Inclusive Education Topic One

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Abstract

The first article I chose to write about is Education Canada: Current Issues by Helen McKenzie. When people think of inclusive education they think of people who have disabilities, however; that is not the case. Inclusive education is also refugees, immigrants and students who are geographically isolated. Canada’s education system is having a hard time adapting to the needs of all children, especially the ones who require more help than the mainstream children. The lack of funding has been a huge deficit for inclusive education in Canada and Saskatchewan. Many programs have been cut which results in fewer teachers, fewer assistants, and fewer classrooms, which in turn, means the students who require adaptations and support to be successful will have only a very small chance at a suitable, successful education experience. Also, more and more immigrant and refugee students are coming over to Canada with little or no English skills and little or no education; they are being placed in regular classrooms without any help, support, or assistance to get them ready for life in Canada. Refugee students coming from war torn countries are entering the education system having never been in school and without any counselling for what they may have endured in their native country. The government briefly tried to get the teachers the proper training for immigrant students, however; it has yet to happen due to the lack of funding. They are trying to incorporate students with disabilities into public schools in regular classrooms but the quality of their education and the other student’s education could be substantially affected.

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My mom has been working in the public school system for over 10 years as both a special education assistant and as a teacher, so I have heard many stories about the problems with both inclusive education and the education system in general. Last year my mom was a teacher in a grade 3/4 classroom. She had 29 students and no assistants and one her 29 students was an immigrant from India who had only been in Canada for a few months. Not only was this student an immigrant with no English she also had a ‘global development delay’. This meant that not only could she not communicate because of the language barrier she was also performing basic tasks at a significant lower rate than her peers. She was unable to turn a doorknob to open the classroom door, so she needed assistants to enter and exit the classroom. She was unable to walk to the bathroom by herself as she would not return to the classroom. She also required someone to be in the bathroom with her to instruct her to flush the toilet, and to instruct her to wash her hands, and turn on and off the faucets for her. She could not independently put her boots, coats, hats, or mittens on and required assistance to do so. She required one-on-one supervision on the playground as she would leave the school grounds and wander off with anyone. She was unable to hold a pencil or crayon and had extreme difficulty with basic fine motor skills. Even though she was diagnosed with a global development delay, she was still placed in a regular classroom because there was no one who could properly test her because of the language barrier, and there was a lack of space available in special programs due to all of the budget cuts and program cuts. She clearly was not getting any of the support she needed in order to be successful in a regular classroom. and because of the amount of assistance she required for basic skills, the other students lost a lot of their academic learning time.

I strongly believe that the lack of funding is hurting the education system more than anything. So many programs have been cut because the government is not putting any money where it is needed. For example, Regina Public has cut the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program in their schools. This is really unfortunate. I am not sure how they are going to incorporate these students into the regular classrooms without having certified language teachers in the classroom assisting them. This makes no sense to me because you are still going to require the same resources as before in order for these children to be successful. The school boards in Regina had also cut their English as an Additional Language Program down to the bare minimum. Even though we have more students entering the school system than ever before with no or limited English skills they have cut the program down to almost nothing. Students in Kindergarten, grade one and grade two no longer get to work with a teacher to help them with their English. They are just placed into a regular classroom with no help to learn English. Children in older grades are now lucky to get an hour a week with an EAL teacher to help them learn English. With such little help and support for these new English Language learners they are falling farther and farther behind in their education.

Students who have needs that go beyond the mainstream classroom are the most at vulnerable students. Unfortunately, these are the students who are affected by the lack of funding and the lack of programs available. These at vulnerable children are our students who have disabilities, our students who are coming from war torn countries, and our students who are coming to Canada without any English language skills. These are the students that are going to suffer because they are the ones who are not going to get any of the support or skills that they need in order to be successful. Unfortunately for these students, their futures are not looking very bright, at least not until the governments, both federal and provincial; realize that education should be a top priority for all students, not just the mainstream.

References

McKenzie, H. (n.d.). Education in Canada: Current Issues. Retrieved October 09, 2018, from http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/bp386-e.htm#c. Special