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The impact of using adaptive teaching case studies in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Professional Development Group

School/Background Context

The Primary Teacher Education course with QTS currently enrolls over 150 student teachers and has focused on aligning on-campus instruction with practical placement experiences. Candidates, all aged 18 and above, enter the programme with a diverse range of A Level and BTEC qualifications; however, each must have achieved at least a Grade 4 in English Language, Mathematics and Science at GCSE level. The university's network extends to partner schools across several local authorities in the Southeast. In addition, trainee teachers are encouraged to disclose any learning, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) or physical needs. Comprehensive support is available through the University's welfare services, inclusive support and counselling, ensuring that all students receive the additional assistance they require.

The Challenge

A previous Ofsted inspection revealed that student teachers were unable to articulate effective strategies for adapting their pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In response, the impact of integrating adaptive teaching case studies—focused on real-world examples of how schools accommodate children with additional needs—into the on-campus curriculum was investigated. The primary objective was to determine whether exposure to these case studies enhanced students' confidence in proposing appropriate adjustments. To assess this, a survey was designed to measure confidence levels on a numerical scale from 1 to 10, administered both prior to and following the inclusion of these case studies. The resulting data were intended to be presented in both tabular and graphical formats, thereby providing a clear depiction of any improvements in student confidence.

What They Did

A survey was administered to 50 students, asking them to rate their confidence in suggesting reasonable adjustments for a child displaying sensory needs that the current classroom environment did not adequately address. The scenario provided detailed information regarding the child's behaviour in the classroom, during play, and at home. Analysis of the responses indicated that 10 students were unable to suggest any reasonable adjustments for inclusion in the child's pupil profile. A further 30 students offered only superficial suggestions, lacking specific details, time frames or measurable objectives. In contrast, 10 students were able to propose comprehensive adjustments, incorporating SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) targets as well as considerations for staffing and financial implications.

What They Did (continued)

Following the survey, a series of instructional sessions was conducted in which case studies were deconstructed and critically examined. A local Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) was invited as a guest speaker, contributing personal case studies and engaging in discussions that generated viable solutions. The interactive sessions afforded students the opportunity to pose questions and participate in in-depth discussions, further reinforcing their analytical skills through the examination of additional anonymised cases.

Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

Subsequent to the instructional sessions, students were assigned a new case study task that required the development of a comprehensive pupil profile. Notably, all 50 students succeeded in formulating SMART targets, incorporating clearly defined time frames, financial considerations and detailed implementation strategies. It is anticipated that, in future teaching contexts, the student teachers will be able to articulate and implement adaptive pedagogical approaches to effectively meet the needs of children with SEND.

In summary, the integration of adaptive teaching case studies within the Initial Teacher Education curriculum has demonstrated promising potential for enhancing student teachers' confidence and competence in devising inclusive educational strategies.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



Earlier and more accurate identification of SEN