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Attitudes and Beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventist K-8 General Education Teachers Regarding Inclusion

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

Attitudes and Beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventist K–8 General Education Teachers

Regarding Inclusion

by

Gillian S. Joseph

MSED, Hofstra University, 2002

BBA, Andrews University, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

General education (GE) elementary and middle school teachers often do not feel

equipped to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities (SWDs) in Seventh-Day

Adventist (SDA) schools. The purpose of this study was to explore SDA GE elementary

and middle teachers' support for SWDs' academic needs, attitudes and beliefs about their

ability to support SWDs, and competence to include SWDs in the classroom. The method

and design was a qualitative exploratory case study. The conceptual framework for this

study was Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and social cognitive theory. Ten elementary

and middle school teachers, who taught SWDS in 3 SDA schools from a conference in

the metro area of a Northeast state of the United States, volunteered to participate in the

study. Data were collected using observations and semistructured interviews and were

analyzed thematically using a priori, open, and axial codes related to the conceptual

framework. Teachers indicated that they limited instruction to whole class teaching and

believed they were not competent to support SWDs' needs. Furthermore, they asserted

that training, along with classroom support, would increase their competence when

including SWDs. It is recommended that SDA administrators offer special education

professional development, add special education classes to the Adventist teacher

certification process, and hire special education teachers, and teachers participate in the

SDA's inclusion initiative to meet SWDs' needs. These endeavors could support positive

social change if SDA administrators hire and train teachers who are prepared and

competent to include SWDs and meet SWDS' academic needs, which could result in

SWDs being served by qualified, knowledgeable, and confident teachers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Study

Children with learning disabilities make up the largest category of students who have been identified as needing special education services. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) there are 2.4 million students who have been identified as having a learning disability under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Additionally, 42% of the students with disabilities (SWDs) who receive different kinds of special education services are treated in the learning disabilities category (2014). The authors further stated that learning disabilities are real and permanent and may result in life-long problems in mathematics, reading comprehension, and written expression; however, having a learning disability does not mean that academic achievement is an impossibility. If individuals have the right kind of instruction, support, and guidance, they can live successful lives (2014). The problem that I investigated in this study was that K–8 Adventist teachers often do not feel equipped to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) schools.

To understand this problem in context, there is a need to understand the structure and philosophy of SDA education. The SDA Church operates a system of schools in the United States, Bermuda, and several other countries in the world. The philosophy of education is based on the Bible, and the writings of Ellen G. White (The Approach and Philosophy of Adventist Education, n.d.). The mission statement that governs SDA schools in North America states that the goal of Adventist education is: "to enable learners to develop a life of faith in God, and to use their knowledge, skills, and

understandings to serve God and humanity" (The Approach and Philosophy of Adventist Education, n.d. para.1). The organizational structure of the SDA church includes the General Conference, which is the parent body of the world church organization. The General Conference is composed of 13 Divisions. Each Division is composed of Unions and each Union is composed of Conferences. The educational system of the church is managed by the Unions and Conferences. The SDA organization in the United States is run by the North American Division (NAD). The Unions and Conferences within the NAD are given the responsibility to govern the SDA schools in their territory.

The Conference, where I completed this study, is part of a Union in the Northeast region of the United States. This Union is composed of six states and the country of Bermuda. The Conference's education system consists of 17 schools, 124 teachers, and over 2000 students. The schools range from preschool through 12th grade in five states.

There are federal legislations that have been passed that dictate how students with disabilities (SWDs) should be taught in the classroom, including in the SDA school system. These federal legislations have changed the way that students with learning disabilities and other disabilities are educated. Roden, Borgemenke, and Holt (2013) stated that these legislations have indicated that it is the right of all students according to the law to receive instruction based upon their grade-level criteria. McLeskey, Waldron, and Redd (2014) indicated that, since the passing and implementation of P.L. 94-142 - The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975, the laws have evolved and have influenced the way that SWDs have been educated in classrooms within the United States.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 1997), for example, indicated that SWDs should be educated alongside their peers, unless they were not able to do so even with accommodations and services. The IDEA law was reauthorized in 2004. According to Yell, Shriner, and Katsiyannis (2006), the main goal of Congress in this reauthorization was to ensure alignment between the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and IDEA. This was accomplished by IDEA's requirement that all special educations teachers be highly qualified, SWDs be allowed to take state-wide assessments, and that special education services be based on peer-reviewed research. The law also stressed the fact that no child should be determined as having a disability if the child was not given adequate scientifically-based instruction in reading, mathematics, or if they have limited proficiency in English (2006). The law also underscored the importance of SWDs being educated in general education classrooms. For the latter to occur, it would mean that all teachers were required to teach all learners (McCray & McHatton, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2014). Walker (2012) posited that this has provided a challenge for general education teachers because they are suddenly expected to provide specialized Instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Through the introduction of initiatives such as the common core standards, policymakers have called upon teachers to increase their expectations for SWDs along with providing a more rigorous curriculum regardless of the ability of the student (McLeskey et al., 2014; Sullivan, 2015). The common core standards postulated rigorous academic standards and expectations meant to prepare students for college. According to Smith (2014), these standards are challenging for general education students. It would

therefore mean that it is even more challenging for students with learning disabilities who are already under grade-level. Sawchuk (2012) added that in the roll-out of the common core standards, teachers have not been thoroughly trained and have not been given enough time to fully understand how to teach using these standards. Based on these factors, there are many SDA general education teachers who do not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of all students, especially SWDs, and there is limited research in this area (Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). There is a need to examine the attitudes and beliefs of SDA general education K–8 teachers regarding having SWDs in the general education classroom and to determine what teachers believe will increase their confidence in teaching these students.

In this chapter, I will give an overview of the purpose of the study, along with the research questions that the study will address. I will also discuss the conceptual framework of the study and the assumptions that I have concerning the topic. The chapter will end with a discussion of the limitations and delimitations of the study and the significance of completing a study of this nature.

Background

Statistical reports in education in the United States show that approximately 2.8 million students have a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Out of these 2.8 million children, private schools have been indicated to enroll 7.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). It is important to look at the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in public schools and the private school systems regarding teaching SWDs. SDA schools fall under the category of private schools. However, there are no current statistics regarding the number of students

with learning disabilities that are enrolled in SDA schools. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers regarding teaching SWDs, and to determine what teachers believe will increase their level of competence when including SWDs in one SDA Education System.

Rising enrollments of SWDs in SDA schools has presented the administrators and teachers with many challenges to successfully deliver quality instruction. Teachers within SDA schools have voiced their concerns about inclusion because they do not feel adequately prepared to teach SWDs (Greulich, 2015). Sargeant and Berkner (2015) added that, within Christian schools, there is the lack of preparedness of teachers, the funding of these services is often limited, and there is often an absence of support from those who provide the public school with special education services. The authors further stated that according to the law: "It was the duty of public-school staff to identify, locate, and evaluate private school students who may qualify for services; assign federal funds for such activities; or work with private school administrators regarding delivery of services under the IDEA" (p. 229).

According to Sargeant and Berkner (2015) the law does not require Christian schools to adhere to special education guidelines for SWDs. However, if the students are accepted in Christian schools, then the appropriate services must be provided to them. Greulich (2015) stated that although the laws regarding the education of SWDs do not apply to all private institutions this does not negate the fact that the students in private institutions legally must receive services. Sargeant and Berkner (2015) added that

Christian schools that accept SWDs need to develop instructional programs that would meet the needs of these students including inclusion programs.

The problems that SDA elementary and middle school teachers have with inclusion in SDA schools mirror current research in special education as it relates to the attitudes and beliefs of K–8 general education teachers toward inclusion. Research has shown that general education teachers often do not feel adequately prepared to teach SWDs (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Berry, 2010; Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2010; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014; Vaz et al., 2014). Researchers have argued that a teacher's attitude and willingness to teach SWDs, is often influenced by the teacher's perceived sense of efficacy in his or her ability to meet the needs of these students (Gebbie, Ceglowski, & Miels, 2012; Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). Montgomery and Mirenda (2014) argued that how teachers viewed their responsibility for students influenced the success of inclusion. The authors further added that the perceptions of a teacher about their ability to teach SWDs has a similar affect (2014). Therefore, it can be assumed that if teachers think negatively toward SWDs, the needs of the students will most likely not be met (Vaz et al., 2015).

There is also very little research that has been conducted on the self-efficacy of inclusion K–12 teachers within SDA schools. This study could add to the body of literature regarding teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding inclusion, specifically in the area of general education elementary and general education SDA teachers. The results

can also be used to make recommendations as to how to improve the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as they relate to teaching SWDs in their classrooms.

Problem Statement

The problem is that elementary and middle school Adventist teachers often do not feel sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in SDA schools. The findings of a Reaching to Educate All Children for Heaven (REACH) survey conducted in 2007 indicated that Adventist K–12 teachers in Bermuda, Canada, and the United States were concerned about inclusion (NAD Office of Education, 2015). Some of the concerns indicated by these teachers included insufficient resources, training, and staffing. The teachers were also alarmed about the increase of SWDs in their classrooms each school year. Archer (2015) argued that this problem still exists more than a decade later when stating, "There is a real problem in the provision of special-education services in Adventist schools in the United States" (p. 5). He further stated that if SDAs value students as being of equal worth then it is important that SDA educators deem it important to include all students with and without disabilities in all aspects of the learning experience. Archer's research supports the need for examining the perceived concerns and of SDA teachers regarding the inclusion of SWDs in general education classroom.

The director of Pupil Personnel Services for Special Education and Counseling, a director in one of the conferences in the North American Division (NAD), has indicated that K–12 general education teachers in her conference struggle to teach SWDs and seem to be resistant to having them in their classrooms. In her capacity as Director of Special

Education, she has visited several schools within the conference. She stated that K–12 general education teachers constantly talk about their lack of training in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. She views this as a real problem in SDA schools that must be addressed.

A K–8 principal in one of the conference schools also indicated that teachers in her school seemed resistant to having students with learning disabilities in the classroom. She further stated that in her discussions with teachers about their struggles in the classroom, they indicated that they seemed to understand that they were required to meet the needs of all students. However, as it related to students with learning disabilities, she reported that the teachers would often complain that they were not adequately trained to teach these students. Added to this was the fact that these students do not perform well in standardized tests. She firmly believed that the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers toward SWDs is a significant problem in the conference schools that needs to be addressed as this can affect the way that teachers support these students in the classroom. As Cornoldi, Capodieci, Colomer, Miranda, and Shepherd (2016) stated the beliefs and attitudes of teachers toward SWDs can shape the educational practices that are used with them.

The administrators in the education department of the NAD determined that there was a need for a plan to teach SWDs. They organized the Inclusion Commission in 2007 to develop such a plan to address the needs of SWDs in Adventist classrooms (North American Division Office of Education REACH Resource Manual, 2015). The Inclusion Commission's inquiry was based on the premise that all students can learn at a high level,

therefore SDA teachers needed to ensure that they met the needs of SWDs in the classroom. The results from the focus questions from the REACH survey conducted by the Commission indicated that inclusion should be the model that should be implemented to educate all children in Adventist schools (North American Division Office of Education REACH Resource Manual, 2015).

Although SWDs are admitted into SDA schools, there is little research relative to the attitudes and beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers in this unique setting about meeting the needs of these students in the classroom (Greulich, 2015). Research has shown that if there is a lack of knowledge regarding SWDs and inclusive practices then it will largely affect the attitudes of teachers and administrators (Mastin, 2010; Monsen et al., 2014). In this study, I focused on the attitudes and beliefs of general education elementary and middle school teachers in SDA schools regarding SWDs and explored the teachers' perceptions about what could increase their efficacy as it relates to meeting the needs of SWDs in the classroom.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of SDA general education elementary and middle school teachers regarding having SWDs in the general education classroom, to determine how they supported the academic needs of these students, and what these teachers believed would increase their confidence in teaching SWDs. Based on the insight that was gained from this research, recommendations were made to assist the superintendent of education at this Conference in possible training opportunities to improve the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in meeting the needs of

these students. This study may have further effects beyond the confines of the local site in that the findings can also influence other superintendents in other Conferences to train their teachers to meet the needs of these students.

Research Questions

I used the following questions to guide this research:

1. How do general education K–8 SDA teachers support the academic needs of SWDs?

2. What are K–8 SDA general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their ability to support SWDs in the general classroom?

3. What do K–8 SDA general education teachers believe would increase their competence when including SWDs?

Conceptual Framework for the study

The conceptual framework for this study was based on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that individuals have in their abilities to handle various situations (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task.

According to Bandura:

In the social cognitive theory, human behavior is extensively motivated and regulated by the ongoing exercise of self-influence. The major self-regulative mechanism operates through three principal sub-functions. These include self-monitoring of one's behavior, its determinants, and its effects; judgment of one's

behavior in relation to personal standards and environmental circumstances; and

affective self-reaction. (Bandura, 1991, p. 248)

Bandura (1991) further stated that a person will not be inspired if they do not pay

attention to their own action, the conditions under which these actions occur, and the

effects that they produce. When a person thinks about his/her performance, they are

more likely to set goals for their improvement (Bandura, 1991). It can therefore be

concluded that an individual's ability to complete a difficult task is based on their self-

efficacy. Thus, individuals with higher self-efficacy will take on more difficult tasks than

those with lower self-efficacy (Urton et al., 2014).

Urton et al. (2014) stated that there are numerous studies that have indicated that

the attitudes of teachers toward SWDs are influenced by their feelings of self-efficacy as

it relates to their experience as a teacher. Specht et al. (2015) added that the beliefs of

teachers about their abilities to teach affects how they work with every student in the

classroom. According to the authors, teachers with high self-efficacy work hard to assist

students who are having difficulty. Chao, Forlin, and Ho (2016) also stated that one of the

strongest predictors of a teacher's attitude toward inclusion is their sense of self-efficacy.

In fact, research has shown that there is a positive relationship between teacher self-

efficacy and the attitudes they have toward inclusion (Chao et al., 2016).

The attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding inclusive practice and their

knowledge and skills are pivotal to the success of inclusion (Beacham & Rouse, 2012).

If the attitudes of teachers to inclusion are negative, then the way they relate to SWDs

will be affected. Montgomery and Mirenda (2014) echoed this sentiment when they

stated that teachers who have negative attitudes toward inclusion of SWDs will also have a difficult time providing learning opportunities for these students. Mulcahy, Krezmien, and Maccini (2014) added that teachers often have lower expectations for SWDs and therefore think that they require slow-paced instruction and fewer assignments, while research supports that SWDs should receive more opportunities to respond, along with consistent monitoring and feedback. These perceptions affect teachers' motivation to engage students and thus affect the ability of the student to gain access to the curriculum.

In this study, I focused on elementary and middle school general education SDA teachers' perceived ability to support SWDs in the general classroom. My aim was to determine what teachers believe would increase their level of competence when including SWDs. To understand this phenomenon, I used a qualitative exploratory case study to capture the beliefs of the teachers and to allow them the opportunity to discuss their experiences with these students in the classroom.

Nature of the Study

The research design that that was most effective in providing the information needed to answer the research questions was a qualitative exploratory case study. Yin (2013) stated that a case study looks at a present-day phenomenon in the context of the real-world. A descriptive case study is used to answer questions based on a theoretical construct (Yin, 2013). Mertens and Wilson (2012) added that a case study is used when research is done on a small number of sites, and when rich detail is needed. It involves an in-depth study of a bounded system such as an activity, event, process. or individuals. It is based on an extensive data collection (Creswell, 2012). Anderson, Leahy, DelValle,

Sherman, and Tansey (2014) added that some of the reasons case studies are used are when the behavior of those in the study cannot be manipulated, when it is the intention of the researcher to address contextual situations because it is relevant to the phenomenon that is being studied, or when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon, and the context.

The phenomenon that I studied were the attitudes and beliefs of elementary and middle school SDA teachers about their ability to support SWDs in their classroom. I also investigated what teachers believed would increase their competence when including SWDs. I collected data through direct observations and semistructured interviews of classroom teachers who supported SWDs.

The criteria for participation in the observations and interviews were those teachers who are presently working with SWDs who have an individualized education plan (IEP) within the SDA system. This type of sampling is called purposeful sampling, where the participants that are selected are knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon that is being studied. The participants must be willing and available to participate (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). The semistructured interviews was used to investigate the opinions of teachers toward inclusion of SWDs in the classroom. The data from the interviews will be informed by the observation data. My goal was to observe how SDA teachers supported SWDs in the general education classroom.

I observed 10 K–8 SDA school general education teachers serving SWDs and who indicated their willingness to participate in the study. I also conducted

semistructured interviews with the 10 participants. This meant that there were 10 direct observations and 10 interviews. I collected the data from the observations using field notes and each interview was audio taped. The coding strategies that I used began with a priori coding based on the framework's constructs followed by open coding and axial coding.

Definition of Key Terms

North American Division (NAD): is one of the thirteen divisions of world-wide Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The territories in the division include Bermuda, Canada, Guam/Micronesia and the United States. The NAD includes nine unions plus the Guam-Micronesia Mission. The unions are divided into many conferences (North American Division, 2016).

REACH Manual: is a manual that was created by the NAD Inclusion Commission in 2007. The NAD assembled the commission to develop a comprehensive plan to deal with SWDs in Adventist classrooms. The comprehensive plan was outlined in the REACH Manual (REACH Manual, 2015).

Seventh Day Adventist (SDA): is a Protestant sect that preaches that Jesus is coming soon to this earth. They also observe Saturday as the Sabbath. SDA view God as the definitive source of our existence, truth and power. They believe that the goal of true education is to ensure that human beings are restored into the image of God as it is revealed by the life of Jesus Christ (The Approach and Philosophy of Adventist Education, 2016). According to SDA this type of education is more than just mere academics, "it fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritual, physical,

intellectual, and social-emotional—a process that spans a lifetime. Working together, homes, schools, and churches cooperate with divine agencies to prepare learners to be good citizens in this world and for eternity" (The Approach and Philosophy of Adventist Education, 2016).

Assumptions

All research is based on certain assumptions. Assumptions help to explain the frame of reference from which the researcher sees a situation (Wargo, 2015). In this study, I assumed that the elementary and middle school general education teachers may have negative attitudes toward having SWDs in the classroom. This assumption was necessary based on the research because teachers do not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of SWDs in the classroom. This could therefore mean that the teachers may not be comfortable about having SWDs in the classroom, which could in turn lead to negative feelings.   I also assumed that the participants in the interviews would give honest and accurate responses. If the participants did not give accurate and honest answers, it would have affected the validity of the data and ultimately the results of the study. These assumptions were necessary because the SDA general education elementary and middle school teachers have stated that they are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of SWDs.

Scope and Delimitations

The targeted population of this research were K–8 SDA general education teachers who are now teaching SWDs in their classrooms in Northeastern United States. The focus of this research was limited to the perceptions of 10 general education teachers

regarding including SWDs in their classrooms. This specific population was chosen because they are the teachers who are directly affected by the increase of SWDs in the SDA general education classroom. The SDA school system was also chosen because there is a lack of research in this setting as it relates to teaching SWDs.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that the participants used in this research were only from SDA schools in a Northeast state of the United States. Therefore, the results may not be transferred to teachers in other educational settings. Another limitation was that the results from the observations and interviews may not accurately reflect the participants' perceptions. It was possible that the participants were unwilling to share their true feelings about inclusion because they did not want to be deemed as intolerant or discriminatory if they shared negative feelings about having SWDs in the classroom. Also, qualitative research cannot be generalized. It is instead used to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of a phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2010). Finally, the use of a qualitive case study could have involved researcher bias because my feelings about the issue could have influenced the interview questions asked during the interview as well as what was observed in the classroom. This could have affected the objectivity of the research. To overcome these limitations, I built a relationship with the participants and encouraged them to be open and honest in their responses, one way this was accomplished was by asking indirect or open-ended questions during the interview process. I also ensured that all data collected were analyzed. As Noble and Smith (2015) recommended, I asked a colleague, who was not familiar with the study, to read the

report to check for researcher bias. These are the ways in which research limitations were addressed.

Significance

There are many SWDs in SDA schools (Hale, 2009; REACH Manual, 2015; Sargeant & Berkner, 2015) and SDA K–12 teachers often report that they do not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of these students. I aimed to examine the attitudes and beliefs of general education K–8 teachers about their ability to support SWDs in their classrooms. It is important that these attitudes and beliefs of teachers be examined, because they can have positive or negative effects on the proper implementation of inclusion in the classroom (Crowson & Brandes, 2014; Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Gebbie et al., 2012; Leyser et al., 2011; Montgomery & Mirenda 2014; Urton et al., 2014; Woodcock, 2014). According to Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin, (2012) based on the Bandura theory, the teachers' perceived efficacy influences the learning environment and tasks teachers use for student learning. Therefore, as it relates to the inclusion of SWDs in the general education classroom, it can be concluded that those teachers with high efficacy about the inclusion of SWDs may be more likely to believe that these students can learn well in the general education classroom. On the other hand, those with low self-efficacy may be more likely to believe that there is very little they can do to help a student with special needs in the general education classroom and therefore may not be willing to try to help them (Sharma et al., 2012). Teachers' positive attitudes are instrumental in successful implementation of inclusion (Alrubaian, 2014). The author further stated that negative attitudes have led to the failure of these programs.

I used an under-researched phenomenon within SDA schools. Sargeant and Berkner (2015) found that there is a gap in literature regarding general education elementary and middle school teachers regarding inclusive education within SDA schools. The authors stated that a lack of current research on inclusion within a school system as large as the SDA school system is disturbing. This study therefore added to the literature on inclusive education in the SDA system within the United States.

This study may also benefit the teachers in many ways. One way they may benefit is that they may be made aware of their self-efficacy and how it can affect their attitudes and beliefs about SWDs and their ability to learn. The study may also provide information regarding how they believe their competence in including SWDs in their classroom can be increased. This may inform professional learning for teachers. According to Mastin (2010), a study like this could compel leaders to think of ways in which they may influence change in the attitudes and beliefs of these teachers.

The results from the study may influence social change as it relates to SWDs in SDA schools as it could empower the superintendents and administrators in SDA education to design and implement programs on inclusive education within SDA universities. These programs could train current teachers to meet the needs of SWDs once they arrive in the classroom (Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). The results could possibly add to the body of literature to help universities address the training of pre-service teachers. According to Sharma and Nuttal (2015), educating pre-service teachers, as it relates to inclusion, provides them with relevant and useful information to help them to be comfortable in inclusive settings. Superintendents and administrators may also be

compelled to provide professional development opportunities as well as form professional learning communities within their schools, where teachers who are already in the classroom are supported in their quest to help these students understand the curriculum. As Sargeant and Berkner (2015) stated, teachers need to be encouraged and thoroughly trained to implement inclusion in SDA schools. This may also help to improve their self-efficacy in having SWDs in their classrooms.

Students may also be impacted by this study. Once teachers understand how their attitudes and beliefs about SWDs affects how they teach students, then they may be more willing to change the way they teach. Park, Dimitrov, Das, and Gichuru (2014) stated that the self-efficacy of teachers toward inclusion helps to shape student achievement and behavior as well as the teachers' attitudes. According to Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012), a teacher's self-efficacy can affect student achievement in significant ways. For example, teachers, with high self-efficacy beliefs, may be more likely to implement educational innovations in the classroom and use classroom management techniques and teaching methods that would empower student achievement. Teachers, may also be more likely to take responsibility for SWDs, manage classroom problems, and keep students on task. Shahzad and Naureen (2017) found in their recent research that teachers' self-efficacy, has a positive influence on students' academic achievement.

Summary

This study was primarily focused on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers to teaching SWDs in their classrooms. The study focused on SDA general education teachers in the elementary and middle grades at as SDA conference in New York City.

In this section I discussed the idea that general education elementary and middle school teachers within SDA schools do not feel that they are adequately prepared to teach SWDs. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and beliefs of general education elementary and middle school teachers toward having SWDs in the general education classroom and to determine what teachers believe will increase their confidence in teaching these students

Chapter 2 contains the Literature Review. In this chapter I investigated the literature that supported the idea that the attitudes and beliefs of teachers can affect the implementation of inclusion in classrooms. I looked at what the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers as it related to SDA schools, and the significance of teacher efficacy as it related to changing these attitudes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

SWDs are being enrolled within Adventist schools (Hale, 2009; REACH Manual, 2015; Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). Although SWDs are accepted in SDA schools, there is little research on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in this unique setting about meeting the needs of these students in the classroom (Greulich, 2015). This gap in literature needs to be remedied through research conducted in SDA schools regarding teacher efficacy and how it affects the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding SWDs in SDA schools. There is also a gap in practice as it relates to how SWDs are taught in SDA schools. Greulich (2015) stated that even though the topic of teaching SWDs has been debated and researched for many years, there are still no consistent outcomes within the SDA educational system. The purpose of this case study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers in SDA schools in a Conference in a Northeast state of the United States toward teaching SWDs, and to assess what teachers feel will be necessary in improving their competence as it relates to teaching these students in their classrooms.

As stated previously, research on inclusion within the SDA church is lacking. Sargeant and Berkener (2015) stated that the lack of research in SDA education is quite significant. According to the authors, one such researcher was James Tucker who published the first public work about inclusion within SDA schools in 1996. Nine years later, Walter Douglas (2005) wrote about the future impact of inclusion on SDA education. Sargeant and Berkener (2015) presented their research in 2015 and they posited that an understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as they relate to

teaching SWDs may lead to "better teaching practices for all children in the Adventist school system" (p. 226).

Some of the topics covered in the literature review included the rights of students as addressed by the legislations relating to the education of SWDs, the rights of SWDs within Christian schools, inclusion within Adventist schools, current research on teacher attitudes and beliefs, and teacher efficacy as it related to teaching SWDs. I will address research related to how to increase competency when including SWDs, and teachers' perceived ability to support SWDs in the general classroom with disabilities.

Literature Search Strategy

I used many strategies to conduct the literature review for this study. Some of these strategies included searches on databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, Sage, and ProQuest through Walden University. I searched for peer reviewed articles using the following databases: Research Gate, Google Scholar, and educational institution websites and search engines. Since there was little information on inclusion in SDA education, I used ProQuest to look for dissertations that included the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding inclusion. I also used scholarly books and textbooks in this literature review.

The search terms that I used to identify germane scholarship included: *inclusion, teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusion, teacher perceptions about inclusion,* and *teacher efficacy*. The terms I used to find literature on inclusion in Christian schools included: *attitude and beliefs in Christian schools, legislation/laws on Christian schools, rights of students in Christian schools,* and *elementary and middle school general*

education teachers. As it related to Adventist schools, I used search terms such as *inclusion in Adventist schools, attitudes and beliefs of teachers* with the secondary search key word being on *Seventh Day Adventist schools*. The above-mentioned terms were all used as part of the iterative process in conducting the literature review.

There was limited current research on inclusion in SDA schools, so I contacted authors who had conducted research on SDA inclusion via email to determine if there were any current studies available on inclusion within the SDA education system. Dr. James Tucker stated that he had written an article in the 1996 *Adventist Journal of Education* dedicated Vol. 58, No. 2 on the issue of inclusion in SDA schools. Prior to this, in 1993, he had written an article in the *Journal of Research on Christian Education*.

Conceptual Framework

My study was based on the conceptual framework of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) stated that there is a direct connection between a person's self-efficacy and a change in behavior. Bandura (1977) further stated that self-efficacy comes from four sources: "performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (p. 195). When people interact with each other they gain knowledge, skills and strategies, and develop certain attitudes (Bandura, 1977; Schunk & Usher, 2013). Through their observations, people are also able to learn about the appropriateness, usefulness, and the consequences of behaviors. Friedman and Kass (2002) stated that teacher self-efficacy can be defined as the degree to which a teacher feels confident enough about his or her ability to encourage students' learning. According to Bandura (1993): "teachers' beliefs in their personal efficacy to motivate and

promote learning affect the types of learning environments they create and the level of academic progress their students achieve" (p. 117). A teacher's belief about her ability to teach a student with a disability can affect the learning environment that she creates for the student, which can in turn affect the student's level of achievement. Therefore, if a teacher does not believe that he/she is capable enough to teach SWDs, then his/her attitudes and beliefs about having these students in the classroom can be affected.

Schunk and Usher (2013), in their research on self-efficacy, argued that people usually act based on their beliefs about themselves and their capabilities to accomplish a task. For example, the authors noted that students who hold a sense of self-efficacy as it relates to succeeding and believe that their actions will result in positive outcomes, are motivated to succeed even though the process might be slow. On the other hand, students whose self-efficacy is weak encounter difficulties and are lackadaisical in their work and possess self-doubts about performing well (2013). The same can be said of teachers as it relates to inclusion. Alderman (2013) postulated that the social cognitive theory assumes that there is a direct relationship between a person's cognitive processes and their social environment.

Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) defined efficacy as the perceived capabilities of an individual about his/her ability to perform tasks at designated levels. According to Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016), an individual's self-efficacy can exert a powerful influence on an individual's motivation, achievement, and self-regulation. As it relates to teachers, Sharma and Nuttal (2016) stated that when teachers have a positive attitude toward inclusion then there is high self-efficacy and less of a concern among those

teachers about the effectiveness of inclusion. The teachers also show high efficacy in the implementation of inclusion. Conversely, teachers who do not believe that they are prepared to teach SWDs, show less willingness to adapt and accommodate SWDs in their classrooms. Thus, the efficacy of teachers is important in the successful implementation of inclusion in the classroom and it should be examined to better prepare and train teachers for inclusion.

I examined the attitudes and beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers about teaching SWDs using social cognitive theory. Once these attitudes and beliefs are identified, it may be easier for teachers to improve their self-efficacy when including SWDs in the classroom. It is critical for teachers to have a voice in what they believe can improve their self-efficacy. Having a voice can increase ownership and buy in, which in turn leads to improved self-efficacy. Katz (2015) stated that in this kind of environment, teachers feel more empowered to change their instructional practices. They also take ownership in creating more inclusive classrooms and are motivated to ensure that the needs of the students are being met.

Review of Literature

Laws that Support SWDs

There are many legislations that have been put in place to ensure that the rights of SWDs are taken into consideration. Roden et al. (2013) stated that these legislations have indicated that it is the right of all students according to the law to receive instruction based upon their grade-level criteria. According to the authors, legislation was needed because there was an achievement gap between SWDs and general education students.

Some of these laws have required greater academic rigor and exposure to the general education curriculum for SWDs. McLeskey et al. (2014) indicated that since the passing and implementation of P.L. 94-142 - the EAHCA in 1975, the laws have changed over the years and were used to influence the way that SWDs were educated in classrooms within the United States. These laws are used to close the achievement gap between SWDs and general education students.

IDEA, 1997, for example, required that SWDs be educated alongside their peers, unless they were not able to do so even with accommodations and services. Because of this legislation, administrators, and teachers were influenced to collapse many isolated special education classrooms and instead place SWDs into general education classrooms.

NCLB law of 2002 contained more provisions for SWDs. These provisions were made based on the disability, socio-economic status, language, race, and ethnicity of SWDs. The goal of NCLB was that all students, including SWDs, gain access to the same curriculum as their peers. The law expanded on the reauthorization of the IDEA's requirements. According to this law, SWDs must be given the opportunity to participate in the same statewide assessments as general education students, not an alternate or modified version. These assessments were used to measure how well these students understood the concepts learned in reading and mathematics. According to Kaufman and Blewett (2012), the U.S. Congress shifted its attention from what schools do with these students to how SWDs performed academically. Based on the law, state department of education personnel mandated that teachers be highly qualified in the subjects that they instructed so that they could meet the needs of all students (Kaufman & Blewett, 2012).

A highly qualified teacher will be more likely to provide a high quality of education to all students.

The IDEA law was reauthorized in 2004. According to Yell et al. (2006), the main goal of congress in this reauthorization was to ensure alignment between the NCLB and IDEA. This was accomplished by requiring that all special educations teachers be highly qualified, SWDs be allowed to take state-wide assessments, and that special education services be based on peer-reviewed research. According to the law, no child should be determined as having a disability if the child's problem resulted from a lack of adequate scientifically based instruction in reading, mathematics, or if they had limited proficiency in English (2006). The law included the importance of SWDs being educated in general education classrooms. This means that general education teachers should be exposed to evidence-based practices that can improve the learning of SWDs in general education classrooms. Teachers would be required to teach all learners (McCray & Mc Hatton, 2011; McLeskey et al., 2014). Roden et al. (2013) argued that the NCLB and the IDEA included language that school administration should require that SWDs be given rigorous academic instruction, and that they should be exposed to the general education curriculum. Bennett and Gallagher (2013) echoed this sentiment when they stated that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CDRP) that was adopted in 2006 included narrative that SWDs are entitled to full inclusion in educational settings.

According the Webb, Webb, and Fults-McMurtery (2011), the education of SWDs have changed significantly since the passing of these laws. The authors stated that

physical education teachers for example now have the task of not only dealing with the health and safety of the students, they must be advocates for the SWDs, collaborate with other teachers, and be on the IEP teams to ensure that the needs of these students are met within general education classrooms. Summers, White, Zhang, and Gordon (2014) added that if general education teachers lack knowledge as to what the rights of SWDs are, they will not provide the accommodations that they need, and therefore the students will experience lower levels of academic achievement. The authors further stated that the lack of awareness of teachers about the legal rights of SWDs can be the difference between supports and accommodations that are offered through elementary and secondary special education as specified by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). However, the authors believed that the interpretation and actual implementation of these rights have been quite ambiguous. This idea may be true as it relates to SWDs in Christian schools.

Rights of SWDs in Christian Schools

The number of SWDs have increased in Christian schools and providing the services that these students need is expensive. Christian schools are not equipped with the personnel or equipment to provide services to SWDs. The general education teachers are often not prepared to meet the needs of these students. Sargeant and Berkner (2015) stated that educational experts have stated their belief that the population of SWDs in private schools might be higher than in the public schools. This might be because many parents believe that these schools have smaller student-teacher ratios and teachers care more for their students. Parents therefore believe that the needs of their children will be

better met in these schools (2015). Christian schools are not legally bound to accept

SWDs; however, their doing this is consistent with the values of the Gospel which

discusses ideas such as caring for the marginalized in society. It is a powerful statement

of praxis to make Christian schools accessible to SWDs (Burke & Griffin, 2016; Russo,

Osbourne, Massucci, & Cattarro, 2011).

The laws governing the education of SWDs also seemed to include that Christian

schools should not exclude SWDs from their schools. According to the sections 504

laws:

> [n]o otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall,
>
> solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be
>
> denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or
>
> activity receiving [f]federal financial assistance... (IDEA, 1973)

According to Russo et al. (2011), the fact that the laws included federal financial

assistance, most courts agreed that the 504 section laws also applied to Christian schools.

This is because most of them accept federal financial assistance through Title 1 programs

or free and reduced lunches for their students and is true of the schools in my study.

Therefore, if Christian schools accept students under 504, they are compelled to provide

services that meet the needs of the students. These services are inclusive of aids and

benefits, teacher quality, and hours of instruction that are comparable to students without

disabilities (Burke & Griffin, 2016; Russo et al., 2011).

Once SWDs are accepted into Christian schools, then under IDEA they are

entitled to receive services from individuals who are as qualified as educators in the

public schools (Burke & Griffin, 2016; Russo et al., 2011). The authors added that an IEP is not required for students in Christian schools, because the services that they are offered are less than public school students. However, the IDEA regulations include a requirement that service plans be made to provide the services that the students will receive. These service plans are reviewed and revised by the individuals who created the plan in a manner that is like the process used in creating an IEP. Russo et al. (2011) also stated that in delivering services in Christian schools under IDEA the following guidelines are applied:

> In distinguishing between public and private schools, the regulations use the term including religious schools, highlighting the fact that religiously affiliated nonpublic schools are included within the IDEA's (2004) framework (34 C.F.R. x 300.139(a)). The regulations reiterate that school boards can provide special education and related services that are ''secular, neutral, and non-ideological'' (20 U.S.C. x 1412(a) (10) (vi)(II)) on-site in nonpublic schools (34 C.F.R. x 300.139(a)). The IDEA also specifies that boards can provide related services using their own personnel or by means of contracts with private individuals or groups. (20 U.S.C. x1412(a) (10) (vi)(I)

> In meeting the needs of SWDs in Christian schools' moral obligations are also applicable. Christian schools are guided by the Bible. The Bible extols the virtues of justice and equality. Here are a few Bible verses about these virtues. (Micah 6:8 King James Version): "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

(Luke 14:13 King James Version): "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just…"

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:37-40 King James Version).

Micah 6:8 admonishes us to act justly, Luke 14:13 be inclusive of the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And in Matthew 25:37-40 what you do to the least of my brethren, you have done it to unto me. What the authors of these verses are saying is that Christians have a duty to take care of the needs of those who are less fortunate than themselves. Jesus spent His life on this earth depicting how people are to treat others, therefore the church needs to follow the example of Jesus.

Carlson (2014) discussed the moral obligations of Catholic schools to provide services for these students. According to Carlson (2014), if Catholic schools are to remain true to their teachings, they must offer special education services to students within their schools. The authors further stated that the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) discusses the inclusive nature of Jesus's teachings. CST includes in its first three teachings the dignity of all people, the right of full participation by all, and that it is the responsibility of the church to seek the common good of all. I can therefore infer that

Catholic schools, in seeking the common good of all their students, must provide services for SWDs.

There is limited current research that looks at the moral obligations of Christian schools other than catholic schools to include SWDs in the general education classroom. However, in an early study done by Pudlas (2004), he stated the idea that Christians have a moral obligation to provide services for SWDs. He further stated that Christians are guided by moral values that include love one another. He explored the idea as to whether the beliefs held by Christians are being fulfilled in Christian classrooms. The results of the study included that the needs of these students were not adequately met in the Christian schools. The students reported that they felt less connected to their peers. He concluded that it is important that Christian schools meet the needs of these students to fulfill their Christian beliefs of love for all.

Inclusion and SWDs

Inclusion as it relates to education can be defined as the commitment to the education of a child to the maximum extent possible in the classroom that he or she is enrolled. Inclusion involves ensuring that the child receives the services that they are required to receive and that the child benefits positively from being in that classroom (Kanter, 2018). Monje (2017) stated that inclusion involves creating schools that meet the needs of all students and that these students are all educated in an age-appropriate general education classroom. The author further stated that inclusion is commonly understood to mean including SWDs in a regular classroom for at least portions of the day. Full inclusion means allowing these students to be in the classroom for the entire

day; therefore, all students, including SWDs, should be educated in regular classrooms, and that they are all given the opportunity to access the curriculum and be successful no matter their ability level.

The idea of inclusion of SWDs in general education classrooms seems to have become more of a norm in society. As Overton, Wrench, and Garnett (2017) stated inclusion is an issue that has confronted educational communities around the world. This is largely due to legislations that have supported the rights of SWDs to be fully included in general education classroom. Vlachou, Karadimou, and Koutsogeorgou (2016) added that inclusion of SWDs has been identified as high priority in many policy documents in European and international organizations. However, many countries continue to face difficulty in implementing inclusive policy practice. According to Vlachou et al. (2016) the implementation of inclusion including the reforming of educational practice is predicated on an in-depth consideration of the beliefs on which these practices were based on. Therefore, the participation and attitudes of teachers and other factors such as parent participation are key elements in the successful implementation of inclusion in the classroom.

Inclusion in Adventist Education

There is limited current research about inclusion of SWDs in SDA schools. One SDA author stated the following:

For centuries, civilized societies of people calling themselves Christians tended to ignore those of their number who had disabilities. This occurred despite the clear words of Jesus, who said: 'But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the

maimed, the lame, the blind' (Luke 14:13, RSV). 'And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto them, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Matthew 25:40, KJV). How is it that so many Christians have overlooked those directives?" (Tucker, 1996, p. 9)

Tucker (1996) further stated emphatically that Christian school leaders need to find ways to educate all of God's children. He also stated that it is way past the time that parochial schools deem it important to serve all children not because it is a trendy thing to do but because it is the right thing to do (1996). In a second article written in 2001, Tucker stated that there is a mismatch within the Adventist educational system between philosophy and pedagogy. The practice within the system must exemplify the SDA philosophy of education. The author stated that traditionally parents who had SWDs were told in SDA schools that the system had nothing for them and that the public schools were better equipped to educate them. The SDA parents were then forced to choose other alternatives. According to Tucker (2001), by presenting this argument to parents, the children were being denied Christian education. This went against the SDA philosophy of education, which claims to follow the words of the master teacher Jesus. As previously mentioned, in Matthew 25:45, the author Matthew stated, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these you did not do it to me." Tucker (2001) questioned as to whether SDA educators were complying with the sentiments of this verse metaphorically as it does not seem to apply to the reality of our

schools. Tucker (2001) further stated that the writings of Ellen White, which are revered

by the SDA church as inspired writings, stated:

> Under no circumstances should the teacher manifest partiality. To favor the
>
> winning, attractive pupil, and be critical, impatient, or unsympathetic toward
>
> those who most need encouragement and help, is to reveal a total misconception
>
> of the teacher's work. It is in dealing with the faulty, trying ones that the character
>
> is tested, and it is proved whether the teacher is really qualified for his position.
>
> (White, 1903, p. 280)

To follow the words of our Master Teacher, it is imperative that administrators in SDA

schools train their teachers to meet the needs of every student within their classrooms.

Sargeant and Berkner (2015) looked at this issue from a different perspective.

The authors stated that the board that manages all Adventist schools in the United States,

Canada and Bermuda is called the NAD K–12 Board. Recommendations from this board

guides all the decisions that are made at the local level that is, at every Union and

Conference. The administration and staff at each SDA school are expected to operate

under a nondiscrimination clause, which is voted by every local school board every year

(Hierarchy: NAD K–12 Board/Union/Conference/local church). According to the

authors the general admission requirements for students as stated by the Union Code is

that:

> The Seventh-day Adventist church schools admit students of any race to the
>
> rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available
>
> to students at its schools, and makes no discrimination based on race, creed, color,

ethnic background, country of origin, or gender in administration of education

policies, applications for admission, scholarship or loan programs, and

extracurricular programs. (Southwestern Union Conference, 2007, p. 159)

If this is the admission code for SDA schools, and since the federal laws stated that

SWDs should be included in general education classrooms, then it is imperative that

teachers embrace inclusive classrooms concentrating not only on the exceptional abilities

that some students may have, but also on the challenges of SWDs.

Hale (2009) examined the effect of inclusion of SWDs in SDA elementary

classrooms. Data on the dynamics of full inclusion were gathered by interviewing 15

elementary teachers in the Western Conference of SDA and by information gathered on

the SDA educational policies as it relates to inclusive education. Based on the results,

there are several SWDs attending SDA schools. The study included the types of

disabilities that are seen in Adventist classrooms, the effects of inclusion on the teachers

and the students, and how teachers meet the needs of these students. The author

indicated that within SDA educational policy, there are no mandates that SWDs should

be accepted into SDA schools. However, the students are accepted and therefore need to

be serviced. Sargeant and Berkner (2015) echoed this sentiment when they stated that

individuals in Christian schools see inconsistencies when schools claim to be Christians

but still deny SWDs from enrolling in their schools. It is important that they SDA

schools treat SWDs with dignity.

The contributors to the NAD Office of Education REACH Resource Manual

(2015) added that the number of students with learning and behavioral challenges is

increasing in SDA schools. It is therefore important that SDA educators make a difference in the lives of these students. In beginning to address this issue, the NAD put together the Inclusion Commission in 2007 to develop a plan to address the needs of SWDs in Adventist classrooms. The Inclusion Commission's driving force was the idea that all students can learn at a high level; therefore, SDA teachers need to understand that they must be accommodating of SWDs in the classroom. The comprehensive plan outlined by the Inclusion Commission is outlined in the REACH manual.

Even though this manual has been put in place, there still seems to be a problem within the Adventist system as to how SWDs are educated. Archer (2015) completed a study which looked at how SDA education is dealing with SWDs. All the Unions were contacted to ascertain whether they employed special education teachers, and if not, how they dealt with SWDs. The initial inquiry was done in 2008 and a follow up was conducted in 2014. Of the 911 schools elementary, middle schools, and high schools that responded to the informal surveys in 2008 only 26 schools had a designated special education teacher. In 2014, it was discovered that of the 659 elementary, middle, and high schools that reported, only 41 had special education services provided by a church employee. There were some conferences that provided services by assigning one special education teacher to service many schools. In some schools, the services were offered by K–12 general education teachers who had received some training in special education. However, in most the schools that reported, special education services were not provided. The schools depended on local public resources to meet the needs of the students. Archer (2015) declared "There is a real problem in the provision of special-education services in

Adventist schools in the United States" (p. 5). His study indicated in the initial inquiry in

2008 that less than 2% of elementary schools and less than 3% of middle schools and

high schools provided direct sources of special education services to their students. He

further stated that if the SDA values students as being of equal worth, then it is important

that SDA educators deem it important to include all students with and without disabilities

in all aspects of the learning experience.

Greulich (2015) added to this conversation by stating that even though James

Tucker addressed the need of special education to be a sustainable part of the Adventist

educational system, little has changed over the years. According to the author, there are

still no consistent outcomes as it relates to special education in the Adventist educational

system. Greulich (2015) postulated that special education within the system cannot be

ignored. Many teachers within the system are working with SWDs, and they have stated

that they need more guidance and training in working with this population (2015). The

Journal of Adventist Education dedicated the January 2016 issue to strengthening the

conversation about teaching SWDs within K–12 SDA schools. The articles in this

journal included the most common disabilities and the areas in which SWDs struggle the

most. The author suggested strategies, information, and issues for teachers who deal with

SWDs. According to Greulich, (2015) although the issue could not cover everything as it

relates to teaching SWDs, it was a good place to start the conversation.

Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs

Teachers have implemented inclusion in many classrooms across the US;

however, there has been resistance by teachers to its implementation (Beacham & Rouse,

2012; Berry, 2010; Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2010; Koh & Shin, 2017; Monsen, et al., 2014; Vaz et al, 2014). Many studies included the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as it relates to SWDs in the classroom and the reasons surrounding these attitudes and beliefs. Researchers have been interested in the attitude of teachers as it relates to SWDs because it is important that special educators and general educators work collaboratively to provide appropriate education for these students (Koh & Shin, 2017).

However as inclusive classrooms have become more prevalent, more and more pressure is placed on general education teachers to meet the educational needs of these students. Elementary and secondary general education teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach SWDs in the classroom (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Berry, 2010; Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2010; Koh & Shin, 2017; Monsen et al., 2014; Vaz et al., 2014). Hwang and Evans (2011) added that there is a gap between belief and practice. The authors believe that the gap comes between the theory about inclusion and the practice. They believe however that the attitudes that are held by general education teachers give an idea as to what happens in the classroom when these teachers must meet the needs of SWDs. Forlin, Earle, Loreman, and Sharma (2011) shared this view when they stated that effective inclusionary practice is based on how K–12 teachers view disabilities and their perceived roles of dealing with these students in the classroom.

The purpose of the study conducted by Hwang and Evans (2011) was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of elementary Korean teachers to inclusion of special education students in classrooms. Based on the results, even though the attitudes of the teachers were more positive than negative, they were not necessarily willing to accept SWDs in

their classroom. Teachers did not feel they had adequate time to meet the needs of these students effectively. They also noted that there were insufficient resources and support from administrators (Hwang & Evans, 2011). A study done in Botswana about teacher attitudes about inclusion had similar results. Mukhopadhyay (2014) stated that elementary teachers were not confident about their ability to teach SWDs and they experienced a lack of time to reach SWDs. Woodcock, Hemmings, and Kay (2012) also can relate to the previous studies that were mentioned. In their research on preservice teachers in Australia, they found that teachers were concerned about their qualifications to teach SWDs, the amount of time required for that purpose. As Vlachou et al. (2016) stated that even though inclusion is seen as a high priority in many policy documents internationally, it is still an issue that is widely debated.

A study conducted in Israel presented some facts on the attitudes and beliefs of elementary teachers toward inclusion. According to Gavish and Shimoni (2011), the elementary teachers reported that they felt resentment, a feeling of helplessness, frustration, and burnout because the inclusion of SWDs prevented them from doing their jobs effectively. The teachers further stated that the response to issues that occurred in the classroom were short-term solutions for SWDs, because there was a lack of a systematic plan of action to deal with these issues. The descriptions given above about the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in the study fall in line with the statement given that elementary teachers have a strong influence on how inclusion is implemented in school systems (Vaz et al., 2015).

Teacher Self-efficacy

Mahler, Großschedl, and Harms (2017) defined self-efficacy as a person's belief that they will be able to successfully produce an outcome. As it relates to the education of children, teacher efficacy has to do with the teachers being confident that they can help students to learn (Reyes, Hutchinson, & Little, 2017). Researchers have shown that teacher efficacy influences the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward inclusion. Researchers have also discovered that the teacher's attitude and willingness to teach SWDs, is impacted by the teacher's perceived sense of efficacy in his or her ability to meet the needs of these students (Gebbie et al., 2012; Leyser et al., 2011; Montgomery & Mirenda, 2014). Montgomery and Miranda (2014) indicated that elementary teachers who were exposed to more training as it relates to special education and inclusion had better attitudes and beliefs about inclusion than those who did not.

Urton et al. (2014) indicated that the teacher's attitude toward inclusion was dependent on the teacher's self-efficacy, support from the principal, and the experience that the teachers gained from teaching SWDs. They found that self-efficacy had a positive influence on the willingness of the teachers to have SWDs in their classroom. Crowson and Brandes (2014) also concluded in their study that attitudes and beliefs of teachers to inclusion are based on self-efficacy. They found that anxiety of the teachers in teaching SWDs, coupled with stereotypical ideas concerning these students, were seen in teachers who opposed inclusion. Gal et al (2010) also indicated in their study that resistance toward inclusion are also based on other environmental barriers such as misconceptions, fear, stereotypes, and labeling as it relates to SWDs. These have a

negative effect on self-efficacy. In a study completed by Wang, Hall, and Rahimi (2015) on 523 teachers composed of elementary, secondary, and junior college teachers, it was noted that the self-efficacy of teachers for student engagement and personally controlled attributions were used to predict the psychological well-being of the teacher and their quitting intentions. This therefore indicates the importance of teacher self-efficacy as it relates to inclusion.

Administrative Support

Support from administrators also has an impact on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as it relates to inclusion. This therefore means that the attitudes and beliefs of the administrators themselves can affect how much support that they give to the teachers. Ball and Green (2014) found that the attitudes of the leaders are critical in shaping school culture and embracing inclusive practices. Urton et al. (2014) agreed that school leaders play a key role in promoting inclusive practices within the school and that they have a strong influence on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as to their readiness to teach SWDs. Chakraborty and Ferguson (2012) also reported that:

> The world is looking to teachers to prepare future generations of world citizens. If we are to attract and retain effective teachers and foster their professional growth within supportive learning communities, it is time for education leaders and teacher preparation institutions to advocate for strategic and systematic practices that address the critical need to create supportive and friendly environments for all teachers. (p. 292)

These studies undergird the importance of the support of administrators for teachers who teach SWDs.

The Needs of Teachers in Improving Competency with Inclusion

In the successful implementation of inclusion in classrooms, teachers' attitudes are of paramount importance. As Lee, Yeung, Tracey and Barker (2015) stated teachers play a significant role as agents of change in a classroom. Therefore, a positive attitude toward inclusion will play a large part in how successful inclusion of SWDs will be. Teachers need to feel competent in being able to successfully meet the needs of these students. Improving the competency of teachers with inclusion is therefore important if their attitudes are to improve.

Professional Development

Professional development has been one of the strategies that has been put in place to help to change teacher attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion. Strieker, Logan, and Kuhel (2012) stated that for teachers to be effective in inclusive classrooms they need on-going professional development on the best practices in helping SWDs to succeed. Constant support from administration as well as their peers is also needed. Administrators use ongoing professional development to build the capability of all teachers no matter the setting, to address issues and problems that they may face in the classroom (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Park, Robert, & Stodden, 2012; Strieker et al, 2012).

There are many forms of professional development. Strieker et al. (2012) stated that the two most common forms of professional development are External Expert Model

(EEM) and the Job-Embedded Professional Development Model (JEPD). The EEM involves inviting outside consultants to offer workshops which are designed to motivate teachers to try new ideas. At the end of these sessions, teachers are expected to return to the classrooms and implement these new practices. When teachers attempted these new practices, and they were not successful in their implementation, the teachers would usually abandon these practices (2012). Waldron and McLeskey (2010) echoed that traditional professional development has been the norm for teaching teachers' new strategies. In traditional development, the teachers are passive recipients. After the training, however the teachers are expected to put this training to use in the classroom without, in many cases, any kind of support. This lack of support in implementation is difficult for the teachers, and they are reluctant to try the new strategies in the class. Collaborative professional development (an example JEPD), where teachers are able to collaborate with the special educator and other experts in the field of education will be more effective in helping teachers to implement new strategies in the classroom (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010; Wilcox & Angelis, 2012).

Grima-Farrell (2012) conducted a study that was based on the need of educators to improve inclusive cultures in general education classrooms. The results of the study went hand in hand with the research done by Waldron and McLeskey (2010). For teachers to help to bridge the gap between research and practice, they needed to be educated to collaborate with peers (JEPD) and be supportive of each other. Finn, Swezey, and Warren (2010) added an important idea about Christian schools. They noted that Christian teachers seemed to be lagging as it relates to acquiring the

professional development that they need to improve their teaching and to adequately meet all the needs of the students.   Finn et al (2010) reinforced the concept that Christian teachers should not only be given training in areas that are unique to Christian schools. They must be equipped to meet the needs of students, along with being able to teach the Christian principles taught by the denomination.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs are used to have some effect in helping teachers to adjust their attitudes and beliefs as it relates to inclusion (Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). The authors further stated that the goal of teacher preparation programs, that include courses on inclusion, is to give these teachers relevant information that will help them to be comfortable in inclusive classrooms when they enter the workforce (Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). The authors also added that a lack of formal training by some K–12 pre-service teachers has been shown to reduce their willingness to adapt to teaching SWDs in the classroom.

In the study conducted by Kim (2011), it was discovered that in K–12 pre-service programs where general education and special education programs were infused into the curriculum. The attitudes and beliefs of the teachers were more positive than those teachers who had separate programs. Gao and Meger (2011) also found some positive associations with their attitudes toward SWDs after being engaged in pre-service K–12 teacher programs on inclusion and diversity. In the study done by Sharma and Nuttal (2016), formal education in inclusion was used to alter the attitudes, concerns, and

efficacy of K–12 re-service teachers as it related to teaching SWDs, thus creating positive attitudes toward inclusion.

The results of research on pre-service education in countries outside of the United States (US) seemed to mirror the research done here in the US. Hettiarachchi and Das (2016) conducted a study on inclusion and the perceived preparedness of K–12 teachers in Sri Lanka to teach SWDs. General education teachers did not feel confident in their ability to teach SWDs. Those who had received training while at school did not deem it as enough to meet the needs of these students. In a study conducted in the Netherlands, K–12 teachers also had issues with having to include SWDs in the classroom. The participants in the study specified limited time for the students, lack of experience regarding teaching SWDs, and little knowledge in the area were the greatest barriers to inclusion (Civitillo, Moor, & Vervloed, 2016). The authors concluded that pre-service programs should provide teachers with the strategies and skills that they need to meet the needs of SWDs in the classroom.

Qualitative Research Studies on Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

The attitudes of teachers toward SWDs has been well researched (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Morgan, 2015). Some of the topics included factors that affect teacher attitudes toward SWDs, the rights of SWDs in parochial schools to special education services, and the attitudes of teachers in SDA schools to SWDs. Even though SWDs have a right to special education services in parochial schools, teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach these students (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Berry, 2010; Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2010; Koh & Shin, 2017; Monsen et al., 2014; Vaz, Wilson, Falkmer,

Sim, Scott, Cordier & Falkmer, 2014). K–12 teachers in SDA schools have also had

problems with teaching SWDs. There are limited teachers who are trained in special

education at the schools, so teachers have little guidance as to how to teach SWDs

(Greulich, 2015; Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). This study will fill the gap in literature

related specifically to understanding the attitudes and beliefs of SDA teachers to teaching

SWDs.

A qualitative study was completed by Horton (2013) in public schools on the

attitudes of elementary general education teachers to teaching SWDs. Teachers felt that

there was a need for more collegiate training for teachers to have success in the

implementation of an effective inclusion program. The participants in the study also

pointed out the need for the support of administrators in their quest to teach SWDs.

In a similar study conducted by Sargeant and Berkner (2015), the results were

similar to the results from Horton. K–12 SDA teachers toward teaching SWDs included:

(a) Teachers do have a positive attitude toward inclusion; (b) Teachers felt that

accommodations were needed when teaching SWDs; (c) Inclusion classrooms are

appropriate in Christian classrooms; (d) The need for SDA education administrators to

develop policies for accepting SWDs in classrooms; and (e) SDA teachers can identify

students with special needs. The participants identified two challenges that they have

with inclusion in SDA schools. One of the challenges is the lack of training in effectively

teaching SWDs. The other challenge was the development of resources and policies for

use of teachers in teaching these students. This mirrored the results of previous research

that have been done where elementary general education teachers do not feel adequately

prepared to teach SWDs in the classroom (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Berry, 2010; Karabenick, & Clemens Noda, 2010; Mc Cray & McHatton, 2011; Monsen et al., 2014; Vaz et al,, 2014).

Sargeant and Berkner (2015) stated the need for further research as to identify further challenges that SDA teachers may have, and what they may need to be successful in inclusion classrooms. In this study, I sought to answer these questions and thus give further insight into solutions for the implementation of inclusion in elementary/middle school SDA classrooms.

Summary and Conclusion

Based on the studies discussed in this section, SWDs, according to law, have a right to be educated in inclusive classrooms along with their peers. Even though these students may be in Christian schools, this does not take away their right to be given the services that they need in inclusive classrooms. The fact that the attitudes and beliefs of teachers can affect how SWDs are taught in inclusive classrooms makes it an important issue that needs to be addressed. Teacher efficacy, which is defined as the belief and the confidence that a teacher should effectively meet the needs of the students have, affects the attitudes and beliefs that the teacher has about inclusion. I believe that it is therefore imperative that teacher-preparation programs include classes and student-teaching opportunities as it relates to inclusive classes. It is also important that leadership provide ample opportunities for teachers to gain professional development on inclusion which can assist in changing their attitudes and beliefs about inclusion.

In Chapter 3 I will discuss the research methodology. I will describe how the methodology chosen for this study will help in gathering data that will adequately answer the research questions in this study. I will also discuss the strategies that have been put in place to ensure the validity and reliability of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

I used a qualitative exploratory case study to conduct this research. This method is used to study a phenomenon in its natural context (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). A qualitative exploratory case study is characterized by a lack of preliminary research. When using this method, a researcher can collect data from multiple collection resources (Streb, n.d.). According to Houghton et al. 2013), this helps to produce a more accurate and convincing case study. Yin (2013) added that in analyzing case study methods, those case studies that used more than one source of evidence were rated more highly in terms of the quality of their evidence than those that were dependent on one source of evidence. An exploratory case study was an appropriate method, because in this study I explored how general education teachers perceived their ability to support SWDs.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative study is conducted when there is a concept or phenomenon that needs to be examined (Creswell, 2013). In this research I attempted to examine the phenomenon as it related to the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward inclusion. The following questions guided my research:

1. How do general education K–8 SDA teachers support the academic needs of SWDs?

2. What are K–8 SDA general education teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their ability to support SWDs in the general classroom?

3. What do K–8 SDA general education teachers believe would increase their competence when including SWDs?

This was a qualitative exploratory case study. Creswell (2013) defined an exploratory case study as "as a case study whose main purpose is to identify research questions or procedures to be used in a subsequent research" (p. 238). The main goal of an exploratory case study is to provide the preliminary foundation on which further research can be completed. During a case study, the researcher looks at a real-life case over a certain time frame. The researcher uses in depth data collection, which involves numerous sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents, and reports. The researcher then reports a case description and case themes. The analysis can be from one site or multiple sites. In this study, I explored the phenomenon that occurred at SDA schools, that of the attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding the inclusion of SWDs in the classroom.

A quantitative study was not appropriate for this study because it is an approach that is used for testing theories and examining the relationship between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative studies are utilized to explore and understand how individuals or groups handle a social of human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2013) added that researchers use qualitative studies to analyze problems that cannot simply be solved through observing and comparing numbers and percentages, but through talking to people and allowing them to tell their stories, unfettered by the researcher's expectations or what the literature says about the phenomenon. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) added that qualitative research gives "voice and feelings to the participants under study" (p. 264). I chose a qualitative study for this research because the voices of individuals could be heard.

There are four other types of qualitative research that I considered for this study. The first one that I considered was the narrative research, which involves researchers collecting stories from participants about their lives. The stories may emerge from one that is told to the researcher or develop between the researcher and the participants, or a story intended to be performed to send out a clear message (Creswell, 2013). These stories may be analyzed in many ways and be analyzed thematically (by what was said), structurally (the structure in which the story is told) or by dialogic/performance (who the story is directed toward; (Creswell, 2013). The narrative research was not appropriate for this study because, while the stories of the lives of teachers might be interesting, the purpose of this study was to understand the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward inclusion.

The phenomenological study is another type of qualitative study that involves the common meaning for several individuals as it relates to their lived experience of a concept or phenomenon. The researchers focus on what the participants have in common as they experience the phenomenon. The purpose of this type of research is to reduce the individual experiences with the phenomenon to what Creswell (2013) called "a description of the universal essence" (p. 76). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study.

I also considered using grounded theory for this qualitative study. Grounded theory studies go beyond descriptions to generating or discovering a theory (Creswell, 2013). The researcher finds a general abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction that is grounded in the opinions of participants. The theory is grounded in data from

participants who have gone through the process (Creswell, 2013). The grounded theory did not fit this study because the purpose of this study was not to create a new theory.

Ethnographic studies differ from other qualitative studies in that it examines the pattern of behavior, beliefs and language of participants. Ethnographers focus on an entire culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2013). They describe and interpret, according to Creswell (2013), "the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (p. 90). Lodico et al. (2010) added that in ethnographic studies, researchers examine culture and community, and how people within that culture or community interact. This type of study would not allow me to answer the research questions since I would not gain insights into how the attitudes and beliefs of teachers influenced their ability to support SWDs in their classroom.

The above methods did not fit the purpose for this study. As Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) stated, through a case study, the researcher gains an in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation. The researcher is also able to study a phenomenon in its natural context (Haughton, Casey, & Shaw, 2013). Hancock and Algozzine (2015) also proposed that it can add strength to what other researchers have already discovered in previous studies. In this study, I examined how K–8 general education teachers in the SDA conference in a Northeast state of the United States supported SWDs, and the attitudes and beliefs of these teachers regarding meeting the needs of these students in their classrooms. I observed how the teachers sought to support the needs of SWDs in the class, and the semistructured interviews corroborated

what I discovered in the observations. The data that I collected were helpful in gaining an understanding of the phenomenon.

The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the goal of the researcher is to understand the phenomenon from the participant's point of view. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2015), this is called the *emic*, or insider's view, rather than the *etic*, or outsider's point of view. The researcher examines the experiences of people and interpret the meaning that they place on it (O'Grady, 2016). It is also important that the researcher shows respect to their participants. In this way, they will feel more comfortable in participating in the research. O'Grady (2016) stated that just as respect plays an important role in any interpersonal relationships, it is an important ingredient in qualitative research. Respect leads to cultivating trust between the researcher and the participant.

In this study, my role was that of an investigator. I tried to ensure that there was no researcher bias. This was because as a researcher, I was interpreting data from observations and formulating questions for the interviews. I am not a teacher in any of the schools; however, I have taught in this conference, so I know many of the participants. The reports could therefore be framed based on the point of view of the researcher. In this research, the questions for the interviews were thoughtfully composed based on the concepts and constructs from the framework. I also had the interview questions reviewed by other researchers who are completing or completed academic qualitative research outside of the study for clarity and readability, as well as to ensure that the interview questions were achieving the purpose for which they were written.

Methodology

Participant Selection

To gain access to participants, a researcher must take into consideration the ethical responsibilities. To ensure that my research was ethically sound would require approval of my research by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. Once I received the approval from the IRB, I received permission from the superintendent, who then informed each administrator of the schools where there were potential participants. I attended a faculty meeting and discussed the purpose of my study and invited teachers to participate. Only teachers who met the criterion described below were invited to participate. These participants then had to sign the informed consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study.

Once the teachers accepted the invitation to participate, and I began interactions with them, I ensured that my actions showed that I respected my participants. According to O' Grady (2016), these actions include: courtesy, listening, and sensitivity to the needs of the participant. The relationship between the researcher and the participant must also be nonthreatening in nature. I also needed to avoid collusion, which meant that the participant felt obligated to respect the researcher because he/she was shown respect in other capacities. This could have resulted in the participant giving the researcher answers they believed were needed rather than truthful answers, thus threatening the validity of the findings (O'Grady, 2016). It was important that I constantly evaluated my practice accordingly.

During the study, it was important that I asked the participants about their respective experiences with inclusion (O'Grady, 2016). This type of relationship helps the researcher to get the answers that they are seeking and provide validity in their findings. The Conference in the Northeast state where the study was conducted has 17 schools, 124 teachers, and over 2000 students. The schools ranged from preschool through grade 12 in five states. The local site was three elementary/middle schools in this Conference.

The participants for this study were 10 teachers from these elementary schools. The criteria for participation in the study were those elementary and middle school general education teachers who are presently working with SWDs identified with an IEP within the SDA system. The teachers were required to have at least 1 year of experience working with SWDs and currently be working with these students. To identify these potential participants, I shared the criterion for participation with the principal so that he/she could identify the potential participants. During my initial visit to the research sites, only teachers identified by the principal were invited to participate in the study. This type of sampling is called purposeful sampling, where the participants who are selected are knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomenon that is being studied. They are also available and willing to participate (Palinkas et al., 2015). The rationale for the sample size was that since the Conference's education system was very small, and the probability of finding a large number of teachers who taught SWDs were limited, a sample of 9–12 participants who met the criterion would lead to saturation of results. Sample sizes in qualitative studies must be large enough to attain enough data to describe

the phenomenon being studied, and to address the research questions. The goal is the attainment of saturation which means that adding more participants to the study would not result in any new information being added to the study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013).

As stated previously, once I received permission from the IRB to begin my research, all the teachers who met the criterion from these three schools were invited to participate in the study. I asked each principal via an email message for permission to attend a faculty meeting to explain my study. The timeframe for attending a faculty meeting at each of these schools was approximately two weeks. The rationale for including all the teachers that met the criterion was that the SDA schools are small. Therefore, the probability of having enough general education teachers, who would have had experience in working with SWDs agreeing to participate in the study, would be greater if all the teachers who meet the criterion were invited to participate. The consent forms were handed out at the meeting, and the teachers were invited to read, and complete the form and return immediately to me. I took the email addresses of those teachers who preferred more time to contemplate taking part in the study and email the consent form to them. These teachers were encouraged to return the consent forms via email within a two-week time frame.

The purpose and nature of the study was explained on the consent form. The teachers were also informed that their responses from the semistructured interviews and field notes from the observations would be anonymous. At the bottom of the letter of consent form, there was a section where teachers indicated whether they consented to

participate in the study. The goal was to have 9-12 teachers indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using direct observations and semistructured interviews. An observation protocol (Appendix A) was used to collect data on how teachers interacted with SWDs in their classrooms. I created the observation protocol which was used to observe the teacher's performance and behaviors in teaching students with disability. This protocol was adapted from the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) survey which was designed to measure the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as it relates to teaching SWDs (Park et al., 2014). The chosen statements were related to the theoretical framework of the study and assisted me in answering the research questions.

Sharma et al. (2012) developed the TEIP survey to measure teacher efficacy as it relates to teaching SWDs in the classroom. Malinen et al. (2013) designed a survey to examine a teacher's efficacy in instruction, managing behavior, and collaboration. I chose items related to instruction based on the needs of the students in the observation protocol. Content validity was established by sending the observation protocol to qualitative researchers for validation.

I used the semistructured interviews to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of teachers about including SWDs in the classroom, and what teachers felt would increase their level of competence when meeting the needs of these students in the classroom. I used the interviews to explore personal experiences (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). An interview protocol (Appendix B) was included in the study. I created the protocol with

six open-ended questions. The questions were created to answer the research questions

and were based on the theoretical framework and current related literature. Part of the

interview protocol also contained follow-up probing questions which were used when

needed during the interview process. The use of open-ended questions in semistructured

interviews can help to reduce the feelings of fear or coercion (Laureate, Inc., 2012).

Creswell (2012) stated that participants are better able to express their true feelings about

a topic when open-ended questions are used in interviews. This is because they may not

believe that the researcher is imposing their ideas on them or forcing them to give the

answers that the researcher wants them to give (Creswell, 2012). This is important if the

findings of the study are to be valid.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once I received the approval from the IRB, the superintendent then informed each

administrator of the schools where there were potential participants. I attended a faculty

meeting at each school and discussed the purpose of my study and then invited teachers

to participate. Only teachers who met the criterion described below were invited to

participate. These participants then had to sign the informed consent form indicating their

willingness to participate in the study.

Once the teachers accepted the invitation to participate, and I began interactions

with them, I tried to ensure that my actions showed that I respected my participants.

According to O' Grady (2016), these actions should include: courtesy, listening and

sensitivity to the needs of the participant. The relationship between me and the

participants was non-threatening in nature. I also tried to avoid collusion which meant

that the participants did not feel obligated to respect me because he/she was shown respect in other capacities. If this occurred, it could have resulted in the participant giving me the answer that I wanted instead of the truthful answers that were needed, thus threatening the validity of the findings (O'Grady, 2016). It was therefore important that I constantly evaluate my practice. This type of relationship helped to get the answers that I was seeking and provided validity in my findings. The Conference in the metro-area of a Northeast state of the United States, where the study was conducted has 17 schools, 124 teachers, and over 2000 students. The schools ranged from preschool through grade 12 in five states. The local site was three K–8 schools.

The first 10 teachers to return their signed consent form were the ones who were observed and interviewed. As stated previously, through the consent form, I informed the participants of the purpose of the study, the procedures, benefits, and risks that could result from the study. I also let the participants know their right to ask questions, to receive results from the study, and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time (Clarke, 2016). If a teacher decided to withdraw from the study, they understood that the data collected up to the time of withdrawal would be used. Participants were assured of anonymity in the study in that they were assigned numbers rather than the use of their names. The participants also understood that if they decided to withdraw from the study, they had the right to withdraw any data collected up to the point of their withdrawal from the study. If a participant only participated in the observation but opted out of being interviewed, the data would be reported as part of the sample of the study; however, the data from the observation would not be reported in the findings of the study.

Data were collected using direct observations and semistructured interviews. This combination of more than one source of data to study one phenomenon is called triangulation (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Lambert and Loiselle (2008) added that triangulation helps to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. The data from both sources were used for data completeness. In other words, each method was used to obtain data on different parts of the phenomenon and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008).

The direct observations were conducted first. Observations allowed the researcher to see what people do rather than the person simply stating what they do (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2017). The observations were conducted in the classroom of the participants and each participant was observed one time. The observations were 45-60 minutes long depending on the grade level that was observed, and each teacher was observed once. There were many questions to take into consideration in conducting the observations: 1. What were the teachers doing during the lessons to engage SWDs? 2. How exactly did they do this? 3. How were they interacting with SWDs? To answer these questions during the observation, an inclusive observation protocol was used (Appendix A).

The interviews were used to gather descriptive data in the words of the participants. Through the interview, I gained some insight into how the participants viewed the phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I used an interview protocol to guide the interviews. The protocol was developed with the research questions in mind and was guided by the framework of the study and literature review. According to Creswell

(2013), the protocol is a form that is designed by qualitative researchers to record information collected during interviews of participants. In the case of these interviews, the protocol included the instructions for the interview process, and the questions that were asked during the interview (Appendix B). The semistructured interviews for this study lasted no more than 60 minutes and were done via telephone. Participants were interviewed once, and interviews were audiotaped. After each interview, the participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns about anything discussed during the interview or concerning the study. I assured them that everything they have said in the interview was confidential. They then exited the interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves, examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or re-combining evidence to produce valid and reliable results (Yin, 2013). The first coding strategy I used was a priori coding, which was based on the framework's constructs. This was followed by an open coding process, and finally axial coding was used to create the final themes for the results (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). This type of coding process was an inductive way of narrowing the data into specific themes. The raw data were systematically organized by looking at the data and searching for patterns, insights or concepts based on the framework of the constructs (Yin, 2013).

The audiotaped recordings of interviews were transcribed using transcribing software from Trint. The Trint software was used to convert the audio file into text. The transcripts of the texts was then used for the data analysis.

Following a priori coding, an open-coding process was conducted to discover any emerging temporary themes (Miles et al., 2014). Open coding involved reading through the data several times and labeling concepts, defining, and developing categories based on any emerging themes from the data (Khandkar, n.d.). Open coding involved carefully reading the data and identifying all the statements that were related to the research questions and assigning a code to each one. The codes were then noted, and each relevant statement was then organized under its proper code (Miles et al., 2014).

The final step in the process was to group together common themes and identify the major ideas from the study called axial coding (Clarke, 2016). This involved finding how the categories and concepts were related to each other. It involved finding a relationship between a list of open codes (Miles et al., 2014). It involved relating data together to reveal codes, categories, and sub-categories that was grounded in the participants' voices within the data (Allen, 2017). In other words, it meant looking for relationships within open codes. This coding and theme process continued until no new codes or themes were found (saturation is achieved). According to Clarke (2016), this is the point where no more pre-determined codes, themes or details can be found in the data.

The data from the interviews were used to corroborate the data from the observations, which is called triangulation. I triangulated the findings by combining the analysis with data from another source (Yin, 2013). This was done by searching for patterns, insights or concepts that look like they can answer the research questions (Yin,

2013). These data should have a connection to the research questions and answer the

research questions.

Data integration was also important, which meant moving back and forth

between both data sets to look for data convergence, divergence, and complementarity

(Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Miles et al. (2014) described this as data condensation

where the researcher sorts, sharpens, and focuses data in such a way so that when the

final conclusions are made, they could be verified. The data were also displayed using

visual representation of the results. According to the authors, these could be used to

assemble the organized information into a more compact form, so it can be more easily

analyzed (2014).

The Qsr Nvivo software was used to help manage the data from the observations

and the semistructured interviews. This software was used to organize, analyze and find

insights in unstructured qualitative data. It gave me the tools that were needed to ask

questions of the data more efficiently (QSR International, n.d.). According to Houghton

et al. (2013), Qsr NVivo is beneficial as a data management tool, because "it can provide

a comprehensive audit trail to depict decisions made during the research process" (p. 16).

Any data that were not related to the themes were noted as discrepant data and reported in

the findings.

Trustworthiness

For the findings of a study to be authentic, it is important that the researcher

ensures that his or her research has credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. Houghton et al. (2013) termed it as authenticity or rigor in qualitative

research. According to the authors, qualitative research is increasingly being acknowledged for its contribution to knowledge. However, because of the flexible nature of qualitative research, strategies to ensure rigor must be put in place.

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the "value and believability" of the findings (Houghton et al., 2013). This process involves two processes which ensures that the research is completed with credibility. This means that the data are analyzed until there is a clear understanding of the phenomena that was being investigated. It therefore meant following all qualitative procedures to ensure that the study's findings were believable and credible. According to Houghton et al. (2013), the lack of any new emerging themes in the data indicated that saturation had been achieved.

Credibility was to be achieved using triangulation to ensure that the data are confirmed and complete (Houghton, et al., 2013). In this study, this was done by comparing the data received from the observations with the data from the semistructured interviews. According to Houghton et al. (2013) if the findings are consistent then it will increase the credibility of the findings. The data from the interviews added more depth to the findings from the observations.

As stated previously member checking is another way to ensure credibility. According to Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell and Walter, (2016), member checking is used to "validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results" (p. 10). The input from the participant is used to correct the subjective bias of the researcher (Smith & McGannon, 2017). This ensures the reliability of the research. To accomplish this, the

results are sent to the participants so that they can check for accuracy and to see if it

resonates with what they have experienced. This gives the participants the opportunity to

give feedback on the accuracy of the data (Clarke, 2016). In this study, there will be two

methods used for member checking. The first method was that the individual transcripts

of interview participants was returned to the participant for verification (Birt et al., 2016;

Thomas, 2017). Once an interview was completed, the recording was transcribed using

the Trint software and was then sent to the participant for review. This enabled the

participant to check the transcript to see if it was transcribed accurately. It also allowed

the participant to add new data or delete any data which they no longer wish to use (Birt

et al., 2016). Allowing the participants to respond to what they said in the interview

could improve the accuracy of the study (Harper & Cole, 2012).

The second method was member-checking using synthesized analyzed data. It

involved returning a summary of the findings to the participants for them to check the

findings for accuracy of their data. The participants should see their own experiences in

the synthesized themes (Birt et al., 2016). This will be done once the narrative is written

based on the findings. Through the methods of triangulation and member checking,

credibility of the study will be achieved.

Transferability

For there to be transferability in research, it is important that the original context

of the research be described adequately so that individuals can use the findings in their

own context. Houghton et al. (2013) stated that "the responsibility of the researcher lies

is in providing detailed descriptions for the reader to make informed decisions about the

transferability of the findings to their specific contexts" (p. 16). This means that in this

study I needed to provide thick descriptions of the phenomenon. This included accounts

of the context and examples of raw data such as direct quotes from the participants, and

excerpts from the field notes that show how themes were developed from the data

(Houghton et al., 2013). A thorough job was done in describing the context of the

research and the assumptions that were essential to the research.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to how stable the data are while confirmability refers to the

"neutrality and accuracy" of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). Dependability helps to

establish that the results of the study is consistent and can be repeated. The aim of the

researcher is to ensure that the research findings are consistent with the raw data that

were collected. This can be done using an inquiry audit. This means having an outside

qualitative researcher examine the processes of data collection, the analysis and the

results of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013) This is done to confirm

the reliability of the findings to the data that were collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2014;

Yilmaz, 2013) .

Confirmability refers to the conclusions gained from the study that can be

confirmed or corroborated by the participants (Houghton et al., 2013). It is based on the

narrative of participants rather than researcher bias. This can be done through an audit

trail. The audit trail is the most popular technique that is used by researchers to establish

confirmability. To do this I had to outline all the decisions that were made during the

research process. This provided a rationale for all the methodological and interpretative

judgments that have been made during the research (2013). The Nvivo computer software helped me to track all the decisions that were made during data collection and analysis. Houghton, et al. (2013) added that the 'query tools' on the software will allow the researcher to not only audit his or her findings, but also to guard against emphasizing excessive findings that suits the researchers fancy. The query tools included text search, coding and matrix queries (2013).

Ethical Procedures

There were many measures that were put in place to ensure that this study was ethically sound. These procedures included firstly gaining permission from Walden's IRB and gaining permission from the superintendent of schools, and the principals of the local sites. It also entailed establishing and maintaining the protection of the identities of the participants. The participants signed a consent form which informed them of the purpose and process of the study. They also knew that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point during the study. If the participant decided to withdraw from the study, they understood that they had the right to withdraw any data collected up to the point of their withdrawal from the study. If a participant only participated in the observation but opted out of being interviewed, this would be reported as part of the sample of the study, however the data from the observation would not be reported in the findings of the study.

To maintain anonymity during the interview process, participants were assigned a random number, and they were referred to by that number throughout the data collection and analysis processes, and also when reporting the findings of the study. This helped to

protect their identity. The ethical handling and storage of paper documents and electronic documents would be carefully considered during this process. All data were placed in a participant file and coded with an assigned number. This will be kept in a secured area in my home. The participant files that are stored on my computer was saved using the participant's assigned number. The documents will be destroyed after five years using a shredder after the research has been completed, as well as the interview recordings being deleted.

Data from the observation was gathered using field notes. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, I kept the observation of each teacher anonymous or limited the types of identifiers. Each teacher who was observed was interviewed so the numbers they were assigned in the observation process was used during their interviews. Another way to maintain confidentiality was to tell participants that the information gathered from the observations would remain confidential. The field notes are being kept in a secured and locked area in my home. After the study has been completed, the notes will be shredded.

Summary

This chapter gave an overview of the research methods that were used in this study. It gave a description of my role as a researcher, the methodology, research design and rationale of the study. It is important in any research that the researcher understands his or her role and chooses the right methodology for completing their research. This is important because mistakes in these areas will impact the findings of the study. Researchers also must be ethically responsible during the research process. It is

important that they retrieve the necessary permission from the IRB and their local sites.

They also must ensure that the identity of participants is never exposed or violated.

Researchers also must be cognizant of the fact that for their research to be authentic, they

need to put in place measures that will assist in guaranteeing that their research is

dependable, transferable, and credible. The research should also be able to be confirmed.

In other words, it should be neutral and accurate. In Chapter 4, I will be presenting the

findings of the study completed at the local site.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of SDA general education K–8 teachers regarding having SWDs in the general education classroom, and to determine how they supported the academic needs of these students. I also determined what these teachers believed would increase their confidence in teaching SWDs. The following questions guided this research:

1. How do general education K–8 SDA teachers support the academic needs of SWDs?

2. What are SDA general education K–8 teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their ability to support SWDs in the general classroom?

3. What do SDA general education K–8 teachers believe would increase their competence when including SWDs?

This chapter includes information on the setting, data collection and analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness as it relates to the results of the study.

Setting

I conducted this study at three K–8 SDA schools in the metro area of a Northeast state of the United States. The criteria for participation in the study included elementary and middle school general education teachers who currently taught SWDs identified with an IEP within the SDA system. The teachers were required to have at least 1 year of experience working with SWDs. The participant teachers ranged in experience from 5–34 years of working with SWDs in their classrooms.

The table below describes the participant teachers based on their self-reported years of teaching, special education training, and years of teaching SWDs in the classroom. Eight of the teachers had completed at least one college course in Special Education, one teacher had a master's degree in special education and one teacher completed a combination degree of education and special education (see Table 1). The teaching experience ranged from 10 to 45 years. There was one male teacher and nine female teachers who signed consent forms and participated in the observations and interviews.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

PARTICIPANTS	HIGHEST DEGREE	SPECIALAL EDUCATION TRAINING	NUMBER OF YEARS AS A GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TEACHING SWDS
Participant 1	BS Education	At least one class	20	10
Participant 2	MS Sociology	At least one class	45	15
Participant 3	MSED	Double major in General Ed/SPED	34	15
Participant 4	MSED	Master's Degree in SPED	10	10
Participant 5	MSED	At least one class	32	6
Participant 6	MSED	At least one class	25	5
Participant 7	MSED	At least one class	25	10
Participant 8	BS Education	At least one class	23	23
Participant 9	MSED	At least one class	39	28
Participant 10	MSED	15 credits in SPED	34	34

Data Collection

The participants for this study were 10 teachers from three SDA elementary schools in the metro area of a Northeast state of the United States. The distribution of participants was as follows: School A six teachers, School B two teachers, and School C two teachers. I collected the data through direct observations followed by interviews of all 10 participants. Two of the schools contained multigrade classrooms, meaning that

there were two or more grades in each classroom, and in the third school there was one teacher per grade. In Grades 6–8 the teachers were assigned classes based on their subject knowledge.

I collected the observation data first using the observation protocol. Each observation lasted approximately 45–60 minutes depending on the length of the class period. I wrote observation data as field notes and then typed them and uploaded them to the NVIVO software. I interviewed each participant about a month later using the interview protocol. The interviews were audio-recorded using voice memos on my iPhone and the Trint software was used to transcribe each interview. I then sent the transcripts to each participant for review. They were encouraged to give feedback on anything that was captured incorrectly. I then stored the data sets in NVIVO using a participant ID to ensure confidentiality.

The entire process between the collection of the data and the transcript review took approximately 3 months. This timeframe was different from the timing discussed in Chapter 3. The original timeframe between the interview and the transcript was intended to be just 1 day. However, because of the accents of the participants, the Trint software did not accurately transcribe the interviews. I spent additional time transcribing each interview manually. The review of the transcript by each participant took approximately 2 weeks. Once the transcript was returned to me the data analysis process began.

Data Analysis

First, I read the observation data and the interview transcript to identify commonalities and differences between the observations and the interviews. I then

identified a priori codes from the observation and interview data. The a priori codes

reflected the framework's constructs, related literature and the research questions. I then

used the a priori codes and other relevant data for open coding. Next, I identified similar

codes which were then grouped under the same themes or categories, and under similar

headings and sub-headings to show their connections as recommended by Braun and

Clarke (2006) and Yin (2014), in a process known as axial coding. This process involved

identifying words, phrases or sentences with similar meanings which were then coded on

the same themes and in some cases subthemes. I used the Nvivo qualitative software

package to store and sort the data.

Table 2 below shows the a priori, open coding and axial coding that was derived

from the data. Any duplicate nodes that I found in the data were deleted, and similar

nodes were merged to reduce the themes. I then exported the completed nodes from

Nvivo, which was used for data storage and management, to the Microsoft Excel format,

where I created comparison analysis tables from the exported data to reflect the findings

and results for the observation and interview themes.

Discrepant Cases

There were no discrepant cases found in the data. All data were utilized.

Table 2

Description of a priori, open coding and axial coding

Priori Codes	Open Codes	Axial Codes
Instructional Strategies	Support academic needs of SWDs (all ten)	• Allocating extra time • Group work • Peer tutoring • Hands on materials and work • One on one teaching • Use of visual materials • Modification of assignments • Differentiated instruction • Extra help after school
	Support academic needs of SWD's from other resources (3 out of 10)	• Assessing and meeting of IEP Goals • Working with Special Education teacher support services(SETSS) • Use of REACH Manual
Belief in Ability	Challenges with SWDs (all ten)	• Struggles to support behavioral issues with students • Improper use of time • Disruptive • Destruction of materials • Students lack ideas • Students easily distracted • Large numbers of SWDs in the classroom
	Teachers' positive response to SWDS (5 out of 10)	• Accepting of SWD's in their classroom • Patient with SWDs • Use of words of affirmations • Use of faith (WWJD) • Believes SWDs can learn
	Teachers not confident (5 out of 10)	• Feels frustrated • Unable to satisfy needs of SWDs • SDA system not preparing teachers to teach SWDs • Additional personnel needed in the classroom to assist SWDs
	Lack of support (all 10)	• Lack of administrative support • Lack of adequate resources(classroom materials, training) • Support with behavioral issues
Needs for Increased Competence	Training (8 out of 10)	• Coaching and modeling • Professional development sessions • Instructional and behavioral strategies to support SWDs
	Classroom support (all 10)	• Adequate resources • Learning from personnel with specialized skills • Paraprofessionals • Parents and Stakeholder involvement

Results

My study was used to examine how these SDA K–8 teachers supported SWDs, their attitudes and beliefs about their ability to support SWDs in the classroom, and what the teachers felt would increase their competence when including SWDs. Each finding is based on the research questions and is discussed in the following section.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do General Education SDA K–8 Teachers Support the Academic Needs of SWDs?

To answer RQ1, two interview questions were asked (Interview questions 1 and 2) and collected observation data to provide answers. Instructional strategies were the main theme that emerged from the analysis of the data along with two subthemes. The subthemes were teacher supporting the academic needs of students of students within the classroom, and teacher supporting the academic needs of students from other resources.

Theme 1: Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategies was the main theme found for RQ1. The instructional strategies the teachers' implement to support SWDs are crucial to supporting the students' academic needs. The subthemes within the instructional strategies were supporting the academic needs of SWDs within the classroom as well as supporting SWDs with other resources.

Interviews

All 10 teachers mentioned in the interviews various instructional strategies they used with SWDs. As some of the teachers stated, these strategies are necessary because the students are often at different levels then other students. There is therefore a

conceptual gap in their understanding of concepts, so they require extra help. The

various instructional strategies mentioned during interviews and those observed during

the classroom observations are contained in Table 3.

Table 3

Supporting the Academic needs of SWDs

Theme 1- Instructional Strategies	Observations	Interviews
Sub-theme 1- Support academic needs of SWDs		
Allocating extra time		P1, P2, P8, P9
Group work and peer tutoring	*P1, P5*	P1, P3, P5, P7, P9, P10
Hands on materials and work	*P2*	P1, P6,P10
One on one teaching	*P2, P5*	P2,P3,P4,P7,P10
Use of visual materials	*P2, P5*	P2,P10
Modification of assignments		P1, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9,P10
Differentiated instruction		P4, P9, P10
Extra work after school		P1
Whole-class instruction	*All ten teachers*	
Variety of assessment strategies	*P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10*	
Sub-theme 2- Support academic needs of SWD's with other resources		
Assessing and meeting of IEP goals		P4, P6, P8
Working with SETSS Teacher	*P5*	P5, P6
Use of REACH Manual		P4

Subtheme 1: Support Academic Needs of SWDs. During the interviews, the

majority of the teachers (seven out of 10) mentioned that one of the ways they meet the

needs of SWDs is through the modification of assignments. Participant 5 stated "…in

math, I would give the child a calculator to help them find the solution to the problems."

Participant 7 stated "If I give 10 questions, …they can do one or two then that's it."

Eight teachers mentioned that they used peer-tutoring and group work to support

SWDs while three stated that they used hands-on work/materials (see Table 3).

Participant 1 stated "I do group work, pairing up the weak [student] with the strong

[student]." Participant 2 stated "sometimes I have to work with them one on one to ensure

that the work is done [while the students are working in groups]."

Observations

During the observations, all 10 teachers used the traditional method of whole-

class instruction. However, all 10 teachers used a variety of assessment strategies to

assess student understanding of the content as they were being taught. Some of these

strategies included questioning, which in some cases the questions were posed directly to

the SWD. Other strategies included partner activity which included the SWD working

with another student to solve a math problem or working together on a comprehension

question in reading. Group share involved sharing the answer on a question they had

worked on.

In eight out of 10 teachers' classrooms observed, the SWDs were doing the same

classroom activities as everyone else. As noted in Table 3, only two teachers were

observed as working individually with the SWDs. The interview data were not supported

by the observation data for modification of instruction for SWDs. During the interviews,

all 10 stated that they used instructional strategies to support SWDs, but during

observations only two teachers were observed as using additional instructional strategies

(other than those already used with the entire class such as visual materials) during their

lessons to assist in the learning of a concept with SWDs.

Subtheme 2: Support Academic Needs of SWDs with Other Resources.

During the interviews, there were four teachers who stated that they supported SWDs with other resources such as insights from the Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teacher and the Reach Manual (a plan to address the needs of SWDs in Adventist classrooms). There were three teachers who mentioned that assessing and meeting the IEP goals was another way they supported SWDs in their classrooms. Participant 4 stated "I definitely want to see their IEP, to find out what their goals are, and then find out what [the student's] strengths are…I know I have to differentiate instruction." Participant 8 posited "I use the IEP to make goals for the SWDs, but my goal [for the student] is usually higher than the IEP [indicates]." Participant 9 added "I look up at whatever they [IEP committee] have recommended for them and I follow through with whatever has been stipulated in the IEP."

Research Question 2 (RQ2)- What are SDA General Education K–8 Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs About Their Ability to Support SWDs in the General Classroom?

The data from the interview (Interview questions 3 and 4) and observations were also used to answer RQ2. One theme and four subthemes emerged from the data. The main theme was the teachers' belief in their ability to support SWDs. The sub-themes that emerged under this theme included the teachers' challenges with SWDs, teachers' positive response to SWDs, teacher confidence with having SWDs in their individual classrooms, and the lack of support in the classroom.

Theme 2: Belief in Their Ability

During the interviews, there were many elements that emerged from the data that alluded to the attitudes and beliefs of teachers about their ability to support SWDs in the classroom. In Table 4 can be noted the teachers' experiences with SWDs mentioned during the interviews.

Table 4
Teachers' experiences with SWDs

Theme 2: Belief in Ability	Participants results
Sub-theme 3- Teacher challenges with SWD's	
Destruction of materials	P2
Aggressive and disruptive	P2, P3,P4, P5,P7, P8, P9, P10
Improper time usage	P2, P6
Students easily distracted	P2,P7,P8
Students lack ideas	P1,P2,P8
Large numbers of SWDs in the classroom	P4, P9, P10
Sub-theme 4- Teachers' positive response to SWDs	
Accepting of SWDs in classroom	P1, P4,P5, P6, P8, P10
Patient with SWDs	P1, P7
Use of words of affirmations	P1
Use of faith (WWJD)	P7
Believes SWDs can learn	P1, P2, P4, P7, P8, P9, 10
Sub-theme 5- Teachers not confident	
Feels frustrated	P2, P3, P4, P9
Unable to satisfy needs of SWDs	P3,P6,P7, P8, P9, P10
SDA system not preparing teachers to teach SWDs	P3
Sub-theme 6- Lack of support	
Lack of administrative support	P3, P4
Lack of adequate resources(classroom materials, training)	P2, P9
Support with behavioral issues	P2, P3, P4
Additional personnel needed in the classroom to assist SWDs	P3, P5, P9

Subtheme 3: Teacher Challenges with SWDs. During the interviews eight of the teachers (see table 4) mentioned that they struggled with the aggressive and disruptive behavior of SWDs in the classroom. Participant 2 stated "they disrupt the class; sometimes they do not want to do what is planned for the day." Participant 3 stated "when the SWD is disruptive… and you have to stop what you are doing to take care of that, what happens is that the other students also start misbehaving." Participant 8 alluded to the fact that this was the first time in 20 years that she had issues with a SWD in her class. She stated, "this one child is tough. There are good days and bad days…it's very volatile... when it gets bad, he hurts himself or someone else." Participant 9 added "disruptive behavior is a constant challenge because student focus is the problem. Sometimes they are on the floor, or they are visually communicating with each other and distracting other students." Three of the ten teachers also posited that there are large numbers of SWDs in the classroom., Participant 4 stated, "curbs my ability to challenge these students in the way that I want to." Participant 9 added "it is problematic for mainstream students… it slows down instruction." Three other teachers mentioned that these students are easily distracted and lack ideas. Participant 1 stated sometimes the SWD would sit and stare blankly, while Participant 2 stated "they have a short attention span….getting their work done is not up to standard."

Subtheme 4: Teachers' Positive Response to SWDs. A sub-theme of teachers' belief in their ability was the teachers' positive response to SWDs in the classroom . It was noted from the interview results that half (5 out of 10) of the teachers shared positive

responses about meeting the needs of SWDs in the classroom. Five teachers mentioned

that they gladly accepted having SWDs in their classroom (see Table 4). Participant 1,

when asked about her attitude and beliefs about in her ability to support SWDs in her

classroom, stated "I would say if it is on a scale of 1-10 (1 the worst and 10 the best),

this year I would probably give myself a 9," Participant 4 added "I have always had

SWDs in my class, and I have been able to work with them…I enjoy working with

them." Participant 5 stated "I must be prepared and be willing to get training in dealing

with these kids." However, Participant 6 postulated:

> You know, as a teacher for these children, I apply my faith. I ask myself "What
>
> would Jesus do if he were working with these children?" I know that Jesus would
>
> be patient with them and work with them. So, I have adopted this same kind of
>
> attitude. And I pray, because sometimes it is not easy, but I ask God to give me
>
> the strength in order to help them.

Along with being positive in accepting of SWDs in the classroom, the majority of

the teachers (7) believed that SWDs could learn. Participant 1 declared "I absolutely

believe that we can reach the children." Participant 2 also stated "I believe that every

child has the ability to learn." Participant 8 added "I do believe that they are not

incapable of learning."

Subtheme 5: Teachers Not Confident. There were many teachers who were not

confident with SWDs in the classroom. According to the data, six teachers felt that they

were unable to adequately satisfy the needs of SWDs in the classroom and were less

confident in their ability to meet the needs of these students. Four of the teachers were

frustrated about having SWDs in the classroom. Participant 2 stated, "sometimes I'm

frustrated… it is difficult to get my lessons done, because I do not have the skills to teach

students with special needs." Participant 9 added "this can be draining work…I see

myself as trying and stretching myself to meet their needs. Sometimes they are on the

floor or talking and distracting other children…it slows down instruction."   Participant 3

added "it is not easy for a general ed teacher to function without having control of all that

is going on."

     Subtheme 6: Lack of Support. Some teachers felt there was a lack of support

for teachers in the classroom. Three out of the 10 teachers stated that there was a need

for additional support in the classroom. According to participant 3, "I am by myself; it is

hard." Participant 5 added "I have the ability, but I need support." Participant 5

continued, "There should be provision like an assistant teacher in the classroom that can

attend to their needs." There were also three teachers who felt that there was a need for

support with behavior issues. Participant 2 stated "If I have a variety of resources, it can

suppress student behavior." Participant 3 stated "The autistic child's behavior can be

unbearable. I cannot give him the attention he needs."

Observations

     Nine out of the 10 teachers demonstrated the ability to control the disruptive

behavior and keep the SWDs on task in the classroom. However, only five teachers were

able to keep the lessons on track despite the behavior of the SWDs (see Table 5).

Table 5:

Teacher experiences with SWDs

Theme 2- Belief in ability	Observed	Not-Observed
Control of disruptive classroom behavior	All observed except P6	P6
Keep students with SWD on task	All observed except P6	P6
Kept lessons on track despite SWD behavior	P1, P4, P6, P8, P10	P2, P3, P5, P7, P9
Managed the behavioral needs of SWD	P2, P5, P7, P8, P9	P1 P3, P4, P6, P10
Re-direct inapropriate behaviours	All observed except P3, P5 and P10	P3, P5, P10

Seven of the teachers re-directed the inappropriate behaviors of the students during their lessons.   Also, only five of the teachers demonstrated the ability to manage the behavioral needs of the SWDs. The SWDs were focused on the lesson when the teacher was in close proximity to them. However, when the teacher moved away, some of the students displayed behaviors such as staring into space, fiddling with pencils or whispering to classmates. During the classroom observations, nine teachers kept the students on task during the class assignments.

Based on the observations data, the majority of the teachers controlled the disruptive classroom behavior. In many of the classrooms, the SWDs were quiet but did not participate in the lesson. However, in some classrooms the teacher resorted to threatening students (no recess, demerits) or the use of verbal cues, or counting to ensure that students were engaged in the lesson.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What Do SDA General Education K–8 Teachers

Believe Would Increase Their Competence When Including SWDs?

The data from the interviews (interview questions 5 and 6) were used to answer this research question. These interview questions zeroed in on specific areas the teachers believed they would need assistance to better meet the needs of SWDs in their classroom, and what experiences might help them develop their ability to support SWDs. One theme and two subthemes emerged from the data. The main theme was needs for increased competence in what teachers mentioned they believed would increase their competence in meeting the needs of SWDs in the classroom. The subthemes were training and classroom support.

Theme 3: Needs for Increased Competence

Many of the teachers mentioned that professional development and classroom support were the leading ways teachers could increase their competence when including SWDs. According to the teachers, professional development opportunities would provide them with new tools and strategies to adequately meet the needs of SWDs in the classroom. The teachers revealed ways to increase their competence in teaching SWDs (see Table 6).

Table 6

Training and classroom support

Theme 3- Needs for Increased Competence	*Participants results*
Subtheme 7- Training	
Coaching and modeling	P1, P2, P3, P5,P6,P7, P8, P9, P10
Professional development sessions	P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P9,P10
Instructional and behavioral strategies to support SWDs	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, 10
Subtheme 8- Classroom Support	
Adequate resources	P1,P2,P3,P9
Special Education Teachers	P1,P2,P3,P4, P5, P6, P7, P10
Paraprofessional	P1,P3,P4,P7
Parents and Stakeholder involvement	P2,P4,

Subtheme 7: Training. The majority of the teachers (8) believed that training was important to help increase their competence to support SWDs (see Table 6). This training, as mentioned before, included professional development sessions. Participant 2 stated "I think professional development sessions and accessibility to resources will help me." Participant 2 further stated that "the PD [professional development] will help me to understand these situations" (referring to the issues that occur in class). Participant 6 added "Professional development is always welcome." According to participant 7, "it will help if we have more training how to deal with them. Because even if we have taken classes in special education, it is still not really your field. So, if we have more training that will help." Participant 10 stated emphatically "Even professional development in the

school or during the summer vacation can be beneficial in acquiring that knowledge to reach these students."

The majority of the participants (8) also believed that coaching and modeling were also important in building their competence in meeting the needs of these students. Participant 6 stated "Coaching is always awesome. And even without SWDs in the classroom, I still prefer coaching where they come in and sit down and show you, as opposed to professional development." Participant 5 postulated that:

"Too often we have PD and they tell us what to do and give us scenarios. But they never actually demonstrate. They need to have a class of SWDs bring us in this classroom and demonstrate how you deal with these situations or how you teach in the classroom. Have someone video them without even knowing that they are videoing them, and let's see how you deal with it."

Many of the teachers also mentioned the need for instructional and behavioral strategies that would help them to increase their competence in meeting the needs of SWDs. Participant 1 stated "if I have different strategies to work with, it would make life easier." Participant 2 added "If I would have more strategies, I can move them from a black to more colorful world." As it relates to behavior strategies, participant 4 stated "I want to know more about Applied Behavior Analysis." Participant 2 also mentioned "I need strategies to address behavioral problems."

Subtheme 8: Classroom Support. Many of the teachers mentioned that classroom support would also help to develop their competence in meeting the needs of SWDs. Eight of the teachers believed that having special education teachers working

with them in the classroom would help. Participant 1 stated "…if I were to see what another teacher like a special education teacher does, I think that will help." Participant 9 added "the school can train or have special education teachers who can take the students out of the room and give them one on one instruction." Four teachers believed that paraprofessionals and adequate resources would also help in building their competence in meeting the needs of these students. Participant 3 stated "I need support, any type of support…like a para [professional]." Participant 7 stated "I need support in the classroom all day." Participant 7 echoed this sentiment by stating "if I have help with how to deal with them in the classroom it will help." As it related to adequate resources, participant 1 stated "if I had different hands on stuff… that would make life so much easier." Participant 2 added "If I have a variety of resources that will help to suppress behavior problems."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As discussed in Chapter 3 for the findings of a study to be authentic, it is important that the researcher ensures that the research has credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This is especially important when it comes to qualitative research, because of its flexible nature. Strategies need to be put in place to ensure rigor.

Credibility

To provide credibility in this study, the process involved two processes to ensure that the research was completed with credibility. The data were analyzed until a clear understanding of the phenomena that was being investigated was reached. The data were

investigated till no new emerging themes could be achieved. This indicated that saturation was achieved.

Credibility was achieved through triangulation. The observation data and the interview data were compared. Thus, the data gained from the observations were used to ask clarifying questions during the interviews to add more depth to the findings from the interviews. The interviews also helped the researcher to note any differences between what the participant said and what was observed in the classroom.

In terms of transcript review, each participant was sent their individual interview transcript for verification. This was to ascertain whether I accurately transcribed the interview. Once the narrative of the results was written, a summary of findings was sent to participants for review for member checking. Through the methods of triangulation and member checking, the credibility of the study was achieved.

Transferability

Transferability in research, means adequately describing the original context of the research so that other individuals can use the findings in their own context. This means providing detailed thick descriptions so that the reader can make informed decisions when transferring the findings to their own settings. It is important that the original context of the research be described adequately so that individuals can use the findings in their own context (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy, 2013). In reporting the results from this study, I presented direct quotes along with detailed tables that showed how the themes were developed for the data.

Dependability and Confirmability

As stated in Chapter 3, dependability referred to how stable the data are while confirmability referred to the "neutrality and accuracy" of the data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). Dependability helps to establish that the results of the study were consistent and can be repeated. To ensure that the research findings were consistent with the raw data that were collected, I had an outside qualitative researcher examine the data and assist me in analyzing the data. This was done to confirm the reliability of the findings based on the data that were collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013).

As it relates to confirmability, it is based on the conclusions gained from the study that can be confirmed or corroborated by the participants (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). It is based on the narrative of participants rather than researcher bias. This was done through an audit trail. To do this I outlined all the decisions that were made during the research process. The NVivo computer software helped to track all the decisions that were made during data collection and analysis. In having the input of qualitative reviewer in analyzing of the data, it helped to guard against emphasizing excessive findings that suited my fancy.

Summary

Several themes and subthemes related to the attitudes and beliefs of K-8 SDA teachers as they relate to inclusion were revealed in this qualitative study. Overall, this chapter included details on participants, data collection steps, data analysis, and findings. The themes that emerged from the data included instructional strategies, belief in ability,

and increased competence in meeting the needs of SWDs. There were several sub-themes that were established during open coding. The interview data were not supported by the observation data for modification of instruction for SWDs. The teachers used whole class instruction to support the learning of SWDs in the classroom. Also, some of the teachers gave positive responses to having these students in their classroom. However, their experiences with SWDs, along with several participants indicating they were not adequately prepared to support the needs of these students in their classrooms, may influence their attitude and beliefs about supporting the needs of students in the classroom. Finally, the majority of the teachers believed that training through professional development, coaching and modeling, along with classroom support, would increase their competence when including SWDs. Interpretation of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5**:** Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of SDA K–8 general education teachers regarding having SWDs in the general education classroom, and also to determine what these teachers believe will increase their confidence in teaching SWDs. The research design that that was most effective in providing the information needed to answer the research questions was a qualitative exploratory case study. I collected data through observations and semistructured interviews of classroom teachers who supported SWDs. I analyzed the data from the observations first. I identified common concepts and emerging themes for each of the participants that were observed. The same process was implemented for the analysis of the semistructured interviews. I identified emerging themes from the data based on similar characteristics.

As stated previously, there were three key findings that stood out in this study. First, in the interviews, the teachers all stated that they used a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of the SWDs. However, the observation data did not corroborate what they said. The teachers often used whole class instruction to support the learning of SWDs in the classroom. Another key finding was that many of the teachers gave positive responses about having SWDs in the classrooms. Several participants indicated they were not adequately prepared to support the needs of these students in their classrooms, which may be influencing their attitude and beliefs about supporting the needs of SWDs in the classroom. Finally, the majority of the teachers believed that training, along with classroom support, would increase their competence when including SWDs

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, I will discuss the interpretation and practical explanations of the findings that I uncovered in chapter four. Based on the results of the study, the SDA teachers at the local site used different instructional strategies to meet the needs of SWDs; however, they had some difficulties including SWDs in their classrooms. Some of the teachers also expressed they did not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of the students, and that training along with classroom support would increase their competence when supporting the academic needs of SWDs in their classrooms. These conclusions are associated with the three research questions and the conceptual framework that guided the data collection and analysis of this study.

Ability to Support SWDs in the Classroom

Many of the teachers reported a positive attitude toward having SWDs in their classrooms. One participant even stated that it is her duty to accept and work with any student that comes to her classroom, her mantra being "what would Jesus do." Many of the teachers also believed SWDs can learn, and they see the need to be patient with them. This confirmed the work by Sargeant and Berkner (2015) that teachers have a positive attitude toward inclusion, and that inclusive classrooms are appropriate in Christian classrooms. The authors further stated that if teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, they will be more inclined to take the necessary measures to ensure support for the academic needs of SWDs in the classroom.

However, the problem that emerged from the data is the inability of the teachers to support the needs of SWDs in their classrooms. While there were some teachers who

stated that they felt that they were supporting SWDs in their classrooms, this was not always observed during the observations. All teachers used the traditional whole-class instruction method during many of the observed lessons. Most of them did not use strategies such as differentiated instruction to meet the needs of these students.

Except for one teacher, who had a master's degree in special education, and one other teacher who did a combination master's degree in education and special education, all the teachers reported that they had little training in special education. This finding mirrors Archer's finding (2015) that in some SDA schools, the services given to SWDs were generally offered by K–12 general education teachers who had received some training in special education. It can also be noted that in all three schools included in this study, the SWDs did receive some services from the Public-School districts in their area. This finding also corroborates the findings of Archer (2015), who stated that in most of the SDA schools that were reported in his study, special education services were not provided or the schools depended on local public resources to meet the needs of the students.

Attitudes and Beliefs of Teachers About Inclusion

As it relates to the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers about their ability to support SWDs in the general education classroom, the majority of the teachers stated that they did not feel adequately prepared to teach SWDs. This confirms the findings of many researchers, who stated that teachers were not necessarily against having SWDs in their classrooms, but they did not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of the students

(Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Berry, 2010; Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2010; Koh & Shin, 2017; Monsen et al., 2014; Vaz et al., 2014).

There was a gap between what teachers said about their confidence teaching SWDs and what was observed in the classroom. Hwang and Evans (2011) confirmed this view when they stated that in inclusive classrooms, there is a gap between belief and practice. The authors believed that the gap comes between the theory about inclusion and the practice.

Some of the teachers felt that there were not enough resources available, and that working with SWDs in their classroom took a lot of time, especially as it related to constantly redirecting them during lessons. This confirmed the results of studies conducted by Hwang and Evans (2011) and Mukhopadhyay (2014) in which teachers felt that they were lacking in resources to meet the needs of these students. The teachers also stated that meeting the needs of SWDs was time-consuming.

Increasing Teacher Competence When Including Students With Disabilities

It is evident from the results that the teachers felt that training and classroom support were the ways that would increase their competence when supporting the needs of SWDs. According to the teachers, professional development opportunities would provide them with new tools and strategies to adequately meet the needs of SWDs in the classroom. This result is supported by several researchers who believed that ongoing professional development helps to build the capability of all teachers no matter the setting, to address issues and problems that they may face in the classroom (Becker & Palladino, 2016; Park et al., 2012; Strieker et al., 2012).

However, while many teachers believed that training was important, they stated there was also a need for coaching and modeling. This may include having an expert or master teacher model how to teach SWDs. In one of the interviews, a teacher stated that the strategies that they learned during professional development demonstrations were valuable but implementing of these strategies was not an easy task. Many of the teachers stated that after the professional development demonstration, there was a need for an expert to come to the individual classrooms and show how to use the strategies with the students.

The result of this need confirmed the viewpoint of Strieker et al. (2012) who discussed the idea that professional development, which involved inviting outside consultants to offer workshops designed to motivate teachers to try out new ideas, were not effective. According to Strieker et al. (2012), when teachers attempted these new practices and were not successful in their implementation, they were usually abandoned. Waldron and McLeskey (2010) echoed this research when they stated that traditional professional development were the norm for teaching new strategies. In traditional professional development, the teachers are passive recipients. The teachers are expected to put the training to use in the classroom without, in many cases, any kind of support. The lack of support in implementation is difficult for the teachers, and they are reluctant to try the new strategies in the class. This can be true in general education and inclusive classrooms. However, in collaborative professional development, where teachers collaborated with a special educator and/or other experts in the field of education,

implementation of new ideas in the classroom were more effective (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010; Wilcox & Angelis, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

This study was based on the conceptual framework of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) developed the social cognitive theory and postulated that there is a direct connection between a person's self-efficacy and a change in behavior. According to Bandura (1993), a teacher's belief about his or her ability to teach a SWD can affect the learning environment that she creates for the student, which can in turn affect the student's level of achievement.

The teachers in this study believed that it was "the Christian thing to do" to include SWDs in their classroom; consequently, they sought to provide an environment where learning could take place. However, their lack of confidence in meeting the needs of these students, coupled with their lack of training, seemed to derail their self-efficacy about their ability to meet the needs of these students.

The teachers were willing to discuss what they believed would increase their competence in meeting the needs of SWDs. Katz (2015) stated that it is critical for teachers to have a voice in what they believe can improve their self-efficacy. Having a voice can increase ownership and buy in, which in turn leads to improved self-efficacy. He further stated that in this kind of environment teachers feel more empowered to change their instructional practices. They also take ownership in creating more inclusive classrooms and are motivated to ensure that the needs of the students are being met.

Limitations of Study

There was one limitation that arose during data collection that was not mentioned in previous sections. I did not observe or interview two teachers who had signed consent forms to participate in the study. This did not affect the trustworthiness of the study.

Recommendations

In this qualitative case study, I examined the attitudes and beliefs of K–8 SDA general education teachers regarding including SWDs in their classrooms. Based on the findings of this study, there is much more that can be discovered regarding inclusion in SDA education. I recommend that a replication of this study occur at the high school level to explore if similar patterns result to this study. I further recommend that a comparative study be conducted between single grade classrooms and multigrade classrooms, to see if the patterns in the data will be different based on the type of classroom. This is important, as there are several multigrade and one-room schools within SDA education. My final recommendation is that a quantitative study that involves a pretest/training/experiential knowledge/posttest be conducted to see if there is a change in the attitudes and beliefs of teachers as it relates to having SWDs in their classrooms.

Implications

This study has several implications for social change. The results from the study can influence social change as it relates to SWDs in SDA schools. Superintendents and administrators in SDA education can be empowered to design and implement programs on inclusive education within SDA universities to support pre-service teachers' education

to support SWDs in the classroom. According to Sargeant and Berkner (2015), these programs can be used to train current teachers to meet the needs of SWDs.

The results could also possibly add to the body of literature to help SDA universities address the training of pre-service teachers regarding inclusion, SWDs' needs, and teacher support. According to Sharma and Nuttal (2015), educating pre-service teachers regarding inclusion provides them with relevant and useful information to be effective in inclusive settings. The superintendent and administrators within the local site and beyond can also be compelled to provide professional development opportunities as well as form professional learning communities within their schools. These measures could be used with teachers who are already in the classroom to support their quest to help SWDs gain adequate access to the regular education curriculum. As Sargeant and Berkner (2015) stated, teachers need to be encouraged and thoroughly trained to implement inclusion in SDA schools. This professional training may help support teachers' self-efficacy in having SWDs in their classrooms.

Another implication for social change is the fact that SWDs may benefit with improved learning opportunities and a positive school environment. Once teachers understand how their attitudes and beliefs about SWDs affects how they teach students, then they willingly change the way they teach. Park et al. (2014) stated that the self-efficacy of teachers toward inclusion helps to shape student achievement and behavior as well as the teacher's attitudes. Thus, with training opportunities and certified special education teachers assigned to classrooms, the students may have the opportunity to gain adequate access to the general education curriculum.

Another important implication for social change is that of building the confidence of parents of students with disabilities in sending SWDs to SDA schools. As discussed in chapter 2, it is a powerful statement of praxis to make Christian schools accessible to SWDs (Burke & Griffin, 2016; Russo et al., 2011). Once teachers are trained, and they are confident to meet the needs of these students, then they will be more intentional in meeting the goals as prescribed by the IEP and informing parents of strategies that they are using to ensure that the students are learning. This may build the confidence of the parents in believing that their children are gaining the knowledge they deserve.

Recommendations for Practice

The first recommendation for practice is that of establishing an increase in training in special education. This training can be accomplished through adding more special education classes to the Adventist certification process. It can also be gained through annual professional development seminars for general education teachers to improve the quality of inclusion practices for SWDs. Superintendents and principals can also offer teachers incentives and scholarships to pursue academic degrees in special education, which may result in more teachers being trained to meet the needs of SWDs in SDA classrooms. As Sargeant and Berkner (2015) stated, teachers need to be encouraged and thoroughly trained to implement inclusion in SDA schools.

I further recommend that during the teacher hiring process each year, administrators and superintendents be intentional in hiring special education teachers. They can also seek out any special education teachers who are already employees and use them as consultants in the schools where they serve and to neighboring schools. Austin

(2015) stated that the Adventist educational system has teachers who have substantial training in special education who work in regular classrooms. According to the author, if the teachers are given incentives such as a flexible schedule or financial incentives, they may be willing to facilitate professional development for other colleagues and serve as leaders in professional learning communities in their schools.

Finally, I believe that the administrators and superintendents should provide opportunities for all teachers to be trained in using the REACH program. During data collection only one participant mentioned the REACH program which was designed to address the needs of SWDs. If there is a program in place, then it is important that teachers understand it and implement it effectively in the classroom.

Conclusion

Students with disabilities are being enrolled within Adventist schools (Hale, 2009; REACH Manual, 2015; Sargeant & Berkner, 2015). Although SWDs are accepted in SDA schools, there was little research on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in this unique setting about meeting the needs of these students in the classroom (Greulich, 2015). This gap in literature needed to be remedied through research conducted in SDA schools regarding teachers' perceptions of their efficacy to support SWDs in the classroom and how it relates to the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward SWDs in SDA schools. There was also a gap in practice as it related to how SWDs are taught in SDA schools. Greulich (2015) stated that even though the topic of teaching SWDs was debated and researched for many years, there were still no consistent outcomes within the SDA educational system. The purpose of this case study was to examine the attitudes

and beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers in SDA schools towards teaching SWDs and to investigate what the teachers felt will be necessary in improving their self-efficacy to meet the needs of these students. Positive social change could occur if SDA administrators and superintendents could design and implement training programs to increase the competence of teachers in meeting the needs of SWDs in their classrooms.

This study has revealed the importance of SDA schools following the directions of the Bible as it relates to dealing with the marginalized. Matthew 25:40 clearly stated 'And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto them, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Matthew 25:40, KJV). In dealing with SWDs, we must give them our best. SDA educators cannot have SWDs in their classrooms and not provide them with the best education possible.

To have general education teachers not adequately trained to meet the needs of SWDs, and not providing these teachers with adequate resources that they need is doing students a disservice. The administrators in the SDA educational system need to be more intentional in providing training for general education teachers in special education, hiring special education teachers, and providing more professional support for SWDs in the classroom. It is therefore imperative that SDA administrators and superintendents adopt and implement these recommendations, so that SWDs would be best served by qualified, knowledgeable teachers. This is not a process that can take place in the future, this process must begin now.

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Appendix A: Observation Protocol

The purpose of this observation is to assist me in understanding the attitudes and beliefs of K-8 teachers toward inclusion particularly in SDA schools. The observations will contribute to my study which examines the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward inclusion.

Observation Instructions and Details:
The observation will be conducted in the classroom of the participant. Each observation should last approximately 45-60 minutes depending on the grade level.

The observation will consist of the use of the inclusive teaching observation checklist attached below. Please be assured that the notes from this observation will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. Each participant in this research will be given a random number which will be used to protect their identity. You will not be judged on how you teach, so please be yourself as you teach. The information gained from the observation is valuable and will assist in creating measures to assist general education teachers in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Kindly note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.

Self-Efficacy Observation Protocol
Teacher name_____ **Date**_____ **Grade**_____ **Subject**_____ **Lesson Title**_____
A. The teacher demonstrates the ability to implement alternative strategies to support students with disabilities in the classroom.
Observed OR Not Observed (circle one) **Specific Observations:**

B. The teacher demonstrates the ability to assist students with disabilities by differentiating instruction for struggling students.
Observed OR Not Observed (circle one) **Specific Observations:**

C. The teacher demonstrates the ability to keep students with disabilities on task.

Observed OR Not Observed (circle one)

Specific Observations:

D. The teacher demonstrates the ability to keep lessons on track despite the behaviors of students with disabilities.
Observed OR Not Observed (circle one) **Specific Observations:**

E. The teacher demonstrates the ability to manage the behavioral needs of students with disabilities.

Observed OR Not Observed (circle one)

Specific Observations:

F. The teacher demonstrates the ability to control disruptive classroom behavior (Give examples)

Observed OR Not Observed (circle one)

Specific Observations:

G. The teacher demonstrates the ability to redirect any inappropriate behaviors of students with disabilities.

Observed OR Not Observed (circle one)

Specific Observations:

H. The teacher demonstrates the ability to use a variety of assessment strategies in a lesson.

Observed OR Not Observed (circle one)

Specific Observations:

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The purpose of this interview is to assist me in further understanding your attitudes and beliefs on having students with disabilities in your classroom and to also what you believe will increase your efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in their classroom. The responses that you give will contribute to my study which examines the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward inclusion. For this interview, the term inclusive stands for students in the classroom who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and are included in the general education classroom during the day.

Interview Instructions and Details:
The interview will be conducted using the telephone or via skype. Each of the interviews should last approximately 60 minutes.

The interview will consist of the questions noted below in this document. Also, follow-up questions may be asked to probe for more details. The interview will be recorded

Please be assured that this interview will be confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. Each participant in this research will be given a random number which will be used to protect their identity. You will not be judged by your answers, so please be honest as possible. Your responses are valuable and will assist in creating measures to assist general education teachers in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Kindly note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.

Interview Questions
1. Describe your experiences with students with disabilities in your classroom.
2. How do you support students with disabilities in your classroom? Explain specific experiences that have contributed to these feelings.
3. What is your attitude about your ability to support students with disabilities in your classroom?
4. What are your beliefs about your ability to support students with disabilities in your classroom?
5. In what specific areas do you believe you need more support to better meet the needs of students with disabilities in your classroom?
6. What experiences might help you develop your ability to support students with disabilities?

Probing Question Examples

1. You mentioned how you would change current training for general education teachers in your building. Describe any training that you would want to address the challenges students with students with disabilities may have in your class?
2. Describe in more detail the frequency and nature of the specific behavioral challenges you noted.
3. How would an increase in understanding how to teach students with disabilities specifically help increase your ability to reach these students?