

# How prepared are beginning teachers to teach students with disability in mainstream classrooms?

Tracey Chamlin

Lecturer in Education/Special Education - USQ

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# Appropriate question for a PhD Study?



# What I know...



# Inclusive Education in Australia



- **Disability Discrimination Act (1992)**
- **Salamanca Statement & Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994)**
- **Disability Standards for Education (2005)**
- **United Nations - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)**
- **Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)**



# The Australian Curriculum

A student with disability should have **access to the same opportunities** and choices in their education that are available to a student without disability

Students with disability are entitled to **rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities** drawn from the Australian curriculum and set in age-equivalent learning contexts



# Students with disability in mainstream classrooms

- In 2014, there were just over **3.5 million students** attending school in Australia
- Somewhere between **7% & 11%** (depending on state/territory) of these students will be **identified as having a disability**
- **Most students with a disability (65%) attend regular classes in mainstream schools**



# Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) Survey, 2013



Australia-wide survey to collect information from school teachers & leaders about their background & qualifications, their work, their career intentions, & school staffing issues.

# SiAS Results:

Over 40% of early career primary teachers perceive a need for more professional learning in:

- Supporting students with disabilities
- Teaching students with a wide range of backgrounds & abilities
- Dealing with difficult student behaviour





# SiAS Results:

Over **40%** of early career secondary teachers perceive a need for more professional learning in:

- Dealing with difficult student behaviour

And **over 35%** expressed need in regards to:

- Supporting students with disabilities
- Teaching students with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities



# SiAS Results:

## Principals' perceptions of the preparation of recent teacher graduates:



- Felt that only 5.6 % of primary and 14% of secondary teachers were very well or well prepared for supporting students with disabilities
- Just over 11% of both primary and secondary teachers were very well or well prepared for dealing with difficult student behaviour

# Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group



## Finding:

Teacher education programs are not consistently equipping beginning teachers with the evidence-based strategies & skills needed to respond to diverse student learning needs.

## Recommendation 14:

Higher education providers deliver evidence-based content focused on the depth of subject knowledge & range of pedagogical approaches that enable pre-service teachers to make a positive impact on the learning of all students.

# What the research suggests...

Teaching self-efficacy for pre-service teachers in inclusive classrooms can be improved through:

- Raising confidence in teaching students with disabilities
- Providing opportunities for authentic face-to-face interactions
- Practical teaching experiences with students with disability in inclusive settings

# What the research suggests...

General education teachers feel that they are not provided with enough time to implement inclusive learning & need more time to:

- Plan instruction
- Collaborate with others
- Use cooperative teaching

Mackey, 2014

# What the research suggests...

For successful inclusive education classroom teachers need:

- Planning time
- A differentiated approach to classroom instruction
- In class supports (e.g. teacher aides)
- Administrative support
- Opportunity for collaboration with other professionals

# What we don't seem to know...

**WHY** are beginning teachers not fully prepared to teach students with disability in mainstream classrooms...

## Is it because of:

- Pre-service teacher education experience
- Initial teacher education program
- Courses available / taken
- Attitude / desire / acceptance
- Previous experience
- Uncertainty as to what to do & how to do it in a classroom environment



# What we don't seem to know...

- What beginning teachers know and understand about teaching students with disability in general education classrooms.
- What beginning teachers DON'T know and or understand in regards to teaching students with disability in general education classrooms.

Seems to be little research focused on beginning teachers while a reasonable amount on initial teacher education students (e.g. attitudes, self-efficacy, confidence).



# Data Collection?

Data to be collected through:

- **Focus group/s**
  - Get an idea of what/where the ‘problem’ is
- **Survey**
  - Informed from the focus group data, to collect a wider indication & ascertain trends
- **Focus group / one-on-one interviews**
  - To clarify understandings and develop recommendations



# Data collected from?

- Beginning teachers
- 1, 2, 3 years experience?
- Principals
- Heads of Special Education
- Queensland only?
- Compare states/territories?
- Go wider... compare Countries?



# Your turn...

## What do you think?

- Clarifying my thesis question
- Methodological considerations
- Scope/depth of proposal
- Possible supervisors



