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Article Critique



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Article Critique

Purpose and Theoretical Background of the Study

In their article, *A Statewide Survey of Special Education Directors on Teacher Preparation and Licensure in Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Model for University and State Collaboration*, Hart and Malian (2013) address the lack of preparedness among the teachers to include and teach students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) effectively and in accordance with grade level standards. Hart and Malian (2013) list following objectives of their research: (a) identify main competencies that teachers need to possess to work successfully with students with autism spectrum; (b) determine behavioral and academic needs of such students; (c) find out opportunities for professional development that districts offer to teachers working with students with ASD; (d) determine what role higher education plays in preparing educators to work with these students; (e) explore whether a separate special education certificate should be offered to teachers of students with ASD; and (f) find out about the role of para-educators in teaching these students (Hart & Malian, 2013). The theoretical background of the study is based on efficacy of learning theory, since the researchers explore competencies one must possess to be effective and succeed in a position of a special education teacher of children with ASD.



Hypothesis and Research Questions

In a current qualitative study, authors did not test any hypothesis. Hart and Malian (2013) attempted to gain greater insight into competencies required to work successfully with students with ASD. Although researchers did not state research questions, considering research objectives that were listed in a previous section, the main research question may be summed up as follows, "Which licensure requirements and competencies are necessary to prepare teachers to work with students with ASD?"

Research Method

Authors collected data from participants via survey that aimed to find out special education directors' opinion pertaining to research objectives listed in a section *Purpose and Theoretical Background of a Study*. The survey participants were 124 special education directors from the southwest of the United States. The data was processed by analyzing directors' responses and ranking competencies that were identified as the most important for teachers who work with students with ASD.

Results

The research questions were answered; the answers were supported by

data. The result of the research is the attainment of a greater insight into special education directors' views on which licensure requirements and competencies are necessary to prepare teachers to work with students with ASD.

Authors' Conclusions



Hart and Malian (2013) came to the conclusion that communication skills, behavior management skills, knowledge of characteristics of ASD, and a formal special education certificate are the most essential for the educators who work with students with ASD. Authors did not suggest any further research.

Stated and Unstated Limitations



Authors reported one limitation – they were not able to survey the majority of special education directors within the target region and worked with a relatively low response rate. The analysis of the article reveals following unstated limitation: the range of respondents may have been broader, and authors could have surveyed not only special education directors but parents and teachers of children with ASD, administrators of programs for children with ASD, and representatives of state agencies involved in services for students with ASD.

Personal Evaluation of the Study



I believe that this article highlighted a very valid point that strong communication and behavior management skills combined with knowledge of ASD characteristics are among the primary characteristics that help an educator to succeed in teaching students with ASD. I think that the authors convincingly justified the need for their study; the overall quality of the research process was satisfactory, and conclusions were well supported with data. Therefore, study findings may be considered reliable. I also feel that this article provides information that may be helpful for special education teachers who want to do their best to effectively manage and provide appropriate instruction for students with ASD.

