

Pre-Service Teachers' Awareness, Attitudes, and Self-Efficacy on Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study aimed to determine the pre-service teachers' attitudes, awareness, and self-efficacy on inclusive education, focusing on how these factors influence their confidence in teaching diverse learners in the current scenario, which the pre-service teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education for their ability, and fostering positive relationships.

Methods: The Likert scale approach is used to answer the questions on the pre-service teacher for the teacher Self-Efficacy Scale addresses the diverse needs of learners and assesses the attitude of pre-service teachers' awareness of the inclusivity of learners during the implementation of inclusive education.

Results: a positive correlation between pre-service teachers' attitudes about inclusive education and their self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners. That suggests fostering a positive outcome on inclusion can significantly enhance teachers' confidence and ability to manage in diverse classrooms. teacher education programs focus on strengthening teachers' attitudes toward inclusion through exposure to diverse educational settings, providing hands-on teaching strategies for inclusive education, and training teachers to address issues in the educational system.

Conclusion: Increasing the field-based experiences and community involvement training to equip the pre-service teachers with the skills needed to foster collaborative, inclusive learning environments, and for educators to face the challenges of inclusive education.

Keywords: attitudes towards inclusion, awareness, inclusive education, pre-service teachers, self-efficacy

Introduction

The importance of inclusive education is not something new. An early reference to the need to ensure an individual's right to education is noted in the United Nations General Assembly (1966), while more recently, it was stressed that inclusion is a part of the foundation for quality education (Ainscow et al., 2019). Inclusive education means quality education for all students, respecting their diversity in terms of educational needs (UNESCO, 2009). Including students with disabilities in typical schools with their peers is part of the global human rights movement, which refers to the possibility that students with disabilities can fully participate in all activities that make up modern society (Rajšli-Tokoš, 2020). The inclusion of students with disabilities is now a worldwide practice (Leyser, et.al, 2008; Brownlee, et.al, 2000; Hegarty, 1998; and Sebba, et.al, 1996).

It has been widely recognized that pre-service teachers hold firm beliefs about the teaching profession long before they enter the classroom, and they persist throughout their teacher preparation and into their early years of teaching. Consequently, examining pre-service teachers' perceptions about education is important for evaluating how teacher preparation programs can be structured to best align prospective

teachers' strongly held beliefs with the pedagogical practices that they will need to learn for their subsequent teaching careers. Every child has at one time or another "played school." By reaching college, most students have closely observed and scrutinized teachers and their behaviors for at least 12 or 13 years. These activities leave an indelible imprint on the minds and hearts of most students as they develop folk theories about what it takes to be a teacher (Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993). "Teachers set the tone of classrooms, and as such, the success of inclusion may well depend upon the prevailing attitudes of teachers as they interact with students with disabilities in their classrooms" (Carroll, Forlin & Jobling, 2003)

Furthermore, the study supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). These goals are fundamental in eliminating educational disparities and ensuring equal access for all learners, including those with disabilities. Inclusive education is essential for effectively addressing the inequalities that persist within the educational system. It compels schools to enhance their curriculum, providing aspiring teachers with the critical tools needed to support underprivileged and marginalized children. Additionally, it advances inclusive teaching methods, strengthens teacher preparation, and guarantees equitable educational opportunities for everyone.

Awareness of the pre-service teachers is very important to the field of inclusive education, where learners' part of inclusivity in the classroom. To occupy the pre-service teacher's awareness of disabilities and inclusive education in the classroom, and to achieve the goals of education. Education for all is part of how inclusive education important. It goes with "the act emphasizes the importance of addressing disparities in educational opportunities and promoting inclusivity," known as No Filipino Child Left Behind Act of 2008.

Purpose

The study aims to determine the pre-service teachers' awareness, attitude, and self-efficacy on inclusive education. It seeks the following; 1) Assess the level of awareness of inclusive education among pre-service teachers in terms of; 1.1.) Attitudes of primary school teachers toward children with disabilities; 1.2.) Factors that would facilitate the process of inclusion in education; 1.3.) Factors that complicate the process of inclusion in education; 2) Analyze the attitude of the pre-service teachers about inclusive education; 3) Examine the teachers' self-efficacy; 4) Determine the relationship among pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive education, attitude of the pre-service teachers about inclusive education, and their self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners; and 5) Formulate a model that illustrates how awareness and attitudes influence pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive education

Pre-service teachers are in the beginning stage of being teachers and, therefore, have the potential for change. They are likely to match what they do with what they think they should do. Several studies have identified how teachers' belief about themselves shape their classroom practice. The study conducted by Richards et al. (1996) on foreign language teachers focuses more on their image in the students' minds than on pedagogical issues. Several studies have identified that beliefs teachers have of themselves are significant factors in affecting the teaching roles and practices that teachers adopt (Borich, 1999)

There were many studies undertaken that reveal the attitude of teachers toward inclusive education. A few of them are mentioned below. Horne & Timmons (2009) found that most teachers were in favor of inclusion. Most felt they needed support from the principal. However, teachers did feel that they lacked adequate training needed to implement inclusion successfully. They also felt they were not given sufficient

time to prepare, and they needed more support in the form of smaller class sizes and assistance with modifying the curriculum. Smitha and Acharya (2010) found that teachers have unfavorable attitudes towards inclusive education. Conclusively, it can be said that teachers' attitudes towards disabled students, in particular, and inclusive education, in general, is the main pivot for making the concept of 'inclusion' a successful venture. Rekha Chavhan (2013) found that the majority of pupil-teachers possess a medium level of attitude towards inclusive education. It was seen from the results that there is a significant difference between male and female student-teachers attitude towards Inclusive Education. Female student teacher has a favorable Attitude towards Inclusive Education than male student teachers. Shane and Christopher [8] (2013) conducted a study on "Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education". The study was conducted on secondary school teachers, including male, female, more experienced, and less experienced teachers. The study found that there was no significant difference in the attitudes of male and female teachers. However, the experience of teachers has an important bearing on their liking or disliking of inclusive education, as a statistically significant difference was found in the attitude of teachers having more experience. The more experienced teachers favored inclusive settings.

Inclusive education can provide a range of academic and social benefits for students with disabilities, such as higher achievement in language and mathematics, improved rates of high school graduation, and more positive relationships with non-disabled students. Nevertheless, many parents and teachers have concerns that the inclusion of students with disabilities might come at the expense of their non-disabled classmates. They may worry that the modifications or accommodations that students with disabilities require in inclusive classrooms will impede the learning of nondisabled students (Peltier, 1997). Despite these concerns, research has demonstrated that, for the most part, including students with disabilities in regular education classes does not harm non-disabled students and may even confer some academic and social benefits. Below, we document our review of the available evidence on the impacts of inclusive education on non-disabled students.

In explaining the concept of self-efficacy, Bandura (1994) offers, "One's self-judgments of personal capabilities to initiate and successfully perform specified tasks at designated levels, expend greater effort, and persevere in the face of adversity and beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments. Perceived self-efficacy is not concerned with the amount of skill one has, but with what one believes can be done with what they have. Four determinants of self-efficacy include experience, or actual performance, modeling, or vicarious experiences, social persuasions, or verbal persuasion, and physiological factors.

Bandura, 1997). Bandura asserts that experiences (referred to as Enactive Mastery Experiences) have the most influence on self-efficacy. For example, successes contribute to the building of self-efficacy, and failures may undermine it. Bandura (1997) further offers that difficulties can provide opportunities to learn how to turn failure into success. Pajares (2005) avers that this determinant of efficacy in life choices is critical for college-level students due to the many academic choices available to them; they will most likely participate in courses and activities in which they believe they can succeed and may avoid those that they perceive as beyond their confidence level. (Bandura, 1997).

Methods

Study Design, Population, Setting

The methods employed in the Likert scale are used to address questions about pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale assesses the diverse needs of learners and evaluates pre-service teachers' awareness of the inclusivity of learners during the implementation of inclusive education.

The study involves 34 graduating pre-service teachers, comprising 27 females and 7 males, who are enrolled in the Bachelor of Elementary Education program for the 2024-2025 academic year at Palompon Institute of Technology, Tabango, Leyte,

Study tool, variables, data collection

The Likert scale is a widely used tool in educational research to measure participants' attitudes, awareness, and self-efficacy through a set of structured response options. In this study, a 5-point Likert scale will be utilized to assess pre-service teachers' levels of agreement with various statements related to inclusive education, ranging from “**Neutral**” (1) to “**Strongly Agree**” (5). This scale allows for the quantification of subjective perceptions, making it easier to analyze trends and patterns in the respondents' views. By using this method, the study can systematically evaluate how informed the pre-service teachers are (awareness), how they feel about teaching learners with special needs (attitudes), and how confident they are in implementing inclusive strategies in the classroom (self-efficacy).

The research instrument utilized in this study is a structured questionnaire aimed at assessing the pre-service teachers' awareness, attitude, and self-efficacy on inclusive education teaching diverse learners. The questionnaire is adapted and modified from (Studen Rajke's Master's Thesis, Studen, 2008), which was developed as part of the "Education for the Knowledge Society" project at the Institute for Educational Research in Belgrade. Such a tool is chosen for its relevance in measuring pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive education and Bandura's Instrument for Teacher Self-Efficacy, a well-established instrument for evaluating teachers' confidence in managing classroom tasks, implementing instructional strategies, and engaging learners.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study were collected using a questionnaire specifically designed for this research. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher explained to them the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the questions were structured to reflect real-life teaching scenarios, allowing respondents to relate their answers to potential experiences they might encounter in the real-life scenario of teaching in inclusive education.

Data Analysis

The instrument was conducted within the visibility of the classroom where the pre-service teachers were. The questionnaire is an adapted and modified instrument. It is the guide for the researcher conducting a survey questionnaire to assess the data. To analyze through Awareness of Inclusive Education and attitudes about Inclusive Education, variables were to be evaluated using SPSS software to explore the relationship between awareness, attitude, and self-efficacy as measured by the questionnaires. The regression statistical method examines the relationships between pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted on the pre-service teachers' awareness, attitudes, and self-efficacy on inclusive education in teaching diverse learners. Several ethical considerations must be considered. First, informed consent is essential, ensuring that participants fully understand the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study before voluntarily agreeing to participate without any coercion.

Participants should also be granted the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any negative consequences. Moreover, fair and inclusive representation is crucial to avoid bias and ensure that diverse backgrounds and experiences are adequately reflected in the study. Relative thereto, the research participants' responses will be kept in strict confidentiality under R.A. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and used solely for research purposes.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>				
Age				
	Female		Male	
Valid	27		7	
	Sex			
	18-20	21-25	26-30	31-25
Valid	3	28	2	1

Level of awareness of inclusive education among pre-service teachers in terms of;

Indicators	Mean	SD
<u>Attitudes of primary school teachers towards children with disabilities</u>		
1. Do you support the initiative to include children with disabilities in regular schools when it is possible?	4.18	.797
2. Does the inclusion of children with disabilities have a positive impact on all children in the group?	3.62	.888
3. In most respects, are children with disabilities have a positive impact on all children without disabilities	3.71	.676
4. The mutual education of children with disabilities and children of typical development is of mutual benefit	3.71	.799
5. A child with disabilities in the regular class of the Elementary School can negatively affect the success of the whole class	2.91	1.111
Construct Mean	3.62	
<u>Factors that would facilitate the process of inclusion in education.</u>		
1. Reducing excessive curricula	2.97	.937
2. Introduction of special programs to encourage the development of children	4.03	.937

3. Adapting teaching contents to the abilities of these children individual teaching	4.00	.953
4. Implementation of active, interactive and participatory methods	4.26	.864
5. Fewer students in the class	2.85	1.209
6. Providing continuous professional assistance to the teacher by special educators	3.88	.977
7. Classes planned in such a manner so that all students can learn	4.09	.965
8. Encouraging the participation of all students in the class	4.50	.788
9. Developing students' understanding of diversity	4.35	.812
10. In every classroom where there are children with disabilities, there should be one special pedagogy in addition to the teacher	3.79	.914
11. Learning by working together in class	4.38	.779
12. Creating an individual educational plan for each child with disabilities	3.47	1.187
13. Adequate adaption of space	3.50	.929
14. Organizing seminars for teachers which enable them to work with children with disabilities	4.24	.890
Construct Mean	3.88	
<u>Factors that complicate the process of inclusion in education.</u>		
1. Resistance of other children toward children with disabilities: ridicule, mockey, ignoring, etc.	2.68	.976
2. Resistance of parents of children of typical development toward inclusion	2.91	1.083
3. Insufficient preparation of teachers to work with disabilities	2.74	1.053
4. Insufficient motivation of teachers to accept additional obligations in their work	2.85	1.158
5. The existing educational system, which is too difficult for other children	2.71	.906
6. Insufficient preparation of schools for accepting children with disabilities	2.76	1.075
7. Lack of financial resources to implement fundamentals school reform	2.91	1.215
Construct Mean	2.79	
Overall Mean	3.43	

Table 1. The results show the positive attitudes toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms, with a construct mean of 3.62. The teachers agree that inclusive education benefits both the students with and without disabilities in the classroom settings. The data shows how the data in high agreement with statements to support for inclusion of M = 4.18 and mutual benefits of inclusive learning

M = 3.71. However, the slightly neutral stance on whether inclusion negatively affects class success M = 2.91. indicates some concerns about the potential academic impact of inclusion on the individual peers. The attitudes towards awareness is acceptable to the teacher, the results show of M= 3.61 agree.

While the factors that facilitate inclusion, the results were even more encouraging, with (M=3.88) leaning toward strong agreement on several items. Teachers highly value classroom strategies such as encouraging participation of all students M = 4.50, collaborative learning M = 4.38, and developing understanding of diversity M = 4.35. The teachers recognize the importance of inclusive teaching methods. However, the issues such as class size M = 2.85 and overloaded curricula M = 2.97 received neutral ratings, highlighting that while teachers support inclusion.

Furthermore, the factors that complicate the inclusion process received an overall neutral rating M = 2.79, reflecting a moderate level of concern. Teachers acknowledged potential barriers such as student and parent resistance, insufficient training, and lack of school readiness, but none were perceived as overwhelming obstacles. These challenges are recognized but not deeply internalized as limitations, possibly due to a lack of direct experience or exposure. The results demonstrate a readiness to embrace inclusive education, especially when adequate support and professional development are provided, and the importance of equipping teachers with the skills, resources, and structural conditions needed to translate their positive attitudes into effective inclusive practices.

Pre-service teachers' attitudes and concerns are found to be major factors that influence the success of inclusion (Carpenter et al., 2005; Martinez, 2003; Sharma et al., 2006). Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) reported that there is a significant link between pre-service teachers' perceived teaching-efficacy beliefs and their attitudes towards children as well as control over the classroom. Studies conducted by Soodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998), Weisel and Dror (2006), Kim (2006), and Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, and Malinen (2011) concluded that pre-service teachers' perceived teaching efficacy is a powerful predictor of their attitudes towards inclusive education.

Table 2: Attitude of the Pre-Service Teachers About Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. Inclusive education requires a selective approach according to the type and severity of developmental pathology	3.56	1.078
2. Inclusive education is an inalienable right of every child	3.62	1.045
3. Inclusive education is a utopia	3.21	1.008
Overall Mean	3.46	

Table 2: shows that pre-service teachers generally express a positive attitude toward inclusive education, with an overall M=3.46 interpreted as agree. They believe that inclusive education is a basic right for every child M = 3.6 which reflects an alignment with inclusive and educational values. The agreement M = 3.56 that inclusive education should be implemented with consideration of the type and severity of a child's developmental condition, indicating a realistic and practical outlook on its application. The pre-service teachers support the advocacy of inclusion; they also understand the complexities and nuances of adapting it to individual learner needs. While the response of "Inclusive education is a utopia" M = 3.21 suggests some reservations about the feasibility of inclusive education in real classroom settings.

Despite having positive attitudes and/or high teaching efficacy, pre-service teachers could have their concerns regarding implementing inclusive education is identified as pre-service teachers were concerned

about the inadequacy of resources and lack of peer acceptance towards children from diverse backgrounds. Accordingly, they found that preservice teachers were concerned that classroom academic standards would decline, and they needed to do more work in an inclusive classroom (Sharma, et.al, 2002).

Table 3: Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. How much can you influence the decisions that are made in the school?	3.44	.960
2. How much can you express your views freely on important school matters?	3.76	.987
3. How much can you do to get the instructional materials and equipment you need?	4.09	.793
4. How much can you do to influence the class sizes in your school?	3.65	1.012
5. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	3.68	.727
6. How much can you do to promote learning when there is lack of support from the home?	3.94	.886
7. How much can you do to keep students on task on difficult assignments?	3.91	.753
8. How much can you do to increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons?	4.26	.710
9. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	4.21	.770
10. How much can you do to get students to work together?	4.35	.734
11. How much can you do to overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning?	4.00	.853
12. How much can you do to get children to do their homework	4.18	.869
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules	4.41	.783
14. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	4.00	.853
15. How much can you do to prevent problem behavior on the school grounds?	4.03	.937
16. How much can you do to get parents to become involved in school activities?	4.09	1.026
17. How much can you do to make parents feel comfortable coming to school?	4.12	1.008
18. How much can you do to make parents feel comfortable coming to school?	4.12	.880
19. How much can you do to get community groups involved in working with the schools?	3.79	.946

20. How much can you do to get churches involved in working with the school?	3.65	1.070
21. How much can you do to get businesses involved in working with the school?	4.03	1.084
22. How much can you do to get local colleges and universities involved in working with the school?	3.35	1.012
23. How much can you do to make the school a safe place?	4.35	.812
24. How much can you do to make students enjoy coming to school?	3.50	.663
25. How much can you do to get students to trust teachers?	4.44	.746
26. How much can you help other teachers with their teaching skills?	4.12	.946
27. How much can you do to enhance collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run effectively?	3.88	1.094
28. How much can you do to reduce school dropout?	3.68	.976
29. How much can you do to reduce school absenteeism?	3.68	1.065
30. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	4.41	.783
Overall Mean	4.00	

Table 3 , shows the high level of self-efficacy among teachers, with an overall mean of 4.00, interpreted as *Fairly Confident*. Teachers consistently rated themselves as capable in managing classroom-related responsibilities, especially in terms of motivating students $M = 4.21$, promoting learning even without home support $M = 3.94$, and handling challenging behaviors $M = 4.00$. They expressed confidence in fostering parent engagement $M = 4.12$ and promoting school-community partnerships, but the confidence was slightly lower when it came to influencing external stakeholders like local colleges $M = 3.35$. However, the highest-rated items demonstrate complete confidence in critical educational tasks such as helping students follow rules $M = 4.41$, encouraging belief in academic ability $M = 4.41$, the student trust $M = 4.44$, and fostering collaboration among students $M = 4.35$.

The indicators show strong instructional self-efficacy, which is essential in supporting inclusive the effectivity classroom environments. However, the slightly less confidence in influencing structural aspects of education, such as decision-making in school leadership $M = 3.44$ and class sizes $M = 3.65$.

The overall data suggest that teachers are equipped to manage day-to-day teaching and student engagement that there is room for growth in terms of institutional influence and external collaboration, which could be supported through leadership training and expanded school-community initiatives, to become effective in classroom management, student motivation, and building positive relationships.

Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in his or her competence to execute required behavior successfully to get expected results, If people do not believe in their abilities to generate a desired effect through their acts, they will not have enough motivation to conduct the act, high self-efficacy is a predictor of increased motivation to achieve goals and feeling more comfortable in coping with unfavorable environments (Bandura, 1997).

Table 4: Relationship Among Pre-Service Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education, Attitude of the Pre-Service Teachers About Inclusive Education, and their Self-Efficacy in Teaching Diverse Learners

Variables	r-value	p-value
Awareness of Inclusive Education	Self-Efficacy in Teaching Diverse Learners $r = .330$	$p = .057$
Attitude About Inclusive Education	$r = .567^{**}$	$p < .001$

Table 4: The relationship among preservice teachers' awareness of inclusive education, attitude of the pre-service teachers about inclusive education, and their self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners, the correlation between pre-service teachers' awareness and attitudes about inclusive education and their self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners.

The data shows a weak, non-significant positive correlation between awareness of inclusive education and self-efficacy $r = .330$, $p = .057$, indicating that while greater awareness may be somewhat associated with higher self-efficacy, the relationship is not statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level. The null hypothesis (H_{01}) is accepted for this variable pair. In contrast, there is a moderate to strong and statistically significant positive correlation between attitude about inclusive education and self-efficacy $r = .567$, $p < .001$, suggesting that pre-service teachers who have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education tend to feel more confident in their ability to teach diverse learners.

Table 5: Formulate a model that illustrates how awareness and attitudes influence pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive education

This model illustrates how awareness and attitudes influence pre-service self-efficacy in inclusive education. This model emphasizes that a well-supported pre-service teacher, armed with deep awareness and positive attitudes, will be much more effective in implementing inclusive educational practices. This model is presented in Figure 1.

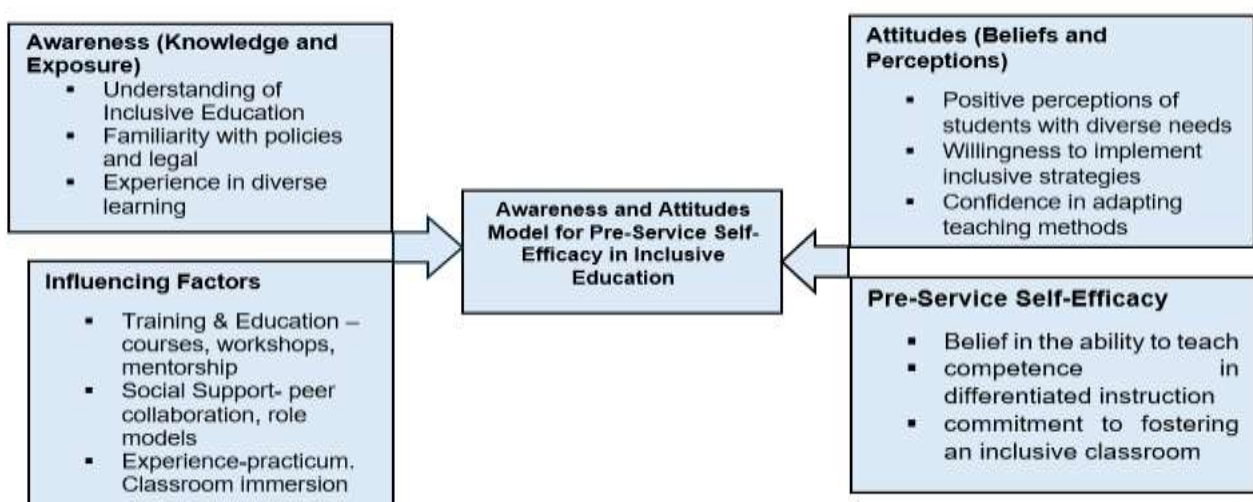


Figure 1: This model demonstrates that greater awareness and positive attitudes lead to enhanced self-efficacy, enabling pre-service teachers to successfully implement inclusive education. Sailor, W.S. (2014),

Implementation of a school-wide approach to delivering support and education to students with disabilities in general education settings alongside those without disabilities

4. Conclusion

Based on the data, the pre-service teachers have an impact on the positive attitudes toward inclusive education and demonstrate a high level of self-efficacy in managing diverse learners. They agree that inclusive education is a right for every child and recognize its benefits, though they express uncertainty about its full feasibility. The facilitating factors, such as interactive teaching methods and collaborative learning, were highly endorsed, while structural and systemic barriers, including large class sizes and limited resources, were viewed more neutrally. Furthermore, teachers reported being fairly to completely confident in key areas of classroom management, student engagement, and fostering a safe and inclusive environment. However, the positive attitudes toward inclusion significantly influence teaching self-efficacy, while general awareness alone. This implies that enhancing teacher education programs to foster more favorable attitudes and practical confidence could be more impactful than focusing solely on awareness of inclusive education.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommended that teacher education programs emphasize fostering positive attitudes toward inclusive education and should integrate more opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with diverse classroom settings, exposing them to both the benefits and challenges of inclusion through workshops.

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