

VALUES TEACHERS FIND IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

**GARY BUNCH
KEVIN FINNEGAN
Faculty of Education
York University
Toronto, Canada**

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Inclusion of students with challenging needs in regular classrooms continues to be controversial practice for many educators. Though individual teachers and a number of entire school systems have moved to inclusive practice and policies, the greater number of educators favour special classes and schools for many students and integration-withdrawal models for many others. As Siegal and Jausovec conclude in their report on teacher attitudes in this area, "There is overwhelming evidence that teachers have negative attitudes toward inclusion and teaching students with special needs" (p. X).

Resistance to inclusion holds true, in particular, if appropriate supports are not provided. Charles and Malian (1980) noted that students who require accommodation, individualized instruction, teaching methods, materials, and services "not provided for non-handicapped students" are not willingly accepted by regular teachers. Concerns exist that programs will be diluted if children with exceptionalities are placed in regular classrooms (Bradfield, Brown, Kaplan, Rickert, and Stannard, 1973), that classrooms will be disrupted (Vacc and Kirst, 1977), that fair division of teacher time would be a problem, and that teacher effectiveness would be affected negatively (Gersten, Walker, and Darch, 1988). Many regular class teachers consider special classes to be the optimal placement for students with special needs (Glickling and Theobald, 1975; Hudson, Graham, and Warner, 1979; Minke, Bear, Deemer, and Griffin, 1996; Moore and Fine, 1978). Vaughn, Schumn, Jallad, Slusher, and Saumell (1996) and Yasutake and Lerner (1996), in more recent research, continue to find concerns regarding support. It is obvious that, regardless of any philosophical appeal of including all students in regular classrooms, the average teacher holds considerable reserve related to actual practice.

Extant research, however, may be seen as limited in that it has focused almost solely on teacher concerns and has not explored whether the average educator additionally finds value to inclusive practice. The research study described here probed teacher attitudes both for concerns and values teachers find in inclusion.

METHOD

Participants

Discussion focuses on analysis of 136 individual interviews conducted with a sample of Canadian educators (see Table 1). They represented school systems with traditional structures (regular and special education offerings) and inclusive structures (regular classes with minimal special education offerings).

Insert Table 1 approximately here.

Interviewees were drawn from among 1492 educators completing the Educator Opinion Questionnaire (EOQ, Bunch, 1992) as part of a larger national study (Bunch, Lupart, and Brown, 1997). EOQ respondents represented both urban and rural areas of Western, Central, and Atlantic Canada. As statistical analysis of EOQ responses indicated few significant differences among survey respondent groups, interviewees were regarded as a single group for this discussion.

Interview questions were based on areas of teacher attitudes indicated in the literature and incorporated in the EOQ. Specifically, these areas were:

- Educational soundness of inclusion.
- Adequacy of teacher preparation for inclusion.

- Teacher self-confidence in inclusion.
- Regular class and resource teacher relationship.
- Administrator support for inclusion.
- Teacher responsibility for students with exceptionalities.
- Effect of inclusion on regular teachers.
- Effect of inclusion on regular students.
- Effect of inclusion on students with exceptionalities.

Key questions, noted under Results and Discussion, were complemented by follow-up questions as appropriate. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were transcribed by a single individual.

Data Analysis

Qualitative procedures were employed to explore interview data. The primary technique employed was that of constant comparative analysis (Bogdan, and Biklen, 1992; Glaser, 1978).

In particular, steps were:

1. Interview transcriptions were read and units of information identified and keyed.
2. Information units were sorted into categories similar in content.
3. Transcripts, keyed information units, and categories were reviewed by a second reader.
4. The two readers met to discuss and resolve differences in analysis.
5. Categories were reviewed again and determinations made with regard to maintaining, subdividing, or collapsing categories as appropriate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As noted, categories were generated with interviewees regarded as a single group in light

of statistical similarity of survey responses. Seven categories were generated: general concerns of regular class teachers, administrator support, soundness of concept of inclusion, regular and resource teacher relationship, regular teacher responsibility, effect on regular students, and effect on included students.

General Concerns of Regular Teachers

The stimulus question around which this area focused was “What specific concerns might teachers have?” with regard to inclusive practice. It was known from previous research that teachers believed that inclusion was demanding of the regular class teacher (Bunch, 1992), and that the related workload was considered onerous (Waldron, 1995). It was anticipated that such concerns would recur in this study. Anticipations were fulfilled. Almost every interviewee mentioned at least one concern. Across the various groups of educators interviewed agreement on three predominant concerns was apparent.

Professional adequacy.

Above all, respondents believed that regular class teachers were inadequately prepared through preservice or inservice experiences to undertake inclusion of students with challenges to their learning. This was obvious through the frequency of comments such as:

They might not feel that they're [not] prepared professionally and they might not have the educational background.

There has been zero to nil preparation on this topic at the faculty of education.

Conversely, a number of respondents, while recognizing that professional preparation was lacking, indicated that the fear of being unprepared lessened with experience in inclusive settings.

When we first started I was really stressed out. I'll be quite honest with you, I cried several nights when I went home but, once we were over the hump, it was just a matter of learning to let go and just go with the flow.

Teacher workload.

The second significant concern among respondents related to workload for the regular class teacher. A considerable number of interviewees indicated that inclusive practice meant more work.

They may have to do more work ... whether it's research or understanding what the students might need in the classroom, whether they might have to change their teaching styles.

In terms of workload teachers appeared to believe working with students with disabilities added to their workload. Among those noting such concern were representatives of all educator groups participating in the study.

Fear of insufficient support.

This final area of concern was the second most frequently mentioned. An impressive number of interviewees expressed fear that regular class teachers would have students with challenges assigned to them, while, at the same time, supports would not be provided or would be withdrawn.

Our experience is that [resource personnel] are gradually pulled out of the system, and then there is no one to assist these people [included students] with their needs.

Another aspect of concern was legal liability. Statements such as, "Lawsuits. Another one that we hear more and more. Am I legally responsible? Am I liable?", suggested that teachers

were aware of the increasingly litigious nature of relationships between schools and parents.

Whereas a number of responses such as those noted indicated concern that various types of support might not be available, other teachers suggested that the concern was misplaced.

They're worried about all kinds of things ... They'll be worried about the students ...

They'll be worried about responsibility. What happens if the student gets injured? But, you know, they [the worries] get alleviated once a person starts working.

Summary.

Educator concerns regarding negative effect on classroom teachers was widespread. Professional preparation at both the preservice and inservice levels was viewed as inadequate. Professional inadequacy was perceived as resulting in reduced self confidence and increased stress. Concern for equitable time for regular students added to these feelings, as did perceptions that teacher workload would be overly onerous. Finally, some educators were convinced that regular class teachers would be left to their own devices, without resources and time, to deal with the needs of students in inclusive classrooms. An interesting point, however, raised by a number was that concerns faded with experience teaching children with challenges in the regular classroom.

Administrator Support

Two questions probed educator attitudes to administrator support directly. These were:

1. What types of support do regular class teachers want from administrators?
2. What types of support do administrators offer?

Responses indicated that interviewees desired two general types of support from their administrators. These were classifiable as direct support which was concrete in nature, and

indirect support which had personal quality.

Direct support.

In terms of direct support the administrator was seen as a provider of resources, as responsible for student discipline and placement, and as a back up for the teacher's authority. As a provider of resources administrators were expected to make time available for planning and other activities related to inclusion, and to ensure that additional personnel were available for regular class teacher assistance..

They [administrators] need to consider extra planning time for the teacher with special needs students.

I want to know that when our enrolment comes up for special needs students, that our administrators are fighting to get resource personnel.

In terms of discipline, teachers looked to administrators to intervene, enforce, and enact discipline when the classroom teacher believed it to be required. As one secondary teacher stated, "Discipline When I send a kid out, I want the administrator to support me".

Administrators were also to protect teachers and regular students from inappropriate regular classroom placement of students with challenging needs.

I would like to see the administrators willing to say "No. This is not beneficial for the child, or for the other children in the class. The kid with this exceptionality is not going to be mainstreamed.

Lastly, teachers considered it the responsibility of administrators to back up regular class teachers in general, and specifically when others beyond the classroom were involved.

When dealing with parents or an outside agency, the whole gamut, they want to feel the

administrator is supporting them.

Elementary and secondary level interviewees commented in roughly equal proportion on need for administrators to provide concrete resources. Comments on discipline, placement, and back up came from all groups, but were concentrated at the secondary level.

Indirect support.

It was anticipated, on the basis of previous research, that educators would mention direct supports from administrators. Less anticipated was that teachers would refer to indirect supports such as administrator leadership and example, administrator mentorship, and administrator empathy to the degree found in this study. Typical comments in this area were:

[Regular class teachers] want to see a commitment to it [inclusion]. The administration of the school is responsible for the school, sets up the training process, the idea of education, where it's going.

I think we just need to know, if we're having a bad day, the administrator wasn't going to think of us as bad teachers. Just sometimes a shoulder to cry on or someone to hug.

It is obvious that teachers have clear ideas of what direct and indirect supports they expect of their administrators. However, the majority of interviewee comments suggested that needs tended not to be met.

I don't feel right now, any. For myself. I try to get extra help When I voiced my concerns to the people who were to take it downtown, who could make the decision of whether I could get help or not, it sort of was, "Well, you know, there are other children who have more needs."

Some teachers believed that administrator support was the luck of the draw, as evidenced

in this quote from an elementary school regular class teacher. *“That depends so much on the administrator. Here, it’s just been fabulous.”*

A few also found that their administrators were fully supportive.

Our administrator offers whatever support you want, as long as you tell him what you want.

Responses from administrators themselves indicated that they knew what types of support teachers wanted. As one elementary principal said:

They want to have a fair hearing, so to speak. If there are issues that are concerning them about a move such as inclusion, they have to feel free to come in and at least talk about it, explore the options. They’re going to certainly need the basic support such as learning materials The staff member logically, from time to time, is going to need some emotional support from the administrative team in the schools. They also need to feel supported by the school administration vis a vis parents, and vis a vis the board of education.

Other responses suggest that administrators believe they do offer the supports that teachers wish. The elementary principal quoted above ended her comments with, *“They [administrators] offer all these”*, while a secondary principal commented:

We provide inservice opportunities. We provide some planning time for our teachers. We provide the milieu, I call it, for our resource room teachers to feel comfortable walking into any classroom where there is a student with a special need.

Such differing responses point to a possible communication failure between principals and other educators in schools. Both teachers and principals know the types of support teachers

want; however, many teachers do not find their needs met, while principals believe they are providing supports of various kinds. Valeo (1994) pointed to a similar communication gap between principals and teachers in her study in elementary schools.

It was not only at the teacher level that this problem regarding provision of support was apparent. Statements such as, *“Some, a lot. Some, none. You know it’s as simple as that. There’s a whole spectrum out there.”* from an elementary principal, and *“It depends. The administrators are as different as the individuals that hold that position.”* from a secondary principal acknowledge the unevenness in support obvious to teachers.

Summary.

Educator responses to questions about administrator support are clear regarding the types of support teachers believe their principals should deliver. In broad sense, these supports may be classified as direct and palpable, or indirect and personal. The majority of regular class teachers, resource teachers, and special class teachers indicated that their administrators did not deliver the supports desired. A lesser number found that they were well-supported.

That principals believed they were offering support suggests a communication gap between administrators and their staffs. A suggestion from both teachers and principals that some administrators do not see it as their responsibility to provide support, is as troubling for inclusion as much as is the lamentable, but not altogether unexpected, possibility of communication breakdown.

Soundness of Concept of Inclusion

Inclusion, to be accepted and successful must be viewed by educators as educationally sound practice. Whether Canadian educators believe inclusion to be sound practice was a central

issue in this study. If the response were “no”, the implication would be that teachers saw inclusion to be without educational value. If “Yes”, the implication would be that inclusion was valuable practice.

The following framing guiding statement and question were designed to elicit indications of any values educators might see in inclusive.

Many teachers indicate that they believe inclusion of students with exceptionalities to be good educational practice.

Why would they hold this view?

The majority of respondents found no difficulty in suggesting values of inclusion.

Responses fell into four areas as follow.

Student rights and equity.

Though couched in various ways, a number of responses implied an attitude, among at least some participating educators, that issues of equity and rights were involved in decisions to include. This perception crossed all educator roles, both elementary and secondary schools, and both traditionally and inclusively structured systems. On occasion, interviewees pointed to perceived shortcoming of special education structures in particular.

Experience has shown that the ghettoization of children, in any capacity, whether it be equity issues through race, or culture, whatever, does not help children blend in society It's not good for the dominant group ... because it gives them such a limited perspective on the world.

Diversity within society.

A significant number of respondees focused on the diversity of society and the

appropriateness of schools reflecting that diversity. Some linked the idea of appreciation for diversity gained in inclusive classrooms to eventual adult roles in society. This value crossed both included and regular students.

The biggest thing is that we live in an inclusive society, and, so, by working on a daily basis in an inclusive school, in your classroom, you're helping all children So when you go out into the world of work, and pursue education past your local school, you're going to be in an environment that deals with variety.

Such responses came from every educator group in this study, save one. Teachers working in special class situations did not advance the diversity of society argument.

Generally enhanced learning.

More interview respondents pointed to generally enhanced learning through inclusive experience than to other areas under Soundness. Comments such as, "*Because they see that the student gains a lot by being in a classroom and achieving ... achieving in a "regular" classroom, rather than being segregated by themselves in a little room.*" pointed to the perception that the regular class was the most appropriate context for learning compared to other options.

A view of the regular class as the appropriate site for learning for all children extended the sense of the above. Value of regular class placement in terms of enhanced learning was summarized by one traditionally structured system principal:

I guess it comes from a basic philosophy about how children learn best and just the sense that all children can and should learn; that they should be together as much as possible; that there are social benefits, large social benefits, to children from all different

inclusive practice, but that the benefits are sufficient to lead to a choice of inclusion.

A lot of teachers, with some general reluctance, agree that it's probably fair that, where possible, these kids have a right to be with other kids, because ... there's enough of a trade-off of the benefits versus the negative.

Regular Class Teacher and Resource Teacher Relationship

A fundamental tenet of inclusive practice is that the regular class teacher should be supported by a resource teacher. Respondents from all educator groups made this point, reflecting frequent mention in the literature. It was followed up in interviews with the intent of probing educator beliefs regarding what form the relationship should take. The contextualizing statement and questions leading to interview discussion of the relationship were:

A change in the roles of regular teachers and special education resource teachers is implied by implementation of inclusive education.

What forms should the role of resource teacher take?

Who should be involved in determining the roles and responsibilities of the regular teacher and of the resource teacher?

Role of the resource teacher in support of the regular teacher.

Interviewees suggested a variety of models for resource teacher. The most common model was that involving some form of direct, ongoing support for the regular class teacher and included students.

If the teacher is a resource teacher, then that teacher needs to be a resource to the classroom teacher, to find those programs that are available, to help with the children, to deal with outside agencies.

Other forms of direct support for the regular class teacher included a focus on providing ideas for teaching strategies or on provision of many types of assistance. Related to these fairly direct support roles were two additional models which placed the resource teacher in a consultative or in a facilitator/coordinator role. Both of these moved the resource teacher back a step from ongoing direct support to a more global “service as required” role.

I see the resource teacher more as a consultant, a professional colleague of the regular classroom teacher as opposed to the person who's responsible for and provides the program for the special kids.

[The resource teacher should] be the person who keeps the overview of the child

Particularly because that person is more likely the one who ... can pass [information] on to the next teacher.

The majority of regular class teachers offering comments under this area, plus a number of resource teachers and special class teachers, preferred the resource teacher to deliver service directly to the teacher and/or to students in the regular classroom. A few favoured the consultant model. In contrast, principals clearly favoured the consultant model. The difference between principals and other staff members with regard to resource teacher role is of particular interest, and will be picked up again in a later examination of who is responsible for determining that role.

Joint roles of regular class teacher and resource teacher.

Commentary on the role of the resource teacher extended into consideration of where resource teacher support should be delivered and the form of the actual regular class teacher - resource teacher relationship. Preferred site of service delivery was definitely the regular classroom. However, to whom the resource support was directed varied in the minds of

respondents. Some respondents believed that, *"The resource teacher should be there to help the classroom teacher with teaching the whole class kind of like team teaching."*, whereas others argued that, *"The best role for the resource teacher is in the classroom, working with those children, lowering the PTR, aiding the individuals, giving them the one on one time they need"*.

Very few teachers suggested that a pull out or withdrawal model should be a part of working with included students.

The majority of teachers commenting on the form of regular teacher - resource teacher relationship advocated a partnership model. They saw the two professionals working as one.

It should almost be like a team teaching role. Where you can meet with the teacher in the classroom, but then, at other times, where you can meet and plan things together out of the classroom.

Though a partnership approach was preferred, some regular teachers argued that there should be a lead partner, and that that should be the regular class teacher. Comments such as, *"Together. The classroom teachers should have the final say, but they [classroom teacher and resource teacher] should be together. They should be professional"* supported this view..

A number of differences regarding the form of the relationship between the two professionals and the site of actual service delivery emerge from interview comments. The suggestion of a pull out model came only from educators who identified themselves as working in a special class setting. Regular class teachers and resource teachers advocated a team relationship, but some regular teachers added that the regular classroom teacher should be the senior partner. Principals tended to favour an indirect service consultant or facilitator role for resource teachers, whereas the resource teachers themselves and the regular class teachers

suggested a variety of direct service models. Who should resolve such differences and set the resource teacher role is the focus of the next discussion.

Who determines resource teacher role?

Though the majority of educators are confident that the regular class and the resource teacher can forge a close and positive working relationship, little agreement on the actual form of this relationship was evident. The guiding question, "Who should be involved in determining the roles and responsibilities of the regular teacher and the resource teacher?" addressed this anticipated divergence of views.

The team model.

By and large interviewees encouraged adoption of some form of a team model. The first of these was a three person team composed of principal, regular teacher, and resource teacher. A few regular teachers suggested an emendation to the model which would place the final decision in the principal's hands if differences should arise between the two teacher members. Still others argued that the regular teacher should play the lead role in team. Fundamentally, however:

It should be a three way street between administration, the teacher, and the resource teacher.

An alternate to the triad model was what we have termed the diffuse team model. Under this, the decision regarding resource teacher role was made by a team including school and system personnel only, or it could be expanded to include others.

The resource teacher should be involved in that. I think the regular teacher should be involved. I think the administration has to be involved. And, partly, the parents. And, you know, I don't see any reason why the students couldn't be involved as well.

The diffuse model ranked behind the triad model which was the model of choice. It also ranked behind a model in which the principal was the sole determiner of resource teacher role. Some respondents suggested, *"It's the principal [who] sets the tone of the school. It's her job and I think she should be responsible and involved directly"*.

This view of the principal as responsible for decisions in this area recalls the earlier suggestion with regard to the triad model option in which the principal was to play a decisive role were the regular teacher and the resource teacher to disagree.

Summary.

As noted previously, educators are confident that a positive relationship can be developed between regular and resource teacher. Deeper investigation of this collegial relationship suggests that actual development of the relationship is more complex than might be thought initially.

A range of possible models for the relationship were suggested. Most called for a team format, though there was difference of opinion regarding actual composition. In the end, a majority favoured a team of principal, regular teacher, and resource teacher.

General agreement existed that the resource teacher work in the regular classroom. However, some special class teachers advocated a pull out model, at least for some students. The apparent unanimity of the majority that the resource teacher work in the regular classroom was disrupted by varying views on what that person's role should be once there.

Lastly, though educators believed a close working relationship could be developed, a number of responses appeared to qualify this. Principals favoured a consultative model, whereas the majority of other educators preferred more direct service models centered on the regular classroom. Here, too, other ideas such as the pull out model were advanced. In addition, some

regular teachers appeared concerned about the quality of their relationship with the resource teacher in their suggestions that the principal hold the final decision on the actual role of the resource teacher, or that the regular class teacher be a senior partner in the relationship.

It may be wise for educators implementing inclusive practice to pay particular attention to the role of the resource teacher, and, given the number of models suggested, even that this should be determined school by school. The number of differences of opinion between educators may suggest both care and caution in setting the parameters of resource teacher role.

Effect on regular students.

A common concern associated with inclusion is that of negative social and/or academic effect for the nondisabled students. Waldron (1995) points out that this issue is a primary argument employed in resistance to the move toward regular classroom placement for all students. She notes a concern "regarding equity versus excellence, wherein the education of average and gifted learners will become 'watered down' to meet the needs of learners with disabilities" (p. 44). Contesting this view is research evidence of social gain for regular students in inclusive situations, and evidence that inclusion does not lower academic achievement of average children (Giangreco, Cloninger, and Dennis, 1993).

The concerns of some interviewees in this study that progress of regular students will be affected negatively was discussed, in part, earlier in this study, as was the obviously conflicting perception that inclusion would enhance their learning. With arguments on both sides, and little solid research evidence on either, this area was unclear. Therefore, the issue of whether educators believed that inclusion has positive or negative effect on regular students was examined in some detail.

Guiding interview questions were:

Advocates for inclusive placement argue that other students will find it a positive experience to have students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom with them.

What would be some of the positive effects?

What would be some of the negative effects?

We believed that posing the two questions one after the other would draw responses on both sides of the issue. Earlier discussion of the educational soundness of inclusion is recalled here, though the present discussion forms a much more direct exploration of effects.

Social effect.

The majority of interviewees described positive social effects. Included in their perceptions was regular student understanding of diversity and equity within the general population. Comments in this area were in addition to similar comments noted earlier.

Ethically, the learning to accept everyone as an individual and looking for the abilities and what the other person is worth, is something that can't be taught from a book.

Learning is viewed as social, but with academic aspects as well. The number of such comments from a range of educators suggested that learning about diversity and equity was viewed as more accessible through direct contact in the classroom than through text based learning, but the knowledge was factual as well as affective. In addition, the knowledge gained was characterized as knowledge that would last through life.

Participants also advanced the belief that regular class interaction with students with challenging needs resulted in higher self esteem for regular students. This was the view of regular class teachers in particular, with good agreement from resource teachers, but also of special class

teachers and administrators.

If there is such a thing as a regular student, the underlying thing is self esteem ... For them to be able to see persons who may be mentally or physically different and to be accepted by their peers, also allows them [regular students] to accept themselves and be accepted.

Mentions of self esteem suggested a number of notions. The most common was that regular students would have a wider base of comparison for their own abilities and needs, and that they would see themselves as contributors through tutoring. A particular point was that regular students with modest abilities would find that they, too, could be contributors.

Allied to heightened self esteem was the finding of some interviewees that inclusive experience promoted regular student self understanding, and understanding of the wider community and their place in it. Again, regular class teachers and resource teachers led special class teachers and administrators in making this point.

They learn to appreciate their own gifts, their own talents. They learn, also, to value each human being, no matter what their gifts are.

Almost no interviewees, whatever their roles in the schools, perceived direct negative social effect for regular students. A number of interviewees offered statements such as, “*Socially, I cannot see that there would be any negative effect*”. One area, mentioned by a few, where negative effect might be found, was that regular students might pick up on negative behaviour.

Socially, I know from my experience that because you treat different children differently, children who are non-disabled perceive that a disabled child is getting away with stuff And so, they try. They do a lot of testing to see how far they can go.

No other social effects of negative nature were mentioned by more than individual respondents, and few of these. No educator group noted more negative effect than did any other. Reference to positive social effect for regular students considerably outweighed the opposite. Highlighting positive social effect were development of understanding of the diversity of society and equity in the presence of difference, heightened self esteem, and stronger self understanding.

Academic effect.

The majority of interviewees believed inclusive experience to contribute to academic achievement of regular students.

Regular class and resource teachers found definite benefit for regular students through involvement in peer tutoring. Other educators noted the effect as well, though they did not mention it as frequently. Respondents believed that, *“Peer learning is one of the strongest ways that kids can learn I can see that it would be beneficial, academically, in most cases”*.

Other aspects with academic implication were benefits in motivation, leadership, communication skill, cooperation, creativity, acceptance of responsibility, and team building.

As far as an attitude about other people and caring, and learning to look after others, and help others, and work cooperatively, there are a lot of advantages.

Some educators also pointed to a collateral effect of inclusion, one related to academic development of regular students with more modest abilities. Pedagogical strategies put in place because students with challenges were in the classroom, were found to meet the learning needs of a wider range of students.

Academically, sometimes, some of those slower students that are in the regular classroom will benefit from the extra instruction that the special student may require. So, instead of

singling just one out, they can make it a small group.

Realizing that there are different ways to evaluate, I can also apply that to other students

Earlier, under teacher concerns regarding inclusion, some participants suggested that inclusive practice may call for a change in how teachers teach. The quotes above suggest that, while this may be true, such changes contribute to the learning of all students.

Participants also mentioned a limited number of possible negative effects for regular students. Individual respondents suggested that a slower pace of instruction may affect faster learners, that some students with challenges may become violent, and that student workload may not be distributed evenly in cooperative situations, with regular students doing more. The single negative effect mentioned by other than one or two respondents was that the behaviour of some included students might disrupt the classroom.

Negative effects tend to happen when there are behaviour problems. When the exceptionality is behaviour related, because it is distracting to the teacher, there is time taken away from the regular stuff going on in class.

Though considerably fewer mentions were made of negative academic effect, and most of these focused on behavioural disruption, teachers did comment that lack of supports would be a limiting factor. This point does not orient specifically on included students, but it underlines the continuing concern of educators that insufficient support will be provided for inclusive settings.

Summary.

Educators interviewed for this study experienced little challenge in pointing to both social and academic effect of inclusion on regular students. In the great majority of instances, the effects noted were positive, and ranged across a variety of areas. Negative effect fell into quite

restricted areas. Though comments leading to this analysis came primarily from regular and resource teachers, special class teachers and administrators also found more positive than negative effect. One explanation for higher awareness of positive effect among regular and resource teachers may be that these are the professionals closest to what actually transpires when regular students and included students are together in the regular classroom.

Effect on included students.

The basic argument for inclusion is that students with challenges will find greater social and academic growth in regular classrooms than elsewhere. Though this is widely believed among advocates of inclusion, research evidence is equivocal. Some studies point to advantages (Schulte, Osborne, and McKinney, 1990; Truesdell and Abramson, 1992). Others support the belief that special placement is superior, at least for some types of students (Carlberg and Kavale, 1980; Madden and Slavin, 1983).

This study did not attempt to compare social or academic strength of differing settings. Teacher perceptions of the effect of inclusive experience was the focus. Within this focus, interviewees found definite social and academic benefit, and relatively little social effect, for students with disabilities when placed in inclusive classrooms.

Two guide questions were developed for this area. The questions and their framing statement were:

Advocates claim that inclusion has positive academic and social effect for students with exceptionalities.

What would some of the possible positive effects be?

What would some of the possible negative effects be?

Social effect.

Educators in all four professional groupings perceived far more social benefit to inclusive settings than they did negative. The main areas of benefit were effect of having peer models, effect of belonging to a group, growth in self esteem, and general positive social effect. While noting positive effect, interviewees often cautioned that reaping these benefits was related to administrator support.

More respondents identified the positive effect of students with challenges being surrounded by average elementary and secondary students than any other positive or negative effect. It formed the most common response for regular class teachers, special class teachers, and administrators, and was noted as well by resource teachers.

For that particular student, the exceptional learner, the benefit is to see what appropriate behaviours and appropriate responses, if you will, are.

Learning to get along with others. Learning how to cope when there are lots of people around you Learning the proper behaviour.

Among the effects attributed to modeling were increased motivation, greater strength in social situations, understanding of social roles, perception of appropriate and inappropriate social behaviour, and the development of social relationships between individuals. A number of comments suggested that the positive effects of modeling reached beyond the classroom to participation in society at large.

Belonging to a group was seen as another benefit of inclusive experience. Despite the fact that they differed in ability, included students identified with the class group. Again, most respondents spoke in terms of the classroom, but a few extended positive effect to society beyond

the classroom with statements such as, *"It's like opening a window on the world. I mean, nobody could doubt that they [regular students] could benefit them"*.

In similar fashion members of all educator groups, particularly that of the administrator group, believed self esteem would be strengthened.

The same for any learner. Enhanced self esteem. Progress, as in measurable achievement. Increased socialization. The opportunity to contribute Happiness. Contentment.

Routine interactions with regular peers added to the personal image of included students in the majority view. Self esteem was viewed as related positively to friendships, achievement, cooperative activity, and personal happiness. In addition to those who nominated specific social benefits, a number of educators spoke of general benefits. Resource teachers were a particular voice in this area.

I compared their behaviour and their academic standing from one year to the next

Once we integrated them, we found their behaviour improved.

A subset of educators noted negative effect of inclusion in the social realm. The single area of any concentration of comments was that regular students might not be accepting of included students. Contributors suggested that rejection by regular students could be demonstrated through a variety of behaviours. Among these were teasing, ostracism, and general evidence of rejection.

Their peers can also be ... the ones that hurt you the most. There can't be the protection as much from just plain peer interactions and teasing and name calling.

Such comments, particularly those on teasing, formed the larger portion of the few

comments on possible negative effects. Perceptions of positive social effect were far more numerous.

Academic effect.

A substantial number of respondents noted academic effects of inclusive experience, though comments were not as specific as those under social effect, and academic effect not as marked in teachers' views. Three sub-categories of discussion were formed from analysis: academic motivation, general academic benefit, and no academic benefit. Mentions of negative academic effect were absent.

A number of regular class teachers and resource teachers found the regular classroom to have motivating influence on the academic effort of included students. Comments such as, *"If they're in a regular classroom, they'll try to act more like a regular student. So that pulls them up academically."* typified teacher belief in this area.

A variety of factors appear to be at work. Among these are seeing the work habits of others: tutor-tutee interaction, exposure to higher level expectations, and desire to function like peers. Andrews (1996) and Falvey and Rosenberg (1995), among others, also have noted benefits of peer modeling and interaction in the regular classroom.

Overall, however, respondents tended to find specification of academic benefit challenging. As one interviewee noted, *"The academic benefits for us are hard to evaluate."* Despite this limitation, a considerable number of participants believed benefit to be present.

Academically, even though a lot of the work is individualized for that student, I think they will pick up a lot of other things that are being taught within the classroom. I think, a lot of times, even their parents, are surprised at their accomplishments.

Though the phrasing tended to be general, the sense that a positive academic effect was present is clear. An impressive number of participants suggested that simply being exposed to the academic activities of a regular classroom would produce effect.

Not all perceptions were positive. A limited number of interviewees, particularly regular class teachers, believed that positive effect was absent or dubious, at least for some included students. Most of these referred to severity or category of disability as being a major restriction. Comments such as, *“That would depend on the type of exceptionality, or the type of need that’s required. But, certainly, some students would benefit from that, but not all.”* were offered.

No academic effect for some students is a logical teacher concern. Teachers like to see academic progress. Though a number of advocates of inclusion argue that social progress is reason enough for regular class placement, some teachers are dubious given the traditional educational emphasis on academics. Despite this logical concern, it is interesting to note that no interviewee spoke of negative academic effect, and the majority of those commenting in this area believed positive academic effect to be present.

Summary.

It is safe to say that the majority of participants in this study, when asked to consider whether inclusion had social or academic effect, had no doubt but that effects were present and that they were almost completely positive. Few educators brought out negative effects in either area.

Peer interaction through modeling and simple physical proximity appeared to teachers to increase self esteem and a promote a sense of belonging to the class group, though documentation of academic growth was more challenging. Increased academic motivation was

noted as a definite effect, but academic effect was spoken of as a general and almost osmotic.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings and discussion above suggest that Canadian educators at the elementary and secondary levels are ambivalent with regard to the practice of including students with disabilities in regular classrooms. While certain of beneficial social and academic effects and that regular teachers can function inclusively, the majority of educators, from future teachers studying at faculties of education to principals, question inclusion on pragmatic grounds. They believe that regular teachers have not been prepared professionally to work with students with disabilities, that they will not receive needed support from administrators, and that workload will be too heavy.

Given the wide perception of benefits for all when diversely abled students learn together and a set of resolvable pragmatic concerns, why is inclusive practice so slow in spreading? Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), in a review of 28 studies of teacher attitude toward inclusive education, suggest that teachers are more influenced by procedural classroom concerns than by any change "in the context of social prejudice and attitudes toward social integration" (p. 71). The present study supports this interpretation. Canadian educators typically qualified their positive views by reference to pragmatic needs: more professional preparation, more time to plan and prepare, and more support from administrators. In other words, their attention turned to the exigencies of daily teaching and they interpreted inclusion as requiring change to accustomed practice. Only when additional supports which would minimize the effect of change were in place could the average educator see inclusion as feasible. Most did not believe these supports

were presently in place or forthcoming.

A recent report on inclusive education by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (March, 1999) also noted the challenge of change. The report, on the basis of a review of inclusive education in eight countries, could find no educational rationale for maintaining any option other than inclusion for students with disabilities, but also noted continuing resistance to inclusive practice. The report concluded that, "Based on the examples of inclusion described in this [study] it would be fair to conclude from an educational point of view there is no limit to the degree of inclusion possible, All children however heavily disabled can be included in regular schools with no detriment to themselves or other pupils" (p. 41). In the view of the OECD authors, only "lack of political will and human beings' interminable resistance to change" (p. 18) block a move to generalized inclusive practice.

Canadian educators appear to be at a crossroads in terms of preferred model of service delivery for students with disabilities. As a group they recognize the benefits of the inclusive approach, but hesitate to change from the known special education model citing clearly stated concerns. While a variety of concerns are mentioned, a number emerge as primary. First among these are need for appropriate preservice and inservice teacher preparation. Second is need for both logistical and personal support from administrators. Third is workload.

The following actions by government, teacher educators, educational systems, and administrators would seem logical.

- Realignment of teacher preparation programs with contemporary understandings of disability and education. The majority of Canadian programs continue to

emphasize categories of disability and associated special curricular needs, and support the traditional psychoeducational view that full time or part time special placement is required for many students, particularly as degree of disability increases. Few programs emphasize integration models, and almost none spend any significant time on inclusive philosophy and methodology. Government ministries and Colleges of Teachers charged with responsibility for education, as well as teacher educators at the university preservice and educational system inservice levels should ensure that future teachers become familiar with inclusive theory and philosophy, organizational models, and pedagogical strategies.

- Workload for practicing teachers should be recognized as a major concern. Teachers do believe that managing an inclusive classroom requires new kinds of support and traditional supports provided in new ways. Strategies such as the parallel curriculum, Circles of Friends and Making Action Plans Happen have been developed to benefit both students and teachers. Emphasis on the collaboration between regular classroom teacher and resource teacher and the strategic use of educational assistants and volunteers in the classroom also would work toward reducing the workload question. Both preservice teacher preparation programs and inservice programs should include knowledge of such strategies. All responsible agencies should be working to familiarize teachers with such time efficient approaches to classroom management.
- Those responsible for administrator selection and preparation should ensure that administrators are familiar with inclusive philosophy and implementation as well

as other models of service delivery for students with disabilities. Administrators also need to understand their role as leaders attentive to professional and personal needs of teachers. School systems, faculties of education, teacher and administrator associations, government, and colleges of teachers share responsibility for ensuring that administrators are prepared to meet the challenges of change to educational practice in this area.

CONCLUSION

Education of students with disabilities and the restructuring of schools in keeping with inclusive philosophy is part of the on-going school reform movement. International organizations such as OECD (1999) and UNESCO (1994) have declared in favour of the inclusive approach. Associations of persons with disabilities and of parents have urged movement to inclusive practice. In response to new government policy, recognition that positive change is required, and at the urging of various advocacy groups, a number of school systems have adopted inclusive practice. They have understood that education for students with disabilities is changing.

Those responsible for guiding education at the government, teacher preparation, school system, and professional association levels must maintain awareness that change is troubling for many educators. Even those favourably disposed to inclusion hold concerns about their abilities to function inclusively, the demands of inclusion, and whether they will receive supports they see as requisite.

Leaders within government and education must act if teachers are to be supported in meeting what appears to be fundamental change in education of students with disabilities.

Role	Panel	Traditional	Inclusive	University
Regular Class Teacher	Elementary	10	12	
	Secondary	14	11	
Resource Teacher	Elementary	3	6	
	Secondary	7	8	
Special Class Teacher	Elementary	6	2	
	Secondary	5	2	
Administrator	Elementary	5	6	
	Secondary	6	6	
Student	Elementary			14
	Secondary			13
		56	53	27

Table 1:

Study Participants by Role, School Panel, and System Structure Relative to Students with Challenging Needs

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