

EUCAPA 2018 Abstract

The effectiveness of a special school experience for improving preservice physical education (PE) teachers' efficacy to teach children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Recent research has criticised how initial teacher education (ITE) programmes address issues relating to inclusive practice, particularly for children with SEND. Indeed, trainee PE teachers have indicated that content and theory-focused lectures do not sufficiently prepare them to include children with SEND in their lessons, and suggest more hands-on, experiential approaches are needed. Thus, this study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a week-long special school experience for improving preservice PE teacher efficacy to teach children with SEND. It asked two questions:

1. How effective is a special school experience for improving preservice PE teachers' efficacy to teach children with SEND?
2. How does the special school experience facilitate learning about SEND and inclusion for preservice PE teachers?

Thirty trainee PE teachers on a secondary PE PGCE programme at a higher education institution in England took part in this mixed-method study. Participants were asked to complete a self-reported efficacy scale at three time-points (before, immediately after and 4 months after completion of the special school experience) to assess any change in efficacy for teaching children with SEND as a result of their involvement in the special school experience. Eight participants were also invited to participate in a semi-structured interview about their experience and to reflect on any impact it might have had on their teaching.

Quantitative results revealed that the special school experience had a significant effect on trainee self-reported efficacy in relation to teaching children with SEND. Thematic analysis of interviews revealed a shift in thinking about SEND and inclusion as a result of the special school experience. This paper will consider these results and their implications for the delivery of ITE programmes.