A Literature Review: Pre-service Teachers’ Self-efficacy to Deal with Student with Special Needs

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Pre-service Teachers’ Self-efficacy dealing with Student with Special Needs
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Introduction

- Special role of teacher education programs to prepare future teachers in meeting the goal of inclusion (UNESCO, 2008).
- Increasing number of enrolling students with special needs in regular schools in both developed and developing countries. The majority of children with special needs in the U.S. are served in regular classrooms (95%; National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).
- Different teaching practice between teachers who have high compared to low efficacy because they have willingness to apply innovative and new teaching strategies and use behavioral strategies to deal with behavioral problems.
- A limited number of studies have been conducted in pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy in teaching students with special needs.
- Previous studies cite or focus on attitudes toward inclusion and self-efficacy studies interchangeably.
- The female pre-service teachers were found to have a higher self-efficacy level when teaching students with special needs (45%).

Two main questions that will be addressed in this article are:

a) What are some of the factors that influence levels of pre-service teachers’ efficacy in inclusive classrooms?

b) What are the changes of self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers during pre-service programs?

Result

- The changes of self-efficacy level during pre-service program

Pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy levels changed during their teacher preparation program (Gao & Magee, 2011; Pendegert et al., 2011). In the first year, pre-service teachers were found to have a high self-efficacy level in inclusive education because they have less or no direct experience teaching students with special needs. Then self-efficacy dropped when they have their first direct teaching experience in the real classroom.

- Pre-service teachers majoring in special education programs reported higher scores in self-efficacy compared to other programs (35%)

- Practicum and previous experiences with students or people with disabilities yields higher self-efficacy in real inclusive classrooms (42%)

- Different teaching practice between teachers who have high compared to low efficacy because they have willingness to apply innovative and new teaching strategies and use behavioral strategies to deal with behavioral problems.

Recommendation for future research

- Future researchers of pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy in inclusive classrooms need to include the following six elements in their investigations:

1. The sample should provide a balance of participant differences in terms of school type.
2. Include a comprehensive description of the program that consists of specific content in inclusive education, learning strategies, background of the instructors, and the design of the instruction of coursework and/or fieldwork.
3. A comprehensive description of the context of the study, including the national policies and laws in inclusive education, the current number of students with special needs enrolled in regular classrooms, and how teachers are currently being prepared to teach in inclusive classrooms.
4. The use of multiple data collections to provide a comprehensive explanation.

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Summary

This paper offers a detailed analysis of 21 studies that focus on self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in inclusive classrooms. Only 23% (n=5) of the reviewed studies offered some alternative strategies that can be applied to enhance high self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers, and some of them discussed how to sustain these high levels in inclusive schools. However, some of these studies revealed some key components of influential factors that can contribute to high levels of self-efficacy. In addition to this, knowing these factors would not be enough to improve and maintain a high level of self-efficacy for pre-service teachers to teach in inclusive classroom. For this reason, more studies with in-depth investigation about specific design of pre-service programs and how its impact to support and maintain a greater sense of self-efficacy in teaching in inclusive classroom are needed.

Design of coursework and fieldwork that improved self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers based on reviewed studies (n=5 out of 21 reviewed studies):

1. The use of self report instruments do not capture the experience of student teachers during the learning process (Deemer and Minke, 1999), so it needs additional information from multiple data collection methods. This aligns with Dickstein (2013) who revealed that teacher candidates’ belief of self-efficacy were shaped by the organizational expectations of effective practices and how the institutions provide various systemic support to achieve the expectations. A longitudinal approach as Pendegert and colleagues (2011) conducted would be the ideal method to capture the growth of self-efficacy, but the attrition number of participants would be the challenge.

2. The overestimation of pre-service students’ sense of efficacy in the first year of study was assumed as one of the reasons for the higher level of self-efficacy in these pre-service teachers have little or no interaction with real inclusive classrooms. This explanation is corroborated by the study conducted by Shukat and Sharma (2013). This study revealed that pre-service teachers in Pakistan have higher self-efficacy levels teaching students with special needs compared to those in Australia because pre-service teachers in Pakistan have less interaction in the real classroom. The explanation of ‘real shock’ in this phenomena was found in real classrooms during the first field experience.

1. 21 studies were selected based on inclusion criteria.
2. 47% of studies described the process of the program.
3. 57% of studies provided sufficient information about the context in which the study took place.
4. Only 38% (n=8) of the total reviewed papers employed pre-post analysis to depict the changes of self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers after enrollment in specific programs with either innovative coursework design or fieldwork. A fewer number (n=3) of qualitative data were analyzed with rigorous protocols.

Bibliography


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