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Becoming Inclusive: A Collection and Analysis of the Perceptions of Newly Qualified General Elementary Education Teachers on their Preparedness for Teaching in Inclusive Settings

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Perceptions of Newly Qualified Teachers on their Preparedness for Teaching in Inclusive Settings

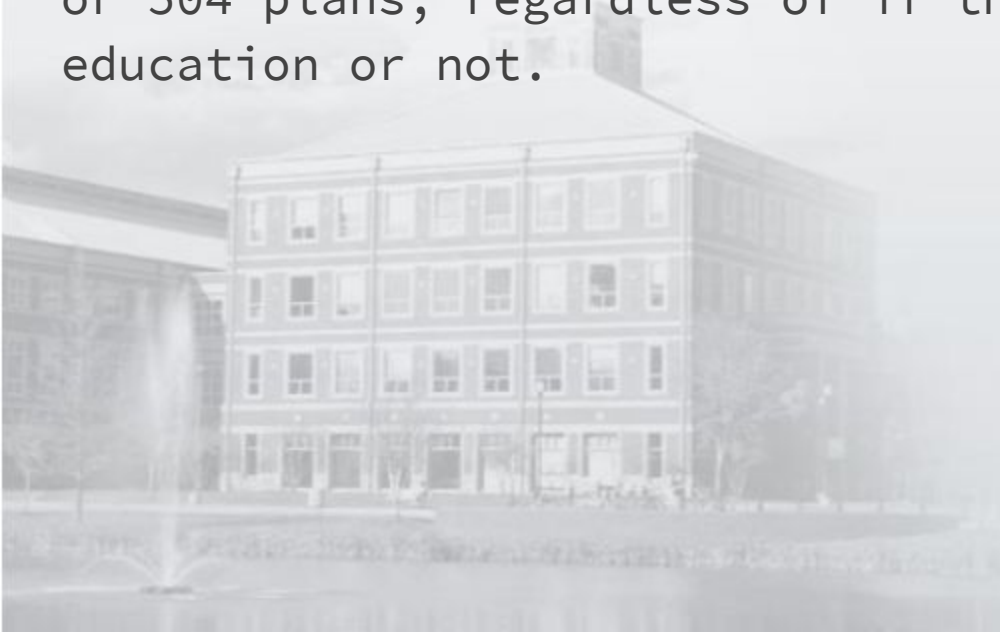
Brooke Armesto



Introduction

“In the last fifteen years, [due to] federal legislation and the Regular Education Initiative (REI)...many schools in the country are moving towards a **fully inclusive model** where students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers.” (Turner, 2003)

Implication: All teachers will likely teach students with IEPs or 504 plans, regardless of if they are certified in special education or not.



Main Issue/Problem

Graduates with elementary education degrees only take two SPED courses, but may still be required in the future to teach children with disabilities.

Are they prepared enough to teach in inclusive settings? If not, how can we better prepare them?



Central Question

How do newly qualified general elementary education teachers perceive their preparedness to teach in inclusive settings?



How I Crafted my Research Question

Research shows that perceived preparedness (self-efficacy) can predict success.

The combination of self-efficacy and collective efficacy have a great impact on teacher preparedness, especially for NQTs. (Tschannen-Morgan et.al., 1998)



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Current Research Studies

- Mostly dated studies
- More internationally-based than U.S.-based studies
- Many studies regarding physical education or secondary education



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Current Research Findings

- General Ed Certified teachers generally do not feel prepared to teach in inclusive settings.
- Perceived barriers to success
 - Not enough real-life experience with students with disabilities
 - Lack of preparation during program
 - Lack of support from administrators, SPED staff
- Ways to improve teacher preparation
 - Focus on specific skills needed for this type of learning environment
 - More experience with students with disabilities in preservice placements



Gap in Research

- Current, updated research
- Clarification
 - Some sources had conflicting results
- Studies surveying elementary school teachers



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Goal

Collect newly qualified teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to teach in inclusive settings, or classes in which students with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom, noting the teachers' unique stories and experiences that contributed to their perceived preparedness.



Data Collection Methods

- Zoom interviews with newly qualified teachers
- Newly qualified teachers will share...
 - Experiences in inclusive settings
 - How they were prepared by their degree program to teach inclusion
 - Perceived levels of preparedness at the beginning of their career, how that compares to their comfort levels teaching inclusion now, and what factors they feel influenced those feelings
 - Suggestions they have for ways they could have been better prepared by their degree program for the reality of teaching inclusion.



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Participants

- Employed as a teacher at a public elementary school in one of the following counties: Bulloch, Bryan, Candler, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Liberty, Savannah-Chatham, or Screven.
- Have taught or are currently teaching at least one student with a disability in a general education setting.
- Graduated with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Georgia Southern University within the past 5 years.
- Identified through a list of Georgia Southern's graduates.
- Excludes those with higher degrees and those teaching more than five years.

Data Analysis Methods

- Qualitative-narrative design using thematic analysis.
- Transcribed interviews will be coded and analyzed for common experiences, opinions, and beliefs, to use to create four themes that indicate similarities throughout the teacher interviews.
- Each theme will correspond to a specific code that will be used to indicate statements throughout the transcripts.



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Sample Interview Questions

*Prior to the interview, teachers' names and current school of employment should be collected.

1. How many years have you been teaching and what grade levels have you taught?
 - a. How many of those years have you taught at least one student with an IEP/504 plan? To clarify, IEPs, or individualized education plans, and 504 plans are types of plans developed for students with disabilities which provide them with specific accommodations or modifications and services to support them in the educational setting.
 - b. In which settings have you taught students with IEPs/504 plans (independently in a general education class, with a paraprofessional, with a partial-day co-teacher, with a full-day co-teacher?)
 - a. What is the (approximate) average number of students with IEP/504 plans in your class? Have you had gifted students in those same classes as well?
2. For the purposes of this study, inclusive settings are those in which students with and without disabilities are served together in one classroom. How were you/are you being prepared to teach in inclusive settings?

- a. What kind of support have you received from your school or district to prepare you for teaching in an inclusive setting?
 - b. In what ways have you prepared on your own?
 - c. In what ways were you prepared by your degree program?
3. Think back to when you were first hired as a teacher. Were you aware that you would be teaching in an inclusive setting? In college, did you ever think you would be teaching inclusive settings?
 - a. When you first found out, how did you feel? Was this something you felt prepared to do?
 - b. What experiences did you have in your degree program that you feel prepared you best for this? What aspects do you feel like your degree program fell short on?
 4. Tell me about a time you felt unprepared in working with a student who was challenging.
 5. After teaching inclusion for some time now, have your perceptions changed? If so, what are some experiences that affected your confidence in your ability to teach inclusive settings?
 6. Do you have any suggestions for improving the B.S. Elementary Education program so that future teachers are better prepared to teach in inclusive settings?

Current Status (As of Oct. 27, 2020)

- Currently in the process of collecting data
- Two teacher interviews done so far
- Anticipated completion: January 1, 2020



Expected Impact

The teacher's responses can provide useful information to professors and program developers on whether or not graduates feel they were fully prepared for teaching in inclusive settings, and what changes can be made to the program to better prepare the teachers.



Works Cited

1. Tschannen-Moran, M., Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. (1998).
•Teacher Efficacy: Its Meaning and Measure. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(2), 202. doi: 10.2307/1170754
2. Turner, N. D. (2003). Preparing preservice teachers for inclusion in secondary classrooms. *EDUCATION-INDIANAPOLIS THEN CHULA VISTA-*, 123(3), 491-495.

