WHY SPECIAL EDUCATION?

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF MOTIVATION ON CHOOSING SPECIAL EDUCATION AS A CAREER

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ABSTRACT

Teacher shortage in special education has been an ongoing dilemma considered critical and severe. The demand for fully qualified special education teachers continues to rise due to various federal mandates as well as an increase in the number of students requiring special education services. The supply of fully qualified special education teachers is not sufficient to meet the increasing demand. Therefore, effective recruitment and retention strategies of fully qualified special education teachers are necessary to increase the supply. One viable recruitment strategy is to investigate the factors that influence individuals to teach special education. The purpose of this study was to explore motivations that influence career choice in special education through (a) the development of a motivational profile of preservice special education teachers and (b) a comparison of various motivational influences between preservice special education teachers and preservice general education teachers. This quantitative study utilized a cross-sectional survey design with a convenience sampling of 356 undergraduate preservice education teachers attending one private, faith-based higher education institution. Participants completed a two-part questionnaire that consisted of a series of demographic questions and the FIT-Choice® Scale, an instrument developed by Watt and Richardson (2007) that utilized the theoretical framework of expectancy-value motivation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent-samples t tests to compare various motivational influences. Aside from the higher-order factor, social utility value, findings from this study showed no statistical significance in various motivational influences between preservice special education teachers and preservice general education teachers. The findings challenge existing assumptions that preservice special education teachers are uniquely motivated in their choice to teach. However, the findings from the study
confirm existing literature related to the significance of altruistic and intrinsic motivations in the choice to teach special education.