen time, replacing traditional activities like outdoor play and imaginative games. Activities like watching TV, playing video games, or texting offer limited chances for creativity. To inspire creativity, children need creative role models, as learning about creative individuals helps them believe in limitless possibilities.

Moreover, Positive Action (2023) outlines several effective teaching strategies for students with special needs. Teachers should establish clear learning expectations by informing students about the lesson objectives and the time needed for each activity. Behavioral expectations should also be discussed, such as encouraging students to talk quietly during seatwork or raise their hands when they need assistance. Providing a schedule in advance is another important strategy, as it helps students stay aligned with the lesson plan, which may include reviewing previous lessons, group activities, and personal reading time. Additionally, teachers should be specific about the materials required for each lesson, such as crayons, scissors, or colored paper for art projects.

Additionally, Fikes (2023) suggests strategies for supporting special education students' academic and social growth. Differentiated instruction, multisensory learning, and technology are key tools to address diverse learning needs, while collaboration with parents provides valuable insights and support. Teachers can also enhance learning through classroom strategies like group setups, breaking tasks into

manageable steps, using alternative assessments, and implementing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for accessibility. These approaches aim to create an inclusive, structured environment tailored to students with special needs.

Overall, fostering creativity in learners within the Special Needs Education (SNED) program is crucial for ensuring inclusive and adaptive education. Innovative teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, multisensory learning, and the use of technology, are vital in addressing individual learning needs while promoting creativity and holistic growth. Programs like DepEd's SPED initiative emphasize individualized support through tailored curricula. By exploring on teachers' strategies and challenges, this study highlights the importance of fostering creativity to ensure that learners with exceptionalities achieve their full potential.

II. METHOD

This study explores the strategies of teachers in fostering creativity among learners enrolled in the Special Need Education (SNED) program. By focusing on the unique needs, abilities, and learning styles of students with special needs, the research aims to identify how teachers create and maintain effective learning environments that nurture creativity and innovation. A qualitative phenomenological research design is employed to delve into the lived experiences of teachers, providing a deeper understanding of their approaches, challenges, and adaptations in promoting creativity within the context of the SNED program.

Phenomenology, as a research methodology, centers on understanding the shared experiences of educators as they endeavor to foster creativity among learners in the Special Need Education (SNED) program. It delves into the different strategies and challenges encountered in developing the creativity of learners in SNED program. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), referencing Flood (2010), the phenomenological approach in qualitative research is particularly effective in uncovering the essence of lived experiences. This approach provides deeper insights into how teachers' strategies for promoting creativity resonate with both their personal perspectives and the developmental needs of their students, uncovering the profound meanings behind their commitment to enhancing creativity in special education contexts.

In this phenomenological study, seven (7) teacher-participants who foster creativity among learners enrolled in the Special Need Education (SNED) program in a public school in the Matina District of Davao City were selected as participants. The researcher used in-depth interviews as the primary method for data collection, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the teachers' lived experiences in nurturing creativity within the context of special education.

On the nature of in-depth interviews, Fontana and Frey (2000) highlight that these interviews can be structured or flexible, making them particularly useful for qualitative studies. In the context of this research, in-depth interviews were employed to explore how teachers develop and implement strategies to foster creativity among learners in the Special Need Education (SNED) program. The interviews provided an opportunity to examine the complex teaching approaches used to nurture creativity and the challenges in implementing the strategies.

Moreover, this study utilizes purposive sampling to carefully select participants, all of whom are teachers involved in the Special Need Education (SNED) program in public schools within the Matina District of the Davao City Division. This sampling approach is crucial for exploring the effective strategies these teachers employ in fostering creativity among learners with special needs and delivering high-quality, inclusive education. As established by Chun et al. (2019) and cited in Mwita (2022), purposive sampling is particularly beneficial for gathering insights from individuals with extensive knowledge of the subject matter. In this study, participants are purposefully chosen based on their substantial experience of over three years in teaching within the SNED program, ensuring a rich and informed perspective on fostering creativity in special education.

Further, in this study, I adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the research process. I obtained informed consent from all participants, ensuring they fully understood the study's purpose, the focus on fostering creativity in the Special Need Education (SNED) program, and their right to ask questions at any time. Participants also gave permission for me to record conversations, with the assurance that all information would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes. I focused on key ethical principles such as respect for individuals, doing good, fairness, consent, and confidentiality, to maintain the study's integrity and build trust with the teachers involved in the SNED program.

As a qualified researcher, my role involves the careful formulation of research inquiries, conducting in-depth interviews with teachers in the Special Need Education (SNED) program, and analyzing the data to uncover the strategies they employ in fostering creativity among learners with special needs. Using the method outlined by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and cited in Vinitha (2019), I will categorize and code the participants' responses, drawing out underlying meanings across various themes. This process will allow for a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences, particularly in relation to the challenges and strategies they use to nurture creativity in students with special needs. Ultimately, this method will provide rich, nuanced insights that contribute to the study's goal of enhancing creative learning within the SNED program.

Furthermore, the data analysis is conducted through Thematic Content Analysis (TCA), as described by King (2004) and referenced in Dawadi (2020), to extract meaningful themes that capture the strategies and challenges experienced by teachers in the Special Need Education (SNED) program. This process involves carefully reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews to identify significant patterns that reflect the teachers' narratives regarding their approaches to fostering creativity among learners with special needs. Following the approach outlined by O'Connor and Gibson (2003), the data is organized, categorized, and synthesized into overarching themes, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. The final presentation of the results is structured to offer clear and coherent insights that contribute to understanding how teachers adapt their strategies to nurture creativity and address the diverse needs of learners in the SNED program.

To establish credibility and validity of the research findings, environmental triangulation was employed. By collecting data from various school environments within the Special Need Education (SNED) program, the study compared and integrated insights from different settings, enhancing the robustness of the results. This approach, as highlighted by Vivek (2023), helped strengthen the reliability of the qualitative outcomes by incorporating diverse contexts, reflecting the varied experiences of teachers in fostering creativity among learners with special needs. The use of environmental triangulation ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the strategies and challenges teachers faced in creating inclusive and creative learning environments in the SNED program.

Overall, by utilizing a phenomenological approach, the research delved into the lived experiences of teachers to understand their strategies, challenges, and adaptations in promoting creativity within the context of special education. Through in-depth interviews with seven teacher-participants, the study uncovered insights into the effective strategies and challenges teachers faced in fostering creativity in SNED classrooms. The findings were analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis and environmental triangulation to ensure validity, offering a comprehensive understanding of how teachers created inclusive and creative learning environments for learners with special needs.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following section presents the findings of this study, which delved into the strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity among learners enrolled in the Special Need Education (SNED) program. Through thematic content analysis of the collected data, key themes emerged, highlighting the approaches and practices teachers utilized to nurture creativity while addressing the unique needs, abilities, and learning styles of students with special needs. These

themes and findings provide valuable insights into the strategies that teachers employed to create inclusive and innovative learning environments within the SNED program. The detailed themes and findings on fostering creativity in the SNED program are as follows:

➤ *Art-Based Learning Approach.*

Art-based learning approach refers to the deliberate application of artistic processes, experiences, and talents as teaching aids in non-artistic fields and subjects. The participants observed that art-based learning strategy is effective and useful in fostering the creativity of SNED learners. In support, Education Alternatives (2021) emphasizes the significant benefits of art for all students, particularly for those with special needs. It fosters creative expression, allowing students to relax, think differently, and build independence, confidence, and self-esteem. It provides an inclusive platform where students, regardless of their abilities, can discover hidden talents and excel, even if they struggle in academics.

➤ *Manipulative Approach.*

Another theme that emerged on the strategies of teachers in fostering the creativity of learners in Special Need Education (SNED) program is the manipulative approach. The participants make it evident that the manipulative approach is a helpful strategy for showcasing students' inventiveness when completing their task. Bouck et. al (2021) explicates that manipulative-based instructional sequences are effective teaching practices for students with disabilities. These sequences are classified as either evidence-based (backed by substantial high-quality research) or research-based (supported by some positive findings). Both concrete (physical) and virtual manipulative-based instructional methods have been shown to help students with disabilities acquire mathematical concepts. The paragraph highlights virtual manipulative-based approaches, such as the Virtual-Representational-Abstract (VRA), Virtual-Abstract (VA), and Virtual-Representational (VR) sequences, which have gained prominence with technological advancements, allowing their use on devices like computers, tablets, and mobile devices.

Meanwhile, teachers in the Special Need Education (SNED) program encounter significant challenges in fostering creativity among learners with diverse abilities and needs. Addressing the varied learning styles, abilities, and developmental differences of students with special needs requires a multifaceted approach, often making the task particularly demanding. The participating teachers shared their experiences, providing valuable insights into the difficulties they face in creating inclusive and creativity-driven learning environments. These challenges underscore the complex nature of nurturing creativity while ensuring the individual needs of learners in the SNED program are met. The specific themes that highlight the obstacles teachers encounter in their efforts to cultivate creativity and provide meaningful

educational experiences for learners with special needs are as follows:

➤ *Temper Tantrums.*

Based on the narratives of the participants, one of the challenges in fostering the creativity of learners in SNED program is the Temper Tantrums. The participants evidently experienced that in fostering creativity to SNED learners there are problems encountered especially when they have temper tantrums while doing some activities. Schilling (2022) who explained that temper tantrums range from whining and crying to screaming, kicking, hitting, and breath-holding spells. Some kids may have tantrums often, and others have them rarely. Additionally, Innovative Behavior Options (2019) highlights that tantrums can be challenging and disruptive for both parents and children, particularly when they occur in public. It acknowledges that even experienced parents of children with special needs may feel frustrated when a tantrum arises. However, by using appropriate behavior-correcting strategies help both the parent and child manage and navigate the situation effectively.

➤ *In-Denial Parents/Parental Issues.*

Another challenge that the participants encountered in the challenges on fostering the creativity of learners in SNED program is the in-denial Parents/parental issues. Discussing the concept of denial in the context of parents' reactions to their child's disability, Logsdon (2022) elucidates that some parents refuse to acknowledge their child's disability and make excuses for their child's academic struggles. Instead of accepting the disability, they might blame teachers, a spouse, or accuse the child of being lazy, while also rejecting the idea of special education services being provided.

Consequently, this study provided valuable insights to support teachers in fostering the creativity of learners in the Special Need Education (SNED) program. The findings highlighted key strategies and challenges faced by teacher-participants in nurturing creative skills among learners in the classroom. The key insights such as Attend behavior management training for SPED learners and Encourage parental involvement in school, focus on gaining additional support to effectively.

Overall, this study provided valuable insights into the strategies teachers use to foster creativity in Special Needs Education (SNED) classrooms, highlighting the effectiveness of art-based learning and manipulative approaches. Art-based learning was found to help students expressed creativity and build confidence, while manipulative approaches, including physical and virtual methods, effectively supported concept acquisition and creative expression. Despite these positive strategies, teachers faced challenges such as managing temper tantrums and parental denial of disabilities, which complicated the task of creating inclusive learning environments. The study emphasized the need for behavior management training for

SPED learners and greater parental involvement to enhance support for fostering creativity in SNED classrooms.

The findings suggest that incorporating art-based and manipulative approaches can effectively foster creativity in SNED learners, while also highlighting the need for targeted behavior management strategies. Furthermore, encouraging parental involvement and addressing issues of denial can enhance the overall learning experience and creativity development in special education settings.

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