

Announcing a New Research Study



Beginning Teacher Study: The Development of Inclusive Practice

The Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education has been awarded an Insight Grant by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to investigate the development of inclusive practice for beginning teachers. This newsletter is the first of regular updates and many ways that we will be sharing what we are learning over the next 5 years. The Centre for Youth and Society (CFYS), University of Victoria is coordinating the Knowledge Mobilization activities.

Issues Addressed

In Canada, the majority of students are educated in their neighbourhood schools where the classroom teacher are supported to takes responsibility for the learning of all students. The practice of inclusive education provides the most beneficial environment and outcomes for **ALL** students. Indeed, inclusion is the recommended teaching practice in Canada and is supported by every provincial and territorial government across the country. Teachers provide an environment conducive for the academic and social-emotional growth of students with diverse learning needs. They are receptive to the idea that all students have a right to an inclusive education; however, they are concerned about their ability to create, provide,

and support an environment that will ensure that this right is being upheld. Teachers require the disposition, knowledge, and skills to equip and empower them with the competence and confidence required to teach students with diverse learning needs.

Expertise in teaching is multifaceted, involving content and procedural knowledge, skills and abilities, a student-centered approach to instruction, and professional self-awareness and understanding. Expertise in teaching, however, is insufficient to ensure student success. Self-efficacy (i.e., the belief that one is a capable educator) is also a key competency for educators in the inclusive classrooms. Educators with high self-efficacy work harder and persist longer to assist students in difficulty.

Extended, focused, and challenging experience is necessary to develop competent and confident teachers; yet, little is known about the type and duration of experience required for this development, especially in its initial stages. There is a clear and pressing need for longitudinal studies with a focus on educator self-efficacy in combination with teaching expertise, spanning the period from initial professional development through the first years as an educator.



Our Research Plan

We will investigate the development of teachers in the inclusive classroom across Canada using both

quantitative and qualitative methods. We will survey pre-service teachers at the beginning and end of their initial teacher education concentrating on their self-efficacy and beliefs on teaching in the inclusive classroom. As they graduate and move into the world of classroom teaching, we will continue to survey them during their first to third years post-program to ascertain how their knowledge and skills in teaching and self-efficacy are developing. A subsample of these beginning teachers will be interviewed at regular time intervals to determine experiences that contributed to or detracted from their development in working in inclusive classrooms. We will examine their knowledge gained in areas that research indicates helps teachers engage learners who struggle (e.g., strategy instruction, universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, assistive technology, classroom management) through course work, field experiences, and continuing education and how these collectively contribute to the professional learning of beginning teachers.

Benefits of the Research

Our original research tackles the critical issue of educating students with diverse needs in the inclusive classroom within Canada, an issue that has not previously been comprehensively researched and certainly never from a pan-Canadian perspective. This work is significant in that the findings will inform future research and policy in the area of inclusive education with crucial implications for the further development of a reliable evidence base for validated practices in our educational institutions.



Researchers Involved

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