

Does More Coursework Mean Better Preparation? Examining Course Availability and Opportunities to Learn Inclusive Practices in Teacher Education

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The European Conference on Education 2026
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Inclusive education is a central goal of teacher preparation programs, yet questions remain about how program structures shape opportunities to learn inclusive practices. Prior research has emphasized the importance of offering inclusion-related coursework; however, less is known about whether increasing the number of such courses meaningfully supports the integration of inclusive practices. This study examines the relationship between course availability and opportunities to learn inclusive practices in teacher education programs. Using survey data collected from 215 faculty members in special education and elementary education-related programs at four-year higher education institutions in the United States, this quantitative study explores associations between the number of inclusion-related courses offered and faculty-reported integration of inclusive practices. Faculty reported an average of five inclusion-related courses within their programs. While most participants indicated that inclusion is considered when selecting clinical or field placement opportunities, fewer than two-thirds reported that all pre-service teachers received clinical or field placements in inclusive settings. Analyses revealed weak but statistically significant associations between course availability and overall integration of inclusive practices. Course availability was more strongly associated with collaboration and assessment-related practices, whereas relationships with instructional and social-emotional-behavioral practices were weak and not statistically significant. These findings suggest that increasing the number of inclusion-related courses alone has limited explanatory power for how inclusive practices are integrated in teacher preparation. The results highlight the importance of intentional course design and practice-based and field-based opportunities in shaping meaningful opportunities to learn inclusive practices.

Keywords: teacher education, inclusive practices, course availability, opportunity to learn

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Introduction

Inclusive education has become an increasingly prominent goal of educational systems, reflecting efforts to ensure that students with disabilities have meaningful access to general education settings alongside their peers (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Guldberg, 2010). In inclusive classrooms, however, placement alone does not ensure successful educational experiences. Teachers must be prepared to respond to diverse academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs through effective and evidence-based practices. Consequently, teachers play a central role in determining the quality of inclusive education, as they are responsible for translating inclusive policies and principles into daily classroom practice (Martínez, 2003; McLeskey et al., 2018).

The growing presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has increased expectations for both general and special education teachers. Teachers are expected not only to deliver instruction aligned with the general education curriculum but also to provide individualized supports, use assessment information to guide instruction, address social-emotional and behavioral needs, and collaborate effectively with families and other professionals (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018). Yet previous research has consistently raised concerns about teachers' preparedness to meet these expectations. Teachers and pre-service teachers have reported limited confidence and preparation for implementing inclusive practices, often attributing these difficulties to insufficient training and limited opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills needed in inclusive settings (Robinson, 2017; Woodcock & Hemmings, 2012).

Teacher education programs therefore have an important responsibility to prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of inclusive classrooms. Research has demonstrated the potential value of coursework, field experiences, collaborative activities, and practice-based preparation in improving teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceived ability to support students with disabilities (Alexiadou & Essex, 2016; Goddard & Evans, 2018; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). Pre-service teacher education has also been identified as an important context for developing positive attitudes toward inclusion and increasing teachers' self-efficacy for implementing effective practices in inclusive settings (Goddard & Evans, 2018; Lambe & Bones, 2007).

One common response to concerns about teacher preparedness has been to increase the availability of coursework related to special education, inclusion, collaboration, and instructional support for students with disabilities. Prior research has examined whether teacher preparation programs offer courses addressing inclusion and related content (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Burke & Sutherland, 2004; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). For example, studies have documented introductory special education courses, collaboration-focused coursework, and courses addressing the characteristics and instructional needs of students with disabilities. At the same time, the literature has identified considerable variation across programs. Some programs provide opportunities related to inclusion and collaboration, whereas others offer comparatively limited coursework or provide these opportunities primarily to special education majors (Allday et al., 2013; Harvey et al., 2010; McKenzie, 2009).

The availability of inclusion-related coursework, however, represents only one dimension of teacher preparation. Counting the number of courses offered provides limited information about what pre-service teachers actually have opportunities to learn and do within those courses (McKenzie, 2009). Inclusive practices may be introduced through lectures or readings, assessed through examinations, applied through projects and lesson planning, or practiced in

authentic field-based settings. These experiences represent substantially different levels and forms of engagement with inclusive practices. Previous concerns about teacher preparedness suggest that exposure to inclusive education content without sufficient opportunities for application and practice may not adequately prepare future teachers for the complexity of inclusive classrooms. Indeed, shortcomings in teacher preparation have frequently been linked not simply to the absence of inclusive content but also to insufficient practice-based preparation and limited opportunities to develop inclusive teaching skills.

High-leverage practices provide a useful framework for examining the preparation of pre-service teachers for inclusive education. Organized around collaboration, assessment, social-emotional-behavioral practices, and instruction, these practices represent important competencies for supporting students with disabilities in general education classrooms (McLeskey et al., 2017, 2018).

Although increasing the number of inclusion-related courses may provide additional exposure to these practices, it remains unclear whether course availability itself corresponds to greater integration of inclusive practices across teacher education programs. The distinction between quantity of coursework and the depth of opportunities to learn within coursework is therefore important. Programs may offer multiple inclusion-related courses while still providing relatively limited opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply, demonstrate, and receive feedback on inclusive practices. Conversely, programs with fewer courses may integrate these practices more intentionally and extensively within existing coursework. Accordingly, the present study examined the relationship between the number of inclusion-related courses offered and faculty-reported integration of inclusive practices in teacher education programs in the United States. Specifically, the study asked whether the number of inclusion-related courses was associated with the overall integration of inclusive practices and with integration within four domains: collaboration, assessment, social-emotional-behavioral practices, and instruction.

Literature Review

Inclusive Practices

Inclusive education requires teachers to use a range of practices that address the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Because teachers are responsible for implementing these practices in daily instruction (Martínez, 2003), teacher preparation programs play an important role in ensuring that pre-service teachers develop the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively in inclusive settings. Research has emphasized that inadequate preparation and limited experience with inclusive practices may contribute to teachers' difficulties in meeting the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Alexiadou & Essex, 2016; Blanton et al., 2011; McLeskey et al., 2018; Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018; Robinson, 2017; Woodcock & Hemmings, 2012).

One framework for identifying practices that are particularly important for teacher preparation is the set of high-leverage practices developed for special education. These practices were designed to represent research-supported practices that can be implemented across instructional settings and student needs and that can be taught and practiced by pre-service and in-service teachers. They are organized into four domains: collaboration, assessment, social-emotional-behavioral practices, and instruction (McLeskey et al., 2017). The framework has also been

proposed as a potential core component of practice-based teacher preparation (McLeskey et al., 2018).

Collaboration is a central component of inclusive education because supporting students with disabilities often requires coordinated work among general and special education teachers, families, paraprofessionals, and other professionals. Effective collaboration includes working with other professionals to improve student outcomes, conducting productive meetings with families and professionals, and collaborating with families to ensure that students receive appropriate services and support (McLeskey et al., 2018). Previous research has nevertheless identified limitations in how teacher preparation programs prepare pre-service teachers for collaborative practices such as co-teaching and interdisciplinary work (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013).

Assessment practices are similarly important because effective inclusive teaching depends on understanding students' strengths and areas of need and using assessment information to make instructional decisions. These practices include gathering information from multiple sources, using assessment results to develop and implement educational plans, and monitoring student data to adjust instruction (McLeskey et al., 2018). Research has also suggested that pre-service teachers may have misconceptions about assessment and may require greater opportunities to develop competence in using assessment information to guide their teaching (Lin & Lin, 2015, 2019).

Social-emotional-behavioral practices focus on establishing supportive learning environments and addressing students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs. These practices include creating positive and well-organized classroom environments, providing constructive feedback, teaching social behaviors and skills, and developing behavioral support plans (McLeskey et al., 2018). Their inclusion in teacher preparation is important because simply placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms does not ensure positive social, emotional, or behavioral outcomes. Teachers must be prepared to provide the supports necessary for students to participate meaningfully in inclusive settings (McLeskey et al., 2018).

Instructional practices represent the largest domain of the high-leverage practices framework. They include identifying learning goals, systematically designing instruction, adapting curriculum and materials, using explicit instruction, employing flexible grouping strategies, supporting student engagement, using technology, and promoting maintenance and generalization of learning (McLeskey et al., 2018). These practices require teachers to combine pedagogical and content knowledge with an understanding of individual student needs. Limited training and experience with inclusive instruction may therefore create challenges when teachers begin working with students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Together, these four domains provide a framework for considering what pre-service teachers should have opportunities to learn during teacher preparation. However, the presence of inclusive practices within teacher education coursework does not necessarily indicate the extent or depth to which pre-service teachers engage with those practices.

Opportunities to Learn Inclusive Practices

Teacher education programs can provide opportunities to learn inclusive practices in substantially different ways. A practice may be introduced through lecture or required reading, assessed through a quiz or examination, applied through assignments such as lesson planning

or projects, or practiced and evaluated in field-based settings. Consequently, identifying whether inclusive content is present in a program provides only limited information about the nature of the preparation pre-service teachers receive.

In the present study, opportunities to learn inclusive practices were conceptualized through five ways in which faculty could integrate a practice into their coursework: lecture, required readings, assessment, application assignments, and field-based assignments. Application assignments included lesson plans, demonstrations, projects, and reflections, whereas field-based assignments involved opportunities such as practicum, fieldwork, tutoring, and student teaching. This approach distinguishes simple exposure to inclusive content from opportunities to apply and demonstrate inclusive practices.

This distinction is particularly relevant because inclusive practices are inherently applied. For example, collaboration requires interaction with other professionals and families, assessment requires interpretation and use of student information, and instructional and social-emotional-behavioral practices require teachers to make decisions in response to students' individual needs. Although lectures and readings can provide important conceptual knowledge, opportunities to apply practices and receive feedback may be necessary for pre-service teachers to translate that knowledge into classroom practice.

Previous research has highlighted the potential value of inclusive coursework, training in inclusive settings, and collaborative experiences for strengthening pre-service teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceived efficacy regarding inclusive education (Alexiadou & Essex, 2016; Goddard & Evans, 2018; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). At the same time, concerns remain regarding insufficient practice-based preparation and teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive practices (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018; Robinson, 2017; Woodcock & Hemmings, 2012).

These concerns suggest that evaluating teacher preparation solely by the number of inclusion-related courses offered may provide an incomplete picture. Offering more courses may increase pre-service teachers' exposure to inclusive education content, but it does not necessarily indicate that those courses provide deeper opportunities to apply, practice, and receive feedback on inclusive practices. Conversely, programs with fewer inclusion-related courses may still provide substantial preparation if inclusive practices are intentionally embedded across existing coursework and field experiences.

The distinction between course quantity and opportunities to learn is therefore important when examining teacher preparation for inclusive education. Rather than assuming that a greater number of courses necessarily represents stronger preparation, it is necessary to examine whether course availability is associated with greater integration of inclusive practices. This distinction provides the basis for the present study's examination of the relationship between the number of inclusion-related courses offered and faculty-reported integration of inclusive practices across collaboration, assessment, social-emotional-behavioral, and instructional domains.

Methodology

Participants and Procedures

This study used a quantitative, self-report survey design to examine how inclusive practices are integrated into teacher education coursework in the United States. The target population consisted of faculty members in special education and elementary education–related programs who taught or had previously taught courses addressing inclusive education or related content. Participants were recruited from four-year institutions of higher education that offered undergraduate special education or related programs as well as elementary education or related programs. A convenience sampling approach was used to construct a broad sampling frame because institutional websites did not consistently identify which faculty members taught inclusion-related coursework.

Because institutional websites did not consistently identify which faculty members taught coursework related to inclusive education, contact information was collected broadly from special education and elementary education faculty across eligible institutions. Potential participants were identified through university websites and other higher education resources, and faculty members whose contact information was publicly available were invited to participate electronically.

The survey was administered electronically using Qualtrics following approval from the University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board. Participants received an invitation describing the purpose of the study and were asked to confirm that they taught or had taught coursework related to inclusive education. Two reminder emails were distributed after the initial invitation. Following data screening and cleaning, the final analytic sample consisted of 215 faculty members.

Participants represented special education, elementary education, and combined special and elementary education programs. Of the 215 participants, 96 identified as faculty in special education programs, 40 in elementary education programs, and 77 in combined programs; two did not specify their program affiliation. Participants had an average of 13.13 years of experience in teacher preparation, with experience ranging from one to 46 years. The institutions represented all four major geographic regions of the United States.

Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey designed to measure the extent to which inclusive practices were integrated into teacher education coursework. The survey was developed because no existing instrument was identified that directly measured the integration of inclusive or high-leverage practices within teacher preparation coursework.

The instrument contained 37 questions organized into three sections: program-related questions, course-related questions, and participant demographics. The program-related section gathered information about characteristics such as program type, number of inclusion-related courses offered, clinical and field placements, and evaluation of pre-service teachers' use of inclusive practices. The course-related section contained 23 inclusive practices adopted from the high-leverage practices framework and organized into four domains: collaboration, assessment, social-emotional-behavioral practices, and instruction (McLeskey, 2018).

For each of the 23 practices, faculty first indicated whether the practice was addressed in their coursework. When a practice was addressed, participants reported the ways in which it was incorporated. Five forms of integration were examined: lecture, required readings, assessment through quizzes or examinations, application assignments, and field-based assignments. Application assignments included activities such as lesson planning, demonstrations, projects, and reflections, whereas field-based assignments included observations of teaching during practicum, fieldwork, tutoring, or student teaching. Participants could select multiple forms of integration for each practice.

The survey was pilot tested with faculty members who represented the target population. Feedback was used to revise wording, clarify terminology, provide definitions, and modify the structure of questions concerning the ways practices were incorporated into coursework.

Variables and Data Analysis

The primary independent variable for the present analysis was the number of inclusion-related courses offered within participants' teacher education programs. The dependent variable was faculty-reported integration of inclusive practices. Integration was examined both overall and separately within the four domains of collaboration, assessment, social-emotional-behavioral practices, and instruction. The integration measure reflected the number of ways in which practices were incorporated into coursework, ranging from zero to five.

Data were exported from Qualtrics, cleaned, and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant and program characteristics. To address the research question examined in this paper, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the relationships between the number of inclusion-related courses offered and the integration of inclusive practices overall and within each of the four domains.

Prior to conducting the correlation analyses, assumptions of normality and linearity were examined. The original course-count variable demonstrated nonlinearity; therefore, a natural logarithmic transformation (LN) of the number of inclusion-related courses was used. The transformed variable showed improved linearity and normality and was used in the subsequent Pearson correlation analyses.

Results

Program Characteristics and Opportunities to Learn

Participants reported an average of approximately five inclusion-related courses within their teacher education programs. Most faculty members (72.6%, $n = 156$) indicated that inclusion was considered when selecting clinical or field-placement opportunities for pre-service teachers. However, only 55.8% reported that all pre-service teachers in their programs received clinical or field placements in inclusive settings. In addition, 85% of participants indicated that pre-service teachers were evaluated on their use of inclusive practices during clinical experiences.

Inclusive practices were generally well represented in coursework. Across the 23 practices examined, faculty reported addressing a mean of 20.71 practices ($SD = 3.70$), corresponding to approximately 90% of the practices included in the survey. However, the ways in which these practices were integrated varied. Across domains, lecture, required readings, and application

assignments were used more frequently, whereas assessments and field-based assignments were used less frequently.

This pattern was evident across the four inclusive-practice domains. Collaboration practices were typically addressed through lectures, readings, and application assignments, with assessments and field-based assignments used less often. Assessment practices were highly represented in coursework but showed a similar pattern, with lecture, readings, and application assignments occurring more frequently than assessment and field-based opportunities. Social-emotional-behavioral and instructional practices likewise tended to be incorporated primarily through lectures, readings, and application assignments rather than through assessments or field-based assignments.

Relationship Between Course Availability and Integration of Inclusive Practices

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted using the natural-log-transformed number of inclusion-related courses. The number of courses offered was positively and statistically significantly associated with the overall integration of inclusive practices, $r = .151$, $p = .027$. The magnitude of the association was weak.

At the domain level, the number of inclusion-related courses was positively and significantly associated with the integration of collaboration practices, $r = .181$, $p = .008$, and assessment practices, $r = .181$, $p = .008$. Both relationships were weak.

In contrast, the relationships between course availability and the integration of social-emotional-behavioral practices, $r = .090$, $p = .186$, and instructional practices, $r = .118$, $p = .084$, were positive but not statistically significant.

Table 1

Correlations Between the Number of Inclusion-Related Courses Offered and Integration of Inclusive Practices

<i>Domain</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Integration of overall inclusive practices	.151*	.027
Integration of collaboration practices	.181**	.008
Integration of assessment practices	.181**	.008
Integration of social-emotional-behavioral practices	.090	.186
Integration of instruction practices	.118	.084

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Overall, the correlation analyses indicated that greater course availability was associated with greater integration of inclusive practices and within the collaboration and assessment domains. However, the associations were weak, and the relationships with social-emotional-behavioral and instructional practices were positive but not statistically significant.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the number of inclusion-related courses offered in teacher education programs was associated with greater integration of inclusive practices. Overall, the findings suggest that course availability is related to the integration of inclusive practices, but the relationship is limited in magnitude and varies across domains. The

number of inclusion-related courses was positively and significantly associated with overall integration of inclusive practices; however, the association was weak ($r = .151$). Similarly, weak but statistically significant relationships were found for collaboration and assessment practices, whereas relationships with social-emotional-behavioral and instructional practices were not statistically significant.

These findings are important because the availability of inclusion-related coursework has frequently been discussed as an important component of preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive classrooms. Previous research has suggested that limited inclusion-related coursework and insufficient preparation may contribute to teachers feeling unprepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Woodcock & Hemmings, 2012). Other studies have emphasized the potential value of specifically designed inclusion-related courses, content-focused special education coursework, training in inclusive settings, and collaborative experiences (Alexiadou & Essex, 2016; Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Burke & Sutherland, 2004; Goddard & Evans, 2018; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016).

The present findings provide some support for the importance of course availability, but they also indicate that simply offering more courses is unlikely to explain substantial variation in how inclusive practices are integrated into teacher preparation. The weak overall relationship between course availability and integration is particularly notable given that inclusive practices were already widely represented in participants' coursework. Faculty reported integrating approximately 90% of the 23 inclusive practices examined in the survey. Thus, differences among programs may not be adequately understood by considering only whether inclusion-related content is present or how many related courses are offered. Instead, greater attention may be needed to the ways in which inclusive practices are incorporated within those courses and the opportunities pre-service teachers have to engage with them.

The descriptive findings reinforce this interpretation. Although inclusive practices were frequently included in coursework, faculty most often reported addressing them through lectures, readings, and application assignments. Assessments and field-based assignments were used less frequently across the four domains. These patterns suggest an important distinction between the presence of inclusive content and the depth of opportunities available to learn and demonstrate inclusive practices. Exposure through lecture and reading may contribute to conceptual knowledge, but practices such as collaborating with professionals, interpreting assessment data, supporting student behavior, and adapting instruction also require opportunities for application in authentic or practice-oriented contexts.

The significant relationship between course availability and collaboration practices may reflect the extent to which collaboration-related content can be distributed across multiple inclusion-related courses. Collaboration is a central component of inclusive education and requires pre-service teachers to develop skills for working with general and special educators, families, and other professionals. Previous research has identified rich content and training in collaborative activities as important components of teacher preparation (Goddard & Evans, 2018; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). At the same time, the association found in the present study remained weak, suggesting that increasing the number of courses alone may not ensure substantially greater opportunities to develop collaborative competence.

A similar pattern was found for assessment practices. Course availability was positively and significantly related to the integration of assessment practices, but the relationship was also weak. Assessment is a particularly important component of inclusive teaching because teachers

must be able to gather, interpret, and use information to identify student needs and make instructional decisions. Although assessment practices were highly integrated into the programs represented in this study, faculty relied more frequently on lecture, reading, and application assignments than on more practice-oriented assessment and field-based experiences. This finding suggests that the number of courses may provide additional opportunities for assessment-related content to appear in the curriculum, but course quantity does not necessarily indicate the extent to which pre-service teachers are required to apply assessment practices in realistic settings.

In contrast, the number of inclusion-related courses was not significantly associated with the integration of social-emotional-behavioral or instructional practices. These findings are especially informative because both domains represent substantial responsibilities for teachers working in inclusive classrooms. Social-emotional-behavioral practices require teachers to create supportive learning environments, provide constructive feedback, teach social skills, and address behavioral needs. Instructional practices include a broad set of competencies related to designing, adapting, and delivering instruction for students with disabilities. The absence of statistically significant relationships in these domains suggests that increasing course availability does not necessarily correspond to greater integration across all areas of inclusive practice.

Taken together, these findings highlight an important distinction between the quantity of inclusion-related coursework and the depth and intentionality with which inclusive practices are addressed within coursework. Strengthening teacher preparation may therefore require programs to examine not only how many inclusion-related courses they offer but also what pre-service teachers are expected to do within those courses. Opportunities to apply skills, demonstrate practices, receive feedback, and participate in field-based experiences may provide a more meaningful indication of the extent to which inclusive practices are embedded in teacher preparation than course counts alone.

The findings therefore do not suggest that inclusion-related coursework is unimportant. Rather, they indicate that more coursework is not necessarily equivalent to substantially greater integration of inclusive practices. Course availability appears to matter to some extent, particularly for collaboration and assessment, but the generally weak relationships suggest that the structure and depth of learning opportunities within coursework deserve greater attention. Teacher education programs may benefit from examining how inclusive practices are intentionally embedded across coursework and how frequently pre-service teachers are provided with opportunities to move beyond exposure toward application and field-based practice.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between the number of inclusion-related courses offered and the integration of inclusive practices in teacher education programs. The findings showed a statistically significant but weak positive relationship between course availability and the overall integration of inclusive practices. Similar weak positive relationships were found for collaboration and assessment practices, whereas the relationships with social-emotional-behavioral and instructional practices were not statistically significant. Taken together, these findings indicate that offering a greater number of inclusion-related courses may contribute to opportunities to address inclusive practices, but course quantity alone does not appear to

account for substantial differences in how these practices are integrated into teacher preparation.

The findings also draw attention to the nature of the learning opportunities provided within coursework. Although inclusive practices were widely represented across the programs in this study, faculty relied more frequently on lectures, readings, and application assignments than on assessments and field-based assignments. Thus, evaluating teacher preparation solely according to the number of inclusion-related courses may overlook meaningful differences in the ways inclusive practices are incorporated into coursework. Programs may benefit from examining not only whether inclusive content is included, but also whether pre-service teachers have opportunities to apply practices, demonstrate their skills, receive feedback, and use those practices in authentic educational settings.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The study relied on faculty self-report rather than direct observations of coursework or pre-service teacher performance. In addition, the survey had a response rate of 10.3%, which may limit the generalizability of the findings, although the sample size was sufficient for the analyses conducted in the larger study. The number of inclusion-related courses also represents only one characteristic of teacher preparation and does not directly capture differences in course quality, sequencing, content, or depth. Other program characteristics may contribute to the integration of inclusive practices. Finally, because the analyses were correlational, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that increasing the number of courses causes greater integration of inclusive practices.

Despite these limitations, the findings have implications for the design of teacher preparation programs. Rather than focusing primarily on adding inclusion-related courses, programs should consider how intentionally inclusive practices are embedded within existing coursework and clinical experiences. Greater emphasis on assessment, application, and particularly field-based opportunities may provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to move beyond exposure toward practicing and demonstrating inclusive practices. This is consistent with the study's broader implication that teacher preparation programs should provide more opportunities for inclusive practices to be addressed through assessment and field-based experiences and should strengthen access to inclusive clinical placements. Ultimately, these findings suggest that the critical issue may be less the number of inclusion-related courses offered than the opportunities those courses provide for pre-service teachers to learn, apply, and practice inclusive teaching.

Acknowledgments

This paper is based on data collected as part of the author's doctoral dissertation, *Inclusive Practices in Teacher Education Programs* (Yozgatli, 2022), completed at the University of Kentucky. The author gratefully acknowledges the Stuart D. B. Picken Scholarship provided by IAFOR, which supported her participation in the conference.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that ChatGPT (OpenAI), an AI-assisted tool, was used for proofreading and language editing, as English is not the author's first language.

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