

Critique of journal article on a current issue in special education.

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The article *Inclusive Education in Canada: Issues in Teacher Preparation* addresses the issue of the lack of Special Education training for teachers through Bachelor of Education programs in Canada. It goes into how Inclusive education (IE) is widely adopted in Canadian educational systems. However, few Canadian universities require students in undergraduate teacher preparation programs to complete coursework on the topic of Inclusive Education. Teachers are going out into the work force upon graduation feeling unprepared to work with students with exceptionalities. Canadian Universities fail to provide enough special education course in their BEd programs. The article mentions 4 major universities, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Toronto and McGill University, which only offer 1 course for special education within the programs. This is alarming as working with students with exceptionalities is an incremental piece of the professional practice. None of these programs appears to require teachers in training to be systematically exposed to definitions and/or descriptions of childhood disabilities in conjunction with mentored experience with research-informed effective classroom-based intervention practices. I feel fortunate enough to take a special education course through Thompson Rivers University, but I agree with the standpoint of this article, in that 1 course is likely not enough. Having only, one courses on this topic does not adequately prepare future teachers to work in inclusive classrooms with students with diverse exceptional learning needs. It's interesting to learn that teachers are lacking highly specialized training all across Canada and this is an issue that is well known but due to the program heaviness, students would not have the capacity to take on more training within the undergrad level. This leads to me to think about how programs can be modified to fit in more special education courses. Could other courses be dropped from the program to accommodate this to bring in more learning on childhood disorders and the application of the knowledge to classroom-based interventions to enhance the learning for children with exceptionalities.

Ministry of education has formally adopted and implemented IE frameworks or included practices in alignment with inclusive frameworks, however, the implementation of inclusion after years of separated education has brought challenges to the classrooms, in particular in teacher competencies and capabilities to meet the learning needs of a broader student population. A challenge with IE that was found was the degree and severity of a child's disability has also been reported to influence acceptance of inclusive practices (McCrimmson, 2014). Length of time on the job has been found to influence attitudes toward inclusion, with newly graduated teachers being more open to and accepting of inclusion than experienced teachers (McCrimmons, 2014). I see this firsthand in my own child's experiences with his exceptionality. Often times the newer teachers appear to take on attitudes towards inclusion with him. We have experienced him being segregated from other students in the classroom with a couple of seasoned teachers who were not as accepting of differences and being inclusive. The article pointed out that indeed, research has indicated that number of years of training is positively related to improved attitudes toward inclusion (McCrimmons, 2014) and that teacher knowledge and experience with childhood disabilities has been shown to dramatically enhance teacher self-efficacy and effectiveness in inclusive classrooms, this shows that teachers can benefit from sufficient training. This could also demonstrate potential biases happening within the practice that should be closely monitored to ensure teachers remain as professional and inclusive as possible. A proposed solution offered was around specialized certificate courses, and I question

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why this couldn't be a requirement for new teachers hired by the school district's as part of an onboard and ongoing training package so employees are well ready for the role.

Reference:

McCrimmon, A. W. (2014). Inclusive Education in Canada: Issues in Teacher Preparation. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 50(4), 234-237.
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