



**THE EFFECT OF IHEART PROJECT ON STUDENT TEACHERS' SELF-  
CONFIDENCE AND MENTAL WELLBEING REGARDING INCLUSION  
PRACTICES<sup>1</sup>**

**IHEART PROJESİNİN ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ KAYNAŞTIRMA  
UYGULAMALARINA İLİŞKİN ÖZGÜVENLERİ VE MENTAL SAĞLIĞINA ETKİSİ**

Ph.D. Gülşah Selin TÜMKAYA<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract**

The aim of this research is to investigate student teachers' self-confidence and mental well-being regarding inclusive practices through Iheart Project. The theoretical framework of the Iheart project was underpinned by the three principles which were developed by Sydney Banks. This project aims to reveal to participants the relationship between the psychology of the mind and innate well-being. Teachers have taken their place in policies and literature worldwide as vital agents of change to ensure social justice and educational equality for all learners. They, therefore, can play a key role both in increasing the participation of youth in school activities and improving their achievement. For this reason, preparing teachers for inclusive practices requires strengthening teachers' self-confidence and wellbeing to increase their awareness of how they might use their resources for the development of youth. This project is led by a trained Iheart facilitator. Iheart aims to support young people to bring to light their innate resilience and well-being. The research is a case study that employs mixed methods to explore issues of self-confidence and mental wellbeing regarding inclusive practices based on student teachers, the researcher, and the facilitator experienced in the project. The study was conducted with 100 Year 1, and two Year 2 student teachers enrolled in initial teacher education courses at Plymouth University. In this article, only the data of 14 special education teacher candidates were used. Data has been collected via Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice and Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scales. Besides that interviews, feedback forms, and the research diaries were applied as a part of data collection. So far, emerging findings suggest that the interactive activities and some of the techniques used in Iheart can be useful to teachers in terms of increasing their self-confidence and mental wellbeing in the school environment. It is anticipated that the training that student teachers receive within the Iheart framework can contribute to their professional lives as they develop effective inclusive practices in mainstream settings.

**Keywords:** *heart, inclusive, self-confidence, mental well-being*

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<sup>2</sup> Tümkaya Gülşah Selin, PhD. Student Department of Special Education University of Plymouth, United Kingdom e-mail: [selin01tumkaya@gmail.com](mailto:selin01tumkaya@gmail.com) ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0743-9353

## Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Iheart Projesi aracılığıyla öğretmen adaylarının kaynaştırma uygulamalarına ilişkin özgüvenlerini ve mental sağlıklarını incelemektir. Iheart projesinin teorik çerçevesi, Sydney Banks tarafından geliştirilen üç ilke ile desteklenmiştir. Bu proje, katılımcıların ruhsal durumu ile doğuştan gelen iyi olma halleri arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Öğretmenler, tüm öğrenciler için sosyal adalet ve eğitim eşitliğini sağlamak için değişimin en önemli temsilcileri olarak dünya çapındaki politikalarda ve literatürde yerlerini almışlardır. Böylece hem gençlerin okul faaliyetlerine katılımını hem de akademik başarılarını artırmada kilit rol oynayabilirler. Bu nedenle, öğretmenleri kaynaştırma uygulamalarına hazırlamak, gençlerin gelişimi için kaynaklarını nasıl kullanabilecekleri konusunda farkındalıklarını artırmak için öğretmenlerin özgüvenlerini ve refahlarını güçlendirmek gerekmektedir. Bu proje, eğitilmiş bir Iheart koordinatörü tarafından yürütülmüştür. Iheart, gençlerin doğuştan gelen dayanıklılıklarını ve esenliklerini ortaya çıkarmalarını desteklemeyi amaçlar. Araştırma, projede yer alan öğretmen adayları, araştırmacı ve deneyimli koordinatör eşliğinde kaynaştırma uygulamalarına ilişkin özgüven ve zihinsel esenlik konularını saptamak için karma yöntemler kullanan bir vaka çalışmasından oluşmaktadır. Araştırma, Plymouth üniversitesinde Iheart başlangıç kurslarına kayıtlı 100, 1. sınıf ve iki 2. sınıf öğretmen adayı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu makalede ise yalnızca 14 özel eğitim öğretmen adayının verileri kullanılmıştır. Veriler, “Kapsayıcı Uygulama için Öğretmen Öz Yeterliliği” ve “Warwick-Edinburgh Mental İyi Oluş” ölçekleri aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, veri toplamanın bir parçası olarak görüşmeler, geri bildirim formları ve araştırmacı günlükleri uygulanmıştır. Ortaya çıkan bulgular, Iheart'ta kullanılan ve etkileşime dayanan aktivitelerin ve bazı tekniklerin öğretmen adaylarına okul ortamında özgüvenlerini ve zihinsel sağlıklarını artırma açısından faydalı olabileceğini göstermiştir. Bu sonuçlardan yola çıkarak öğretmen adaylarının Iheart çerçevesinde aldıkları eğitimin, okul ortamlarında etkili kaynaştırma uygulamaları geliştirerek mesleki yaşamlarına katkı sağlamanın beklendiği söylenebilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Iheart, kaynaştırma, öz güven, mental sağlık*

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

According to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, the concept of an inclusive school is described as follows: “The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have” (Dreyer, 2017, pp.383-384).

Teachers have taken their place in policies and literature worldwide as a vital agent of change to ensure social justice and educational equality for all learners. This is because teachers might play a key role both in increasing participation of children and young people in class and improving their achievement (Ballard, 2012; Florian, 2009; Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2009). A review of teacher education in Scotland, for example, stressed the need to prepare teachers as “prime agents of educational change” (Scottish Government, 2011, 4) and suggested that among other knowledge and skills, “all new teachers should be confident in their ability to address underachievement, including the potential effects of social disadvantage” (36). In this regard, preparing teachers for inclusive practices requires strengthening teachers’ self-confidence so that they can work with other professionals for all purposes and increase their awareness of how they might use their resources for the development of children and young people (Edwards, 2007; 2010). According to Jurgensen and Guesalaga (2018), self-confidence is one of the personal factors that reflects people's beliefs to cope with different situations.

Research on the role of confidence in lifelong learning shows that student teachers’ perceived confidence has an influence on their well-being and engagement with the learning process (Norman and Hyland, 2003).

Above all, I think although it might be a rewarding job, inclusive practices can sometimes be quite challenging for teachers. The reason is that despite the advantages of moving towards more inclusive education, numerous teachers are considering quitting their jobs every passing day. The survey of around 1,200 current and former teachers showed that even though being aware of the workload challenges before starting teaching at school, workload was playing a vital role in teachers leaving or considering quitting their teaching jobs in the future (UCL Institute of Education, 2019). Additionally, roughly 42,000 full-time teachers working in the state sector quitted their jobs less than a year in the UK due to the workload, which represents a 9.8% wastage rate (Foster, 2019). Stressful working environments such as carrying out their jobs under the conditions of overwork as well as performativity cultures might have an effect on teachers' motivation, self-efficacy and job commitment. As a result of this situation, the entire education system can be negatively affected (Schleicher, 2018).

When we consider the rationale of my research which mentioned above, I chose to study student teachers' self-confidence and mental wellbeing regarding inclusive practices. This is because I recognized that how student teachers feel about their self-confidence and mental wellbeing is often neglected in the literature. I also took my own self-efficacy perception for inclusive practices at the time of my undergraduate education at university into consideration. As a matter of fact, I was feeling inadequate since I did not have any professional experience in the years when I studied at the university. This situation, therefore, was my biggest motivation when I was offered the opportunity to take part in the Iheart Project. This project is led by a trained Iheart facilitator. Iheart aims to support youth to bring to light their innate resilience and mental well-being (Iheart, 2020). Iheart first emerged influenced by the three principles.

The three principles, which are set up by Sydney Banks, a philosopher, author and lecturer who was born in Scotland in 1931. The Iheart Project at PloE aims to extend the original project to student teachers, to increase their self-confidence and mental well-being regarding teaching in the school environment. These principles has three important components namely mind, consciousness, and thought. It aims to reveal our psychology of mind, and innate wellbeing (The Three Principles Foundation, 2020). The Iheart Project, thereby, aims to raise the level of student teachers' self-confidence and mental-wellbeing. This is because enhancing confidence can lead student teachers' to adapt to new situations quicker, take better responsibility, to be more interactive and motivated in the class, and connect with others effectively (Norman and Hyland, 2003).

The Iheart Project which the researcher got involved lasted for 10 weeks. The programme was led by Iheart programme coordinator to help student teachers' self-confidence and mental-wellbeing while working with children in their class. Each session focused on different topics related to our innate mental well-being.

An outline of the contents of the 10-week Iheart programme sessions is shown below in Figure 1.

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<b>Session 1:</b> What is Iheart and why it is helpful
<b>Session 2:</b> Intelligence System
<b>Session 3:</b> Our well-being resides within.
<b>Session 4:</b> Where do our feelings come from? Why does it matter?
<b>Session 5:</b> Exploring the Inseparable connection between thought and feeling
<b>Session 6:</b> What happens when we overlook thought? What causes us stress?
<b>Session 7:</b> Separate Realities
<b>Session 8:</b> Dissolving the Barriers to Learning and Motivation
<b>Session 9:</b> Making Sense of Worry, Stress and Anxiety
<b>Session 10:</b> Optional Session

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**Figure 1.** *Figure Iheart Programme Institute of Education*

## **Iheart Project**

### ***Why Iheart?***

Iheart was chosen by the researcher among other mental well-being courses for children and youth. This project was led by a trained Iheart facilitator. Iheart aimed to support young people to bring to light their innate resilience and mental well-being (Iheart, 2020). It was currently being carried out with school children by Iheart facilitators in school settings. This project at a university in South West England aimed to extend the original project to student teachers, to increase their self-confidence and mental well-being regarding teaching in the school environment.

Although the Iheart mental well-being programme was not selected by the researcher, other mental well-being courses such as Building Learning Power, ELLI Learning Skills, Thrive, and SEAL have been searched before the researcher took part in the Iheart Project.

And then some key points were noticed by the researcher that set Iheart apart from other programmes. This is because of the fact that many mental well-being programmes usually look for the solution to the problem elsewhere. In light of many mental wellbeing programmes, existing solutions are built on the assumption that today's youth have a hard time showing resilience in the face of difficulties. For this reason, they generally tend to try to build or create resilience in young people. But what if there is a radically different way to take resilience and well-being into consideration? In other words, what if everyone has innate resilience and mental well-being? At this point, Iheart has brought a whole new perspective to resilience with an innovative, and evidence-based mental wellbeing educational programme. The reason is that, according to Iheart's teachings, well-being actually comes from within (Iheart, 2021).

## **METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

Mixed method in this research. Data has been collected by using existing scales namely Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) and Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being

(WEMWBS) Scales before and after the Iheart Project as a quantitative part of my research. In addition, auto-ethnography has been used as qualitative methods of the research. Auto-ethnography was chosen by the researcher as a part of my methodology since this methodology was compatible with my research epistemology. In this regard, critical realist ontology was applied in the research.

### ***Participants and Procedure***

The study was conducted with 100 Year 1, and two Year 2 student teachers enrolled in initial teacher education courses at Plymouth University. In this article, only the data of 14 special education teacher candidates were used. As well as asking Y1 student teachers to complete TEIP and WEMWBS Scales observation was also carried out with around 100 Y1 student teachers divided into four groups each Thursday during the programme by applying auto-ethnography to reflect researcher's thoughts and feelings regarding each Iheart sessions. Additionally, 4 week- Iheart sessions were attended by the researcher with Year 2 student teachers studying at the University of Plymouth arranged as an additional classroom activity to gain more insight into the Iheart programme's principles in March. This Y2 student teachers' group who were receiving specialist training in Maths, Science, and Inclusion and SEN Education consisted of 4 student teachers. Later online Iheart sessions were organised with the new Y1 student teachers due to the pandemic as an extra bounce within the updated Iheart framework. Following that, one of the Y2 student teachers' experiences were monitored by the researcher with the Iheart programme during the school placement this year by conducting an interview with her twice before the first placement and after that. Besides that, an interview was conducted with a school student who took part in Iheart in Scotland as a part of a case study to understand better the design of Iheart and its impact on school students.

### ***Instruments***

Data has been collected via Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice and Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scales. Besides that interviews, feedback forms, and the research diaries were applied as a part of data collection.

#### ***Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale***

The TEIP scale, which was developed by Sharma et al. (2012), contains 18 questions investigating various dimensions of self-efficacy for readiness to teach in inclusive settings. Three dimensions of teaching efficacy- efficacy to use inclusive instruction (EII), efficacy in collaboration (EC) and efficacy in managing behaviour (EMB) has been analysed by this 18 items scale. Each dimension covers six items in that the scale employs the following ranking: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= disagree somewhat, 4= agree somewhat, 5= agree, and 6= strongly agree. Sharma et al. (2012) reported the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the overall scale  $r= 0.89$ . The total score value may range from 18 to 108. Owing to the fact that TEIP Scale is frequently implemented to measure self-efficacy perceptions of students and qualified teachers regarding mainstreaming practices, it has been chosen in this study.

#### ***Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS) Scale***

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was developed in 2016 to allow the monitoring of mental well-being in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programs and policies which aim to take mental well-being forward. WEMWBS is a 14-item scale with five response categories, collected to ensure a single score ranging from 14-70. The items are all worded positively and include both feeling and functioning sides of mental well-being, thereby making the concept more accessible. This scale is selected for this research, because it has been widely used either nationally or internationally for monitoring projects/

programmes, and investigating the determinants of mental well-being (Warwick Medical School, 2018).

### ***Researcher Diaries***

Auto-ethnography is an effective qualitative research method used to analyse people's lives, a tool that Ellis and Bochner (2000) define as "...an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 739).

For each session of the Iheart programme, which lasted 10 weeks, the researcher made in-class observations. By doing this, primary source information was obtained by the researcher using the auto-ethnography method on how Iheart sessions could improve student teachers' self-confidence and well-being. While researching the content of the Iheart sessions, the researcher analysed the content of each session in detail from the point of view of the special education teacher. Thus, while working with individuals with special needs in the inclusive environment of the Iheart project, reflective researcher diaries emerged at each 10-week Iheart session on how student teachers can contribute to their self-confidence and mental well-being.

At the beginning of the Iheart project, classroom observations were planned for 10-week sessions with a student group consisting of only Y1 Plymouth Institute of Education student teachers. However, later on, the project was extended to other Y1 and Y2 student teachers in order to improve the self-confidence and mental well-being of student teachers in the school environment. In this context, extra sessions were held so that they could get more efficiency from the project. While some of these sessions were held online due to the pandemic, some of them were held face-to-face. I also attended all Iheart sessions voluntarily to learn more about Iheart sessions. Then, the researcher's perspective on these sessions was reflected in the research diaries and added. Therefore, repeating the work has helped the researcher to delve deeper into the Iheart programme and make its teachings accessible to readers.

### ***Analysis of Data***

Due to the small number of participants in the study, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used for the analysis of quantitative data in the study. In the qualitative data, direct quotations are included. In addition, observations were made by the researcher and researcher diaries were created.

## **FINDINGS**

This chapter will present the findings from the data analysis to support the discussion of the aims of this research. In this section, there are quantitative data analyses from the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) and Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS) Scales and qualitative data analyses from observations, interviews, feedback forms, and researcher diaries.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis of TEIP and WEMWBS Scales**

#### ***SPSS Analysis of TEIP Scale***

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results Table I regarding the collaboration sub-dimension of student teachers' inclusion self-efficacy scale is given in Table I.

**Table 1.** Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Collaboration Sub-scale Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group

Pre-Test	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Post-Test					
Negative Ranks	5 <sup>a</sup>	5.20	26.00		
Positive Ranks	9 <sup>b</sup>	8.78	79.00	-1.687 <sup>b</sup>	.092
Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>				
Total	14				

a.EC2 < EC1, b.EC2 > EC1, c.EC2 = EC1

As shown in the Table 1 no significant difference was found at 0.5 level between Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Collaboration sub-scale pre-test and post-test results of the course work group [ $z = -.142, p > .05$ ].

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results regarding managing behaviour sub-dimension of student teachers' inclusion self-efficacy scale is given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Managing Behavior Sub-scale Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group

Pre-Test	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Post-Test					
Negative Ranks	7 <sup>a</sup>	4.00	28.00		
Positive Ranks	4 <sup>b</sup>	9.50	38.00	-.449 <sup>b</sup>	.653
Ties	3 <sup>c</sup>				
Total	14				

a.EMB2 < EMB1, b.EMB2 > EMB1, c. EMB2 = EMB1

As shown in the Table 2 no significant difference was found at 0.5 level between Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Managing Behavior sub-scale pre-test and post-test results of the course work group [ $z = -.449, p > .05$ ].

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results regarding inclusive instruction sub-dimension of student teachers' inclusion self-efficacy scale is given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Inclusive Instruction Sub-scale Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group

Pre-Test	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Post-Test					
Negative Ranks	5 <sup>a</sup>	5.20	26.00		
Positive Ranks	9 <sup>b</sup>	8.78	79.00	-1.687 <sup>b</sup>	.092
Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>				
Total	14				

a.EII2 < EII1, b.EII2 > EII1, c.EII2 = EII1

As shown in the Table 3, no significant difference was found at 0.5 level between Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Inclusive Instruction sub-scale pre-test and post-test results of the course work group [ $z = -1.687$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Inventory Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Inventory Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group*

Pre-Test Post-Test	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Negative Ranks	4 <sup>a</sup>	6.50	26.00	-1.021 <sup>b</sup>	.307
Positive Ranks	8 <sup>b</sup>	6.50	52.00		
Ties	2 <sup>c</sup>				
<b>Total</b>	14				

a.SE2 < SE1, b.SE2 > SE1, c.SE2 = SE1

As shown in the Table 3 no significant difference was found at 0.5 level between Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) inventory pre-test and post-test results of the course work group [ $z = -1.021$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

#### ***SPSS Analysis of WEMWBS Scale***

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS) Inventory Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group in Table 5.

**Table 5.** *Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS) Inventory Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Course Work Group*

Pre-Test Post-Test	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Negative Ranks	7 <sup>a</sup>	6.43	45.00	-.473 <sup>b</sup>	.636
Positive Ranks	7 <sup>b</sup>	8.57	60.00		
Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>				
<b>Total</b>	14				

a.WB2 < WB1, b.WB2 > WB1, c.WB2 = WB1

As shown in the Table 5, no significant difference was found at 0.5 level between Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS) inventory pre-test and post-test results of the course work group [ $z = -.473$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

The data was analysed Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale in Inclusive Instruction, Collaboration, and Managing Behaviour Sub-scales. By doing so, pre and post-test scores of the coursework group were generated for each

subscale. Following the TEIP Scale, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was also used for the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being (WEMWBS) Inventory. The results obtained for the pre and post-tests for both scales showed that there was no significant difference in the self-efficacy and mental well-being of the participants before and after the intervention of Iheart programme. Since sufficient findings could not be obtained from the quantitative data on the effect of the Iheart programme on the self-efficacy and well-being of student teachers on inclusion practices, quantitative data collection tools were also used to conduct an in-depth research by examining the subject more deeply.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative findings illustrated that some of them found answers to their questions about well-being and happiness and reconstructed their own thoughts on the subject, whereas others preferred to stay with the same thought and beliefs. At this point, as a researcher who has attended Iheart sessions more than once, I would like to point out that Iheart's teachings may seem a bit abstract to some student teachers. This is because although Iheart's new framework has become more concrete and clear, the initial starting point of Iheart was grounded on the three principles namely mind, consciousness, and thought that Sydney Banks put forward. These three principles may seem a bit complex and abstract for those who learn at first. Some student teachers had difficulty in fully assimilating how human nature works and the structure of these mechanisms because they did not have enough time. Besides that numerous student teachers do not even have enough experience to apply and see Iheart's teachings in their professional lives, both for themselves and their school students. In light of the observations made and the findings obtained from the student teachers, this showed that student teachers may need more time to notice the change and transfer Iheart to their daily lives.

Quotations from some of the student teachers from interviews are as follows.

*“That is sort of like was not long enough that it would have a stressful effect, sort of working and working. So, that is kind of energise by the fact it is my third placement I think. So, erm I do not really have enough experience to come up with it I think”.*

*“I am not sure if I can adapt something which I learned from Iheart to school placement, to be honest”.*

In addition to this, Iheart made a positive effect on several student teachers. Student teachers expressed their views on self-confidence and mental well-being regarding inclusion practices after the Iheart programme as follows:

*“And in terms of students like it helped me to apply in sort of look at the situations is like “Right, I know this child is stressing but I know that is just that child. If I can help that child to cope with that stress, that stress goes away, and the situation goes away”.*

*“So, take a step away, just breathe, calm down and look at it from like your new perspective.*

#### **Diaries**

Some of the diaries that the researcher kept during the Iheart sessions are shown below:

#### **Iheart programme session 1**

##### **Diary 1:**

It was Iheart's first opening day. Participating in the first session and observing the lectures got me very excited. Now was the time to start. I don't know why I am so full of life when I watch the first video clip about what is resilience and well-being in Iheart. I think it was because the video took me back to my childhood. After a while, I started to think about what resilience means to me. What did prosperity mean? If we were all born happy, why do I feel stressed and anxious sometimes? What happened then? Have we lost our ability to be happy? Afterwards, I vaguely recalled my happiest childhood memories. Suddenly, a certain memory came to my mind. I was 6 years old. It was a spring day. While playing outside with my best friend, my favorite toy broke. Therefore, although I was quite unhappy, the colorful stones standing in front of my eyes suddenly caught my eye. Opportunities don't just fall out of the sky. They need to be noticed before you can access them. I immediately headed towards the stones and started collecting them. After a while, for no reason, I found myself playing with those colored stones. Then my best friend accompanied me to play games together. Why do I feel a glow of peace even though my favorite toy is broken? This scene made me ask a lot of questions about happiness. Can happiness be learned or is it innate well-being? In fact, if I needed these things to be happy, I would still be depressed when my toy broke. This means that every baby can be born with innate well-being traits. When I was lost in my childhood memories, the Iheart program coordinator asked trainees what innate health and resilience meant to them. Very similar definitions were made by the students for these concepts. Then the Iheart coordinator summarised the video's content. She emphasised holistic health, which means the connection of mind, body, and spirit. We then watched another video on how the Iheart programme helps young students in the school setting. Each of the students had different backgrounds and cultural and economic aspects at school. They said that the Iheart programme had a very positive effect on their mental health and they felt less stress in the school environment after participating in this programme. After watching this video clip, I started to think that the Iheart programme could make a great contribution to teachers working with SEN. This is because it can be particularly beneficial for the holistic health of teachers working with SEN who have low self-efficacy perceptions.

## DISCUSSION

The study was conducted with 14 Y1 and 4 Y2 student teachers studying at the University of Plymouth Institute in Education. Emerged findings from the study were discussed below.

First of all, no significant difference was found in the inclusive instruction, collaboration and Managing Behaviour sub-dimensions of TEIP Scale in terms of student teachers' self-efficacy perceptions regarding inclusion practices.

Bandura's conceptualisation forms the foundation for the concept of self-efficacy. According to his conceptualisation, an individual's ability to carry out the actions necessary to attain their goals is represented by their cognition, emotion, and self-efficacy system. Instead of focusing on the abilities that people possess, Bandura centered on people's beliefs about what they can do with the skills and abilities they may have (Sharma and Nasa, 2014).

Considering Bandura's idea of self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy can be characterised as teachers' perceptions of their abilities to improve student outcomes in educational environments. Numerous studies have demonstrated that teachers' self-efficacy may have a significant impact on their instructional behaviour, as well as their well-being, which includes student motivation, communication with students, strengthening student success, student self-efficacy perception, work satisfaction of the teacher, work commitment, teacher effectiveness,

and instructional behaviour (Klassen and Chiu, 2011; Klassen and Tze, 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2014; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Zee and Koomen, 2016).

As a result, student teachers generally may view teaching as a difficult profession. Yet, it can be particularly challenging to meet individual needs in diverse learning groups when doing so in inclusive classrooms. For this reason, teachers' self-efficacy perceptions can play an effective role in the success of inclusive education. The goal of inclusive education is to increase student engagement in the classroom and lessen students' academic and sociocultural isolation from mainstream schools. As it enables the education of all children and works to transform society to remove additional obstacles and prejudices, inclusive education is a strategy that is widely supported (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Inclusive education has many benefits for school students with SEN. Firstly, by using their peers as role models, students with SEN can connect with their peers and learn how to behave appropriately. Since it teaches students to accept individual diversity and be tolerant of other viewpoints, inclusive education may also be helpful in eradicating social stereotypes. When all students participate in classroom learning activities, it may prevent SEN persons from being stigmatised by their peers (Brown, 2001). Secondly, inclusive education might be beneficial as a means of boosting student engagement and removing obstacles to learning.

For these reasons, it is important to increase student teachers' self-efficacy towards mainstreaming practices as it can contribute to the realisation of an effective mainstreaming education. Nevertheless, the TEIP Scale conducted with student teachers showed that the Iheart Project did not contribute much to the development of student teachers' self-efficacy perceptions regarding inclusion practices. In other words, there was no meaningful difference in self-efficacy in TEIP Scales' pre- and post-test findings. There may be some factors that affect this situation. One of them may be that student teachers do not have enough time to see the effects of the Iheart Project, which lasted for 10 weeks, when they go to their internship in an inclusion environment, since they are still in their first year of university. Secondly, Y1 student teachers may not have enough pedagogical training for inclusion practices during the implementation of the Iheart programme. In addition, in the light of the interviews, it was observed that although the attitudes of Y2 student teachers towards inclusive practices were higher than that of first grade student teachers, they were still not at the expected levels. The higher self-efficacy perceptions of Y2 student teachers may be due to their internship experiences.

In addition to the TEIP Scale, the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was also applied to student teachers. However, the findings obtained from the WEMWBS Scale before and after the Iheart programme indicated that there was no significant change in the mental well-being of student teachers.

'Mental well-being is not simply the absence of mental illness but is a broader indicator of social, emotional, and physical wellness. Mental well-being is defined as children and young people's happiness, life satisfaction, and positive functioning' (Public Health England, 2016, p.6). Schools may have a variety of effects on children's and adolescents' mental well-being. For instance, by providing a learning and socialisation environment that will develop children's skills and characters, the school can enable them to gain life habits that can help their mental well-being. Since mental well-being affects daily functioning in a variety of ways, including work performance and stress levels related to one's profession, it is also a big problem for teachers, children, and teenagers (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Maslach and Leiter, 2008). Nonetheless, even though mental well-being plays a significant role in the school settings, a number of 36,300 teachers quit their profession in 2020–2021, an increase of 4,000 from 2020 (UK Government, 2022). Therefore, in addition to boosting teachers' self-confidence, their ability to persevere in the face of adversity may also be crucial

to improving the efficacy of inclusive practices. For this purpose, the Iheart project aimed to increase the mental well-being and resilience of student teachers regarding inclusion practices. On the other hand, WEMWBS Scale made at the end of the Iheart programme showed that there was not much improvement in the mental well-being and resilience of student teachers. One of the most important factors in this situation may be that the duration of the Iheart programme, which lasts 10 weeks, is not long enough for student teachers to internalise iheart's abstract teachings. In addition, some activities and programmes carried out within the framework of the Iheart programme did not always serve adults. This may have caused student teachers not to be able to adapt the teachings of the programme to their daily and professional lives sufficiently. Therefore, interviews were conducted with student teachers afterwards in order to investigate their self-efficacy perceptions regarding inclusive practices and their mental well-being in more depth. The interviews revealed that some student teachers experienced some positive changes in their self-confidence and mental well-being regarding the inclusion practices of the Iheart project. In this context, many student teachers stated that they were able to reveal the qualities they believed to be innate, such as well-being and resilience, that they already had in themselves, through the Iheart programme. In this sense, the application of Iheart and similar mental well-being programmes to student teachers can create positive impacts for teachers' professional lives.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to explore issues of self-confidence and mental well-being regarding inclusive practices based on student teachers, the researcher, and facilitator's experiences in the Iheart Project. In this study, it was clearly seen that while some student teachers increased their self-confidence and mental well-being, some need more time and some practical experiences to internalize Iheart's teachings. In addition, although the Iheart Project is currently applied to students aged 10 to 18 in schools, it has probably been applied to Plymouth University Education faculty-student teachers for the first time in the world. In this respect, it is expected that this research might provide an original contribution to the literature and shed light on the development of teacher training programmes in the future.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research has shown that the Iheart programme can help student teachers to prepare for their professional lives by increasing their well-being and self-confidence toward inclusion practices. Therefore, the inclusion of self-confidence and mental wellbeing improvement coursework such as Iheart in the teacher training programmes of students can contribute to their personal development, while at the same time, it can shed light on them while working with individuals with special needs in their professional lives.

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