

Background

Introduction

With the increasing number of young children with special needs entering the early learning environment, there is now a greater understanding of the need for professional development and intervention training as it relates to inclusive practice for early childhood educators (Baker-Erickzén et al., 2009).

Literature Review

Although training is being requested, there is little research

What are the current professional learning needs for RECEs working with children with special needs, and what do they propose as the most effective way of supporting these needs?

Methodology

Research Design

This qualitative study used a phenomenological research design.

Instrument

Data was collected through a semi-structured, face-to-face interview of 14 open-ended questions.

Procedure

RECEs from child care centres across Toronto were recruited by email to the centre supervisor.

Participants

The participants for this study included 4 RECEs with a range of 5-20 years of experience working in the field and directly supporting children with special needs.

Results

Conclusion

This study identified a hands-on training model, with an aspect of performance feedback provided by a clinical specialist, as the most effective training model to implement when supporting RECEs in the inclusive early years environment. Similar to Baker-Ericzén et al. (2009) training as it pertains to a specific child, as opposed to the generalized written reports currently being provided. While participants report feeling comfortable in their inclusive role, they attribute this feeling to years of experience and hands-on training. Consistent with the literature (Baker-Ericzén et al., 2009; Brebner et al. 2016; & Loreman et al. 2013) initial training and education does not provide the necessary skills to support an inclusive environment.

Limitations

- ∅ The individual professional background of the selected RECEs, and years of experience may influence decision to participate
- ∅ Convenient sampling from one site
- ∅ Central Toronto child care centres may have easier access to organizations and agencies providing support to educators

Recommendations

- ∅ Support educators through hands-on training in the child care environment, specifically provided by clinical specialists;
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looking beyond foundational knowledge in workshops.

References

- Baker-Ericzén, M. J., Mueggenborg, M. G., & Shea, M. M. (2009). Impact of trainings on child care providers' attitudes and perceived competence toward inclusion: What factors are associated with change. (4), 196-208.
- Ó'Leary, M., & O'Leary, M. (2013). Understanding of early communication: Application to their work with young children. (3), 277-292.
- Loreman, T., Sharma, U., & Forlin, C. (2013). Do pre-service teachers feel ready to teach in inclusive classrooms? A four country study of teaching self-efficacy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(1), 27-44.