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

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Introduction

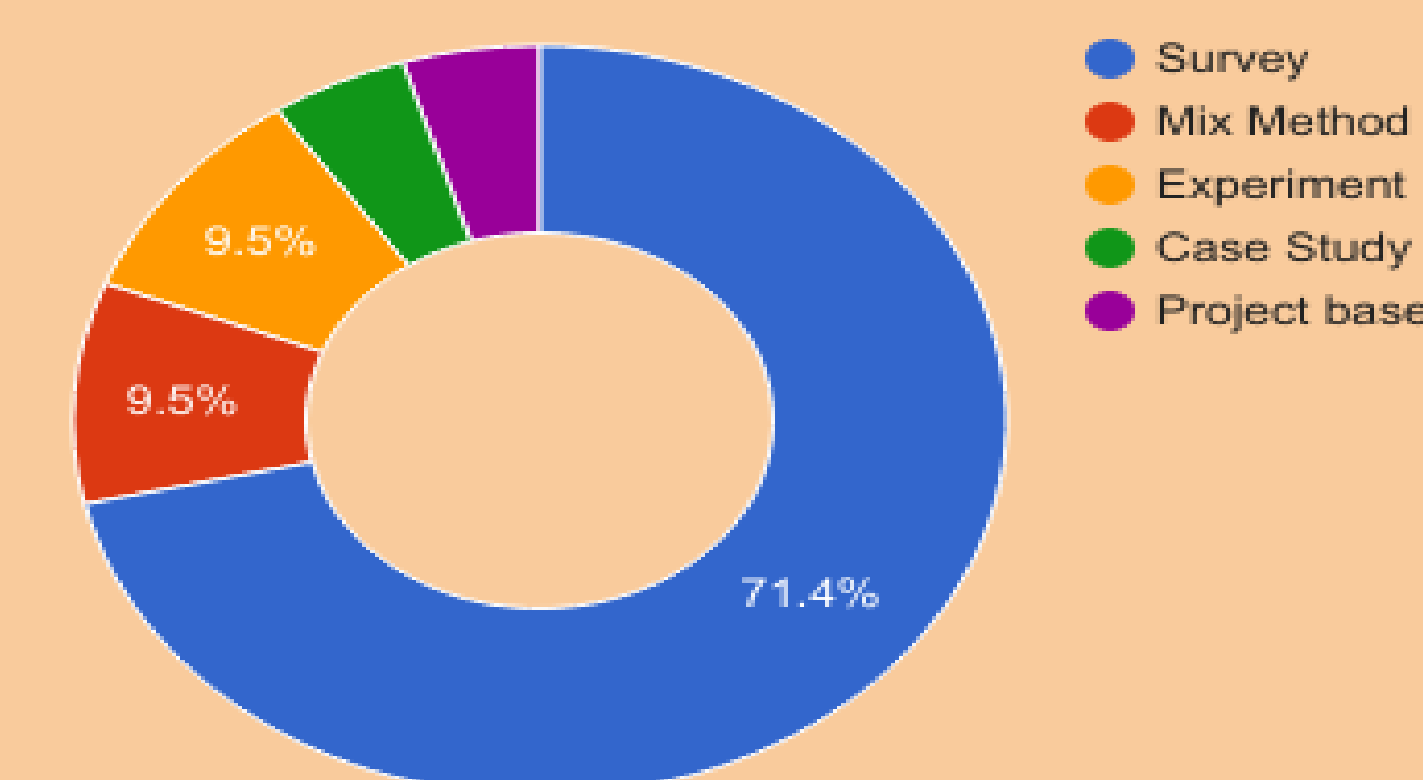
- Special role of teacher education programs to prepare future teachers in meeting the goal of inclusion (UNESCO, 2008).
- Increasing number of enrolling students with special needs in regular schools in both developed and developing countries. The majority of children with special needs in the U.S. 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.

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

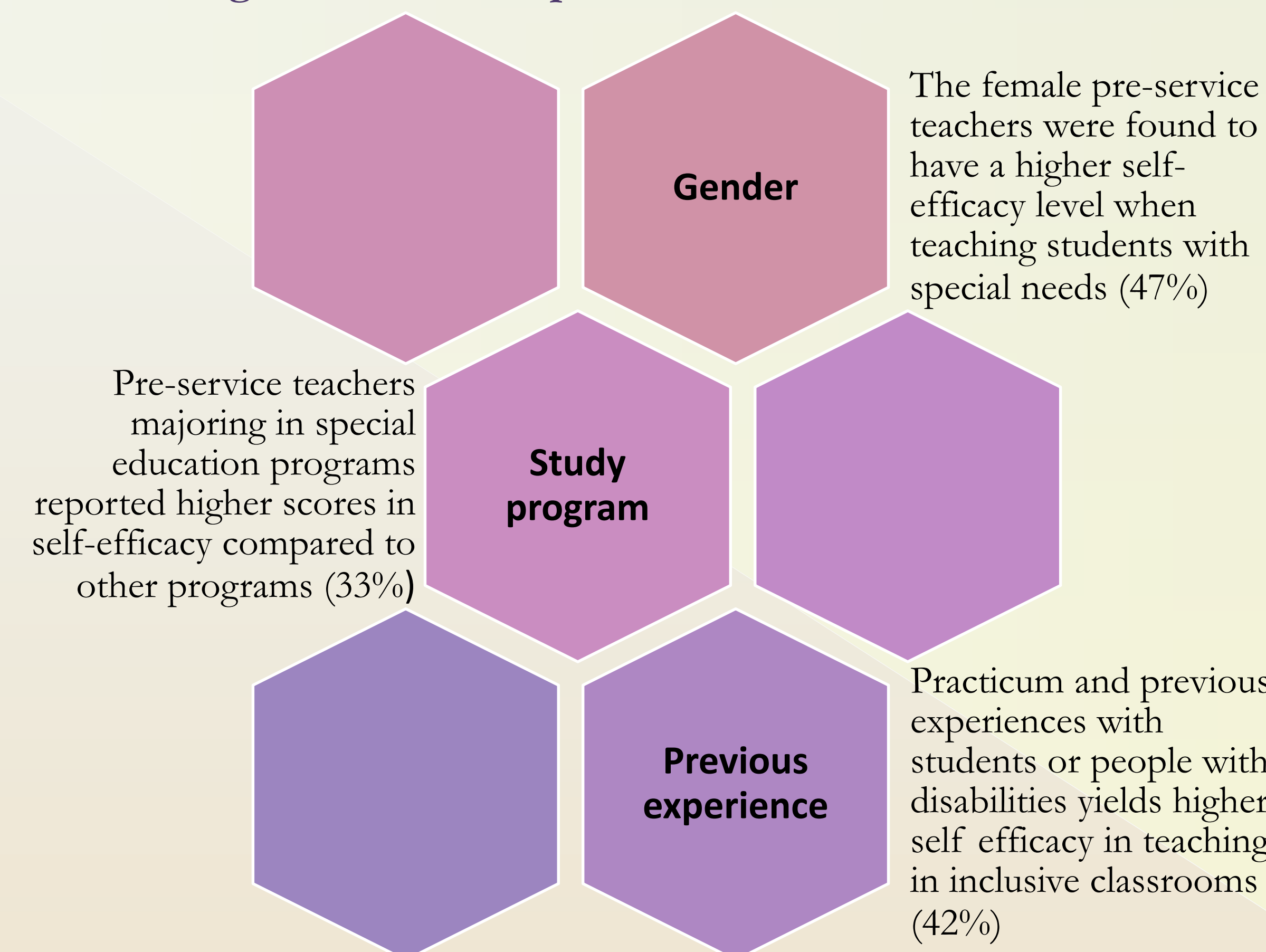
- a) What are some of the factors that influence levels of pre-service teachers' efficacy in inclusive classrooms?
- b) What are the changes of self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers during pre-service programs?

Result

Research methods in reviewed studies



Influential factors of pre service teachers' self-efficacy level teaching students with special needs.



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):

Content and design coursework

- Employed problem-based learning and collaborative inquiry
- Provided sequential learning (started with literature review and followed by structured observation)
- Focused on educational implication of disabling conditions
- Enabled a deeper understanding of the content and skills of inclusive practices, such as instructional strategies for diverse students
- Applied critical reflections

Design of Fieldworks

- Built connections between coursework and fieldwork (3)
- Provided modeling by instructors
- Offered feedback from peers
- Created high intensity of field work in different settings
- Developed and taught both individuals and a small group of learners
- Supervised faculty member and high quality of mentor teachers

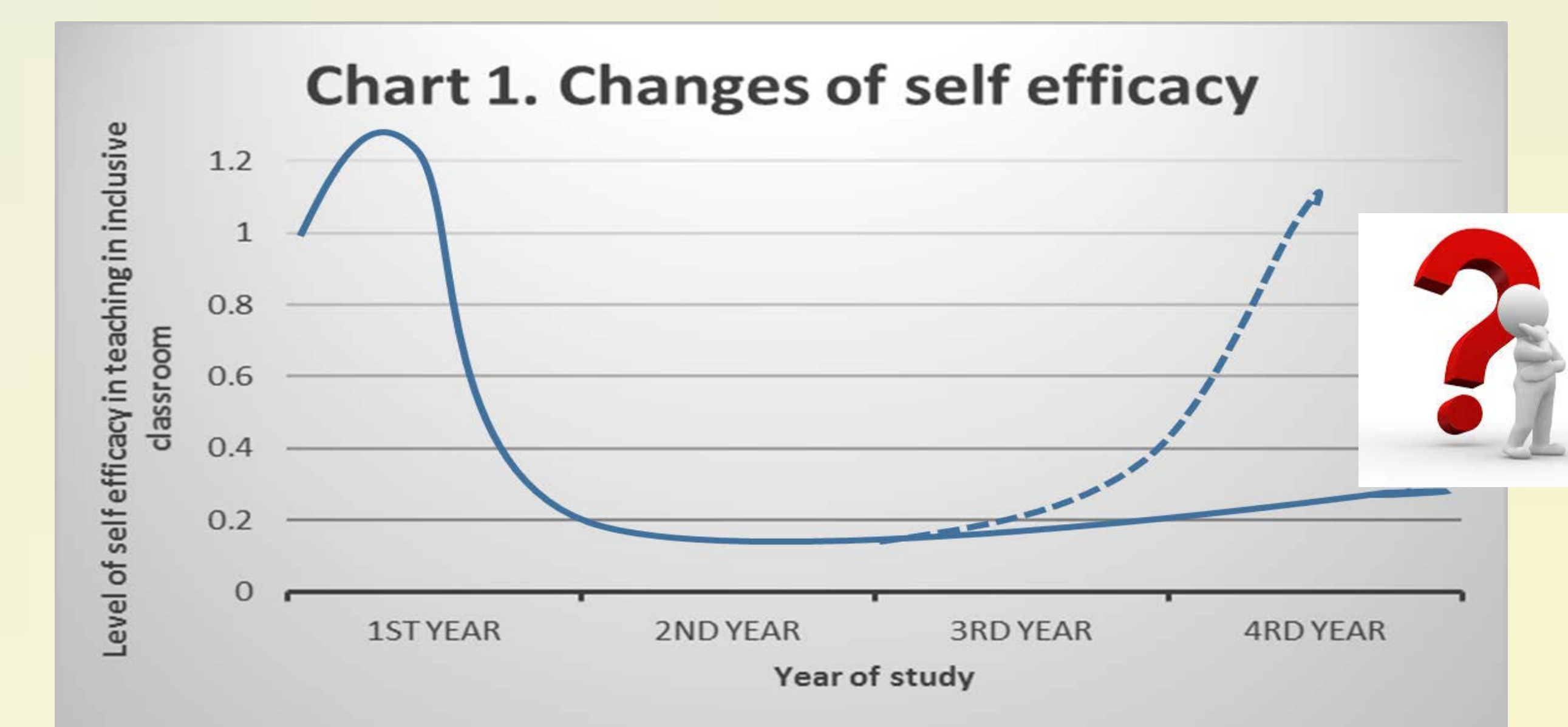
Discussion

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 Pendergast 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 years of study was assumed as one of the reasons for the higher level of self-efficacy in these studies because the pre-service teachers have little or no interaction with real inclusive classrooms. This explanation is corroborated by the study conducted by Shaukat 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 'reality shock' in this phenomena was found in real classrooms during the first field experience.

Result

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

Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy levels changed during their teacher preparation program (Gao & Mager, 2011; Pendergast 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.



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 field of study.
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.

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 none 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.

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