

Preservice Teachers' Attitudes Toward Students with Disabilities

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- “I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”



--Haim

Ginott

- The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of candidates' perceptions of special education knowledge as related to self-efficacy and perceptions of disabilities.
- The areas of investigation included basic knowledge of special education laws and procedures as related to the established competencies, the teacher preparation program attended, self-efficacy, and candidates' perceptions of disabilities.

Abstract

- Including all students has new importance given the accountability mandates under NCLB.
- This inclusive school movement has been an impetus for change, not only in curriculum and instruction, but in the roles of programs preparing teachers.
- Teacher training institutions have a responsibility to ensure that all teacher educators, including preservice teachers are well-prepared to meet challenges of inclusion in the face of NCLB and IDEA requirements.
 - (Harvey, Yssel, Bauuserman, & Merbler, 2010)

Literature Review: EPPs

- Preservice general education teachers are not well-prepared for working with students with exceptional needs (Reed & Monday-Amaya, 1995, as cited in Harvey, et al., 2010).
- As teacher certification requirements change to address mandates such as NCLB, and educator preparation programs shift to a more-performance-based evaluation of teacher candidates, adjustments in college curriculum will need to be made (Shippen, et al., 2005).

Literature Review: EPPs

- State policy-makers are promoting specific roles for colleges and universities in better preparing general education teachers for working with students with disabilities.
- Features of teacher preparation programs that are emerging as effective and therefore should be considered include the following:
 - coursework that blends content knowledge with procedural or pedagogical knowledge,
 - pedagogies that promote active learning,
 - coursework aligned with high-quality field experiences,
 - opportunities for special education and general education preservice teachers to collaborate, and
 - extended opportunities to learn to teach
 - (Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, & Murphy, 2012).

Literature Review: EPPs

- The use of field experiences is considered to be an important mechanism for providing preservice teachers with opportunities to apply knowledge in practical teaching situations.
- Field experiences that were carefully designed to facilitate preservice teachers' implementation of strategies acquired during their coursework seemed to have the most promise for increasing preservice teachers' sense of efficacy, perceptions of competence, planning abilities, knowledge, and classroom performance
 - (Leko, et al., 2012).

Literature Review: EPPs

- Three themes were apparent in a literature review by Davis and Layton (2011) regarding inclusive education:
 - the diversity of teacher training,
 - the importance of collaboration,
 - and the effect of teacher perceptions upon student achievement.
- While all three are crucial elements, teacher perceptions may be the greatest predictor of successful inclusive classrooms.
- Research focusing on the elimination of negative perceptions towards individuals with disabilities, while offering solutions promoting collaboration among a pedagogically diverse group of instructors, benefits general and special educators, and more importantly, the students they instruct.

Literature Review: Perceptions

- Davis and Layton (2011) also found that perceptions tended to fall into one of two categories:
 - beliefs that students with disabilities would be unable to meaningfully participate in grade level activities
 - and beliefs that students would be unable to conform to mainstream behavioral expectations.
- Participating teachers were equally concerned with the possibility of encountering challenging student behaviors.

Literature Review: Perceptions

- The most consistent finding across existing studies is that teachers' willingness to integrate students is associated with the nature and severity of the student's disability.
- Other studies have found that teachers are more willing to integrate students whose disabilities do not require additional responsibilities on their part (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998).

Literature Review: Perceptions

- Teacher efficacy has been defined as teachers' beliefs about their ability to bring about desired outcomes in their students.
- Two distinct components of teacher efficacy have emerged:
 - personal efficacy, or the belief that an individual can affect changes in his or her students;
 - and teaching efficacy, or the belief that teaching can overcome the effects of other influences
 - (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984, as cited in Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998).
- Teacher efficacy is not only teachers' perceptions about their own capabilities, but also how this efficacy influences students' learning (Chu, 2011).

Literature Review: Self-Efficacy

- Teachers with low self-confidence are more likely to refer students who are perceived as difficult to teach, particularly students with special needs, than are teachers with high self-confidence (Jung, 2007).

Literature Review: Self-Efficacy

- Previous research has indicated that preservice teachers do not feel adequately prepared to serve students with disabilities in general education classrooms (as cited in Shippen, et al., 2005).
- Cook (2002, as cited in Everhart, 2009) found that teacher candidates did not feel adequately prepared to work in classrooms in which one or more students with disabilities were present.

Literature Review: Self-Efficacy

- Preservice teachers' successful field experiences, as well as working with effective classroom teachers, promoted their sense of efficacy in teaching those who are culturally different.
- For this reason, teacher education programs should examine the structure of initial field placements because of their potentially transformational influence on preservice teachers' belief systems (Lastrapes & Negishi, Winter 2011-2012).

Literature Review: Self-Efficacy

- According to Pajares, (1992, as cited in Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002), beliefs about teaching, which include perceptions about what it takes to be an effective teacher, are formed before a student enters college.
- These beliefs are either challenged or nurtured during their teacher training program (Minor, et al., 2002).
- Research has shown that teachers form beliefs about their teaching, including attributions, during their preservice training, and once these beliefs are embedded they can be resistant to change over the span of a teaching career (Woolfolk-Hoy & Spero, 2005, as cited in Woodcock & Vialle, 2011).

Literature Review: Self-Efficacy

- What are preservice teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities as determined by the Opinions About Persons with Disabilities Scale?
- *Rationale*
 - Attitudes established before the students began working in education or as they went through the educator preparation programs may indicate how they feel about having special needs students in their classrooms and also how willing they may have been to gain more knowledge of special education.

Research Questions

- Does the self-efficacy of preservice teachers affect their knowledge and understanding of special education law as determined by the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale?
- *Rationale*
 - By examining the candidates' self-efficacy, the researcher can see if those with higher self-efficacy sought out more opportunities to learn about special education or whether they understand the learned knowledge better than those candidates with lower self-efficacy.

Research Questions

- How well do preservice teachers perceive their knowledge of special education law?
- *Rationale*
 - The group of candidates may or may not perceive these areas of special education laws and procedures to be important. By examining this information, educator preparation programs and school administrators can gain insight on how to help these candidates be successful in the classroom.

Research Questions

- Do certain Educator Preparation Programs prepare students better for dealing with students with disabilities? If so, how?
- *Rationale*
 - Examining the varying Educator Preparation Programs and the requirements for candidates can determine if certain programs are more adept at preparing candidates to work with special needs students. For example, do programs with more field work in special populations have students with greater knowledge in this area?

Research Questions

- Data collection will occur through:
 - Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale
 - Opinions About Persons with Disabilities Scale
 - Other questions developed by the researcher containing topics related to candidates' knowledge of special education laws and procedures as they relate to the competencies established by the Texas Education Agency.

Data Collection

- This scale was developed to assess teachers' perceived efficacy for teaching students with disabilities.
- The original scale contained 14 items and was initially administered to 245 students of education.
- The second scale was designed to improve measurement of self-efficacy by rephrasing items and using a 100 point scale.
- (Dawson, 2008)

Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale

- Understanding teacher efficacy for teaching students with disabilities can contribute to a better understanding of teacher beliefs, help shape professional development for teachers, influence the teacher education curriculum, and provide the foundation for a better conception of what it means to be a teacher today.
- (Dawson, 2008)

Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale

Teacher Beliefs Survey

Directions: This scale is designed to measure how much impact you feel you have through your teaching. Please select the best possible answer for each statement. Your answers are confidential and anonymous. Answer questions according to how many good strategies you have at your disposal for use in the following situations.

		Nothing (No Strategies)	Very Little (1-2 Strategies)	Some (3-4 Strategies)	Quite a bit (5-6 Strategies)	A great deal (6+ Strategies)				
<i>How much can you do to ...</i>										
1	... adjust lessons to meet the needs of all students in your class, regardless of ability level?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	... create an environment that is open and welcoming for every student, including those with disabilities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3	... encourage all students to accept those with disabilities in your classroom?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	... manage a classroom when your students range from learning disabled to gifted?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	... change society's view of individuals with disabilities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6	... establish meaningful relationships with your students with disabilities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	... de-escalate a situation involving a student with disabilities that is getting out of control in your									

Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale (v1)

Teacher Beliefs Inventory

This scale is designed to measure the beliefs that preservice teachers hold as they prepare to enter the field of education. Please select the best answer: answers range from 0 (I do not believe I can do that at all) to 100 (I believe I can handle this task). Answer all items regarding your ability to complete the tasks today. Teaching experience is not required; you have beliefs about these things whether or not you realize it. Your answers are confidential and anonymous.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Certain I cannot do			Certain I can do moderately						Certain I can do	
1. I can adjust my lesson plans to meet the needs of all of my students, regardless of their ability level.										
2. I can create an environment that is open and welcoming for students with disabilities in my classroom.										
3. I can effectively encourage all of my students to accept those with disabilities in my classroom.										
4. I can manage a classroom that includes students with disabilities.										
5. I can establish meaningful relationships with my students with disabilities.										

Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale (v2)

- This scale was developed by Jennifer Aldrich to collect preservice early childhood educators' self-report data related to inclusion.
- In the initial study, 332 participants served as the validation sample. After validation and revision, data were collected from 172 participants from 10 universities in Texas during their student teaching/final intern semesters.
- (Aldrich, 2000)

Inventory of Opinions About Persons with Disabilities Scale

- In the original study, participants reported positive self-perceptions about their beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion.
- The participants reported less positive attitudes about training.

Inventory of Opinions About Persons with Disabilities Scale

Opinion Inventory

Page :

Directions: Please circle the appropriate number, from -3 to +3, that best describes your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements concerning persons who are disabled. There are no correct answers. The best answers are those that honestly reflect your feelings. Please respond to every statement.

KEY

-3: I disagree very much
-2: I disagree pretty much
-1: I disagree a little

0: I neither agree nor disagree

+1: I agree a little
+2: I agree pretty much
+3: I agree very much

- | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | |
|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|---|
| | | | | | | | 1. Most persons with disabilities are willing to work. |
| | | | | | | | 2. Persons with disabilities are in many ways like children. |
| | | | | | | | 3. Persons with disabilities need only the proper environment and opportunity to develop and express criminal tendencies. |
| | | | | | | | 4. Adults with disabilities should be involuntarily committed to an institution following arrest. |
| | | | | | | | 5. Persons with disabilities should be prevented from having children. |
| | | | | | | | 6. Individuals with disabilities are able to adjust to life outside an institution. |
| | | | | | | | 7. Adults with disabilities should be prohibited from obtaining a driver's license. |
| | | | | | | | 8. Persons with disabilities should live with others who are similarly disabled. |
| | | | | | | | 9. The opportunity for gainful employment should be provided to persons with disabilities. |

Inventory of Opinions About Persons with Disabilities Scale

- This section was created to evaluate the knowledge that preservice candidates have regarding basic special education knowledge and procedures.
- There is one question for each of the 12 special education competencies.
- The questions were rated for content validity by current special education professionals.

Knowledge component

Question
<p>The main characteristics of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dyslexia Impulsivity Bullying Speech problems
<p>Evaluation strategies for special needs students include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> True/false tests Timed tests Multiple choice tests Evaluating content separately
<p>Which of the following strategies would be most effective for providing job training to a student with an intellectual disability for work as a mail sorter in a busy corporate mailroom?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pair the student with an employee who can work beside him or her and model the required tasks. Make a list of job tasks for the student to refer to as necessary throughout his or her shift.

Knowledge Component

- A link to the survey will be sent to all current members of the Texas Directors of Field Experience, asking them to forward to current student teachers.
- The survey is entirely online and preservice teachers should be able to complete it in about 20 minutes.
- Data from responses will be compiled and written into doctoral dissertation.
- Possible presentation of data received at next year's CSOTTE conference.

What's next?

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