Early Intervention in the 21st Century

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TRANSITION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRES

A decade of experience in preschool education demonstrated how successful inclusion of children with disabilities within this environment could be, and how early childhood education and care centres have a significant contribution to the early intervention of all children.

My recently completed doctoral research (2013) was titled ‘Transition of Children with Disabilities into Early Childhood Education and Care Centres’, and sought to understand, in the New South Wales (NSW) context, the factors impacting on the transition into early childhood education and care centres for children with disabilities. Underpinned by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, this study used a mixed-method design involving questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, to determine the perceptions of key stakeholders in the process of transition into early childhood education and care centres for children with disabilities. An initial questionnaire for parents of children with disabilities was followed by focus groups to gain insight into the lived experience of participants in relation to this transition for their children with disabilities. Three significant issues provided the focus for the discussions, namely, factors that contributed to positive transition experiences, negative experiences that occurred during transitions, and the main concerns parents held in relation to enrolling in an early childhood education and care centre.

Questionnaires distributed to early childhood education and care centres were followed with interviews with ten educators to gain more in-depth understanding. Issues explored in the interviews were areas of disability educators found more challenging, educator attitudes to enrolling children with disabilities, procedures that had been used during transitions, what educators wished they knew more about, and their experience of communication with parents. Findings from the research will be discussed, as well as a number of recommendations in relation to policy and practice.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Jane Warren trained as an Early Childhood Teacher and worked for ten years in a preschool setting with children aged 3-5 years of age where she became passionate about inclusion of all children, including those with disabilities. She strongly supports the importance of early learning on future outcomes for children (including positive attitudes), and believes that early intervention for children with disabilities takes many forms, including being part of an ECEC centre. Jane strongly believes in the importance of parents, educators and other community organisations working in partnership to meet the needs of individual children, which inspired her recently completed Doctorate in Education, focusing on the transition of children with disabilities into ECEC centres. She loves working with children and families in a supported playgroup environment as a stepping stone to further inclusion, and inspiring university students to be passionate, inclusive educators.

FIND OUT MORE

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