

Teachers' voices in upholding educational rights for children with disability

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Pre-recorded presentation link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLuRXbgz9zA>

Background: In the rapidly changing conditions and challenges of inclusive education, one thing remains constant, all children have educational rights. The rights of children with disability are articulated in conventions and declarations including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Teachers have a responsibility to uphold rights at school. However, most literature about teachers' understanding about educational rights focusses on early childhood or pre-service teachers' perspectives.

Significance: This research aimed to understand what teachers believe are their obligations regarding children's educational rights and to investigate reports regarding how teachers' uphold children's educational rights for children with disability. Early childhood is a critical developmental period. The importance of early childhood is echoed in research on educational rights with many studies focused on prior-to-school settings. However, there is limited research on educational rights in school settings and limited mention of disability. Therefore, this project focused on the early years of primary school and children with disability. Through this research teachers were given an opportunity to add to the discussion on the successes and challenges of enacting educational rights in the classroom.

Research design: This small scale exploratory study focussed on Australian teachers who had taught students from prep/ kindergarten- grade 3 completed a 30-minute online interview. The study used a qualitative approach within the interpretive framework of hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic interpretation acknowledges the multiple realities of experiences by focusing on the relationships between the data, and embraces the influence of the researcher's subjectivities on interpretive processes. In doing so, a holistic, rather than reductionist interpretation of the data was provided. Furthermore, moral and political philosophical concepts and theories including utilitarianism, rights-based liberalism and Rawls' *Theory of Justice* has been used to understand how teachers' understanding is guided by philosophical reasoning.

Findings: Preliminary findings from the interviews conducted to date suggests that many teachers are unaware of the specific details of international conventions, declarations, and obligations of the rights of persons with disability, however; participating teachers followed their rights obligations through moral reasoning. Interviews are ongoing but the study will be completed by the conference and the presentation will focus on the full findings of the completed study.

Implications: This small scale exploratory study provides foundational knowledge of what is currently known by practicing school teachers about rights of children with disability. This knowledge can be used to support further research looking into rights enactment in schools for all children including children with disabilities.