

Art Educators Preparedness to Teach Special Education Students

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Introduction

Many art educators, including myself, feel unprepared to teach the special education students in our classes. I am a dyslexic student who learned how to express myself through visual art, eventually creating my identity as an artist and art educator. My desire to further learn about how I can best help my students, has motivated me to conduct this exploratory study into art educator preparedness. To truly fulfill our mission to provide equitable learning environments for all our students, we need to improve our teaching methods through teaching strategies to meet all our students' learning needs. This qualitative narrative study explored art educators' feelings around how prepared they feel to teach their special education students, strategies for preparing art educators, and learn strategies that art educators have successfully used to help support their special education students.

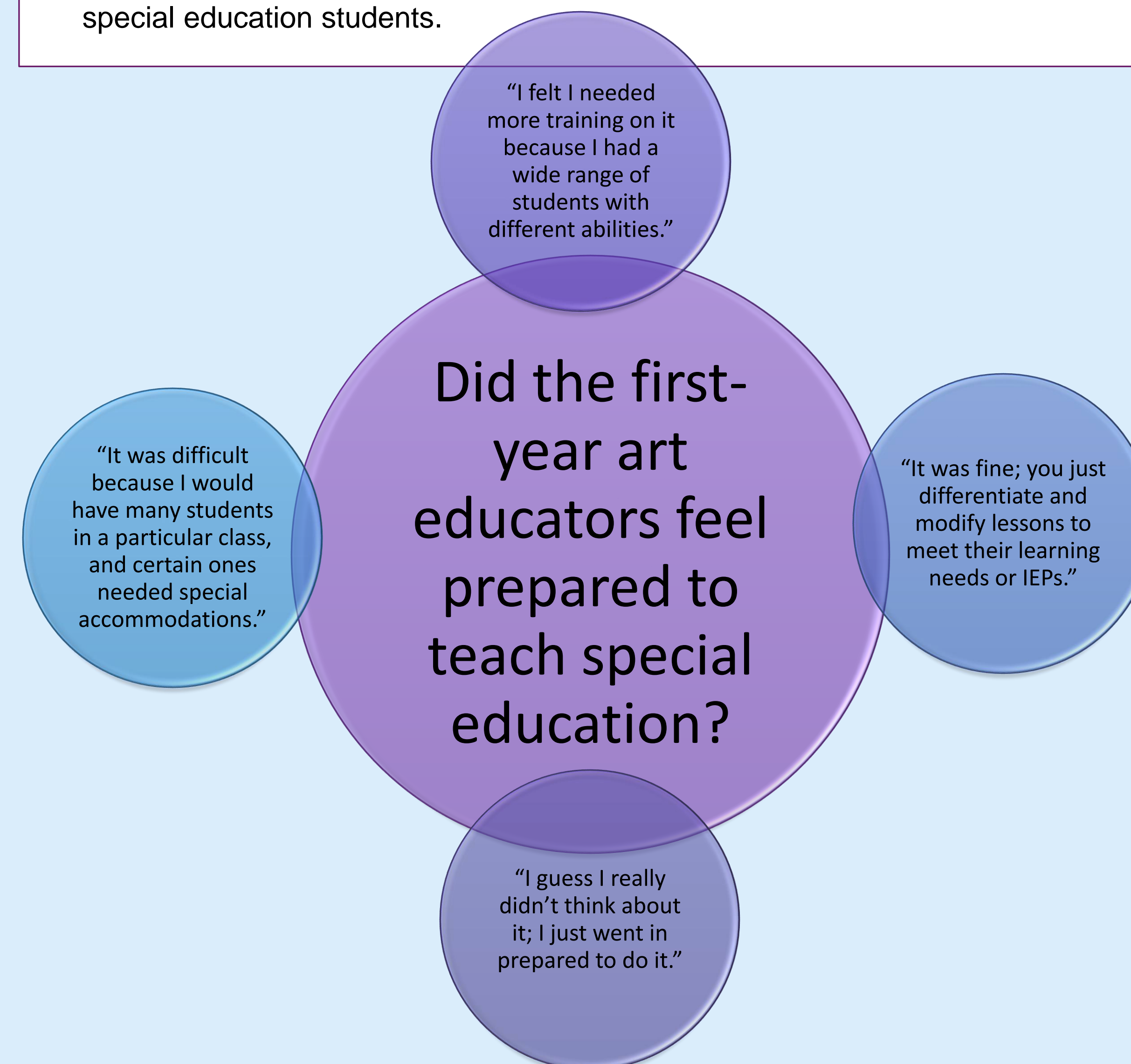
Research Question

The research question that was explored:
Do secondary first-year art educators feel ready to teach the special education students in their classes effectively?

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Method

In this qualitative narrative research design, the research focused on conveying “experiences as they are expressed in the lived and told experiences of individuals” (Mertler, 2019, p. 81). Through interviews of four art educators using a web conferencing software called Zoom, this study analyzed the educators' experiences as first-year art educators teaching special education students to determine if their teacher preparation program prepared them to effectively teach these students. This research also explored what experiences art educators had in determining what teaching strategies were most effective when teaching special education students.



Findings

Ten categories related to the research question were explored:

➤ How First-Year Art Educators Felt About Teaching Special Education Students

Challenges Faced in the First Year of Teaching:

- Knowledge of Art Foundations and Concepts
- Knowledge of Disabilities
- Paraprofessional Support
- Working with Case Managers (Special Education Teachers)
- IEP Attendance and Understanding
- Assistive Technologies
- Professional Training

Strategies that Emerged:

- Strategies in the First Year
- Strategies Learned After the First Year

Discussion

First-Year Art Educator Preparedness to Teach Special Education Students Key Finding:

➤ Art educators with experiences working with special students before their first year of teaching felt the most prepared.

Top Three Most Effective Strategies:

1. Direct one-on-one instruction.
2. Grouping special education students together and close to the educator.
3. Visual demonstrations or modeling.