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# Challenges of Non-SPED Teachers in Handling Students with Special Needs during the Pandemic

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A B S T R A C T

The emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in December 2019, has impacted the economy, livelihood, physical and mental well-being of people worldwide, and most especially the educational system. This study identified the challenges of Non-SPED teachers in handling students with special needs during the pandemic. The researchers utilized a qualitative research. Purposeful sampling was used to select the informants. Six Non-Special Education teacher were considered: three from elementary school and three from high school, from both public and private schools with a variety of specializations. This study used a duly-validated researcher-made interview questionnaire. There were three themes formed from the results of the interview. These themes were about the challenges experienced by Non-SPED teachers in handling students with special needs during the pandemic in the area of (1) Instruction, (2) preparation, and, (3) strategies. There were three significant categories identified relating to the challenges of Non- SPED teachers in terms of instruction namely (1) Delivery of Instruction (2) Sudden Shift of Pedagogy in Education, and (3) Students' Attitude towards Learning.Challenges in preparation included (1) Providing Suitable Tasks Based On Students' Capacities (2) Teaching Approaches, and (3) Time-constraint. Lastly, challenges in strategies were (1) Attending Students' Needs, (2) Providing Feedback, and (3) Constant Communication. This shows that Non-SPED teachers handling students with special needs during the pandemic found it challenging in guiding students in the area of instruction because of distance learning and preparation due to limited knowledge and time. So, they devised strategies to fulfill the needs of the students.

Keywords:Challengers of Non-SPED Teachers, Pandemic, Student with Special Needs

## INTRODUCTION

The effects of the pandemic have received considerable attention for a significant shift in the educational system. We shifted from the traditional classroom learning approach toward today's technology learning methods. During this pandemic, teachers' tasks and responsibilities have expanded. They strived to provide their students with a high-quality education (Special Education Degree, 2022). Teachers have had to reconsider their teaching skills and capabilities as a result of this unexpected combination of education and technology (Medium.com, 2021). Learners are accustomed to learning in a classroom setting, with teachers delivering lessons face-to-face. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, learners are forced to stay at home and prepare lessons with the help of their learning facilitators. The changes that are currently happening have a direct impact on how the lesson is delivered (Canonizado, 2021).

The general features of the traditional role of teachers in a face-to-face classroom setting are widely known for detecting each child's particular requirements and fostering a healthy, motivating, and encouraging learning environment (Ramos, Toni Marie, 2022). They work with a wide range of children, from those who are physically fit to those who are physically disabled or sensory impaired to those who have speech difficulties or autism, and they typically have the following daily responsibilities: teaching a small group of students and individuals both inside and outside the classroom, developing and adapting individualized teaching methods that are appropriate for each of their students, collaborating with the Class Teacher and the Lead Teacher to improve the learning environment for the children by informing parents about their children's progress and making recommendations to improve the learning environment at home (Indeed.com, 2022). Communication in a virtual classroom is generally asynchronous and structured rather than instantaneous and organic, with much of it taking place via email or message boards.

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It was discovered that teachers confront challenges in the COVID-19 pandemic, including a lack of opportunity, network and internet use, learning planning, implementation, evaluation, and engagement with parents (Fauzi et al., 2020). The four components of problems experienced by teachers throughout the COVID-19 period were teacher, school, curriculum, and student (Mailizar et al., 2020). Teachers find distance education hard and don't have the choice but to the confront issues applied in the COVID-19 program, such as technical impediments, student conditioning, student involvement in education, and online education experience (Rasmitadila et al. 2020). Recent data, however, contradicts this viewpoint, demonstrating the benefits of online learning. Students can attend classes from any location they want with online education. It also enables schools to reach out to a larger network of students rather than being limited by geographical limits (Sharma, 2021). Online lectures can also be recorded, preserved, and shared for the students or teacher to view later. This allows students to access the instructional materials whenever it is convenient for them. As a result, online learning provides students with the flexibility of time and location in their education. Financial costs are reduced when students learn online. This is because online learning eliminates the costs of student transportation and food (Gautam, 2020).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the Challenges of Teachers in Handling Students during the Pandemic but little research was conducted on the challenges of Non-SPED Teachers in Handling Students with Special Needs during the Pandemic. The results of the research were conducted about the difficulties of teachers handling students but those are only applicable in the context of physically fit students thus, challenges occurred with Non- SPED teachers in dealing with students with special needs in an inclusive classroom in the new normal.

It's critical to recognize the problems that Non- SPED teachers confront as they continue to carry out their tasks during this pandemic at a time when teachers are making remarkable efforts to support students. They must also take care of their tasks to continue to fulfill their roles. The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges that Non- SPED teachers have while dealing with students with special needs during the pandemic. The outcomes of this study may also aid in the development and implementation of new ideas, activities, and techniques to improve instructional delivery. Finally, this research aims to assist educators, stakeholders, and policymakers in rethinking programs and policies that will promote achievement for all students in a distance learning setting while also creating a safe atmosphere for both the teacher and the students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researchers utilized a qualitative research design by using interview to identify the Challenges of Non-SPED teachers in handling students with special needs during the Pandemic. This research is based on the Scientific Management Theory (Frederick Winslow Taylor, 1911) that focuses on improving the efficiency of each individual in the organization.

### Informants

The informants for the study were chosen using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was described as the process of selecting a certain sample of people to participate in a study (Creswell, 2012). According to Patton (2015), the deliberate sampling strategy is a good framework for deciding who should be questioned.

Teachers from public and private schools in Iloilo City are among the informants. Six (6) teachers were interviewed. The informants were between 23-30 years old. Three (3) were teaching in the elementary and three (3) from high school withvariety of specializations. Pseudonyms were utilized for privacy and anonymity.

*Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of informants*

| INFORMANTS | LEVEL | TYPE OF INSTITUTION | AGE | MAJOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Melvin | Elementary | Private School | 29 | Filipino |
| Jovy | Elementary | Private School | 25 | Mother Tongue |
| Sofia | Elementary | Private School | 26 | Mathematics |
| Riza | High School | Public School | 24 | Social Studies |
| Joy | High School | Public School | 23 | English |
| Mae | High School | Public School | 24 | Science |

**Research Instrument**

This study used a duly-validated researcher-madeinterview questionnaire to identify the challenges faced by Non-SPED teachers in accommodating students with special needs in an inclusive classroom. The questionnaire was separated into two parts. Part 1, the information sheet, contains information about the informants, such as their name, the grade level they taught, the institution they worked at, their age, and the major or subject they taught. Part 2 of the questionnaire consists five questions divided into five categories: identification of special needs students, identification of individual needs, identification of appropriate strategy and motivation, classroom management accommodations, and assessment accommodations.

**Ethical Considerations**

In this research, informants' voluntary participation was obtained by oral informed consent. The informants' dignity and well-being were safeguarded at all times. Throughout the study, the research data were kept confidential, and the researcher acquired consent from the teachers to collect information for the study.

**Data Collection**

The data were collected online using the Facebook Messenger. The identified informants were provided a soft copy of the written interview questionnaire. The first component of the online interview asked the target informants for their consent and provided information about the study's goal. It was also stressed that their identities were secret even after the research has ended. The written interview questionnaire consisted of four open-ended questions, and the informants filled out whenever it was convenient for them. Data collection technique also included a virtual focus group discussion to validate the information supplied by each informant. The informants were not compensated in any way for their participation in the study.

**Data Analysis**

The accomplished written interview was submitted by the informants during their convenient time, the researchers opted to store the data for easy access. Each document was downloaded and labelled with the informants' names. After collecting the six (6) written interview forms from six (6) informants, the researchers used Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) qualitative content analysis to analyze the transcripts. The written transcripts were organized using a data analysis matrix created by the researchers to identify the difficulties encountered by the Non- SPED teachers in handling students with special needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers initially agreed that the informants' significant statements and phrases would be highlighted and given relevant codes. In addition, the different codes were classified into different categories based on their differences and similarities. Meaningful categories were generated by grouping important codes together. The different categories were reduced and grouped according to teachers' challenges, classroom management, preparation, and insights into the implementation of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, the informants were shown the documents to ensure that the data presented were accurate.

**Trustworthiness**

To ensure the research's validity, strict data gathering, constant observation, text descriptions, verbatim or direct quotations, and the use of informant validation were observed. The techniques used in this research were also described for other researchers to consider when conducting research that may or may not be related to this.

## RESULTS

**Instruction**

There were three significant categories identified relating to the challenges of Non- SPED teachers in terms of instruction namely (1) Delivery of Instruction (2) Sudden Shift of Pedagogy in Education, and (3)Students' Attitude towards Learning.

**Delivery of Instruction**

This was divided into four (4) subcategories namely (1) Poor Comprehension, (2) Language Barrier, (3) Low Test Validity, and (4) Not Established Rules.

- *Poor Comprehension.* Poor comprehension of English is common among school-age since language was a complex area that needs concentration and a thorough understanding of the subject's totality. Normal students have difficulty in comprehending as students with special needs do. During the pandemic, the students were not allowed to go to school for their security and safety. The Department of Education and other private universities opted to shift from the normal face-to-face classes into distance education using modules and/or online classes. Because of that, teachers saw that students

have difficulty understanding their lessons. The presence of the teacher beside the child caused them to not fully understand the lesson. The instant shift posed a great challenge for the students as well as the teachers.

> Melvin: *"The challenge and difficulty I experienced in teaching students with special needs during the pandemic in terms of class instruction are that they are not able to comprehend easily."*
>
> Jovy: *"Class instructions need to be clear for the students to comprehend and fully understand it."*
>
> Riza: *"The difficulty I've experienced is in the area of comprehension or understanding of the directions. They are very late or slow compare to average learners so I must take time to make them understand the instructions given."*

- *Language Barrier.* Teacher's encountered difficulty in giving instructions and letting the students understand the topic because of the language barrier between them. The informant posited that most of the students especially in private schools were well-versed in using the English language however, this gave a great impact on Filipino Teachers. They found it difficult to make the student understand their topic because English was the total opposite of Filipino, which was their subject and their medium of instruction as well. Giving instructions was one of the problems encountered by them since they found it difficult to communicate.

> Melvin: *"Difficulty in the language because most of their first language is English and my subject is Filipino".*

- *Low Test Validity.* Learning assessment was the fundamental feedback of students' learning. The test measured what it claims to measure consistently or reliably. Teachers faced challenges in this area in measuring the authenticity of the test results of the students. During distance learning, they have difficulty knowing the level of understanding of the learners based on the task that they are doing. Low test validity was an issue in distance learning. Numerous teachers complained that students asked for help from a more knowledgeable person to answer their activities and assessment. There were times that parents answered the module by themselves especially since their student was among those with special needs. To make it easy, and help their kids pass the grade level, they were the ones who answered the activities. This did not test the students' understanding of the topic but the parents. Assessing online posited bigger chance for a student to commit cheating. Therefore, the test result of the student during the pandemic may not be an accurate measure of their learning.

> Jovy: *"Low validity of the exam results and learning during virtual classes."*

- *Less Established Rules.* The lack of physical engagement between student and teachers made a gap in the area of discipline during the delivery of instruction. Because of the distance learning setup, the teachers found it hard to fully implement the classroom rules and regulations inside their online platform. They found it difficult to establish rules with their students with special needs. Teacher Riza said that she was already having problem in implementing the rules with her normal students. She have an inclusive class so, she was challenged to make her normal students follow so those with special needs will also do the same.

> Riza: *"It is hard to implement learning strategies policies, guidelines, and procedures considering that most of my students have special needs."*
>
> Jovy: *"Rules were not fully established because of lack of physical presence. Discipline is very hard and choosing the appropriate classroom rules in managing students during virtual classes has been a big challenge."*

**Sudden Shift of Pedagogy in Education**

This was divided into three (3) subcategories namely (1) Need for Extra Patience, (2) Effort and Understanding, and (3) Need To Adjust Teaching Techniques.

- *Need for Extra Patience, Effort and Understanding.* Being a teacher is never an easy task and the pandemic made it even difficult. Dealing student with special needs in normal setup require a lot of effort, patience and understanding and this was doubled during the pandemic. TeacherJovy has devised more meaningful and interesting activities for her lesson to make students learn especially those with special needs. As a Non- SPED teacher, it was a big challenge for her to extend her patience and effort to make them learn. Teacher Sofia has to calm her student with special needs first before she delivers her lesson. It required a lot of time, patience, effort, and understanding to those all these tasks.

> Jovy: *"Being a teacher requires you lot of effort, patience, and understanding especially if you are handling students with special needs. Looking for the best possible example in your lesson to make it more meaningful and knowledgeable is very difficult too."*
>
> Joy: *"It was an arduous task for me to facilitate the students in the teaching-and-learning process since they needed additional supervision when it comes to class instructions. Also, I have to extend my patience, especially to the students with special needs."*

- *Need To Adjust Teaching Techniques.* The pandemic bought a massive change in the educational system. Especially in the area of teacher methods, strategies, approaches, and techniques. The long teaching experienced helped Non- SPED teachers to use the best methodological techniques in teaching student with special needs. But when pandemic happened, they have to begin from scratch because the strategies they used in normal setup may no longer be applicable in distance learning. They have to devise and learn new strategies fitted with their students with special needs.

  Jovy: *"The face-to-face classes wherein the students need to go to school suddenly change into virtual classes. Pedagogical use is also a great challenge in the teaching-learning process."*

  Melvin: *"Reviewing the lesson and breaking the lessons into simple parts was very challenging."*

  Sofia: *"During that time there are so many adjustments happened between teacher and students, especially during class transition."*

**Students' Attitude towards Learning**

This was divided into three (2) subcategories namely (1) Repetition of Lesson or Instruction, and (2) Little to No Class Participation.

- *Repetition of Lesson or Instruction.* It's quite normal for students with special needs to ask repeated questions to teacher since some of them have trouble in comprehending. Some of the student with special needs were slow learner. But the challenge here was how the teacher will make them understand and stop asking non-related questions. Teacher Joy have a student diagnosed with ADHD. He was overly active and tend to ask repetitive questions although that question is already answered previously. Teacher Jovy experienced that too but with her, she needed to address it first before she can proceed with the next topic. There were times that she ignored the student's question for she might that she be stuck with that and cannot proceed. Teacher Jovy said that her student with special need ask random question is her way to catch the teacher's attention. So, at times she just pretend not to hear any from the student.

  Joy: *"He would often ask several repetitive questions to every task or activity I ask them to do."*

  Jovy: *"Class instructions need to be repeated for the students to comprehend and fully understand it. As a teacher, you cannot proceed to your next lesson without achieving the desired objectives thus, repetition and reviewing of the lesson has been very crucial and time-consuming."*

  Sofia: *"In my student's case, he seemed to be restless in our class and liked to interrupt me in the middle of my discussion by asking unnecessary and unrelated questions."*

- *Little to No Class Participation.* Teacher Joy said that there were days when the student with special needs do not attend the class. So, she called the attention of the parents. The parent asked for an apology for the absences of her child because there were times that the child has her seizure. As a teacher, she understood the effort of the parent as well as the child to go to school. She just gave alternative activity for the child to catch up with their class.

  Joy: *"Some students are not entering the online classroom which serves as their attendance"*

  Mae: *"Some are not active during the online class and if they will, they tend to distract me by throwing tantrums."*

**Preparation**

There were three significant categories identified relating to the challenges of Non- SPED teachers in terms of preparation namely (1) Providing Suitable Tasked Based On Students' Capacities (2) Teaching Approaches, and (3) Time-constraint.

**Providing Suitable Tasked Based On Students' Capacities**

This was divided into two (2) subcategories namely (1) Need to Design Suitable Task, and (2) Need to Consider Student's Individual Capacity.

- *Need to Design Suitable Task.* Students with special needs progress at different rates and have different ways in which they learn best. When preparing lessons, teachers will take account of this by looking carefully at how they organize their lessons, classroom, books, and instructional materials. The teachers need to design activities that are suited for normal students and with that student with special needs.

  Melvin: *"I need to design a task that is suitable for all."*

  Jovy: *"Looking for the best possible method and techniques that you can use in class that can cater to all types of learners not only for the students with special needs is very crucial to the teacher."*

  Riza: *"In making lesson plans I need to consider and adjust my activities so that they will be suited to my regular and students with special needs."*

- *Need to Consider Student's Individual Capacity.* Aside from designing suitable tasks for all students, there is also a need to consider the level of student comprehension and intelligence and their capacity. The interview revealed that

Non- SPED teachers have difficulty in providing tasks based on the student capacity. Teacher Riza explained that there are times when she has to create another task for her student with special needs because the level of difficulty does not match. Having students with special needs is a challenging and arduous task.

Melvin: *"I need to always consider their capacity in terms of their exams."*

Jovy: *"Student's needs, type of learners, objectives, and topics are things that need to be considered in preparing your class."*

Riza: *"I need to design, adapt and implement teaching strategies that are responsive to learners with disabilities, giftedness, and talents."*

## Teaching Approaches

This was divided into two (2) subcategories namely (1) Varied Teaching Strategies, and (2) Meaningful Learning.

- *Varied Teaching Strategies.* Instructional strategies included approaches that a teacher may take to engage students in learning actively. Teachers used different teaching styles based on the capacity of their learners to cater to their needs and helped them to reach their full potential, engage and reach the students in their classes. Not all instructional strategies would have a perfect fit for every situation. This pandemic challenged the teachers' ability to use the internet and applications that were not familiar to them. They have to explore every feature of the application like Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and a lot more. Teachers were not prepared for this event. Since they can no longer use the strategies they are accustomed to, they have to try again and again to find the best strategies that will fit students' needs.

  Riza: *"The strategies I utilize in handling students with special needs during modular and/or online classes are using differentiated activities which are applicable in their special needs."*

  Joy: *"I also make sure that my class is interesting and fun to catch his attention and would engage him in participating."*

  Sofia: *"Creativity has been a challenge also to a teacher like me especially in preparing my lesson because I need to think more and more about the possible way to make my lesson more understandable and interesting."*

- *Meaningful Learning.* The sudden shift of instruction allowed the teacher to implement different approaches thatd enabled them to get the attention of their learners. Teachers made sure that the lesson was fully understood by the students in a meaningful way. The concept of meaningful learning was that individuals fully understand the concept and make connections with prior knowledge. Teacher Mae saw to it that what she taught was relatable to students' experiences. This would help them build immediate connections and can fully understand the topic.

  Mae: *"You must think out of the box to have the best possible way to make your class more meaningful. A single approach or technique is not enough to make your class more meaningful and interacting."*

## Time-constraint

This wasdivided into two (2) subcategories namely (1) Lack of Time, and (2) Overloaded Task.

- *Lack of Time.* Teachers had a hard to prepare tasks and presentations for their classes that could cater to all types of learners in the onset of distance learning. The whole educational system was modified to push through in providing education. The goal of an educational institution is no longer quality education but to survive the years under the pandemic. Everything was put to test, was to rush. It's a big challenge for teacher Sofia to manage her class time along with the strategies she applies to her students with special needs. Her student with special needs tries to get her attention during the discussion so she has to address it at the same time push through with the session. Also, since everything changed, teachers need to think of new activities and try their effectivity with the students, and it's time-consuming.

  Mae: *"Lack of time. In my case, I have so many things to prepare for our classes."*

  Sofia: *"Classroom preparation has also changed since the pandemic started. For example, is having limited time to manage the class. There's a need to teach straight to the point."*

- *Overloaded Task.* With the sudden shift in education, teachers needed to prepare a lot of tasks to cater individual needs of their students, a task based on the capacity of the learners. The overloaded tasks that teachers have were hindrance for them to giving the best to their students. At times they cannot prepare for the lesson because they are bombarded with tasks.

  Mae: *"I need to make a module every week, I need to prepare power point every schedule of my online class (twice a week) and every week I need to print modules for the distribution and segregate the module in every subject."*

**Strategies**

There were three significant categories identified relating to the challenges of Non- SPED teachers in terms of strategies namely (1) Attending Students' Needs
(2) Providing Feedback, and (3) Constant Communication.

**Attending Students' Needs**

This wasdivided into three (3) subcategories namely (1) Teachers Readiness, (2) Getting Students Attention, and (3) Classified Task.

- *Teachers Readiness.* Teachers needed to be attentive and ready to cater to all the questions posed by their students in identifying the areas of the lesson that students not fully understand.

    Melvin: "*I always tend to prepare a frequent solution about their queries because most of them are fond of questioning especially if our topic is about literature.*"

    Joy: "*What I did during those times was I entertained him by answering the questions he addressed until he stops asking.*"

- *Getting Students' Attention.* One of the biggest challenges teachers face was getting and maintaining the attention of students especially those with special needs. Understanding will not be made possible if students were restless and fidgety.

    Riza: "*I always see to it that their focus is somewhat likely a 100% during our discussion*"

- *Classified Task.* Teachers classified the task given to their students to encourage maximum participation so that each individual may derive the values in learning.

    Riza: "*I also used group work activities so that I can classify in categorizing them according to their needs.*"

    Sofia: "*Create home learning activities that resemble the typical school day in the physical classroom.*"
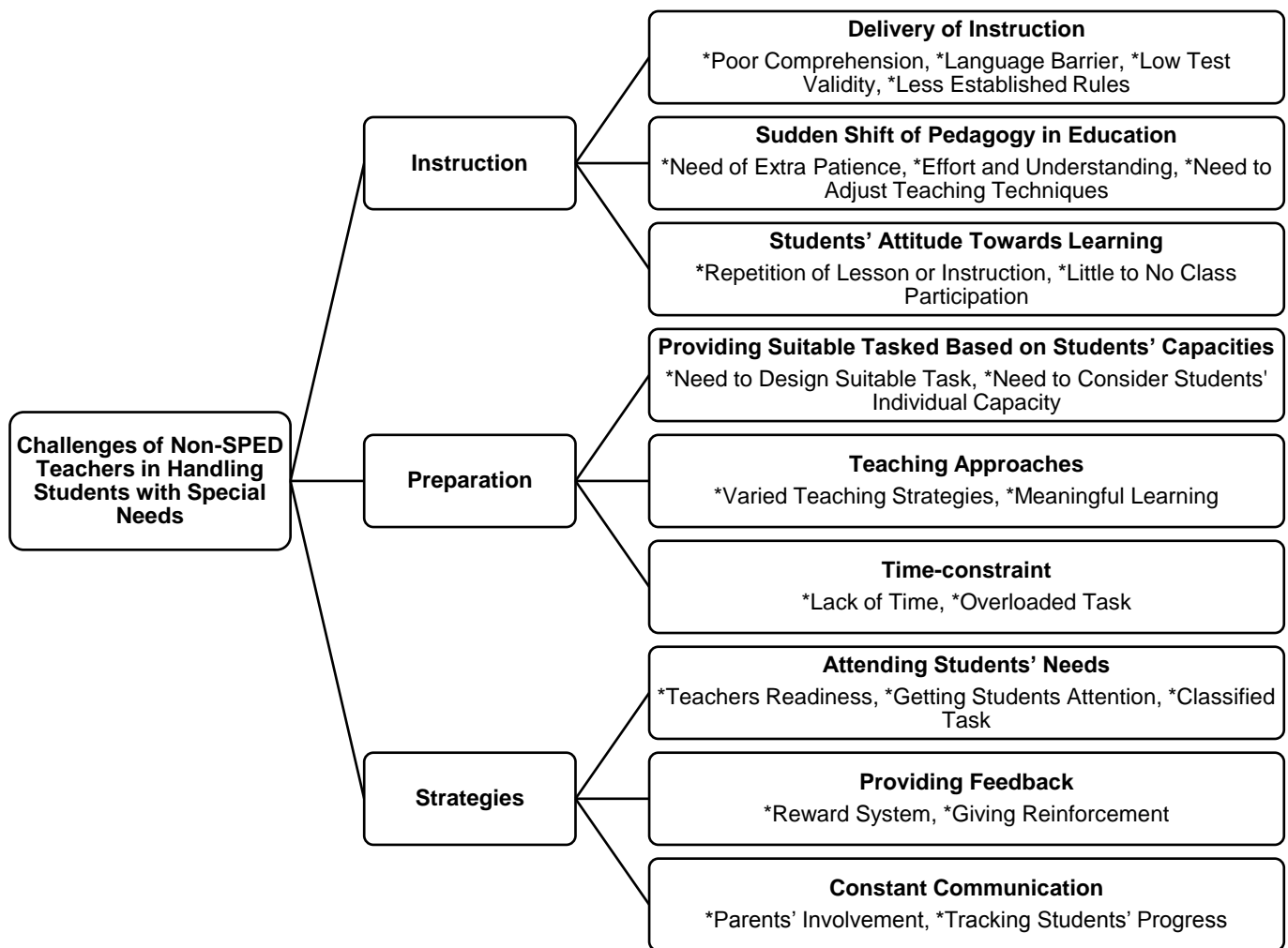
**Providing Feedback**

This was divided into two (2) subcategories namely (1) Reward System, and (2) Giving Reinforcement.

- *Reward System.* Teachers gave rewards to the students for them to be more interested and improved their participation in the everyday classroom tasks. It motivated them to be more productive because they created a feeling of pride and achievement.

    Mae: "*I used the reward system in a form of giving 3 claps and 2 thumbs up during our virtual classes.*"

    Mae: "*A student who behaved and listened attentively during class was given a reward.*

- *Giving Reinforcement.* Teachers gave positive reinforcement in schools as a way to motivate students practice positive behavior through incentivizing their good choices. Students connected their positive behavior to the positive behavior to their positive responses. Thus, promoted good behavior choices.

    Melvin: "*By giving credit every time students answer or ask something regarding our lesson whether it is related or not.*"

    Jovy: "*Praising was also utilized in every recitation wherein a student who actively participated in class was praised "very good/good job.*"

    Sofia: "*Plus point was also used to those who follow, listen, participate, and engage in every class activity.*"

**Constant Communication**

This was divided into two (2) subcategories namely (1) Parents' Involvement, and (2) Tracing Students' Progress.

- *Parents' Involvement.* Parent involvement developed a positive attitude toward learning and progresses further in their educational journey while parents have a chance to further understand what their child learns.

    Mae: "*Having constant communication with the parent or guardian to update the performance of the student.*"

- *Tracking Students' Progress.* During distance learning, teachers monitored the progress of their students to see their growth and development.

    Joy: "*I message him from time to time to remind him of the tasks or activities that he needs to answer. I update him if there are instructions or information from the school.*"

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**Delivery of Instruction**
*Poor Comprehension, *Language Barrier, *Low Test Validity, *Less Established Rules

**Sudden Shift of Pedagogy in Education**
*Need of Extra Patience, *Effort and Understanding, *Need to Adjust Teaching Techniques

**Students' Attitude Towards Learning**
*Repetition of Lesson or Instruction, *Little to No Class Participation

**Instruction**

**Providing Suitable Tasked Based on Students' Capacities**
*Need to Design Suitable Task, *Need to Consider Students' Individual Capacity

**Teaching Approaches**
*Varied Teaching Strategies, *Meaningful Learning

**Time-constraint**
*Lack of Time, *Overloaded Task

**Preparation**

**Challenges of Non-SPED Teachers in Handling Students with Special Needs**

**Attending Students' Needs**
*Teachers Readiness, *Getting Students Attention, *Classified Task

**Providing Feedback**
*Reward System, *Giving Reinforcement

**Constant Communication**
*Parents' Involvement, *Tracking Students' Progress

**Strategies**

## DISCUSSION

Numerous prevention and transmission strategies had to be put in place globally as a result of COVID-19. Schools now need to use emergency remote instruction due to pandemic measures like lockdowns and restricted travel. When it comes to planning, designing, and delivering courses, standard remote teaching typically takes the shape of higher-quality online education. It is crucial that teachers understand the need of offering inclusive education to children during this difficult time.This study aimed to identify the challenges of Non-SPED teachers in handling students with special needs during the pandemic. These challenges were elaborated into instruction, preparation, and strategies of the teacher. Nine (9) major categories were extracted from the data text after thoroughly scrutinizing the interview transcripts. A detailed analysis was used, which led the researchers to place the findings of the study in the context of related literature and the results of other research projects that were similar to this.

COVID-19 has disrupted education systems on a global scale, creating unexpected challenges. Approximately 1.6 billion children around the world have been unable to attend school due to COVID-19 lockdowns, with schools required to make rapid adjustments in the move to online teaching and learning. This pandemic made a big change similar with the private and public teachers in Iloilo City. For students with a disability and additional learning needs, the move to remote learning has presented additional challenges, including barriers to engaging with technology, reduced access to educational supports and individualized learning interventions, and a loss of social connections. Inclusive education means that every child is valued, and receives a high-quality and equitable education. In partnership with research teams in Australia and seven countries (Austria, Bangladesh, India, New Zealand, Italy, Canada, and Spain), researchers from Monash University are conducting a study to identify how teachers are responding to the challenges to inclusive education posed by COVID-19, and in particular to share examples of approaches to good practice with teachers around the world (Lens.monash.edu).

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced most countries around the world to shift from their conventional methods of in-person teaching, training, learning, and educating to digital pedagogy (Sutton and Jorge, 2020). Although it was difficult

for educational institutions to suddenly shift from the traditional chalk and talk didactic teaching (Basilaia, 2020) to online teaching, appreciable attempts were made for the undisrupted flow of knowledge. In response to these challenges, many teachers have rapidly adjusted their practice and developed innovative approaches to providing inclusive education to all students. Based on the gathered analyzed results, instruction, preparation and strategies are among the areas in education where they are most challenged of.

In the area of instruction, three subcategories were identified namely: delivery of instruction, sudden shift of pedagogy in education and students attitude towards learning. The Department of Education and private institution opted to shift from normal face to face classes into distance education using modules and online classes. As a result, education has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information, and take less time, meaning the changes coronavirus has caused might be here to stay. With this sudden shift away from the classroom in many parts of the globe, some are wondering whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic, and how such a shift would impact the worldwide education market (Li, C, et al. 2020). This instant shift made a great gap between students and teachers in the area of discipline during the delivery of instruction. Poor comprehension, language barrier and low test validity to measure students learning were among the identified problems during the delivery of instruction. Besides issues with submitting assignments and learning course material virtually, some students may be dealing with an extra struggle: a language barrier. Some students may not be fluent in English, so they may be struggling with a language barrier (Bashore, 2022). Furthermore, due to lack of face to face interaction, it was witnessed that students were often rude and impudent during the online classes (Oyedotun, 2020) which demotivated educators and posed another challenge of virtual discipline maintenance. Teachers need to be more patient, exert more effort and understanding in dealing with their students in the duration of their online classes. Also, there is a need to search for the best method, strategies, approaches and techniques to cater students with special needs. Furthermore, most of the teachers were challenged on how to make students understand and at the same time manage student's unwanted behavior since some of them are overly active and tend to ask repetitive questions although it is already answered.

In the area of preparation, three significant categories were identified namely: providing suitable task based on student's capacity, teaching approaches and time constraint. Students with special needs progress at different rates and have different ways in which they learn best. When preparing lessons, teachers will take account by looking carefully on how they organize their lessons. Extra effort in preparing instructional materials is a must. Aside from designing suitable task for students, there is also a need to consider the students level of comprehension, intelligence and capacity. The challenges were not only limited to students but teachers also struggled to adapt to the online mode of education. Due to the sudden transition to digital pedagogy, educators were not given any formal training to prepare material and conduct classes online but were expected to continue the teaching-learning process without any disruption (Chen et al., 2020). Another challenge teachers found is the difficulty of preparing task and presentations for their classes that could cater all types of learners in just one hour. Given the fact that there students with special needs who try to get the attention of the teacher during the discussion and it is already time consuming. The overloaded tasks the teachers have are a hindrance for them to give their best to the students there are also time that they could not prepare for the lesson because they are bombarded with the task at hand.

In the area of strategies, three significant categories were identified namely: attending student's need, providing feedback and constant communication. Teachers need to be ready to cater all the questions ask by the student. One of the biggest challenges teachers' faced is getting and maintaining the attention of the students especially those with special needs. One of the strategies is the reward system where teachers motivate students to be more productive by creating opportunities for students to feel proud of themselves by the reward they received. Another is giving reinforcement as a way to motivate students to practice positive behavior by praising their good work. In addition to this, constant communication by parent involvement and tracking students' progress plays a vital role in student's growth and development.

The findings of this study revealed how teachers encountered challenges in giving instructions, preparation of the lesson, and the use of different strategies to cater to the needs of all the students in an inclusive classroom. Many academics highlighted the passiveness of students during synchronous classes as a major cause of concern (Hassan et al., 2020). Engaging students posed a big challenge to teachers where studies revealed that students initially were not sincere and serious about their online classes and teachers received very low response rates to the allocated assignments. Owing to lack of training, marking attendance digitally also became a tedious task for educators and there were high possibilities of students marking proxy attendance while indulging in other online activities (Farooq et al., 2020).

This study has various limitations that should be noted and may be addressed in future studies. Firstly, the number of informants which consists only of five Non-SPED teachers may not be ideal in generalizing the findings to the broader field of inclusive education. A quantitative research may accompany the qualitative findings of this study to provide a deeper understanding about the challenges of Non-SPED teachers in handling students with special needs considering the instruction, preparation and strategies of the teachers.

In view of the findings and conclusions of the research study, the following are the recommendations: (1) It is

ideal if school administratorscreate and design a curriculum that will help equipped teachers with the ability to handle students with special needs in order for them to give the utmost attention they ought to receive. (2) It will be a great improvement if teachers will be further trained on how to identify student withspecial needs and how they can provide appropriate accommodation on the various aspect of education.(3)If Non-SPED teachers in private and public schools be given an opportunity to attend seminars and trainings, they will eventually accommodate students with special needs so that they could effectively make them learn.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers are the core facilitators of skills, knowledge, and values of the future leaders. Teachers who are motivated enough can perform their duties and responsibilities well, and in the long run, yield good results. They will produce excellent leaders in the present, who will contribute to the sustainable development of the country in the years to come. Learning about the experiences and challenges of Non-SPED teachers in handling with students with special needs during the pandemic will strengthen the role they play in the educational system.

Despite the difficulties encountered by the Non-SPED teachers in accommodating students with special needs during their online classes, they provide the best possible strategies to cater their students learning needs. Strategies such reward system, reinforcement, riddles, interactive games and a lot more are utilized and highly regarded to solicit positive attitudes of students towards learning. In this time of pandemic, the skills of the teachers coupled with patience, effort and strength help overcome the challenges they encountered in accommodating students with special needs.

As teachers were challenged in instruction, preparation and strategiesthey dealt with these difficulties they encountered by using their own coping techniques because it is really challenging and stressful especially during the pandemic. Hence, teachers must be really in any circumstances that may occur along their teaching careers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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