

Creating an Inclusive Classroom: Country Case Studies Analysis on Mainstream Teachers' Teaching-Efficacy and Attitudes towards Inclusive Education in Japan and Singapore

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Abstract : How we idealize the regular schools to be inclusive as much as possible hinges on mainstream teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy towards the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular schools. This research studies the Japanese and Singaporean mainstream teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy towards the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classrooms by investigating what key variables influence their attitudes and teaching-eficacy and how they strategize to address their challenges to include their students with special needs in their regular classrooms. In order to understand the nature of teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy towards the inclusive education, a mixed-method research methodology was carried out in Japan and Singapore; it involved an explanatory sequential method of employing quantitative research first before qualitative research. In the quantitative research, 189 Japanese and 183 Singaporean teachers were invited to participate in the questionnaires and out of these participants, 38 Japanese and 15 Singaporean teachers shared their views during their semi-structured interviews. Based on the empirical findings, Japanese teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy were more likely to be influenced by their experiences in teaching students with special needs, knowledge about disability legislation, presence of their disabled family members and level of confidence to teach students with special needs. On the other hand, Singaporean teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy were affected by gender, educational level, received trainings in special needs education, knowledge about disability legislation and level of confidence to teach students with special needs. Both country results also demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between their teaching-eficacy and attitude. Narrative findings further expanded the reasons behind these quantitative factors that shaped teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy. Also it discussed the various problems faced by Japanese and Singaporean teachers and how they identified their coping strategies to circumvent their challenges in including their students with special needs in their regular classrooms. The significance of this research manifests in necessary educational reforms in both countries especially in the context of inclusive education. These findings may not be as definitive as expected but it is believed that it could provide useful information on the current situation about teachers' concerns towards the inclusive education. In conclusion, this research could potentially make its positive contribution to the body of literature on teachers' attitudes and teaching-eficacy in the context of Asian developed countries and these findings could posit that regular teachers' positive attitudes and strong sense of teaching self-eficacy could directly improve the success rate of inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classrooms.

Keywords : attitudes, inclusive education, special education, teaching-eficacy

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