

**Educators' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices in Early Childhood Care and
Education settings in British Columbia: The role of teacher education and work
experiences**

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Abstract

Based upon semi-structured interviews with six participants who had completed their Basic Early Childhood Educator (ECE) and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs in British Columbia, this study investigated early childhood educators' perspectives on the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of their inclusive teaching practices. To date, only a few research studies have discussed early childhood educators' perspectives on inclusion and inclusive teaching practices (however see, Dalkilic, 2014). To address this gap, two research questions guided this study: What role does teacher education play in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings? What role does work experience, including professional development workshops, play in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings?

This qualitative study was informed by a disability studies framework (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005). The data, gathered from semi-structured interviews, were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Five themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data. They are as follows: The importance of "real world" experiences for inclusive teaching practices; The barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices; Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices; The role of practica in strengthening inclusive practices; and The importance of learning about different diagnoses. Recommendations for ECCE settings and teacher education programs, along with limitations and suggestions for future research, are addressed in the conclusion.

Lay Summary

Informed by a disability studies framework, this qualitative study examined early childhood educators' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of educators' inclusive teaching practices. Five themes were identified: The importance of "real world" experiences for inclusive teaching practices; The barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices; Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices; The role of practice in strengthening inclusive practices; and The importance of learning about different diagnoses. Recommendations address both early childhood teacher education programs leading to a Basic ECE certificate and/or Post-Basic ECE certificate in Special Needs and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) work environments in British Columbia (BC). Future research that builds directly upon this study are described.

Preface

This research is an original and unpublished work by the author, Karima Rehmani. The Behavioural Research Ethics Board of British Columbia gave full board approval to this research on November 15, 2017 under the UBC BREB Certificate number H17-02576.

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Dedication

Two Angels and an Inspiration

Dedicated to Two Angels: My Dad, Nuruddin, and my Mom, Khairunnisa.

I dedicate this thesis to the two most important people in my life: My parents. Almost seven years ago my dad and mom left a lucrative business and their comfortable lives in Karachi—a metropolitan city in Pakistan and also my hometown—to give me and my siblings a better future.

Coming home after a challenging day at work and school, I always felt energized because my mom and dad were there to hear me out. My mother's warmth and affection, and my father's strong-will and motivating words made me believe in myself. Just because of them I have learned to never give up in life. Their financial, physical, and emotional support has helped me become a better human being and it has inspired me to accomplish this milestone in my life. Mom and Dad, you have been the best parents, confidants, and the most beautiful, honest, and ethical people I have and I will ever come across in my life.

Dedicated to an Inspiration: His Highness the Aga Khan

I was pursuing a career in Business Leadership when I heard His Highness, the Aga Khan, speak about the importance of early years in a child's life. These words and his work for humanity made me think about making a career shift. Influenced by His Highness the Aga Khan, I made a career choice that has helped me create a difference in student teachers' and children's lives. Today, when I look back, I am immensely happy to have made this choice.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Inclusion has become an integral part of education systems around the world. Even though the interpretation of the concept of inclusion may differ among scholars from various disciplines, in general, inclusion can be defined as the act of removing barriers and creating spaces that encourage people to participate fully in their everyday environment (Swain, Nordness, & Leader-Janssen, 2012). In education, the concept of inclusion has several interpretations regarding ways to include children with special needs and/or from different backgrounds. In school, the term “children with special needs” has been used to define children who may or may not be diagnosed with intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs, but show differences in their development given parents’ and educators’ expectations. The term special needs in this study acts as an umbrella term to describe children ages birth- to-five years old with additional needs in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings. In this study, the concept of inclusive teaching practice is defined as a pedagogical practice based upon principles of approaches that address the diverse needs of all children (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee & Allan, 2001).

This research investigated the perspectives of in-service early childhood educators on how teacher education and work experiences shaped the development of their inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings. In British Columbia (BC), in order to become an early childhood educator with a special needs specialization (Post-Basic certificate), students are required to take a few courses on the topic and do one practicum in an inclusive ECCE setting. An early childhood educator myself, I was interested in investigating educators’ perspectives on the role of their teacher education and work experiences. As I chose a qualitative research methodology, I interviewed six early childhood educators using a semi-structured interview protocol (Kvale, 1996) and analyzed their interviews thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The participants in this

study had completed their Basic ECE and Post-Basic credential in Special Needs (see details about certification in Section 1.3) and they had worked in an ECCE setting for at least two years. These criteria allowed me to recruit participants who were able to reflect upon the development of their inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings.

1.1 Research Problem

A number of research studies on inclusive practices have discussed early childhood educators' attitudes toward children with special needs and the coursework and field experiences that prepared them to work in inclusive settings (e.g., Romi & Leyser, 2006). Some studies reported that in-service educators' attitudes are the key factor to consider when implementing an inclusive policy (e.g., Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). For example, there are early childhood programs that have zero-reject policies where all children are welcome to attend the center (Halfon & Friendly, 2013). So far, there are only a few research studies have discussed early childhood educators' perspectives on inclusive practices (however see, Dalkilic, 2014). This gap in the literature reflects the research problem that is the focus of this study.

To date, there has been little discussion about how early childhood educators define the terms "disability" and "inclusion" (Lalvani, Broderick, Fine, Jacobowitz, & Michelli, 2015). Dalkilic's (2014) research is one of the few that inquired into early childhood educators' perspectives on inclusion. She found that many early childhood educators held conventional perspectives on inclusion. Though little has been mentioned about the impact of educational preparation on educators' perspectives, Dalkilic (2014) stated that the perspectives of the participants in her study conformed to the regulatory practices of inclusion, such as labelling a child with special needs as an "autistic child." These regulatory practices often work to marginalize children with special needs in educational settings.

In addition to the gap in literature, the amount of education that is needed to become an

educator certified to work with preschool-aged children with special needs is substantially less in comparison to the amount of work that is needed to develop inclusive teaching practices (Howe, Flanagan, & Perlman, 2017). Typically, in BC, to become a certified special needs early childhood educator, an educator completes two courses and one practicum that lead to a Post Basic certificate (see details about certification in Section 1.3). With this level of education, it is important to investigate the perspectives of in-service early childhood educators on how teacher education and work experiences shaped the development of their inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings.

1.2 Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate in-service early childhood educators' perspectives on the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of their inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings. In other words, this study examined early childhood educators' perspectives on what shapes their inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings.

The following two questions guided this research:

- 1) What role does teacher education play in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings?
- 2) What role does work experience, including professional development workshops, play in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings?

1.3 Educational requirements in British Columbia

The BC Child Care Licensing Regulation (CCLR), in the BC Ministry of Health, delineates who can be certified as an early childhood educator in British Columbia (Community Care and Assisted Living Act, 2002). The Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies (CCSOC)

outlines the necessary knowledge and skills that are required to become an early childhood educator in BC (Government of British Columbia, n.d.). Certification as an Early Childhood Educator in BC is granted by the BC Early Childhood Education Registry in the BC Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD). There are two ways to obtain certification to practice as an early childhood educator in BC.

1. At the minimal level, one can obtain an Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECEA) certificate. An ECEA can be obtained upon completion of one early childhood education course in child development, health and safety, or child guidance, from a recognized educational institution in BC (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.).
2. The Basic ECE certification is granted upon graduation from a Basic ECE certificate program in a recognized educational institution in BC, and upon the completion of 500 hours of supervised work experience in a licensed ECCE setting (Early childhood Educator Registry, n.d.). A Basic ECE certificate program includes coursework focusing on topics, such as child development, curriculum development, health and nutrition, guidance, and safety. This certificate is valid for five years. Having said that, the Early Childhood Educator Registry (n.d.) has recently introduced a one-year Basic ECE certificate that is granted upon the completion of coursework. This certificate does not require educators to complete 500 hours of supervised work experience. In order to renew this one-year certificate, educators need to complete 500 hours of supervised work experience in an ECCE setting (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.)

According to the Early Childhood Educator Registry (n.d.), educators are required to renew their Basic ECE certification after every five years. For this, educators need to complete 40 hours of professional development that includes courses or workshops focusing on topics, such as child development, human resources, and children with special needs.

Apart from these certificates, according to the BC Child Care Licensing Regulation (CCLR), individuals can also work as Responsible Adults in ECCE settings (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.). According to the Early Childhood Registry (n.d.), an individual can work as a Responsible Adult if they are 19 years or older with relevant work experience and have completed a minimum of 20 hours coursework in child development, guidance, or health, nutrition, and safety.

Pre-service and in-service early childhood educators may choose to pursue the Post-Basic certificate, by taking additional courses in Special Needs and/or Infant Toddlers. Students enrolled in a Post-Basic early childhood program have a choice to do one of these two certificates after they have completed their Basic ECE program (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.). The Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs¹ includes two to three courses and one practicum (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.). Similarly, the Post-Basic certificate in Infant Toddlers also includes two to three courses and one practicum. In some cases, students may choose to obtain both of these Post-Basic certificates, and some programs may require students to complete both of these certificates in order to be granted a diploma.

There are a number of approved early childhood programs and institutions in BC that offer Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates. These programs and institutions include Public-Post secondary, Private Post-secondary, Distance Learning, and Adult Education (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.). Having said that, one institution in BC offers a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education (Early Childhood Educator Registry, n.d.).

¹Recently, the term “special needs” has been replaced by the term “inclusive education” in the K-12 education system in British Columbia (Government of British Columbia, 2018).

1.4 Early childhood policy in British Columbia in relation to inclusive education

ECCE settings in BC provide services for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children (Wiant, Kehel, Rempel, & Tough, 2014). In Canada, only a few provinces offer publicly operated childcare options for parents. These provinces include Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec (Childcare Research and Resource Unit, 2016; Howe et al., 2017).

Although there is no federal legislation that guarantees access to inclusive services, all provinces in Canada have policies to support inclusion practices in ECCE settings (Howe et al., 2017). Examples of support include funding to purchase resources or employ additional staff (Childcare Research and Resource Unit, 2016). According to Howe et al. (2017), all ECCE settings in Manitoba are required to have an inclusive policy and offer programming that meets the needs of all children. Similarly, ECCE settings in Prince Edward Island are required to register children with special needs and implement practices that are inclusive in nature. In BC, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is connected to three ministries: The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the Ministry of Education. Out-of-home early childhood facilities are regulated by the Community Care Licensing Branch in the Ministry of Health.

According to Child Care Licensing Regulation (CCLR, 2007), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) environments providing services to children in this age group are divided into four general categories: Group Child Care for children under 36 months, Group Child Care for children 30 months to school age, Preschool for children 30 months to school age, and Multi-Age Child Care that provides services to children of various ages from birth to five. Individual program operations can vary based on the specific policies of each institution, even though all ECCE services in BC are regulated by CCLR. Each institution has the autonomy to design their own program, as long as they consider the safety and health element as their highest priority in

their centers and provide children with an environment that also promotes their social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth (CCLR, 2007).

Child Care Licensing Regulation (CCLR) has used the phrase “child requiring extra support” to refer to children with special needs (CCLR, 2007). The term “special needs” is an umbrella term and in the Licensing Regulation handbook it is used for children who may require physical, intellectual, emotional, communicative or behavioral support (CCLR, 2007). As discussed in the CCLR, institutions should meet the physical structure requirements to support children with special needs. ECCE settings should also modify their programs to meet the needs of children who require extra support (CCLR, 2007). If a child is diagnosed with an additional need, the institution should specify and provide a “Care Plan” that discusses the child’s area of diagnosis and the recommended actions as stated by health care professionals that need to be taken to support that child’s development (CCLR, 2007). It is important to remember that there are circumstances where children with special needs may not have a diagnosis. There are only three sections in the Licensing Regulation handbook that discuss the area of “Inclusive Education” for early childhood education (CCLR, 2007). Providing care to young children (birth to age five years) who require extra support is dependent on early childhood institutional policies based on their ability to provide services to children with special needs (CCLR, 2007). This means that programs can deny registration to children if they do not have qualified staff.

There are two programs in BC that provide support to families with children with special needs: Supported Child Development (SCD) and Infant Development Program (IDP). During the mid 1990s, SCD replaced the concept of special needs child care with inclusive child care in BC (Parsa-Pajouh, Stockburger, Greenwood, & Prediger, 2005). In 1995, SCD’s primary objective was to implement an inclusive framework that supported children with special needs who were using special needs child care and education programs in BC (Parsa-Pajouh et al., 2005). The

goal of this framework was to create inclusive ECCE settings in the province of BC where every parent had the same choices and every child felt a sense of belonging (Parsa-Pajouh et al., 2005).

To date, the SCD program assists in finding inclusive programs for families who have children with special needs. This program typically supports children from age three up to 12 years of age (BC Center for Ability, 2017). They may also consider youth who are between 13 and 18 years of age on an individual basis (BC Center for Ability, 2017). The IDP assists families who have children with special needs between the ages of birth and 3 years (BC Center for Ability, 2017). Both programs are financially supported by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Even though these programs support children with special needs, ECCE settings in BC may not be able to accommodate families who have children with or without special needs (Halfon & Friendly, 2013). This is due to three reasons. First, there is a high demand for child care and often the program directors struggle to find certified early childhood educators. As a result, many ECCE settings have long waiting lists that make it inaccessible for families to find a suitable child care in their catchment (Halfon & Friendly, 2013). Second, full day enrollment in child care settings is expensive, especially for a family with children with special needs because children with special needs may require a behavioral interventionist, an occupational therapist, or additional staff to support their intellectual, behavioral, social, and physical needs. Third, some ECCE settings may refuse children with special needs as they lack the staff and resources to support children with special needs (Halfon & Friendly, 2013).

According to the child care *BC caring for kids, lifting up families' report*, in April 2018, the government of BC responded to some of these concerns by introducing a child care fee reduction for licensed child care providers who care for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children (Government of British Columbia, 2018). Besides this, the government also announced

increased spaces for individuals who want to pursue a Basic ECE or Post-Basic certificate and funding to support professional development for existing educators (Government of British Columbia, 2018). This budget supports a commitment—Code of Ethics—articulated by the Early Childhood Educators of BC (2008) that states that educators are responsible to support children in their care. Given that the government of BC has announced that it will provide professional development funding for existing early childhood educators, it seems that educators could become more prepared to support all children in their care. Though the importance of the early childhood workforce is now recognized in many parts of the world including BC, Moss (2006) suggests that re-envisioning this workforce may only be possible if we critically question how the work of early childhood educators is understood.

In order to understand the work of early childhood educators, it is important to think about the image of an early childhood educator in our society. According to Moss (2006), people may have different images of how they understand the work of an early childhood educator. Moss (2006) described three images of an early childhood educator that are prevalent today. First, many people view an early childhood educator as a substitute mother whose role is to provide maternal care for the children and therefore may not need to have specific education to care for the children. The second image of an early childhood educator is more of a technician who may have varying levels of qualification. This educator as technician is expected to follow a prescribed curriculum and use standardized measures to assess children in their setting. The third image of an early childhood educator is of a researcher, a collaborator, and a thinker who co-constructs knowledge with the children and other adults. The process of co-constructing of knowledge is not based on any set outcomes or prescribed curricula. Instead, this process requires rich dialogue and attentive listening on behalf of the educator.

These three images contribute to how a society understands the work of an early

childhood educator. Moss's (2006) notion of the early childhood educator as a researcher is important for this study for two reasons. First, the notion of an educator as a researcher helps us reflect upon our image of children. If children are viewed as empty vessels that need to be filled up with prescribed knowledge that produces a certain outcome, the way society views educators' work would correspond. In this case, educators would be viewed as individuals who have to teach children a prescribed curriculum and assess them on the basis of what has been determined as required knowledge regardless of the lived experiences of the children and educators. Similarly, if children are viewed as fragile beings who need protection, the image of the educator as a substitute mother who has to provide maternal care for the children is consistent. However, if children are viewed as agentic, curious and full of potential, the image of the educator as someone who thinks, collaborates, and is open to different ideas and perspectives is significant. According to the British Columbia Early Learning Framework, the image we have of children strongly influences the way we interact with them and the way we construct environments to support their learning (Government of British Columbia, 2008).

Moss's (2006) image of an educator as a researcher is also important for this study because this image incorporates the idea that all children are citizens with rights and capabilities who have a wide range of needs but also a great deal to contribute to the communities within which they live. The educator as researcher and co-constructs of knowledge and environments with children and other adults can support children with both typical and special needs in more responsive ways. The role of educator as a researcher is strongly influenced by educational preparation and educators' work experiences, including professional development opportunities at work.

1.5 Theoretical Framework: Disability Studies Framework

Disability studies is an emerging field within social sciences research. The interdisciplinary field of disability studies proposed that the term “disability” is constructed by the society in which we live (Lalvani et al., 2015). For example, children who make use of sign language and technology to communicate may experience a “disability” if they enter an ECCE setting that does not value multiple forms of communication. Though one will find various models of disability in the literature within the disability studies framework, I used the social model of disability for this study.

The social model of disability has been, in many ways, a response to the traditional medical model of disability. The medical model of disability can be described as a traditional way of looking at disability (Barnes, Oliver, & Barton, 2002). Under this model, society views “disability” as an impairment that needs to be cured if that person wants to fit within the normal stages of development (Barnes et al., 2002). The medical model assumes that every individual wants to achieve the normal state of being. This model views children with special needs as “atypical” and “abnormal.” This model does not acknowledge the social construction of disability—for example, the ways in which social institutions and expectations can, themselves, be disabling—and the notion of disability is defined as an individual attribute, or as something that resides within the child (Barnes et al., 2002). This theory is further elaborated in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3).

1.6 Methodology

This study utilized semi-structured interviews to elicit early childhood educators’ perspectives on the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of their inclusive teaching practices. According to Patton (2002), qualitative interviewing is based on the assumption that the perspectives of other people are meaningful. Researchers using qualitative interviewing often conduct interviews to gather stories. For this study, the data were collected

through semi-structured interviews with the research participants (Kvale, 1996). These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze data gathered from the semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method that allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the set of data they have collected. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is flexible and "can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches" (p. 78).

1.7 Summary and Overview of Thesis

Chapter 1 provided a brief description of this study, including the purpose and two research questions that guided this study. The context of this study was provided with a focus on the educational and professional requirements necessary to become an early childhood educator in BC. This chapter discussed the disability studies framework and briefly described the qualitative methodology that was used to gather and analyze data for this research study.

The subsequent chapters of this thesis are as follows. Chapter 2 addresses the existing literature on the research topic. It discusses the history of special education, as well as the difference between key concepts: integration, inclusion, full-inclusion, and inclusive pedagogical approach. It also discusses the disability studies framework. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methodology that guided this qualitative research to investigate educators' perspectives on the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of their inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings. The data collection and analysis process is also described. Chapter 4 describes the five themes that emerged from the analysis of interview data. They are as follows: The importance of "real world" experiences for inclusive teaching practices; The barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices; Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices; The role of practica in strengthening inclusive practices; and The

importance of learning about different diagnoses. Chapter 5 provides seven recommendations for teacher education programs—Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs—ECCE work environments, and policy makers, along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The implementation of inclusive teaching practices in educational settings is a relatively new practice in the field of special education (Odom, 2000). Throughout this study, an inclusive teaching practice is defined in relation to the inclusion of children with special needs (ages birth to five years) in ECCE settings. Since existing literature has used the term “special needs” to define children who may or may not be diagnosed with social, behavioral, emotional, intellectual and physical needs, the term “special needs” in this study acts as an umbrella term to describe children’s diverse and unique needs in educational settings.

This chapter begins with a brief history of the field of special education. The second section discusses key concepts including: integration, inclusion, and inclusive pedagogical approach. The third section discusses the disability studies framework that conceptualizes the term “disability” as a social and cultural phenomenon, rather than an individual or a medical one. The fourth section focuses on educational preparation, coursework, practicum experiences, and educators’ attitudes. The fifth section describes the content of coursework and practicum experiences and how it shapes educators’ teaching practices. This section also provides examples of countries where coursework may not always be complemented by field placement. The sixth section discusses the importance of professional development and the need for in-service educators to continuously update their teaching strategies. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

2.1 History: The Field of Special Education

A report on inclusive child care in Northern BC described the emergence of inclusive ECCE settings in the field of special education (Parsa-Pajouh et al., 2005). Principally, the field of special education has had three phases (Parsa-Pajouh et al., 2005). The first phase was described as the denial phase: society did not recognize the existence of disabilities. This phase ended in the late 20th century. The second phase was described as the recognition phase: society slowly began to identify children with special needs. During this phase, the constitutional rights of children with special needs started to gain recognition. The third phase is the most recent and current phase: children with special needs are included and supported in mainstream educational settings (Odom, 2000). Though this phase has been in effect since the early 1970s, inclusive early childhood services for children with special needs have only emerged as a major service since the 1990s (Odom, 2002).

In 1994, representatives of 92 countries at the World Conference held in Salamanca, Spain, announced that all children have a right to seek education and the diverse needs of all children should be taken into account by education systems (Khan, 2011). During this conference, the Salamanca Statement on Special Education declared that all children had a right to inclusive education. This statement defined inclusive education as “a framework for action that would accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions” (Khan, 2011, p. 18). The Salamanca Statement is considered to be one of the most important documents in the field of special education (Khan, 2011). This statement is significant to mention in this study because it advances the need to develop inclusive teaching practices by stating that all children should be included in educational settings.

2.2 Key Concepts: Integration, Inclusion, and Inclusive Pedagogical Approach

The terms “inclusion” and “integration” are often used interchangeably in the literature; however, their meanings are different (Leatherman & Niemeier, 2005). Integration is described

as the placement of children labelled with special needs in a mainstream educational setting (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). Based on the principles of integration, three main models of practice have been recognized. These models include locational, social and functional integration (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Locational integration can be described as the physical placement of children with special needs into a mainstream educational setting. The main purpose of locational integration is to have children with special needs participate in the same classroom as other children. These children are often separated from their peers for a portion of the day to work on their individual curricula with their special education assistants (SEA) (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Social integration is defined as the interaction of children with special needs and their peers in a mainstream educational setting. The main purpose of social integration is to support the social development of children with special needs. Therefore, some social integration policies do not require children with special needs to follow the same educational curricula as their peers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Functional integration policies encourage children with special needs to take part in the educational and social matters within a mainstream educational setting. The level of participation in these matters has not been specified, and it often varies from school to school (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Full inclusion. According to Leatherman and Niemeyer (2005), the terms integration and inclusion are used interchangeably. However, the concept of inclusion goes beyond the physical placement of a child labelled as a child with special needs in a classroom. A classroom can be described as an inclusive educational setting only when children with special needs participate fully in the educational and social curricula in a way that is meaningful for their own experience

and learning. Within the context of inclusion, there is a radical trend called “full-inclusion,” which further highlights the difference between the terms “inclusion” and “integration.”

“Full-inclusion” means full participation and placement of children with and without special needs (Gindis, 2003). This means that none of the children are “pulled-out” from the mainstream setting for any portion of the day in order to follow a separate curriculum. Full-inclusion policies require all program managers, teachers, and SEAs or other inclusion support staff to collaborate and work in a way that meets the needs of all children.

An ECCE center is “fully inclusive” when there is a zero-reject policy, and all families and their children have full access to the ECCE center’s services and resources. Moreover, a center is also fully inclusive when the leadership of that center prepares the staff to meet the needs of all children by offering the staff professional development opportunities (Halfon & Friendly, 2013).

Quite a few early childhood centers in Canada have programs specifically designed to meet the needs of all learners (Halfon & Friendly, 2013). However, many families who have children with special needs continue to experience barriers in accessing quality child care in Canada (Halfon & Friendly, 2013). Analyzing data gathered between the years 2000 and 2013, Halfon and Friendly (2013) maintained that some families still experience barriers in accessing quality child care for their children with special needs because there is an essential need for a robust policy of inclusion across Canada. In addition to this key factor, proper planning and funding, and well-prepared staff and directors are integral for high-quality inclusive experiences (Halfon & Friendly, 2013). Much depends on the program managers and teachers’ educational preparation, work experiences, and how they define inclusion. Educators’ work environments may strengthen their inclusive teaching practices over time and help them reflect upon their inclusive teaching strategies (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). As stated in the Early

Learning Framework, educators should continually reflect upon their practices and the experiences they create with and for the children (Government of British Columbia, 2008).

Teachers may utilize different pedagogical approaches in their work settings.

Inclusive pedagogical approach. Inclusive pedagogy is an emerging approach in the field of education and it has been identified as one of the practices that support the needs of all children (Florian, 2015). An inclusive pedagogical approach aims to improve the quality of mainstream educational settings by addressing issues that cause inequity and invariability. This approach uses the bell curve model of inclusion as a metaphor to explain how some children in primary schools are marginalized because they do not fall within the normal distribution of developmental expectations.

A bell curve refers to a line that is plotted after the data points have been gathered for an item that meets the standards for normal distribution. A normal distribution is described as the center of distribution in which the curve focuses towards the center and decreases on either side (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The normal distribution curve creates the idea that children who do not fall within the normal distribution require something different or additional. In other words, “bell curve thinking” suggests that what is ordinarily available will meet the needs of most children, while some at the tail ends of a normal distribution may require something different (Florian, 2015). As a result, the identification of providing something different to any learner may lead to marginalization (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The bell curve model is practiced in mainstream educational settings in a few ways. Sorting students by ability is one example of how this model is practiced.

An inclusive pedagogical approach negates the idea of using the bell curve model in mainstream educational settings (Florian, 2015). Instead, this approach focuses on extending what is ordinarily available to all children. An inclusive pedagogical approach focuses on how

educators can collaborate with children to identify barriers to learning (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). This creates an environment where children feel valued and important. An inclusive pedagogical approach acknowledges the fact that some children may require a SEA to facilitate their learning. However, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) disagree with the notion of separating the child from his or her peers. Instead, this approach advocates the importance of working in a team, thus, the SEA does not isolate the child with special needs. Instead, a team approach enables educators to teach all children together given the anticipation that children's development differs. The successful provision of inclusive services in ECCE settings primarily depends on the approach program managers and educators adopt in their daily practice (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015).

This section described different inclusive practices, including integration, full-inclusion, and the definition of an inclusive pedagogical approach, that may be adopted by educators in different ECCE settings. The current study focused on educators' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices from a social model of disability, situated within the disability studies framework.

2.3 Disability Studies Framework

As discussed in the previous section, some early childhood educators' perspectives about inclusion are limited to locational integration, or the physical placement of children with special needs in mainstream educational settings, whereas other educators' perspectives about inclusion go beyond physical placement. The disability studies framework provides another lens for early childhood and K-12 educators in relation to the development of their inclusive teaching practices (Lalvani et al., 2015). This framework conceptualizes the term "disability" as a social and cultural phenomenon, rather than an individual or a medical one (Bøttcher, 2012). The focus of the medical approach to disability locates biological or other differences as attributes of an

individual and fails to recognize the individual with special needs as an active participant in social institutions (Bøttcher, 2012).

According to Vygotsky (1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003), terms such as “disability” and “abnormality” are socially constructed and they hold various meanings in different societies and different historical moments. Although conditions, such as blindness and deafness, exist in society, Vygotsky stressed the need to look beyond these biological factors and address their social consequences (Vygotsky, 1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003). According to Vegner (1994, as cited in Gindis, 2003), the concept of disability has three layers. The first reflects a child’s individual characteristics. The second layer includes the characteristics that are specific to that child’s disability. The third layer describes how the individual and disability-specific characteristics influence the child’s social interactions. The content of these social and cultural interactions can have a lasting influence on the child’s development. Similarly, Vygotsky (1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003) introduced the terms “primary disability” and “secondary disability”: a primary disability refers to biological differences; whereas a secondary disability refers to social-cultural responses to and/or the meanings made of differences. These responses and meanings may hinder the process of child development given what a difference, such as “blindness,” is taken to mean in a particular social and historical era, and may also prove to be detrimental for children with special needs in many other ways, for example, given the expectations of parents and children with a particular developmental difference (Vygotsky, 1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003).

Vygotsky emphasized the need to change social and cultural attitudes regarding disabilities and view different ways of learning as a child’s strength (Vygotsky, 1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003). His theory not only supports the importance of having positive attitudes toward children with different developmental needs, he also highlighted educators’ significant role in

supporting children and looking beyond the biological factors to support the diverse learning needs of all children. In order to do so, it is important for educators to understand the social model of disability, as to date, the medical approach to disability is predominant in several educational settings that are designed to primarily support children without special needs.

According to Barnes et al. (2002) and Lalvani et al. (2015), the social model of disability advances the idea that “disability,” and the meanings attached to it, has been created by society. Able-bodied people may view people with additional needs as individuals who have impairments. Besides the attitudinal barriers created by society, Barnes et al. (2002) and Lalvani et al. (2015) stated that disability is created socially by built environments that may devalue or segregate people who require additional supports. For example, the lack of ramps or appropriate infrastructure can limit accessibility for some people with “physical impairments.” By creating these limits, it may imply that some human characteristics have a privilege over others (Slee, 2006). Adding further to this, Slee (2006) described how inclusive arrangements, such as inclusive environments and services, address the concept of disability within the context of diversity; however, exclusive arrangements, such as “special schools,” view the concept of disability as an illness. Within school settings, these arrangements can give different meanings to the concept and experience of disability.

The Disability Studies Framework in Education (DSE) provides teachers with tools to promote inclusive educational opportunities and full access to children labelled with disability (Broderick, Hawkins, Henze, Mirasol-Spath, Pollack-Berkovits, Prozzo Clune, Skovera, & Steel, 2012). The DSE framework helps student teachers understand how they can create classrooms that address issues of equity by deconstructing the conventional notions that are associated with the concept of disability (Broderick et al., 2012). One of these conventional notions states that children with special needs require modified instruction in a structured classroom setting

(Broderick et al., 2012). This conventional notion also implies that general education teachers do not need to know how to support all children's needs. Therefore, many stakeholders in educational settings argue for the need to have "experts" modify instruction and accommodate children with special needs in schools (Broderick, Mehta-Parekh, & Reid, 2005). As a result, it is not surprising to have special education teachers perceived as experts who may also use a pull-out strategy, thus children with additional needs are often separated from their peers in mainstream classroom settings (Broderick et al., 2005). This isolation may also result in stigmatization and often gives a message to all students that "disability" resides in the individual (Broderick et al., 2005). The DSE framework critiques this idea and argues that the concept of disability resides in the relation between the individual and their environment (Broderick et al., 2005).

The DSE framework resonates with the current study in a variety of ways. This framework describes the need for inclusive teaching practices that deconstruct traditional forms of knowledge and support marginalized voices by acknowledging different ways of learning (Slee & Allan, 2001). This is consistent with Vygotsky's emphasis on the need to change negative societal attitudes regarding disabilities, view different ways of learning as a child's strengths, and to use these strengths to build and support development (Vygotsky, 1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003). The DSE framework defined inclusive teaching practice as a pedagogical approach that acknowledges different ways of learning by implementing a learner-centered approach (Slee & Allan, 2001). The DSE framework often uses a variety of terms, such as inclusive schooling and inclusive education, to describe inclusive teaching practices in educational settings.

2.4 Educators' Attitudes

Some literature has focused on K-12 and early childhood educators' attitudes toward inclusive educational settings (e.g., Wiart et al., 2014). An inclusive child care center is likely to be successful when educators hold positive attitudes toward working with children with special needs in educational settings. Student teachers who are enrolled in teacher preparation programs that offer courses in special and inclusive education may develop positive attitudes toward inclusive education and working with children with special needs in educational settings.

Swain et al. (2012) conducted a survey for student teachers at the university level in Omaha, Nebraska, USA. This survey was conducted at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The student teachers who participated in the survey were enrolled in an introductory course in special education at the university. The course included a practicum component in a general or special education setting where student educators worked for 20 hours a semester with children with special needs. At the end of this practicum, students were required to submit a reflective case study based on their observations and learning. The majority of the participants registered in elementary and secondary teaching majors had unclear ideas about inclusive education and little experience working in inclusive settings (Swain et al., 2012). However, by the end of the semester, many of the educators developed positive attitudes towards inclusive settings. Their coursework helped them become familiar with terms, such as inclusion, and their field experiences helped them understand the possibility of including children with special needs in mainstream educational settings (Swain et al., 2012).

Similarly, Romi and Leyser (2006) found that practicum and other work experiences with children with special needs in inclusive settings helped students understand the benefits of inclusive classrooms. These student educators held positive attitudes regarding inclusive educational settings in comparison to educators who had no experience. Romi and Leyser (2006)

also found that educators taking special education as their major demonstrated higher support for inclusive settings compared to students who were enrolled in a general education program.

Although educators may have positive attitudes toward including children with special needs in mainstream settings, they may still feel uncertain about working in an inclusive setting. For example, students at the University of Brunei Darussalam, located in Brunei, were taking an educational psychology course as part of their undergraduate degree in education. At the time of the field survey, these students had not yet taken the inclusive education course that was compulsory for all students in this program (Haq & Mundia, 2012). Even though these student-teachers had optimistic viewpoints about inclusive settings, they were hesitant to work with children with cognitive impairments or challenges (Haq & Mundia, 2012). The same findings hold true for the participants in Romi and Leyser's (2006) study when the majority of the student teachers had not taken any courses in special education and inclusion. These student teachers were concerned about their lack of preparedness and instructional skills and they were hesitant to work in inclusive settings.

Similarly, a study conducted in Alberta, Canada, found that even though early childhood educators may have positive attitudes, their practices showed that they were hesitant to include children with special needs in mainstream educational settings (Wuart et al., 2014). This was primarily because the educators had not completed an educational preparation program that offered courses in special education and inclusion (Wuart et al., 2014). Additionally, participants in this study stated that "targeted" education and field placements would support them in providing care and support for children with special needs in mainstream educational settings. In other words, these educators stated that specific courses and field placements would prepare them for inclusive child care settings.

Lee et al. (2015) noted that many early childhood educators in their study conducted in Hong Kong had positive attitudes, but some expressed concerns about including children with certain types of special needs, such as children with intellectual disabilities or severe behavior disorders. Though little is known why, Lee et al. (2015) stated that a few teachers perceived some special needs as more challenging than others and felt less prepared to support children with a high spectrum of needs. Another important finding in this study was the variation in course content and field placements. Teachers in this study attended different colleges and the course content for each college covered different aspects of special and inclusive education (Lee et al., 2015). Additionally, teachers were placed in different centers to complete their field experience requirement and this may also reflect why some teachers felt more prepared than others (Lee et al., 2015).

These studies show that a combination of coursework and field experience can have a significant influence on educators' attitudes about inclusive education. Having said that, a recent study conducted in the United States examined the similarities and differences between early childhood student educators and special education student teachers and noted a number of similarities between the beliefs and attitudes held by these two types of educators. This research study suggested that these similarities could be due to the way early childhood educators were being prepared (Spear, Piasta, Yeomans-Maldonado, Ottley, Justice, & Conell, 2018). The study reported that many early childhood educators in the general program learned specific content to support diverse needs through their university coursework, which is why they held similar beliefs as those in the special education program (Spear et al., 2018).

This section described the role of teacher education (coursework and practicum experiences) in the development of educators' attitudes towards inclusive practice. This section informs the current study by supporting the notion that attitudes learned from teacher education

can influence educators' perspectives about inclusive teaching practices. Additionally, a positive attitude may help to prepare educators to develop inclusive teaching practices.

2.5 The Content of Coursework and the Practicum Experience

It is important to talk about the type of educational preparation—including both coursework and practicum experience—that supports teachers to develop inclusive practices in ECCE settings. As mentioned in the literature, “targeted” and appropriate coursework that covers concepts and strategies to work in inclusive settings is important for a successful inclusive ECCE setting. “Targeted” and appropriate coursework includes teaching strategies, not just the characteristics of children with special needs, as this will assist student educators in making adjustments to the lesson planning and help them acknowledge the differences among children who have different learning needs (Sharma, Shaukat, & Furlonger, 2015). In addition, practica experiences can be enhanced by having exemplary field sites that offer opportunities for longer practicum hours, as well as collaboration with parents and mentor/lead educators (Atiles, Jones, & Kim, 2012). This may further support educators by helping them build confidence and instructional skills as they learn to work with children with special needs in inclusive settings (Atiles et al., 2012).

Coursework that incorporates inclusive teaching practices, prepares educators to implement these practices once they graduate (e.g., Giovacco-Johnson, 2005). This finding was supported by a qualitative study where six participants were interviewed at a private urban graduate school of education (Giovacco-Johnson, 2005). Some of the participants in this study enrolled in early childhood teacher preparation programs, while others had recently graduated with a Master of Arts degree in early childhood special education. The participants stated that university coursework, which incorporated inclusive education practices, allowed them to implement new strategies in their first year of teaching (Giovacco-Johnson, 2005). The novice

educators in this study mentioned that their coursework helped them understand philosophies and practices, such as working with diverse families and children, thereby assisting them in developing individualized education plans for children with special needs (Giovacco-Johnson, 2005).

Student educators who experience practica placements in inclusive settings learn and implement specific teaching strategies that help them increase their competency in these educational settings. Leatherman and Niemeyer (2005) conducted a qualitative case study at a state university in the southeastern United States where they observed and interviewed four participants in an ECCE setting. Two of these participants were student educators and the other two were in-service educators in the pre-kindergarten program of one of the state's public schools. The classroom educators stated that their coursework helped them develop specific strategies, such as modifying the environment to support all children with and without special needs, following children's interests, and creating individualized educational plans to meet children's specific needs (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). The student educators in this study learned to work with individualized educational plans from their mentor educators and they also implemented curriculum activities that encouraged full participation by all children.

Similar to Leatherman and Niemeyer's (2005) study, Voss and Bufkin (2011) conducted a mixed methods study where they surveyed and interviewed early childhood educators between the years 2004 and 2010. The student educators in this study were involved in field experiences that were built into an undergraduate inclusion course that focused on teaching support strategies in inclusive classrooms. This site-based coursework acted as a great tool for educators as it allowed them to learn and reflect on their teaching practice (Voss & Bufkin, 2011). The participants in this study discussed that during the site-based coursework, a university faculty member observed student teachers in their field placements, and based on these observations, the

faculty member created a link between a student teacher's needs and areas of potential improvement (Voss & Bufkin, 2011). The faculty member adjusted the curriculum to support the student teachers' learning. This further helped the educators to connect the approaches they learned in their coursework and apply them in their practice as student educators. For example, their university coursework provided them with strategies that enabled them to work one-on-one, with small groups, and also with the entire class (Voss & Bufkin, 2011).

Another study that was conducted in the United States included 31 pre-service early childhood teachers who were enrolled in three academic courses aligned with a field experience. These 31 educators submitted a reflection towards the end of their semester that was used to explore what they had learned from their observation and field placements in each early childhood setting. The educators had completed 88 hours of observation and field placement in six early childhood settings during their first semester (Robertson, McFarland, Sciuchetti, & Garcia, 2017). The participants mentioned that they were able to apply their coursework in practical settings as the fieldwork and observation was aligned with their course content. Participants in this study reported that combined coursework and field experiences influenced the way they thought about disability (Robertson et al., 2017). For example, the content of the coursework completed helped them view disability within a broader construct of diversity. They noted that they were not offered a separate course on diversity, instead, the constructs associated with diversity and disability were integrated throughout the courses. Hence these participants were aware of the children who came from different cultures and backgrounds during their field placements and they were able to support them.

According to Robertson et al. (2017), many of the participants also thought that a child who was learning English as a second language was no different than a child with special needs in terms of diversity. The participants stated that as student teachers they were able to relate to

this because they were doing their field placements and observations in classrooms where most children with special needs were learning English as their second language and used sign language to communicate (Robertson et al., 2017). The participants further stated that they did not know sign language; this experience was an eye opener: as they were the ones who were “different” from the children. Therefore, after this experience many participants wondered how children with special needs would feel when labelled as different and alienated in early childhood settings where children are sometimes pulled out of their classrooms for a portion of their day to focus on a different curriculum (Robertson et al., 2017).

Macy, Squires, and Barton (2009) stated that university coursework should prepare student educators to apply their instructional strategies to small and large groups in classroom settings. Macy et al. (2009) also described several features of a quality practicum experience. First, the coursework portion of a teacher education programs is congruent with the philosophy of a practicum setting. This provides opportunities for student educators to implement teaching strategies that they have learned during their coursework. Second, student educators should have opportunities to work with both typical and special needs, as this would strengthen student educators’ inclusive teaching practices. Third, a quality practicum setting pairs student educators with mentor or sponsor teachers who provide feedback throughout the practicum. Similarly, a practicum experience can also be enhanced when college instructors work closely with student educators during their practicum placement. This includes providing feedback on practicum assignments and visiting and observing students at practicum sites. Overall, practicum placements should provide a venue for student educators to learn and try out different teaching and support strategies in inclusive education (Macy et al., 2009).

In developing countries, such as Pakistan and India, university coursework may not always be complemented with field placements, and course content focuses more on information

about the causes and features of disabilities. This has been supported by two quantitative research studies in India and Pakistan where educators participated in studies conducted by Sharma, Moore, and Sonawane (2009) and Sharma et al. (2015), respectively. Educators were enrolled in Bachelors and Masters of General Education programs. While the educational preparation in Pakistan and India focused on disabilities, the course content was based on the medical model of inclusion, and discussed the causes and features of different disabilities, rather than discussing strategies for inclusion (Sharma et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2015). The majority of the participants in these studies reported having limited experience working with students with disabilities. This may explain why these studies did not mention field placements in inclusive educational settings. The participants in this study also noted they had never experienced learning in an integrated classroom, either as students themselves or as educators (Sharma et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2015). These participants reported that they had always observed segregated schools for children with disabilities, and their coursework was geared towards working with students with special needs in segregated settings (Sharma et al., 2015). Hence, the student educators in this study were somewhat pessimistic about including children with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2015).

This section discussed the importance of educational preparation that supports educators' inclusive teaching practices, including incorporating inclusive teaching strategies in university coursework and complementing it with field placements. This informs the current study by suggesting that educators' perspectives about the role of education in the development of their inclusive teaching practices may be influenced by the kind of educational preparation they had.

2.6 In-Service Educators and Professional Development

In previous sections, I discussed the importance of coursework and practicum experience and how together, they prepare educators for inclusive teaching practices. This section focuses on

in-service educators and their professional development. Professional development can be defined as an opportunity for in-service educators to update or enhance their teaching practices (OECD, 2012). Professional development, also referred to as continuous education, is one of the main avenues by which early childhood and K-12 educators enhance their teaching practices.

A small number of research studies have discussed the need for specific professional development workshops that prepare in-service educators to support children with special needs in inclusive educational settings (Parsa-Pajouh et al., 2005). Many educators have limited coursework and field experiences in inclusive teaching practices (Soto-Chodiman, Pooley, Cohen, & Taylor, 2012). For example, 12 primary school teachers, who had no prior education and experience in the field of special education, participated in a study that was conducted at a primary school in Western Australia (Soto-Chodiman et al., 2012). The participants discussed the need for professional development that would focus on how to support children with special needs. These participants also mentioned that when children with special needs were included in their mainstream classroom setting their first reaction was hesitation. However, as they gained some experience, they were able to overcome their hesitation toward inclusive educational settings (Soto-Chodiman et al., 2012).

Eight early childhood educators participated in a similar study at a university in the southeastern part of the United States (Leatherman, 2007). The educators had no prior education in the field of special education. They did, however, have one year of experience working in inclusive settings (Leatherman, 2007). Though many of these educators stated the need for prior coursework in special education, they also discussed that their on-the-job and internship experiences in inclusive settings had strengthened their understanding of inclusive education. During the interview, some of these educators stated that their on-the-job learning experiences had made them think about putting the child first by modifying the environment to support the

child's needs. Many of these educators stated that the inclusive classroom was a place where the children, parents, and teachers could learn and grow (Leatherman, 2007). They also noted the significance of having specific education in the field of special and inclusive education. The educators mentioned the lack of specific professional development workshops that cover different aspects of inclusive teaching. Even though these teachers felt that they were meeting the needs of all children, they stated that continued education and experience in inclusive education could develop their inclusive teaching practices in child care settings (Leatherman, 2007).

This section discussed the importance of continuing education, such as professional development workshops on inclusive practices, that enhance educators' knowledge and expand their teaching practices to work with children who may have social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs. The current study explored the role of education and work experiences, including professional development workshops, in the development of educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings.

2.7 Summary

The second chapter addressed the existing literature on the research topic. A brief overview on the history of the field of special education was provided. Key concepts such as inclusion, integration, and inclusive pedagogical approach were discussed. This chapter elaborated upon the disability studies framework that was briefly discussed in Chapter 1. This chapter reviewed literature on the importance of teacher education programs—content of coursework and quality practica experiences—and how they can prepare educators to work with all children. Last, Chapter 2 briefly reviewed literature that highlighted the role of work environments and the importance of professional development opportunities for existing educators in ECCE settings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology of the research and is organized in five sections. The first section identifies the researcher's position. The second section briefly discusses how this research draws from a social constructionist perspective. The third section provides information about the participants and the procedures for participants' recruitment and for obtaining an informed consent. The fourth section describes the semi-structured interviews, a data collection method used to explore early childhood educators' perspectives of the role of teacher education and work experiences, including professional development workshops, in the development of their inclusive teaching practices. The fifth section describes the thematic analysis used for analyzing the data collected from interviews. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

3.1 Researcher's Position

“She is a special child; there is a separate program for children and adults in the community who require extra support like she does.” When the community school's principal finished saying these words to Inza's mother, I could see tears rolling down her face. That was my first real encounter with the word “special” associated with a child.

During my voluntary experience at a community school in Karachi, a metropolitan city in Pakistan, I met Inza, a five-year-old girl, who was diagnosed with Down Syndrome. This young girl changed my perception about children who are marginalized and excluded by virtue of their differences. She was able to do and to be so much more than assumed by adults around her. Following the mainstream understanding of the educational system in my country, I, too, believed that children with special needs should be separated from other children who were perceived as normal. However, as Inza became a part of our Kindergarten classroom, I began to question my own assumptions.

Educators tended to label Inza as “the special child.” Although she was physically present in the classroom, the head educators assumed that Inza did not have the ability to perform and take part in the daily routines of our school. For example, she was never given the opportunity to participate in singing the national anthem; this was a part of the everyday routine for all other students. I cannot forget the sadness in her mother’s eyes when Inza was asked to stay home during the end-of-school celebrations. Even though Inza was physically a part of our community school, she was never valued as a person and for what she had to offer.

My encounter with Inza inspired me to start wondering about all the other ways in which children with special needs were excluded by the educational system. The following question formed in my mind: How can ECCE settings acknowledge children with differences instead of marginalizing children who are perceived to have them? My head educator’s response toward Inza made me consider the requirement for ECCE settings to become spaces for all children. Most importantly, it made me wonder how educator’s understandings about inclusive practices may change over time after working in inclusive settings.

My research has also been shaped by my experiences in a developing country. I had several encounters with children with special needs in Pakistan: a country where most children attended segregated schools and were often identified by their diagnoses (for example, “an autistic child”). This led me to question how early childhood spaces can become more inclusive, and after a few years of working and studying in Canada, this question became more refined, leading me towards this research with early childhood educators who are already working in inclusive child care settings.

Given the amount of time children spend in child care settings, I felt the need to conduct research that would help me understand the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of educators’ inclusive teaching practices. Indeed, this study has helped me learn

how educational preparation and work experiences have influenced educators' teaching practices in inclusive child care settings. It has enabled me to investigate gaps that exist in the way teachers are being prepared to support children that were diagnosed and undiagnosed as having special needs in child care settings. Lastly, it has encouraged me to further examine the ways we can develop more inclusive pedagogies in the early childhood sector.

3.2 Discussion of Methodology

Interpretive research focuses on investigating the way humans interpret their experiences by making sense of the society they inhabit (Sandberg, 2005). Additionally, interpretive research focuses on language, signs, and meanings from the perspectives of the research participants (Sandberg, 2005). This study employed an interpretive lens to investigate early childhood educators' perspectives.

3.3 BREB and Participants

Before the recruitment of the six participants, I submitted a BREB application. Once approved, I began my recruitment and data collection. The six participants were provided with verbal and written information about this study. Initially, the consent form was shared with the directors of each ECCE setting (see Appendix A). Once the directors consented to allow the educators working in their center to be invited to participate in this study, the consent form was shared with the educators (see Appendix B). All participants responded by sending an email confirmation, agreeing to take part in the study. They handed in the signed consent form on the day of their interview.

To begin the interview, described next, I shared that I am an Early Childhood Educator myself and I may share some similar teacher education experiences. Also, that I was interested to learn about their experiences. At the end of my research, all participants were given a choice of

either a \$10 Starbucks gift card or a \$10 children's picture book. The picture book was based on the theme of inclusion and the acknowledgement of differences in early childhood settings.

For the purpose of this research, I recruited participants who had completed their Basic ECE certificate and their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. The participants in this study met the following criteria:

1. Graduated with a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs within the last ten years.
2. Worked with 3-5-year-old children in an ECCE setting for at least two years.

These two criteria helped me identify educators who had taken coursework in general education and special education and had worked in a child care setting for at least two years.

Based on these criteria, I used the snowball sampling method to invite participants (Merriam, 1998). As part of the snowball sampling method, two early childhood educators that I knew and who met the requirements were invited to be participants and then, as the snowball sampling method suggests, these two educators introduced me to other educators who also met the criteria. According to Merriam (1998), this type of sampling strategy is used when the purpose of the research is to explore and find insights. Thus, the sample should be the one that enriches the study.

Six research participants were selected for this study. Similar to other qualitative studies on this topic that relied primarily on interviewing educators, six was an appropriate number of participants (e.g., Dalkilic, 2014). Table 1 describes the educators who took part in this research study.

Table 1: Research Participants

Research Participants (Pseudonyms)	Years of work experience in ECCE settings	Childcare center (Pseudonyms)	Year in which they completed their certificates	Post-secondary Institution
<u>Dia</u>	13	Preschool for children 30 months to school age	Basic: 2006 Post-Basic: 2014	Credence College
<u>Daisy</u>	8	Preschool for children 30 months to school age	Basic: 2012 Post-Basic: 2015	Credence College
<u>Emma</u>	10	Group Child Care for children 30 months to school age	Basic: 2007 Post-Basic: 2013	Basic: CED college Post-Basic: Learning Academy
<u>Nancy</u>	9	Multi-age Child Care	Basic: 2007 Post-Basic: 2012	Basic: MC Institute Post-Basic: BC College
<u>Sally</u>	18	Preschool for children 30 months to school age	Basic: 1998 Post-Basic: 2013	Credence College
<u>Valory</u>	2	Group Child Care for children 30 months to school age	Basic and Post-Basic certificate: 2015	Mangla College

Table 1 provides information about the six research participants in this study. As shown, most participants had more than five years of experience in an ECCE setting. Half of them worked in a half-day Preschool program, while the other half worked in a full-day Group Child Care program. Most of these participants completed their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs after a long gap. For example, Dia completed her Post-Basic certificate eight years after earning a Basic ECE certificate. The last column of this table shows that Dia, Daisy, and Sally attended the same educational institution. All educational institutions stated in the table above offered a Basic ECE and a Post-Basic certificate in both Special Needs and Infant Toddler. Only Mangla College offered a Bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education that included the Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates.

3.4 Data collection

A semi-structured interview includes a sequence of topics, as well as prepared questions. Yet at the same time, there is flexibility to change the sequence of the topics in order to follow up with the participant's response (Kvale, 1996). For this study, I used semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996).

Researchers may use an interview guide to keep track of the topics that have to be covered during a semi-structured interview. An interview guide typically lists the questions that are explored during the interview. The interview guide helps the researcher make use of the limited time by pre-determining the specific subjects, issues, or notions to be explored during the course of an interview. This guide is prepared in order to ensure that all the interview participants are being asked questions focusing on a specific subject area which allows the participants to experience the same lines of inquiry (Patton, 2002). An interview guide also allows the researcher to employ a conversational style during the interview process (Patton, 2002). This

conversation style approach in interview guide can also assist the researcher to develop prefatory statements which helps to clarify a topic, before proceeding with a new question. Prefatory statements facilitate responses and prepare the interviewees for the question that is coming next. As a result, this helps both the researcher and the participant to organize their thoughts before moving on to another question (Patton, 2002). In order to keep track of the topics that have to be covered during a semi-structured interview, I used an interview guide (Patton, 2002).

In addition to using an interview guide, it is important for a researcher to conduct a pilot interview. A pilot interview provides an opportunity for feedback and helps the researcher test how their questions are being understood (Kvale, 1996). I conducted one pilot interview, which lasted for 90 minutes, and this helped me edit a few questions. For example, during the pilot interview, I was asked to define the term inclusive teaching practices in relation to this study, thus, I included that definition at the beginning of the interview. This pilot interview also helped me keep track of time. Soon after conducting a pilot interview, I edited the interview guide and began the interview process with the participants.

The interview process began with some demographic questions: the participants were asked to talk about their educational and professional background (see Appendix C). Soon after these introductory questions, the interview continued with some questions that were designed to address the research questions. These questions acted as a general outline to guide the interview and focused on three areas: teacher education, work experiences, and professional development.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant at a coffee shop or a conference hall at the University of British Columbia. Before beginning the interview, the participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any point. The first two educators were from a local community preschool. As part of the snowball sampling method, these two participants referred me to other educators who met the selection criteria of this study.

Though the interviews were expected to last for 60 minutes, most of these interviews lasted for 70 to 80 minutes. Before the interview, I had planned to answer research participants' questions about this study. However, none of the participants asked questions about the study. Some participants had questions about seeking a graduate degree in the field of education; they asked these at end of the interview. All of the participants mentioned that they were interested in reading the final version of this thesis.

3.5 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

For this study, I used thematic analysis to analyze the data I gathered during semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is regarded as an “accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data” that “can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 77-78). Thematic analysis is the process in which a researcher looks for themes that have appeared as being vital to the description of the phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This process includes the identification of themes by carefully reading and re-reading the data that has been collected (Gall et al., 2003). As a result of this process, a researcher develops a list of codes in relation to their research questions. After reviewing these codes a few times, the codes are collated in to potential themes (Gall et al., 2003).

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. In the first phase, I familiarized myself with the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), transcription is the best way to gain familiarization with the data, a foundation for my research. I divided this first phase into four steps. First, I created a preliminary transcript. Second, a set of transcript conventions (see Appendix D) was developed based on Schiffrin's (1987) transcript conventions. According to Lapadat and Lindsay (1999), transcript conventions, in the form of symbols, represents relevant aspects of the original interaction that has taken place during an

interview. Once I added the transcript conventions, I reviewed the transcripts for any mistakes (i.e., spelling mistakes) made in the typing process. For this I had to review the audio recordings numerous times as these mistakes can give a different meaning to a sentence. Last, I read all the transcripts once again to identify key findings and prepare for the next phase. I recorded a list of ideas during this phase that stood out to me in relation to the research questions. These ideas helped me to proceed toward the next phase.

In the second phase, I generated codes. Coding is the process where the researcher assigns a word or a phrase to a portion of the data (Gall et al., 2003). During this phase, I thought about my research questions and reviewed the transcripts. This helped me to extract a list of data across interviews that responded to the interview questions and connected with my research questions. A table was formed to represent the list of initial codes I had generated through this iterative process. This table included three columns: the list of initial codes, participants' representativeness, and examples of data by participants to describe the codes. Below is an example from the table that was formed to represent the list of codes.

Table 2: Example of a code

Code	Representation	Best Description
Practica are great value	Dia, Daisy, Emma, Nancy, Sally, and Valory	Daisy: I think practicums are great value ... even though I had a practicum where I did not agree with philosophy but even in that practicum I learned something (242-243)

As shown, Table 2 has three columns: code, participants' representativeness, and examples of data by participants to describe the codes. Column 1 is an example of a code from the teacher education context. Column 2 states the pseudonym names of the participants who shared that practica are great value. The last column is an example from Dia's transcript to exemplify the code. In this last column, the notations for excerpts is linked to line numbers from transcripts.

Several interesting ideas stood out for me when I was creating the table to represent the list of initial codes. In most of these codes, one participant, Nancy, had something different to share; this seems valid, as her educational preparation was different from the other participants. For example, all participants except Nancy noted that they learned about different diagnoses during their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. Similarly, all of the participants besides Nancy wished to have longer practica placements. Soon after creating the table, I returned to the interviews to assure that the table connected well with my research questions. At one point, I had 40 codes, but after review I collapsed some of them into one code. For example, all participants discussed that it was hard for them to attend professional development workshops due to three barriers: funding, distance, and the time to attend these workshops after a busy day at work. I combined the code "distance" and "time" and collapsed them to form a new code "accessibility" to represent these two barriers. At the end of this phase, I was able to generate 30 codes that represented the data. Within the second phase across the interview questions that separated these foci, I divided the codes in to three categories: teacher education, professional development workshops, and work experiences. These three categories helped me organize the data and they also assisted me in answering the research questions.

In the third phase, I referred to the interview transcripts and systematically reviewed the table of 30 codes created in phase two. I collated the codes from phase two into potential themes.

For example, participants discussed a few barriers such as accessibility, funding, and inconsistent professional development workshops. I collated these codes and created a potential theme, “barriers.” The themes captured important points within the data, especially in relation to the research question, and they also represented a patterned response, across participants and interview questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the fourth phase, I reviewed the themes to check if the themes resonated with the codes. This phase helped me identify whether the themes represented the data set or not. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase is important because the researcher is able to identify and code data that were missed earlier. Once again, I went back to the interview transcripts to review and ensure nothing was missed. During this fourth phase, it was evident that some themes were overlapping and they shared codes. The overlapping occurred because some ideas were found to be common between the three categories: teacher education programs, professional development workshops, and work experiences. For example, most research participants noted that their practicum placement exposed them to work with children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs. Similarly, in another theme related to educators’ work experience, participants noted that their work experience as full-time educators exposed them to a variety of children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs during their practica. There were a few other commonalities such as the courses that research participants took during their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs and what they had in common with the professional development workshops they attended as full-time educators. Eventually, five broad themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data. In the fifth phase, I named and defined these themes.

The fifth phase involved writing a detailed analysis for each of these themes. Though listing themes may have been possible in any order, I listed the themes based on their representativeness.

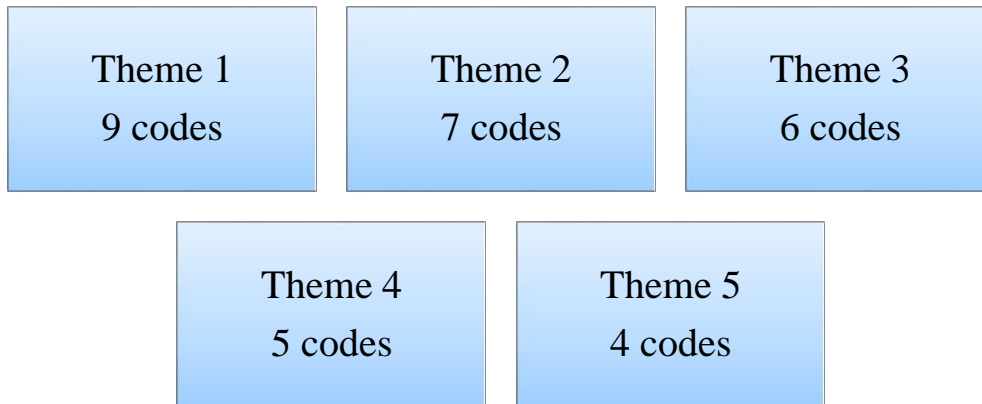


Figure 1: Order of the Themes

Figure 1 shows the order of the themes and the number of codes in each theme. As shown, Theme 1 is the strongest and most important of all as it was generated on the basis of nine codes. This tells us that participants value real world experiences which they gain from their practica, professional development, and most importantly from their work. Theme 2 stands second in importance because it was generated on the basis of seven codes. Hence, the order of the themes in Chapter 4 is based on their representativeness.

Once the themes were defined in detail, I wove in the scholarly literature that resonated with the key findings and what participants had reported in this study. In the sixth and last phase, I wrote my thesis including both detailed description and an argument in relation to the research questions and their findings. In this phase, I also conducted member checking which is often used by qualitative researchers to improve the validity of their study. As part of the member checking process, I emailed each participant their own transcript, as well as my analysis. Out of six participants, I heard back from four participants. It was exciting to note that after reviewing the analysis, one of the participants added that there are advantages and disadvantages of working in both preschool and daycare setting. However, she elaborated that the most important factors that are likely to increase the chance of being able to provide a successful inclusive learning

environment are smaller ratios and a team of highly experienced, skillful educators. I found this to be an important feedback in relation to this study.

The five themes that emerged in this study, and are described in Chapter 4, are as follows: Theme 1: The importance of “real world” experiences for inclusive teaching practices; Theme 2: The barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices; Theme 3: Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices; Theme 4: The role of practica in strengthening inclusive practices; and Theme 5: The importance of learning about different diagnoses.

3.6 Summary

Chapter 3 described the methodology that guided this research. It began with a personal story that inspired this research project. It also gives a brief account of the researcher’s background. The second part of this chapter discussed the interpretive research methodology and how it was used in this study to investigate early childhood educators’ perspectives on what shapes their inclusive teaching practices. The third and fourth sections discussed the recruitment of participants using a snowballing sampling strategy (Merriam, 1998). These sections included a discussion about confidentiality, procedures to obtain a consent and the data collection method. The last section described how the data gathered were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The five themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data are defined and described in detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data (see Figure 1). This chapter is divided into five sections according to these five themes. The first section describes Theme 1: The importance of “real world” experiences for inclusive teaching practices. The second section describes Theme 2: The barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices. The third section describes Theme 3: Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices. The fourth section describes Theme 4: The role of practica in strengthening inclusive teaching practices. The fifth section describes Theme 5: The importance of learning about different diagnoses. This chapter ends with a summary.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the codes were divided into three contexts in relation to the interview guide: teacher education, professional development workshops, and work experiences. Figure 2 highlights the three contexts and where the five themes overlap. For example, Theme 1 and 2 emerged across all three contexts. This is primarily because participants discussed Theme 1: The importance of real world experiences in relation to the three contexts. Similarly, all participants noted in Theme 2: The barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices, that they faced barriers throughout the three contexts: in their teacher education, work experience, and accessing professional development opportunities. On the other hand, Theme 3: Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices and 5: The importance of learning about different diagnoses, emerged across two related contexts: work experience and professional development and teacher education and work experience, respectively. As shown in the Figure 2, Theme 3 and Theme 5 both have the work experiences context in common. Last, Theme 4: The role of practica in strengthening inclusive practices, is the only theme that emerged across one context: teacher education.

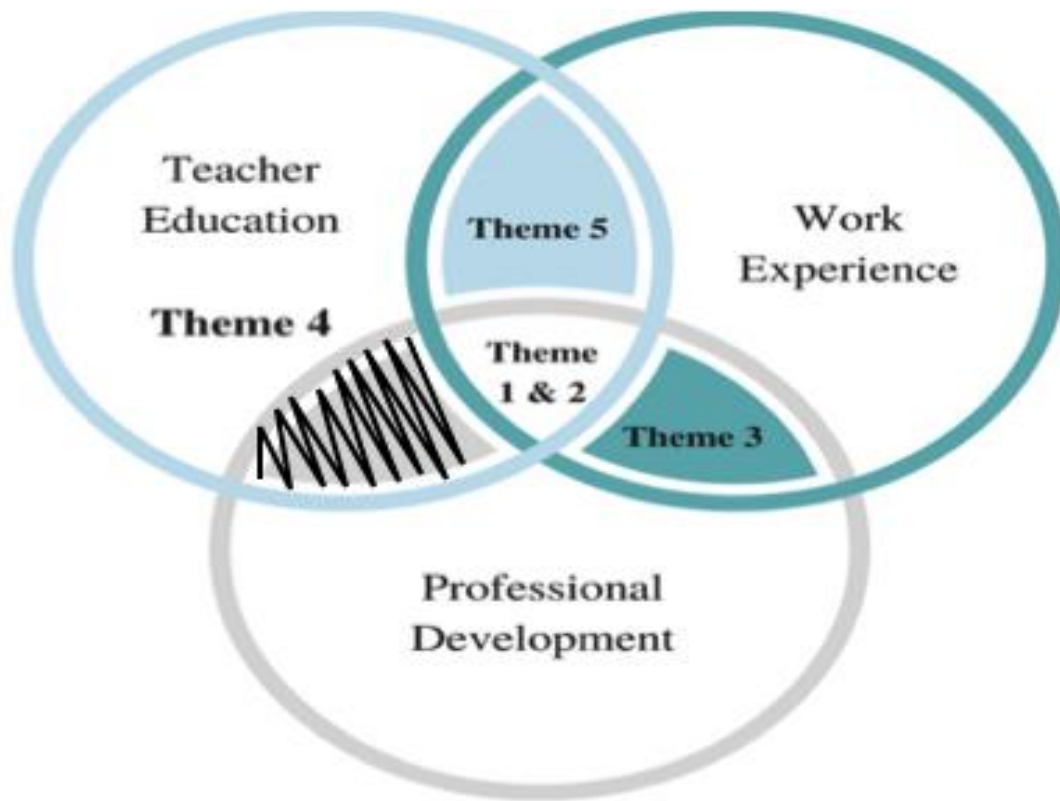


Figure 2: Overlapping of Themes

Figure 2 shows a strong thematic overlap between work experience and the other two contexts, perhaps because work experience is the intended goal for ECE preparation and the context that most fully enables participation for ECEs after the completion of their education. As shown in Figure 2, the other two contexts—teacher education and professional development—do not seem to overlap; however, they do connect at some point because work experience brings them together. For example, participants learned about identifying children with special needs during their teacher education program which is discussed briefly in Theme 1; however, it was their workplace that offered professional development opportunities to learn further about identifying and supporting children with special needs.

4.1 Theme 1: The importance of “real world” experiences for inclusive teaching practices

Theme 1: The importance of “real world” experiences for inclusive teaching practices, which was generated on the basis of nine codes, emerged across the three contexts that formed the organization for the interview questions: teacher education, professional development, and work experience. The term “real world” was coined by one of the participants who stated that it is the “real world” experience that strengthens inclusive teaching practices. This idea of “real world” experience was present in all six interview transcripts when participants discussed the importance of working with children and how that work experience developed their inclusive teaching practices. Though the idea of “real world” was used by all six participants to highlight the importance of work experience as full-time educators, this idea also surfaced, albeit to a lesser degree, when participants reported the exposure they received during their practica and the professional development workshops that helped them apply what they learned at work. Participants reported that they were able to attend professional development workshops once they began working as full-time educators. In addition, the idea of “real world” also surfaced in conversations about coursework when participants discussed how it was helpful when their college or university instructors shared their own work experiences with children with typical and special needs in ECCE settings, as discussed next.

Instructors’ “real world” experiences. During their teacher education, Daisy, Dia, Emma, Sally, and Valory felt more prepared to support children with both typical and special needs when their instructors shared their own experiences with regard to working with children with typical and special needs in ECCE settings. These participants reported that the courses these instructors were teaching were not limited to examples from the textbook; instead, what made a difference was that the textbook and teaching was expanded by the instructor’s “real world” experiences.

The term “real world” was coined by Sally, who explained that by “real world” she meant “seeing it in action” (177). Within the context of teacher education, Sally explained this term further by stating that it was helpful when information from textbooks was paired with instructors’ “real world” experiences in regard to working with children in ECCE settings. Similarly, Valory noted that “instead of only bringing the book theories out, the instructors can also talk about personal experiences of what they did in practice” (230-231). Valory noted that she tended to learn more about inclusive teaching practices when her instructors shared real examples of the strategies they used when they were working in ECCE settings as educators. Other participants echoed the same idea and reported that instructors’ personal experiences in ECCE settings allowed the participants to apply knowledge from their coursework better once they began working as full-time early childhood educators.

Unlike the other five participants, Nancy did not report learning about instructors’ personal experiences in ECCE settings during her teacher education coursework. During the interview, Nancy was able to recall more information about her work experiences than her teacher education program. She was the only participant who did her Post-Basic certificate online and completed her Basic ECE certificate at a Montessori-based institute that no longer offers this certificate. This institute seemed to be different from the other colleges and universities where the other participants completed their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates. According to Lee et al. (2015), the variation in the course content covered in each college or university results in differences in educators’ perspectives on inclusive teaching practices. This may be one of the reasons why Nancy did not report learning from instructors’ personal experiences in ECCE settings in her Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate programs.

“Real world” as taking a break from school. Daisy, Dia, Emma, Nancy, and Sally reported that a gap year between Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate gave them opportunities to

work with children in ECCE settings. This gap year allowed participants to work as full-time educators in ECCE settings. Participants also noted that a gap year gave them “real world” experience *before* they took their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. For example, Daisy noted that the gap year set her apart from her colleagues, who knew a lot of theory, but lacked experience. She further reported that it was important for teachers to be “on the floor” to know how they should be with children (200). During the interviews, all participants used the term “on the floor” to describe being with children in a classroom.

Sally reported that she began her Post-Basic certificate coursework right after completing the Basic ECE certificate, but she did not complete the Post-Basic certificate the first time she took it. When she went back to pursue a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs, which was after 12 years, she realized the importance of gap years. Though Sally did not report the difference between the program she had left and the one she pursued later, she stated that the Post-Basic certificate she pursued right after finishing her Basic ECE certificate did not prepare her to work with all children. She noted that the 12 years of work experience prepared her to work with children with special needs and develop her inclusive teaching practices.

Professional development workshops as “real world” experience. The idea of “real world” experience surfaced, to a lesser degree, in the context of professional development workshops when all six participants reported that these workshops helped them apply newer inclusive strategies at their work. Daisy, Dia, Emma, Nancy, Sally, and Valory reported that professional development workshops acted as hands-on-experiences and shaped their ongoing development of inclusive teaching practices. For example, Dia, Emma, Nancy and Valory noted that during teacher education they had learned about the ways to identify children with developmental delays and how to share these observations with families. However, these participants noted that they still found it necessary to attend workshops as it furthered their

inclusive teaching practices. For example, Daisy, Dia, Emma, and Nancy reported that the “red flags workshop” at work provided them with specific strategies to identify children with developmental delays and it also helped them initiate conversations with families at their work place. Daisy, Dia, Emma, and Valory defined the term “red flags workshop” as a workshop that assisted them in identifying signs among children who are not developing in expected ways, and as a result, these workshops helped the educators have conversations with families about those signs (424-425). Valory also noted that the “red flags workshop” helped her identify what she should do and what she should not do at her work place (267). Valory explained that the “red flags workshop” she attended as a full-time educator gave her strategies to work with specific children who were not developing typically at her workplace.

Sally and Daisy shared examples of other workshops that were helpful, such as “circle time” (242) and “sensory needs” (360), that gave them advanced inclusive strategies to apply at their work place. According to Leatherman (2007), professional development workshops update educators’ inclusive teaching skills and prepare educators to better apply these skills in their practice. Researchers found that even though educators are meeting children’s diverse needs at work, they still feel the need to take professional development workshops. Teachers have stated that continuing education workshops on special education topics enhanced their inclusive teaching practices and helped them apply these practices at work (Leatherman, 2007; OECD, 2012).

“Real world” experience and connecting with families. Once participants started working as full-time educators, they noted that they were able to see many things in action that differentiated practica placements from their work experiences. Having said that, the idea of “real world” was present in both practica and work experiences. Dia, Daisy, and Valory reported that during practica, the idea of “real world” experience surfaced differently from their daily work

experiences. These three participants reported that full-time work experience afforded more connections with families and having conversations on a regular basis, which resulted in the development of their inclusive teaching practices.

According to Atilas et al. (2012), connecting with families is one of the major learning components for student educators when they are doing a practicum. This helps student educators understand children's different needs and implement inclusive teaching strategies accordingly (Atilas et al., 2012). In this present study, participants noted that during practica, their connection with families included greeting and having a few short conversations. Dia reported that her practicum placement lasted for a month, where she "took a step back and observed" (326). Dia noted that it was important to get comfortable with a new setting during her practicum and that is why she took a step back and observed the classroom, connected with the mentor teachers, and learned a bit about the families and their children, before she felt comfortable to connect with families.

However, as these participants became full-time educators, they had different opportunities to interact with families at work. For example, Dia, Daisy, and Sally reported that as full-time educators, they scheduled meetings with families to discuss children's individualized educational plans. These participants also reported that as full-time educators, they are required to share children's progress with parents. Participants noted that the "red flags workshops" helped them to discuss with families regarding how their children with developmental delays are supported at work. Nancy acknowledged that families are experts in knowing their children's needs and she also noted that a healthy connection between an educator and a parent makes the educator feel comfortable in discussing children's progress with the families.

"Real world" experience when working in/as a team. All six participants noted that they were able to experience the benefits of working in a team once they began working full-

time. For example, Nancy and Valory reported that their permanent and full-time positions provided many opportunities to work with a team of educators who had several years of experience working in ECCE settings. Though this opportunity was present when participants were doing their practica and when they worked as a substitute teacher, participants explained that it was limited to supporting the permanent staff at their practica or substitute work. For example, Nancy reported that as a substitute teacher she was not fully part of the team. She noted that the permanent staff “would tell her that this is what we are working on. So that's why we're doing this. That's why we're using strategies and you are just supporting the team by using those strategies. Sometimes you don't know the diagnosis or some things” (503-505). Nancy noted that it felt more as if she was supporting the permanent staff at the center she subbed at as many times she did not have all necessary information about the children and their different needs. Similarly, Valory noted that when she was a substitute teacher, she had to “adapt according to the classroom”; however, as a full-time educator she has the opportunity to “bring her ideas to the table and do things according to her educational philosophies” (340). This probably meant that as a full-time educator, Valory was able to create activities and work according to what she thought was best for the children. Sally also noted that working with a team of educators is itself a “real world” experience that developed her inclusive teaching practices. Sally reported that the majority of the educators at her center had at least 10 years of experience and she noted that all these educators were “great mentors.”

Dia, Emma, Sally, Daisy, and Nancy reported that working with a team also included collaborating with other professionals, such as a public health nurse and an occupational therapist. Though this opportunity was present when these participants were doing their practica or working as substitute teachers, they did not attend meetings with these professionals to support children with special needs. However, once they began working full-time, they were a part of all

the meetings and they had greater opportunities to work alongside these professionals which included developing individualized educational plans with these professionals and discussing strategies that work best for the children. According to Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), working with a team of SEAs and other professionals, such as an occupational therapist, benefited educators who may not be aware of the advanced strategies that are needed to work with children with diagnosed needs.

Learning from children as/in “real world” experiences. All six participants also noted that practice gave them the “real world” experience opportunities to *learn from the children*. This was an important factor that strengthened teachers’ inclusive teaching practices. Though participants noted that they learned from children even during practica, they reported that practica lasted for a few weeks only. Therefore, participants explained they had more opportunities to learn from children when working full-time. For example, Daisy explained that after spending a lot of time working with the same group of children as a full-time educator, she realized that teaching involves a reciprocal relation where educators learn from children as much as vice versa. Daisy noted: “the children taught her inclusion really like they can participate in the classroom just like any other child ... so does the child that is learning that there are other children in the world when there is an only child coming in a group setting!” (274-277). Daisy explained that it was the children who taught her that including children with special needs at her center was no different from supporting children who were learning English as a second language, or children who did not have siblings and were not used to a relatively large social group.

Similarly, Sally explained that as a full-time educator she worked with several children, both with and without special needs, and she found that every child wanted to belong. For example, Sally learned that just like other children, those with special needs “want to learn and have fun, and they just want to be a part of the group” (111-112). Romi and Leyser (2006) stated

that educators who have experience working with children with special needs understand the benefits of an inclusive classroom where children with different needs are present. For example, Sally and Daisy mentioned that they learned to support and work with children with special needs over time as they had been one working with children with special needs for more than five years.

All six participants in this study reported that their practice gave them opportunities to work with children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs. Though most of the participants learned about children with special needs in courses, and were exposed to them during their practica, it was their workplace that provided opportunities to work with children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs. For example, Emma reported that she was exposed to Dravet Syndrome at her work place and that it prompted her team to learn more about it after a child had seizures. She shared an experience as follows:

the child would get seizures any time when he gets high fever so one time I called 911 because he had a seizure so quite scary and that time we could not give him medication. We were not allowed to. We were so panicked after this case happened we knew what to do we learned and we got the doctor to come in like the nurse to come in and now we are so ready. (347-351)

An experience like this can definitely propel educators to plan ahead. For example, Emma and her team's exposure to Dravet Syndrome propelled them to have emergency contact information for all children in a binder that was easily accessible to all educators at her center. Even though they had emergency contact information for all children before this incident, it was not accessible and hard to find when this incident happened. Additionally, Emma noted that the educators at her center, including herself, learned that in such situations, they have to stay calm and assign one educator to be with the child who is having seizures.

This theme illustrates participants' perspectives on "real world" experiences and how these strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. Though the idea of "real world" experiences as strengthening inclusive teaching practices was present across the three contexts—teacher education, professional development, and work experiences—all six participants reported that they also faced barriers across all three contexts.

4.2 Theme 2: Barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices

Theme 2: Barriers that impede the development of inclusive teaching practices was generated on the basis of seven codes that emerged across the three contexts: teacher education, professional development, and work experiences. This theme focuses on participants' perspectives on the barriers they faced during their teacher education, at their work place, and with professional development workshops.

Barriers related to ECE Course content. All participants reported that their Basic ECE certificate courses did not cover the content related to children with special needs which was needed to prepare them for working with all children. None of the participants learned about different diagnoses or topics related to working with children with different needs in their Basic ECE certificate program. Most of the participants reported that they acquired the theoretical knowledge and practical exposure to work with children with special needs after the completion of their Post-Basic certificate. However, Daisy and Sally noted that they were lucky to work with children with diagnosed needs during their Basic ECE certificate practicum. Valory, for example, did not have this opportunity. Typically, student teachers in BC are placed at practicum sites by their college or university. Therefore, participants in this study shared different experiences in relation to their practica placements.

Daisy reported that the information related to accommodating different needs in early childhood settings was available during her Basic ECE certificate program, but it was never

shared with the students until someone had a question about it. However, all participants mentioned that the Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs was designed to prepare students for inclusive teaching practices. Early childhood educators in BC may choose to do a Post-Basic certificate in Infant Toddlers or Special Needs (Early Childhood Education Registry). These educators are not required to do both of these certificates, unless the college or university program they are enrolled in, requires them to complete both of the Post-Basic certifications. Also, a Post-Basic certificate, as participants reported during the interview, which included three courses and one practicum, was not thought to be sufficient to develop educators' inclusive teaching practices.

Dia, Daisy, and Valory reported that they had limited interaction with families during their practica, which acted as a barrier in the development of their inclusive teaching practices. For example, Daisy stated that, "communication with them [parents] was pretty limited actually ... I could make small talk and tell them about the child's day but to go in depth about what their child was like ... it was not recommended" (281-283). Daisy reported that she did not interact with families during her practicum placements because of two reasons. First, her college instructors had recommended that student teachers would not discuss children in depth with their families. Second, most families trusted the full-time teachers who were working at the center for a long time and they felt more comfortable sharing their concerns with them. According to Atilas et al. (2012), longer practica may eliminate this barrier and provide opportunities for families to discuss concerns with both full-time and student educators.

Barriers related to access to professional development. Though all six participants attended professional development workshops as full-time educators, Dia, Emma, Valory, and Nancy reported that they did not have access to these workshops on a consistent basis. On the other hand, Sally and Daisy said they were able to attend workshops on a regular basis; however,

they were only able to attend the workshops that took place at their work place. With the advances in research and strategies to support children with special needs, it is important to think about access to professional development, as well as the role of professional development. However, participants in this study did not have access to professional development workshops on a consistent basis. According to Leatherman (2007), the importance of consistent professional development workshops is that educators are introduced to new research studies and strategies associated with inclusive classrooms and special education topics.

Nancy mentioned that funding was a critical factor that made it harder for her to attend workshops on a consistent basis. She reported receiving \$150 professional funding each year to attend workshops. However, she noted that this amount was not enough; especially when she wanted to attend educational conferences. Similarly, Daisy reported that whenever she wanted to attend workshops outside her workplace it was difficult because her work place did not provide additional funding to attend workshops outside of the organization. Having said that, Daisy also mentioned that her manager arranged workshops every few weeks at the workplace that helped her learn about different strategies to work with different needs, new research, and new ways of working with differences. Dia mentioned attending workshops that were affordable; she also mentioned that many of these workshops were offered by educators working in the field who charged a low fee. Valory and Emma reported that they received a funding of \$500 every year, hence, affordability was not a big challenge for them. It is evident that participants in this study do not receive the same amount of funding to access professional development workshops which shows inconsistency within the early childhood profession.

Apart from funding, participants reported that there were other barriers, such as time, distance, and limited spaces in workshops that impeded the development of inclusive teaching practices. Emma, Valory, and Nancy noted that it was a big challenge to attend professional

development workshops as they worked full-time. For example, Valory stated that she worked “full-time so it is harder” (248). Going to the workshop sites required time and too often the conferences were held in places that were at least an hour away. For example, Nancy and Valory reported that it took them almost an hour to commute to work every day; this made it harder for both of them to attend workshops after the end of their work day. Emma also mentioned that, at times, she was unable to attend workshops due to limited spots. She reported that many organizations have a limited capacity when they organize workshops and most of them take 25-30 participants per workshop. Sally acknowledged that funding and other barriers, such as time and distance existed, but she was lucky to be a part of an organization that organized workshops every few weeks.

Other barriers. Nancy and Valory reported that it was difficult to focus on individual child’s needs as they worked in full day programs. They both worked in a child care setting where children arrived as early as eight in the morning and departed as late as six in the evening. Additionally, both of these participants had minimal administration and preparation hours every week. In addition, Nancy and Valory worked in settings where there were three educators for 24 children. Both of these participants explained how busy it was to work in a child care setting with many transitions throughout the day, which left them little time to document children’s learning and reflect on it. Valory also reported that “she did not get time” (355) to observe and record children’s engagement on a consistent basis.

Dia who had worked in a child care setting in the past, stated that “the focus is different in a daycare. The focus is this constant transition, the ratios were 1 to 8 and there was nap time there was so many transitions throughout the day” (497-499). Dia acknowledged that it was difficult to focus on individual needs in a child care setting where the priority is to help children with several transitions during the day including nap time. She also mentioned that the ratio of one teacher for

every eight children made it challenging for her to focus on understanding children's different needs. However, at present, Dia worked in a preschool setting where the teacher-child ratio is much smaller. On a typical day, she reported having twelve children and three educators in each classroom.

Dia, Daisy, and Sally worked in centers where children arrived at nine in the morning and departed at two in the afternoon. Though children stayed for five hours at the center, Dia, Daisy, and Sally did an eight-hour shift every day and they spent two to three hours preparing curriculum, writing reports, collaborating with other educators in their team, and attending workshops and meetings organized at their workplace. Though these three participants had adequate time for administration and preparation, they did not observe and record children's engagement consistently. Dia mentioned she was planning to make more time for documenting children's conversations in the upcoming year.

This theme discussed the participants' perspectives on the barriers that impeded the development of their inclusive teaching practices. They faced these barriers during their teacher education, in accessing professional development workshops, and at their workplace, especially when it was a full day child care setting. The next theme focuses on participants' workplace experiences that strengthened their inclusive teaching practice.

4.3 Theme 3: Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices

Theme 3: Experiences at work that strengthen inclusive teaching practices, was generated on the basis of six codes that emerged across the two contexts: professional development and work experiences. Under this theme, participants discussed the factors that led to the development of their inclusive teaching practices at their work place.

Ongoing professional development. While Theme 2 highlighted the barriers to accessing professional development, it is identified in Theme 3 as an experience that strengthens

inclusive teaching practices. Daisy, Sally, Dia, Emma, Valory, and Nancy reported that ongoing professional development workshops shaped their inclusive teaching practices. For example, Dia noted that professional development workshops “keeps us on our toes and some help us to think critically as well” (429-430). Similarly, all six participants viewed professional development workshops as a continuing education opportunity that was available to them through their work. As reported by the participants, a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs in BC typically includes three courses and one practicum, which may not fully prepare teachers to support children with special needs. Additionally, participants in this study noted that their Basic ECE certificate courses did not necessarily cover content related to children with special needs. Therefore, participants, such as Sally, noted that it is important for educators to attend workshops that discuss novel research studies and new strategies that impact practice positively. According to Parsa-Pajouh et al. (2005), professional development workshops act as continuing education and provide the additional knowledge educators need to support a variety of children’s needs. Most participants in this study highlighted the importance of having access to professional development opportunities on a consistent basis.

Sally and Daisy also reported that attending professional development on a consistent basis at work strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. Sally further noted that at her work place they “have someone who comes in every six to eight weeks to do a workshop and within the organization they have some in-service days” (203-205). Sally explained that the workshop topics are always different and some workshops focus on inclusive teaching practices. Though Dia, Sally, and Daisy work in the same organization, it was interesting to note that Dia did not mention that they had someone come in to do a workshop every six to eight weeks. Instead, Dia reported that the professional development workshops at her workplace were not consistent.

When asked if she attended a workshop at her work place every six to eight weeks, Dia noted that

“those workshops are not the schedule ones. It’s like if our manager finds someone” (406).

Having said that, Dia also noted that these workshops at her workplace helped her “pick up new strategies” (417).

Nancy and Emma also shared that they did not attend professional development workshops consistently, however, whenever they had the opportunity to do so, they learned new strategies. Nancy also stated that apart from attending workshops, she felt it was also important to read articles and self-learn. She specifically noted: “we are reading articles, continuously improving and self-learning” (337-338). It seems like self-learning is something that Nancy, and perhaps her team members, engaged in on a regular basis.

Though educators in BC can attend professional development workshops even when they are completing their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates, participants in this study reported that they attended professional development workshops after the completion of their certificates and never as much as they would have liked. Perhaps, one of the reasons has to do with the licensing requirements. According to the Early Childhood Education Registry in BC, early childhood educators have to complete 40 hours of professional development workshops or conferences related to the field of early childhood education in order to renew their 5-year Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates. Educators in BC have to complete these 40 hours over the period of 5 years. This could be the reason why participants in this study chose to complete these professional development hours after the completion of their certificates.

Smaller teacher-to-child ratios. During the interview, participants also reported that smaller teacher-child ratios strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. For example, Dia, Sally, Emma, and Daisy stated that smaller teacher-child ratios helped them focus on children’s individual needs. Some of the participants noted that at some point they had worked in centers with higher ratios, as well and they were able to see the differences in terms of the time they had

to engage with children and learn about their needs. At the time of this study, Dia, Sally, Emma, and Daisy worked in centers where they had the funding for one teacher for every four to six children. As Dia noted, “we are lucky to have the funding that we do so our ratios are smaller and the focus is much greater on being inclusive” (491-492). Dia, Daisy, and Sally worked for a non-profit organization where children with special needs were funded by SCD, an organization that helps families to find ECCE settings that support children with special needs. Similarly, Emma also reported that she felt supported at work because her center had one teacher for every four children. While reducing the number of children to teachers in a center is an enabling condition that balances educators’ workloads with children’s needs, Emma stated that, in BC, the typical minimum ratio for children ages three-to-five is one adult for every eight children. In this study, Nancy and Valory worked in centers that followed a typical ratio: one teacher for eight children.

Collaborating with a team. Dia, Daisy, Emma, Nancy, and Sally reported that collaborating with a strong team of mentors and professionals strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. Participants reported that at their workplace they collaborated with a team of educators and other professionals, such as occupational therapists and public health nurses. Daisy, Dia, and Sally reported having more than 15 educators at their center, with whom they discussed strategies, collaborated on different projects, and sought advice whenever they encountered a challenging situation at work. In addition to this, Nancy stated that it was impossible to do everything alone and it was essential to rely on a team of educators and professionals at work. Nancy, Dia, Daisy, Sally, and Emma reported working with other professionals, such as special educational assistants and occupational therapists who helped them support children with special needs at their work. The five participants also noted that these professionals provided resources, devised strategies, and met them on a frequent basis.

Emma also shared the importance of collaborating with a team of educators who had completed their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates. Emma reported that she worked with her “strong team” who had completed their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates in special needs (342). Emma noted that this factor strengthened her inclusive teaching practices as she was able to collaborate and learn from a team of educators who felt prepared to support both children with typical and special needs. As mentioned by all the participants, a Basic ECE certificate requires individuals to complete all coursework and practica, typically, in a year-long program. In this study, all participants had also completed their Post-Basic certificate, which includes three courses and one practica. However, according to the Early Childhood Educator Registry in BC, educators need a minimum of an ECEA certificate, which is just one course, to work in ECCE settings. In addition to this, some centers may hire responsible adults who have completed 20 hours of coursework in child development, guidance, or health and safety. Perhaps this is why Emma highlighted the importance of working with a team of educators who had completed both the Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates.

Valory was the only participant who did not report collaborating with a team of educators and other professionals and this could be because she had worked in an ECCE setting for only two years, with fewer colleagues.

Centre’s inclusive policy. Dia, Daisy, Sally, and Emma noted that their workplace focused on inclusive practices that shaped their inclusive teaching practices. Daisy, Sally, Dia, and Emma reported that they were working in centers that implemented an inclusive policy. These participants noted that by an inclusive policy, they meant that the center was an inclusive space where every classroom had both children with typical and special needs. These participants also noted that they encouraged all children in their classroom to take part in the everyday activities, which were prepared to meet all children’s needs. In addition, Daisy, Sally, Dia, and

Emma also reported that they had zero-reject policy in their centers which meant that all children could attend their center. These participants noted that their center managers mostly hired educators who had their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. Daisy reported that for many years her center provided tuition funding for at least one educator to complete a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs, and she was one of the educators who had received that funding.

According to Gindis (2003), an inclusive policy can be described as full participation of all children, with and without special needs, whereas, according to Avramidis and Norwich (2002), functional integration is where educators encourage children with special needs to take part in educational and social activities within a mainstream educational setting. From these two definitions found in literature, it appears that some of the teaching practices implemented by the participants in this study were consistent with functional integration. Having said that, according to Halfon and Friendly (2013), an early childhood center can be described as fully inclusive when there is a zero-reject policy, as well as when the leaders of that center hire and prepare all educators to meet the needs of all children. Thus it appears that, in this study, the centers where these participants worked adopted an inclusive policy overall.

Participants in this study also reported that their managers often organized workshops such as identifying “red flags” and working with a variety of children with different needs in order to strengthen educators’ inclusive teaching practices. Dia explained this further by noting that “it helps that your entire school the entire classroom the entire curriculum is focused on inclusive” (491-492). When the whole center follows an inclusive policy, it also becomes easier to share and learn from other educators who are dealing or have dealt with similar challenges or concerns.

Observing and recording. All six participants in this study reported that observing and recording children’s engagements had strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. These

participants noted that they were able to reflect upon the fact that children express themselves in multiple ways and not just verbally. For example, Sally said that if the children “are not talking there are other ways ... you know they are understanding if you give them a two-step direction and they can follow it they are receptive you know they can understand, for example put your lunch away and go to washroom and they do it that means their receptive language is age appropriate” (406-409). Sally reported working with children who used non-verbal ways to communicate and noted that children express themselves in multiple ways and that verbal expression is just one way. Many children at Sally’s workplace had immigrated from a different country; therefore, she noted that even though children may not speak English, they can understand what is happening around them. Similarly, Emma noted that documenting children’s engagement helps her recognize children’s abilities that may not be visible otherwise. For example, Emma noted that once she was revisiting children’s conversations that she had recorded during an activity, and she was surprised to hear a child engaging in the activity. She noted that she had not observed that child engaging actively before and such incidents may not be visible unless they are recorded.

Dia, Sally, and Daisy also reported that every year, they write an annual report for each child based on developmental stages. These participants noted that the annual report is usually a page long, but they are required to create a detailed report for children with special needs that is up to four pages. According to these participants, this report helped them focus on what they could do to support children with special needs. Bøttcher (2012) argued that when the school environment views children’s needs from a medical perspective, the responsibility of learning is placed on the individual child. However, within the context of report writing, it seems like participants viewed children’s needs from a social perspective as they mentioned that a longer report will help the families and future educators to support children with special needs.

Though Nancy and Valory noted that they did not have a lot of time to document children, both of them shared that they observed and recorded children's engagements whenever they went on a walk. Valory also reported that she recorded children's experiences occasionally and most times it was spontaneous.

This theme discussed participants' perspectives on work experiences that strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. The next theme focuses on how practica experiences strengthened participants' inclusive teaching practices.

4.4 Theme 4: The role of practica in strengthening inclusive teaching practices

Theme 4: The role of practica in strengthening inclusive teaching practices was generated on the basis of five codes that emerged in one of the three contexts that formed the organization for the interview: teacher education. Before discussing this theme, it is important to note that there are some variations in the number of practica completed by participants during Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate.

Sally, Valory, Nancy, and Emma mentioned doing three practica during their Basic ECE certificate. However, Daisy and Dia reported that their Basic ECE certificate was comprised of five practica. Similarly, five participants in this study reported that they completed one practicum during their Post-Basic certificate which is typical when completing a Post-Basic certificate in BC. However, Emma noted that her college provided an option to complete two three-week practica or one six-week practicum during her Special Needs certificate. Emma noted that she chose the former option.

As mentioned above, there were some variations in regard to how the colleges offered practica. Participants also reported that most of their practica sites were chosen by their colleges, unless they were doing a work-site practicum. Therefore, some participants received exposure to children with special needs during their Basic ECE certificate while others did not.

Importance of practica. All six participants reported that practica were valuable and they always learned something from their practicum center. For example, Daisy reported: “I think practicums (sic) are great value ... even though I had a practicum where I did not agree with [the] philosophy [of the centre] but even in that practicum I learned something” (242-243). Daisy explained that even when she did not agree with the philosophy in this particular practicum placement, she reflected on the alternate ways of being with the children that strengthened her inclusive teaching practices. Sharma et al. (2009) and Sharma et al. (2015) found that educators who did not have practica placements as part of their teaching degree lacked the experience of implementing their university coursework in a classroom setting. However, in this study, all participants had the opportunity to take practica during their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. Indeed, practica were seen as valuable because they allowed educators to apply what they had learned, and as Daisy stated, there is always something to learn from them even if what is learned is a philosophy that is not consistent with your own.

Duration of practicum. Daisy, Emma, Dia, Sally, and Valory reported that practica should be longer in duration. Dia stated that, “if practicums (sic) were like paid internships yeah and you spend six months or more and then you learn so much like that six months is worth three years of courses” (385-387). She noted that many other professions offered paid work placements for a longer period of time, allowing the students to apply skills and knowledge they had learned from their coursework. Atilas et al. (2012) also found that longer practicum hours give ample opportunities for educators to grow as teachers and build confidence. Additionally, longer practicum duration allowed educators to collaborate with families and other mentors which may not always be possible in a four or five-week practicum. In this study, some of the participants noted that a longer practicum also gave them the chance to reflect upon whether the profession they wished to pursue was a good fit for them.

Nancy was the only participant who did not talk about the need to have longer practica. This may have been due to a number of reasons. First, Nancy was not able to recall much about her teacher preparation program, but she had lots to report about her work experiences. Second, little is known about the practicum placements that she did during her Basic ECE certificate at a college that no longer offers the early childhood preparation program. Also notable, is that Nancy did her Special Needs certificate at a college that offers online early childhood programs. Typically, in BC a college organizes the student educators' practicum at a center or students may choose to do a work-site practicum. A work-site practicum, as explained by a few participants, means that student teachers complete their practicum hours at the ECCE center they are working at. However, Nancy reported that her case was different. She was connected to an organization by her college, who assessed whether she was a great fit to do a practicum through that organization. She reported that once she passed the standardized tests required by this organization, she started a work-site practicum. Though Nancy did not talk about the need to have a longer practicum, she did talk about this unique practicum during her Special Needs certificate. Her practicum was called "diverse-abilities" (122), instead of a special needs practicum (some schools referred to it as an inclusive practicum). Nancy reported that working with children of multiple ages was one of the major foci of this practicum as this organization believed that children with different ages have different abilities. Nancy also noted this practicum was challenging because, according to her, it was more work than the typical practicum in BC given the number of assignments due every week.

Importance of mentor teachers. Daisy, Dia, Valory, and Sally discussed the importance of having mentor teachers, also referred as sponsor teachers, at practicum sites. For example, these participants stated that mentor teachers help practicum students in the development of inclusive teaching practices. Participants noted that it was helpful when mentor teachers made

them feel comfortable or shared necessary information about children that further assisted them to plan activities. According to Atilas et al. (2012), exemplary practicum sites have mentor teachers that provide student educators with resources and vital information about children and families. This information helps student educators understand children's needs and plan activities accordingly. Similarly, according to Leatherman and Niemeyer (2005), educators stated that their mentor teachers helped them make individualized educational plans. In accordance with the literature, the participants in this study reported having great mentor teachers during their practica.

Valory stated that her "mentor teacher was very nice, she explained what each child needs and she showed me profiles and obviously they were on paper but it was very helpful to know their strengths and challenges" (164-166). Since practicum placements typically last for four to six weeks, this information can assist educators by giving them relevant knowledge about children and, therefore, plan activities accordingly during their practicum. This is, indeed, different from working as a full-time educator where participants reported having more access to this kind of information.

Sally also reported that she can still hear her mentor teacher's voice because she was so patient with a child when he was getting ready to go outside (142). Sally noted that a teacher at her practicum taught her to be patient and break a task into multiple steps especially for children who require extra support. She explained that such experiences strengthened her inclusive teaching practices and she was able to use this specific example from her mentor teachers, once she began working as a full-time educator.

Nancy did not mention anything about sponsor teachers likely because she did not have a sponsor teacher for her Post-Basic certificate practicum. She worked alone and submitted assignments online. Occasionally her college instructor would call her colleague or center owner

to assess how Nancy was doing. Emma seemed to learn a lot from her practica placements; however, she did not mention anything about her mentor teachers.

Besides having mentor teachers, college instructors also play an important role in helping student educators during their practica (Macy et al., 2009). According to Macy et al. (2009), practica experiences strengthen inclusive teaching practices when college instructors provide feedback to student educators throughout the practicum. However, participants in this study did not mention anything about their college instructors in relation to practica experiences.

Exposure to children with special needs during practica: Daisy, Emma, Valory, Dia, and Sally reported that exposure to children with special needs during their practica strengthened their inclusive teaching. For example, Emma stated that she had experienced working with children with “fetal alcohol syndrome and Autism, ADHD, and . . . PTSD post traumatic disorder” (160-161). Working with children with different needs during practica seemed to prepare the participants for future work opportunities. Sally also reported that her practicum in an inclusive setting exposed her to a variety of different needs which included “autism spectrum and undiagnosed developmental delays” (107). Sally, Daisy, and Emma had the opportunity to work with a variety of children with diagnosed needs when they did their Basic ECE certificate practicum. This helped them realize the importance of working with children who have diagnosed needs. Interestingly, each of these participants are now working in early childhood settings that implement an “inclusive” policy throughout the center or school. According to Leatherman and Niemeyer (2005), student educators learn specific teaching strategies when they work with children with diagnosed needs in their practicum settings. These strategies help educators strengthen their inclusive teaching practices. Sally, Emma, and Daisy also noted that the exposure to different diagnosed needs during their practica, especially in the Basic ECE certificate practicum, encouraged them to pursue a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs.

As mentioned earlier, Nancy's practicum experience during her Post-Basic program was unique. While the data do not reveal much about her practicum during the Basic ECE certificate, when Nancy was doing her Post-Basic work-site practicum in special needs, she spoke a bit about her work with children with special needs. Initially Nancy was unable to recall if she had worked with children who had diagnosed or undiagnosed needs. However, later she noted that there were a couple children who had "behavioral challenges" (243). She also discussed using different strategies to work with one child with behavioral challenges and she reported taking an online course that helped her whole team work with that child.

In this theme participants discussed the role of practica in strengthening their inclusive teaching practices. The next theme focuses on the importance of learning about different diagnoses in teacher education programs and work experiences.

4.5 Theme 5: The importance of learning about different diagnoses

Theme 5: The importance of learning about different diagnoses, is based on four codes that were generated across two contexts: teacher education and work experiences. The importance of learning about different diagnoses was emphasized by the participants especially in the context of teacher education related interview questions.

All six participants—Dia, Daisy, Emma, Sally, Nancy, and Valory—reported that their Basic ECE certificate did not specifically cover content about children with special needs. Valory noted that she "felt like Basic and Post-Basic practicum were different from each other. Post-Basic was more about supporting different needs, I felt Basic was more towards curriculum" (195-196). She reported that her Basic ECE certificate courses prepared her to follow children's interests, document children's learning, and implement an emergent curriculum. On the other hand, her Post-Basic certificate courses were more about inclusive teaching practices and supporting children with different needs. According to Broderick et al. (2005), teacher

preparation coursework should focus on inclusive teaching practices that address issues of equity, as well as deconstruct the traditional forms of knowledge in which children are identified by their disability. In this present study, participants reported that their Post-Basic certificate incorporated inclusive teaching strategies; however, their Basic ECE certificate did not incorporate any. Studies conducted in the past also found out that general education courses do not have content related to special needs (e.g., Romi & Leyser, 2006), however, a recent study suggested that some colleges have begun to incorporate content related to special needs in their general education program (Spear et al., 2018).

All participants, except Nancy, who did her Post-Basic certificate online, noted that they learned about different diagnoses during their Post-Basic certificate which also included topics such as “red flags” and having conversations with families who have children with special needs. For example, Dia briefly described a course in her Post-Basic studies that gave her meaningful information about different diagnoses. She reported that,

the whole point of that course was to increase our knowledge of the different kinds of diagnoses that you might need to know about or conditions or types of behaviors that you might run into while working and so you have to get a heads up be able to identify, even not identify, but just be able to be familiar with. So that was I thought that was interesting.
(235-239)

Dia completed this course while doing a Post-Basic certificate and she noted that this course gave her the theoretical knowledge of different diagnoses. This idea was supported by another qualitative study where novice early childhood educators reported that coursework in inclusive and special education helped them work with children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs, during their first year of teaching (Giovacco-Johnson, 2005). Similarly, in this present study, five

participants reported that their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs gave them the theoretical knowledge needed to work with children with different needs.

Though learning about different diagnoses is important during teacher education programs, the disability studies framework suggests that educators look beyond the diagnosis or the biological defect attached to the child (Bøttcher, 2012). A medical approach to disability views children from a biological lens. In contrast, a social approach to disability looks beyond the biological factors and focuses on supporting the diverse needs of all children by reducing the social and cultural conditions that disable children (Vygotsky, 1993, as cited in Gindis, 2003). Instead of focusing on a diagnosis from a medical approach, Slee (2006) suggested that educators focus on how they can address the barriers created by society for children with special needs. For example, having no ramps at school can cause a barrier for a child with physical needs. In this present study, participants echoed the idea of focusing on children with special needs from a social perspective by discussing how they can change their environment to support these children. Sally reported how the physical environment at her workplace supports children with physical needs, as she noted they have ramps at her workplace. However, some of the participants in this study also wanted to support individual needs and learn about individual diagnoses. For some of the participants in this study, their desire to learn about diagnoses was linked to developing a better understanding of children's needs in order to better support them. In sum, it seems that participants were using both social and medical approaches to work with children with special needs.

Daisy and Emma also reported that it would have been helpful if coursework and practica discussed specific diagnoses and gave them opportunities to work with specific developmental disabilities respectively. Emma noted that "some people they don't really understand even when they know the kid has Autism but they don't know exactly because they didn't go and study that

specifically” (139-140). Similarly, in relation to the practicum context, Daisy noted that “you don’t know until you work with all of them” (358). While Daisy and Emma categorized children in terms of their diagnoses and they explained that it would have been helpful if they had the opportunity to work with children with different diagnoses; the knowledge provided by a diagnosis was deemed useful because it would likely change their teaching practices. Learning about children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Down Syndrome, and other needs was considered useful information that mattered for their teaching practices. Perhaps, as mentioned earlier, Daisy and Emma wanted to support all children in their classroom, and that is why they wanted to learn more about individual diagnoses.

Sally, Dia, Nancy, and Valory, on the other hand, did not discuss the need to work with children with specific diagnoses; their perspective seems to suggest a different perspective on inclusion. This could be explained by Sally reporting that she had worked with several children who were diagnosed with different needs. For Nancy, working with different age groups and cultures was as important as working with children with special needs. During the interview, Nancy often spoke about inclusion in terms of working with multi-aged children, as she had worked in a multi-age ECCE setting for eight years. These comments illustrate that within the field of early childhood education, the notion of inclusion can be interpreted differently, as was reported by Swain et al. (2012). Though other participants interpreted inclusion as the act of removing barriers for children with special needs, Nancy described inclusion as a way to include children of different ages and cultures in a mainstream ECCE setting. What Nancy reports here is something that was found in another recent qualitative study where early childhood educators reported that disability should be viewed within a broader construct of diversity (Robertson et al., 2017). Additionally, the educators in Robertson et al.’s (2017) study also noted that the concepts

of disability and diversity were integrated in their coursework; they were not taught about disability separately.

None of the children at Nancy's and Valory's workplace were diagnosed with a developmental disability. On the other hand, Dia, Sally, Emma, and Daisy worked in centers where every classroom had three to four children with diagnosed needs. In the past, Nancy and Valory reported they had come across children who were described as having Autism Spectrum Disorder and who had other diagnosed needs, but they had little experience working with these children. Research studies conducted in Alberta and Hong Kong have highlighted the need to prepare teachers to work with children with individual diagnoses. A study conducted in Alberta, Canada, found that specific coursework and field placements that introduced educators to a variety of children with diagnosed needs played an important role in preparing teachers to provide care for all children (Wuart et al., 2014). Similarly, Lee et al. (2015) reported that educators may perceive some children with diagnosed needs, such as children with severe behavior disorders, as challenging because they have never taken a course or worked with children with these types of needs. In this present study participants also highlighted the need to work with children with individual diagnoses. However, by learning about individual diagnoses, it seemed as if the participants wanted to gain a better understanding of how they could support both children with typical and special needs. This connection seems to imply a link between information about diagnoses and teacher self-efficacy.

4.6 Summary

This chapter described the five themes that surfaced in the study. In Theme 1, participants discussed the importance of practical experiences for strengthening participants' inclusive teaching practices. In Theme 2, participants reported some of the barriers to attending professional development workshops, such as funding and accessibility, that impeded the

development of their inclusive teaching practices. In Theme 3, participants reported experiences at work, such as collaborating with a team of educators and professionals that strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. Theme 4 focused upon the role of practica in the development of participants' inclusive teaching practices. Last, Theme 5 focused upon the importance of learning about different diagnoses.

As shown in Figure 2, these five themes appeared to have some overlaps. According to participants' responses, it also seemed that teacher education and work experiences were two major contexts that played an important role in the development of participants' inclusive teaching practices. Having said that, initially, the interview guide and data gathered in this study were divided in to three contexts: teacher education, professional development, and work experiences. However, what these themes appear to show is that, for these participants, there were two contexts that contributed to participants' inclusive teaching practices: teacher education and work experiences. Taken together, these themes also show that teacher education included practica placements; whereas, work experiences included professional development. These ideas are elaborated in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The amount of education required to become a certified early childhood educator in BC is substantially less in comparison to the amount of practice that is needed to develop inclusive teaching practices (Howe et al., 2017) and, yet, there are limited studies that report early childhood educators' perspectives on what shapes their inclusive teaching practices (see, however, Dalkilic, 2014). The purpose of this study was to contribute to this line of inquiry: to investigate participants' perspectives on the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of their inclusive teaching practices. Therefore, this study was guided by the two following questions: What role does teacher education play in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings? What role does work experience, including professional development opportunities, play in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings?

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section returns to the research questions and clarifies how they have been addressed given the five themes that emerged from the data analysis. The second section discusses the limitations of this study. The third section suggests recommendations for teacher education—including both Basic ECE and Post-Basic certification—that provides the credential for educators in BC to work in ECCE settings. This section also suggests recommendations for work experiences in ECCE settings and policy makers. The fourth section describes two potential studies for future research. The chapter ends with a final summary.

5.1 Addressing the Research Questions

In order to address the research questions systematically, the data gathered in this study were divided into three contexts following the assumptions of the interview protocol: teacher education, professional development, and work experiences. However, participants' perspectives

illustrated that, in their experience, two contexts contributed to their inclusive teaching practices: teacher education and work experiences. Teacher education included practica placements, whereas work experiences included professional development. Participants noted that the majority of their time during teacher education was spent taking coursework; and some time was assigned for practica placements that included having some exposure to working with children in ECCE settings. Similarly, while working as an early childhood educator, participants had some opportunities to attend professional development workshops or conferences, but this was not a distinct context contributing to their inclusive teaching practices. Instead, it was identified as one aspect of work experiences.

Role of teacher education. According to the six participants in this study, teacher education—including both the Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs—was important in the development of their inclusive teaching practices. As illustrated in Theme 5, all six participants reported that their Basic ECE certificate focused on planning and creating a curriculum for children in ECCE settings. However most of the participants noted that it was their Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs that played a greater role in shaping their inclusive teaching practices. The participants further explained that their Post-Basic certificate helped them identify children with developmental delays and share these observations with families. A few participants also reported taking specific courses during their Post-Basic certificate that introduced them to children with different diagnoses and that gave them inclusive teaching strategies to work with all children. This finding has been supported by previous studies in which educators have reported that coursework in inclusive and special education developed their inclusive teaching practices and enabled them to work with children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs during their first year of teaching (Giovacco-Johnson, 2005; Swain et al., 2012).

As part of their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate, participants also reported completing a number of practica placements that shaped their inclusive teaching practices. Research has highlighted that coursework should be complemented by field experiences (e.g., Sharma et al., 2009). The educators in these studies stated that their coursework helped them become familiar with terms, such as inclusion, and it gave them strategies to work with children with special needs, whereas their field experiences gave them opportunities to work with children with typical and special needs in educational settings (Sharma et al., 2015; Swain et al., 2012). Since participants in this study earned their certificates in different educational institutions, however, there was wide variation in the number and kinds of practica completed. Additionally, most participants in this study also noted that their practica sites were chosen by their educational institutions. Having said that, all participants, as discussed under Theme 4, reported that they always learned something from their practica experiences, thus, regardless of the variations, it was considered to be valuable across all participants.

Participants also reported several specific factors that shaped their inclusive teaching practices during their practica. For example, Daisy, Dia, Sally, and Valory discussed the importance of having mentor teachers who provided them with sufficient information about children's needs, teaching strategies, and feedback. This finding is similar to other studies in which educators have noted the importance of having mentor teachers as that helped them learn about children's needs and plan activities accordingly (Atiles et al., 2012; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). Further, and although it was limited, most participants also reported that they had the opportunity to work as a practicum student with children with special needs during their Post-Basic certificate program. Participants noted that this experience shaped their inclusive teaching practices. Daisy, Emma, and Sally reported that they also had a chance to work as a practicum student with children with special needs while completing their Basic ECE certificate.

They noted that it was this opportunity that encouraged them to pursue a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs.

While participants noted the benefits of practica placements, they also reported that practica experiences were different from working as a full-time educator. As highlighted in the idea of “real world” discussed under Theme 1, while participants reported that practica gave them some exposure to the “real world” and always provided them with something to learn, they also acknowledged that practica gave them limited exposure to interact with families and collaborate with a team of educators. As student educators, during practica, they were not privy to some of the more complicated discussions that occurred between educators and families when a developmental concern was raised and/or queried. Once participants began working full-time, participants were able to become involved with families, children, and colleagues at a deeper level and, as a result, they had a better sense of both children’s needs and the kinds of teaching practices that were supported by their programs and centre directors. In a sense, the “real world” of practica became even more “real” in work experiences.

Role of work experience. In the present study, participants highlighted many factors that strengthened their inclusive teaching practices once they began working as full-time educators. Most of the participants in this study had an opportunity to work during gap years between their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. As illustrated in Theme 1, participants explained that gap years gave them a chance to be in the classroom and work as full-time educators before going back to school. This experience set them apart as educators, as they were able to connect the experience they had during the gap years with the theory they learned once they entered the Post-Basic certificate program. In addition, participants in this study also reported that working with small teacher-to-child ratios strengthened their inclusive teaching practices. Sally, Dia, Daisy, and Emma had opportunities to work in classrooms where they had

one teacher for every four children. In more typical ECCE settings, Nancy and Valory noted they had one teacher for every eight children. As illustrated in Theme 1, Nancy and Valory noted that the higher teacher-child ratios that characterized their work settings reduced their ability to focus on children's individual needs. Dia, Daisy, Emma, and Sally noted that the smaller teacher-child ratios that characterized their work settings allowed them to engage with children and learn about their needs.

As highlighted in Theme 3, participants also reported other experiences, such as working and collaborating with a team of educators and professionals at work as strengthening inclusive teaching practices. Most participants noted that given the different role they played, as student educators, they were less able to engage in significant discussions regarding the development of inclusive teaching practices developed for and with specific children. They noted that the range of ways in which they could collaborate with work colleagues was significantly different from their participation as practica students. As educators in ECE settings, they had more opportunities to collaborate on different projects with their co-workers, attend parent-teacher meetings, and discuss children's developmental needs with families at their workplace. This participation directly contributed to their inclusive teaching practices.

Last, participants also discussed that ongoing professional development workshops, during their work experiences, shaped their inclusive teaching practices. Participants noted that even though their coursework and practica led to the credential to work with children in ECCE settings, they still felt the need and were interested in ongoing professional development both to update their knowledge about specific kinds of developmental milestones for children at their workplace and to continue to develop their teaching practices, in general and in relation to inclusive practices. For example, participants noted that workshop topics related to identifying children with developmental delays were important for their inclusive teaching practices work. A

small number of research studies have similar findings. According to Parsa-Pajouh et al. (2005), professional development workshops provide educators with additional knowledge that educators need to support children's needs at their workplace. As noted in Theme 2, most participants however, reported that they had limited funding and time to attend professional development workshops or conferences on a consistent basis.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The research reported in this thesis is based upon a qualitative study. The choice of qualitative study is a major strength in this research because it enabled the participants to report their perspectives on inclusive teaching practices. Having said that, it is important to highlight the limitations of this study as well.

This study utilized semi-structured interviews as a single method of gathering the data. Using a single mode in gathering the data is a limitation as the findings draw on a single source of data. Using two research methods to gather data enhances credibility and validity. Perhaps, observations could have been used as a second method to gather data in this research study. This would have enabled triangulation and corroborated, to some degree, how participants engaged in inclusive teaching practices. Indeed, gathering and incorporating pedagogical narrations into interviews, along with analyzing the documents themselves, was initially included as a second research method to document participants' inclusive teaching practices. According to the Government of British Columbia's (2008) Early Learning Framework, pedagogical narrations are a method of documentation in which educators record and then reflexively interpret children's actions and behaviors or, more simply what they have been doing, in ECCE settings. However, none of the participants in this study used pedagogical narrations as a regular practice and, further, some were unaware of it. Therefore, this method was not utilized to gather data in this study.

Although it is consistent with sample sizes in other qualitative studies, sample size could be perceived as another limitation of this study. Six early childhood educators were interviewed in this study. Though other early childhood educators, who have completed their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs within the past few years may have similar perspectives, the findings of this study are still specific to the six participants. The findings in this study do not suggest a general perspective on the role of teacher education and work experiences in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices, but form a foundation for future inquiry with multiple research methods and more participants.

5.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

The experiences of the six participants—early childhood educators—interviewed in this study differed in a few ways that include: the educational institution some of the participants attended to complete their certificates, the number of practica they completed during their certificates, and the different kinds of ECCE settings where they completed their practica. Other differences include: the way they described or understood inclusion, the amount of work experience they had in ECCE settings as full-time educators, the different types of ECCE settings where these participants worked, and the number of professional development opportunities they had and were able to access each year. Having said that, these six educators also had several things in common. For example, some of them went to the same educational institution to complete their certificate and some were working at the same ECCE setting during the time of interview. These similarities and differences may have contributed to both the convergent and divergent perspectives reported by the participants in this study; given differences noted in Chapter 4, similarities are noted here.

The results of this study suggest that both teacher education and work experience play an important role in the development of inclusive teaching practices. These practices are influenced

by many factors that include the educational institutions where participants completed their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificate, and the practica sites where these participants completed the practica portion of their certificate. It also includes other factors, such as the ECCE settings where participants currently work as full-time educators, and how much access they have, especially in terms of funding and time, to attend professional development opportunities.

As noted earlier, while the interview was designed to elicit perspectives regarding three contexts—teacher education, work experiences, and professional development—the participants described their experiences as either teacher education or work experiences. In relation to teacher education, the participants in this study appeared to view their coursework as theory, and their practica experiences as practice (see Figure 3). Further, they viewed their work experience as practice and the professional development opportunities made available through work as theoretical. As highlighted in Figure 3, theory and practice were existent and, yet, separated into particular aspects of both teacher education and work experiences.

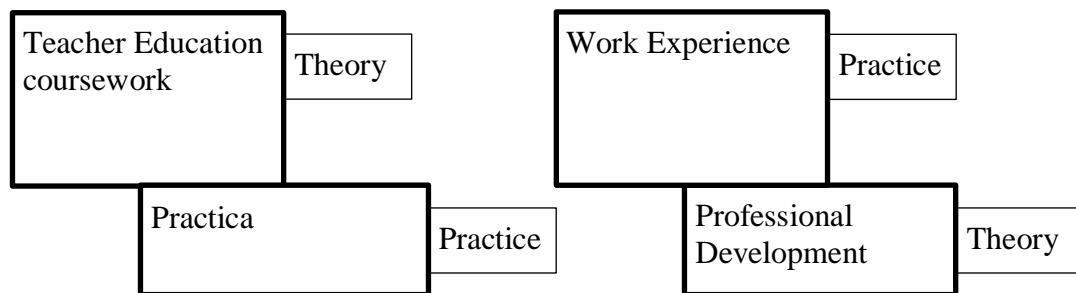


Figure 3: Participants' Perspectives

Although this is a more nuanced perspective than the common separation between teacher education (including practica) as theory and work experience (including professional development) as practice, the dichotomy between theory and practice does not seem to hold. After all, a large part of the coursework in the programs included discussions of practices,

strategies, and skillsets and inclusive teaching practices are themselves theory driven even if the theory is tacit.

Although participants did not speak about it as either theory or practice, the aspect of practical experiences with children, which seemed to be the most significant aspect to the participants, was woven through teacher education coursework, practica, work experiences, and professional development. For example, as highlighted in Theme 1, participants discussed the importance of “real world” experiences that included stories teacher educators told about children, practica experiences with children, work experiences with children, and professional development about working with children. These glimpses into the “real world” of ECCE were the most valued aspects across both of these contexts, perhaps suggesting that it is the “real world” that brings together both theory and practice.

Recommendations for teacher education. Based on the findings of this study, I suggest four recommendations for the Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates that certifies individuals to work in ECCE settings.

In order to prepare educators to work with all children, a commitment articulated by the Early Childhood Educators of BC (2008), the first recommendation of this study would be to incorporate special education coursework and inclusive teaching strategies in the Basic ECE certificate. According to the participants in this study, their Basic ECE certificate did not cover topics related to inclusive teaching strategies and working with children with special needs. Most participants also noted that they were not exposed to children with diagnosed needs during the practica portion of their Basic ECE certificate. It is important to note that in BC it is not common to diagnose children in ECCE settings. Diagnosing and assessing children typically begins in kindergarten (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016). Though it is not common to have children with diagnosed needs in ECCE settings, participants noted that there are a few ECCE

centers in BC that have both children with typical and diagnosed needs. During their Post-Basic certificate participants reported that they gained the theoretical knowledge and practical exposure to work with children with special needs. Given that a Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs is not mandatory in BC, it seems that a Basic ECE certificate may not be sufficient to support all children's needs without having the theoretical knowledge and the practical exposure to work with children with special needs. Hence, it could be helpful to incorporate special education coursework and inclusive teaching strategies in the Basic ECE certificate.

According to Broderick et al. (2005), teacher preparation coursework should focus on inclusive teaching practices that address issues of equity, as well as deconstruct the traditional forms of knowledge in which children are identified by their disability. This is consistent with current literature. A recent study stated that some educational institutions have already begun incorporating content related to special needs in their general education program (Spear et al., 2018). According to Spear et al. (2018), both student educators from general and special education program negated the idea of identifying children with their disability and focused on supporting all children's needs. These educators held similar perspectives on inclusive teaching practices as the special education content was incorporated in the general education program (Spear et al., 2018). The decision to include inclusive and special education content in the Basic ECE certificate may help educators view inclusive teaching practices as an aspect of the profession. Additionally, this could also help educators deconstruct or co-construct their understandings of inclusion to move beyond the physical placement of children in ECCE settings.

In this study, most participants noted that their special education coursework incorporated inclusive teaching strategies and information about children with different diagnoses that helped them create an environment that supports all children. On the other hand, some participants discussed the importance of learning about different diagnoses, as well as working with children

with specific diagnoses. This finding suggests that participants had contrasting perspectives because at one point they noted the need to create an environment that adapts to all children in their classroom. This perspective is more consistent with a social model of disability that suggests that educators can reduce barriers for children with special needs by creating an environment that supports all needs. On the other hand, some participants also discussed the need to support children with specific developmental delays and learn more about supporting individual needs. This perspective is more consistent with the medical model of disability that focuses on individuals' specific biological differences and suggests that these impairments or disabilities need to be cured or managed. Though the social model of disability discusses the need to reduce disabling conditions by providing an inclusive environment for children, it appears that student educators may also benefit by learning about specific diagnoses. This could be because learning about specific needs may help educators develop inclusive strategies that work for all children. Hence, special education coursework could incorporate teaching strategies that relate to both social and medical models of disability. This may help educators understand individual diagnoses while also thinking critically about the categories of diagnoses and, ideally, ensuring that they do not come to see children as "a diagnosis." This may contribute to the reduction of disabling conditions and the creation of inclusive environments where all children are supported.

The second recommendation would be to attend to opportunities for "real life" experiences in teacher education, both coursework and practica, and professional development. In BC, educational institutions may want to create opportunities for student educators to gain exposure to working with children with special needs during their Basic ECE certificate. This may strengthen student educators' inclusive teaching practices by providing them with a rationale for learning about how to work with children with diverse learning and development needs. During coursework, educators could have ample opportunities to reflect upon and co-construct

their image of the child. According to the British Columbia's (2008) Early Learning Framework, an educator's image of the child determines the way they interact with their children. A strong image of the child could inspire educators to focus on children's strengths and create an environment at their work or practicum placement that supports children with diverse needs (Government of British Columbia, 2008). Similarly, threading examples and discussions of theoretically grounded practices for working with children who appear to be developing differently throughout coursework and ensuring that coursework is linked with practica experiences may enable inclusive teaching to become normalized.

Within the second recommendation, BC educational institutions that offer online courses could also attend to challenges faced by student teachers who complete most of their coursework online. For example, unlike other participants in this study who discussed how their Post-Basic certificate in special needs helped them develop their inclusive teaching strategies, Nancy did not discuss her Post-Basic coursework; it did not appear to connect with her practica and real-life experiences. This could be because Nancy completed her Post-Basic certificate online. Perhaps, online courses could provide mentoring by using a blended learning approach in which student teachers have adequate opportunities to interact with their instructors via virtual platforms. Additionally, online courses could also incorporate projects and activities in which student teachers are encouraged to reach out to people or organizations in their local community (i.e., libraries, ECCE settings, and peers).

A third recommendation may be to consider increasing the duration of practica placements. Practicum placements should be long enough to provide a venue for student educators to learn and try out different teaching and support strategies in inclusive education (Macy et al., 2009). While working with children and their families during practica is limited, in both Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates, most of the participants in this study also reported

that they wished for longer practica. Practica that are shorter in duration provide fewer opportunities to develop relationships with families and children, as well as interact with families and understand children's needs. As suggested by the participants, a longer practicum may address this gap. This has been supported by other studies that shared that longer practica allowed student educators more time to collaborate with families and mentors; this may not always be possible in a four-to-five-week practicum (Atilas et al., 2012). A longer practica, perhaps one that lasts for 20 to 30 weeks, may give student educators a stronger foundation for working with children with special needs, as well as better prepare educators for future work environments.

A fourth recommendation, which builds from the notion of a longer practicum experience, may be to explore the possibility of a paid practicum or internship experience. Similar to other professions, like business and engineering, completing a Basic ECE or Post-Basic certificate in ECE, in particular with a longer practicum experience that enables student educators to develop relationships with children, families, and colleagues and more fully contribute to work settings may be a basis for creating paid internships. Indeed, in some professions, longer practica are incorporated within degree programs and they tend to be paid. Additionally, as the findings in this study suggest, there is a wide variation in number and kinds of practica each participant completed. A longer practicum that requires more responsibility and enables more access may begin to address some of this variability and provide more stability in preparation for the profession.

Recommendations for work environments. The findings of this study lead to three recommendations for work environments.

First, in order to move in the direction of inclusion, ECCE settings in BC could implement a zero-reject policy allowing children with typical and special needs to have full access to ECCE settings. This is likely to impact educators' inclusive teaching practices in a

positive way. According to Halfon and Friendly (2013), an ECCE setting is fully inclusive when it has a zero-reject policy. In other words, inclusion is more than simply the physical placement of a child in an ECCE setting. Full inclusion occurs when children and families with diverse needs have access to all resources in their ECCE settings and they do not experience any barriers due to their biological differences. An ECCE setting could become fully inclusive if the center managers and educators are well prepared to work with children with a wide range of needs and abilities. If all centers in BC implement a zero-reject policy, perhaps all student educators will have an opportunity to gain practical exposure to children with different needs during their practica and all full-time educators will work in centers that support all children. Indeed, a robust policy of inclusion across Canada may ensure quality ECCE settings for children with typical and special needs.

In order to implement a zero-reject policy, a second recommendation would be that all early childhood center managers consider hiring certified educators who have completed their Basic ECE certificate or are in the process of completing it. Hiring a responsible adult who has 20 hours of coursework may affect the quality of delivery in ECCE settings. Having said that, it is important to note that there is a huge shortage of certified early childhood educators in BC and this could be why it is challenging to hire qualified staff (Halfon & Friendly, 2013; Howe et al., 2017). One of the reasons behind this shortage is low wages (Howe et al., 2017). Recently the BC government announced that there would be more spaces for individuals to complete their Basic ECE and Post-Basic certificates (Government of British Columbia, 2018). Additionally, the government will also provide grants and bursaries to support the completion of these certificates. One expectation is that this may enable student educators to complete their certification and work as a fully certified early childhood educator (Government of British Columbia, 2018).

Third, the findings in this study suggest that participants did not have access to professional development workshops on a continuous basis. According to Leatherman (2007), consistent professional development workshops introduce early childhood educators to new research studies and innovative inclusive teaching strategies. Therefore, providing consistent access to professional development opportunities is critical to developing educators' inclusive teaching practices. Center managers could arrange workshops on a consistent basis at workplaces that support educators in their classroom; in order to access these opportunities ECEs would need to be given the time and funding to attend these workshops. One of the ways center managers could attend to funding issues is through the support of BC government. Recently, the government has announced that it will provide funding support for existing early childhood educators to access professional development opportunities (Government of British Columbia, 2018). In addition to providing consistent professional development opportunities, it is important to also focusing on the content of these workshops. For example, workshops that go beyond the identification and categorization of children with developmental delays might include discussions regarding both the benefits and concerns associated with labelling; this sort of approach may better prepare educators to navigate the process of assessment and diagnosis with children and families. Further, the content of professional development workshops may include attending to educators' images of the child, the social and medical models of disability. Finally, as Moss (2006) suggested, workshops could prepare educators with an awareness of social and cultural images of educators, including how to become researchers and collaborators.

In sum, educators' perspectives highlight the importance of both teacher education and work experiences for the development of their inclusive teaching practices. What participants have reported in this study is pertinent to their education and work experiences. A larger sample

size could lead to different perspectives on inclusive teaching practices. Therefore, this study opens up opportunities for future research that builds directly upon this research study.

Recommendations for policy makers: Teacher education and work experiences

The ECE Registry that governs certificates for practice and approval of educational institutions, including coursework, is in the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development. Hence, any change to coursework and practica, and/or qualifications of educators would fall under their responsibility. Therefore, some of the recommendations stated above directly relate to policy makers—ECE Registry in the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development—and they could also be classified as recommendations for policy.

First, incorporating special education coursework and inclusive teaching strategies in the Basic ECE certificate may be possible if the ECE Registry in the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development approves it. Second, the duration of practica is also governed by the ECE Registry; hence, this is again a recommendation for policy. Perhaps, the approval of longer duration of practica for educators could help reduce the challenge of filling several educator positions in ECCE settings. A longer duration may also lead to the approval of paid practica opportunities, which may encourage ECCE center managers to hire student teachers who are working towards a Basic ECE certificate, rather than hiring a Responsible Adult.

The Child Care Licensing Regulations are within Community Care and Assisted Living in the BC Ministry of Health. Hence, any changes about policies regarding whether or not to accept children into an ECCE setting are governed by this ministry. Suggested recommendations for implementing a zero-reject policy in ECCE settings, as well as updating the language used to talk about learning and teaching, would directly fall under this ministry's responsibility.

5.4 Future Research

This study, based on educators' perspectives on the role of teacher education and work experiences on the development of their inclusive teaching practices, drew upon semi-structured interviews. Future research that builds directly upon this research may include the following two studies.

First, a study could address the extent to which the experiences of these participants represents the profession more generally by building from similar research questions and using a survey to include more educators. The research questions for this study would be: What is the relationship between teacher education and work experiences in ECCE settings in BC? How do these two contexts impact inclusive teaching practices? To include more participants, a survey could be developed, based on the interview questions, and sent to early childhood educators throughout BC to investigate how representative the perspectives of the participants in this study are of the profession as a whole. This quantitative survey with a large sample size could be complemented with semi-structured interviews with 20 participants to express their experiences in detail and triangulate with the survey data.

Second, a future qualitative study with ECCE center managers could address their concerns regarding strengthening educators' inclusive teaching practices. Ten semi-structured interviews could be conducted to address two research questions: What factors strengthen educators' inclusive teaching practices in ECCE settings? How do professional development opportunities at work impact educators' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices? This study could also include ECCE center observations to investigate the relations between center managers and their staff. A rationale for this future research could be to examine the perspectives of center managers as they hire and lead in-service educators in their ECCE settings. Similarly, it is equally important to investigate college and university instructors' perspectives

5.5 Final Summary

Chapter 5 addressed the research questions in relation to the five themes that surfaced in this study and discussed some of the limitations of this study. This chapter provided seven recommendations for teacher education and work environments and discussed two possible avenues for future research.

This research examined early childhood educators' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices through semi-structured interviews with six participants. It contributes to the literature on the context of early childhood education in BC and how the role of education and work experiences influences educators' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices. ECCE settings in BC are complicated by variations in teacher preparation, including practica, competing policies, low wages, and the feminization of the profession; however, they are also influenced by the dedication of early childhood educators who work tirelessly to support children's learning and development.

According to Moss (2006), a re-envisioning of the early childhood workforce begins with a conceptualization of the work of an early childhood educator as a researcher and a collaborator who co-constructs knowledge with children and as one that supports children by creating an inclusive environment that are responsive to the image of the competent child (Government of British Columbia, 2008; Moss, 2006). Indeed, as stated in the recommendations in this chapter, this image of an early childhood educator may require policy makers to create opportunities for educators—across teacher education programs, ECCE settings, and ministries—to re-evaluate, together, the ways in which ECE educators are prepared in BC, as well as the standards for the profession including certification and wages. It is time we recognize that the images we hold of the child and the educator are related: our commitment to our children is only as strong as our commitment to our educators

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form for Directors



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Consent Form for Directors

The Role of Education and Work Experiences

in the Development of

Inclusive Teaching Practices in Child Care Settings

I. STUDY TEAM

Who is conducting the study?

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, Ph.D.
Human Development, Learning, and Culture
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
University of British Columbia
Phone: 604- [REDACTED]
Email: j.vadeboncoeur@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator:

Karima Rehmani, MA Student
Early Childhood Education (ECED)
University of British Columbia
Phone: 604- [REDACTED]
Email: karima.rehmani@gmail.com

This research is being conducted as part of a Master's thesis: a requirement for the completion of the degree in progress.

II. INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

Why should you take part in this study?

You are invited to participate in this research study because one or more early childhood educators working at your center have consented to participate in this study.

Why are we doing this study?

Through this research, we would like to inquire the role of education and work experiences in the development of inclusive teaching practices in child care settings. We believe that the best way to inquire about educators' inclusive teaching practices is to talk with them about their education and work experiences in early childhood settings.

This study will investigate the following:

1. The role of teacher education, preservice and in-service, in the development of early childhood educators inclusive teaching practices in child care settings.
2. The role of work experiences in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in child care settings?

III. STUDY PROCEDURES

What will you do in this study?

We are asking for your consent to speak with the educators at your daycare/preschool to tell them about the study and invite them to participate. During this study, the early childhood educators working at your center will be asked to provide a few examples from their work experiences that may not necessarily be related to your organization. However, the educators might give some examples related to their work experiences with children and families at your center. The educators will also be requested to share a printed copy of de-identified pedagogical narration documents which they have done at your daycare/preschool. The ECEs will be reminded of confidentiality and that they are not to use any names of the children or their parents while talking about their experiences. The name of your organization will not be mentioned in the report of the study or any publications related to the study.

If you say “Yes”, here is how we will do the study:

- The co-investigator (Karima Rehmani) will conduct one interview session with the educators that are currently working at your center. The co-investigator and the educators will arrange an interview time before or after the educators' work shifts for that day.
- The co-investigator and the educator will meet at a place and time that has been agreed by both. This can be at a quiet coffee shop or at a public library meeting room which will be booked in advance.
- The co-investigator will audio-record the interview so that she does not have to take notes. We think that the co-investigator will be able to engage better in the interview process if she is not distracted by taking notes during the interview.

If you say “No”, we will ensure the following:

- The educators at your center will not be contacted/invited to take part in the study.

IV. STUDY RESULTS

The data from the interviews will be used for data analysis, which will serve the purpose of answering the research questions of this study. The results of this study will be reported in a Master's thesis and may be published in journal articles and books.

A short summary of the results and the thesis will be sent to you after the completion of the Master's degree. If you wish to receive the short summary and a copy of the thesis, please write your email in the space provided below. _____

V. POTENTIAL RISKS OF THIS STUDY

We do not think this study is going to be bad for you in any way.

In case you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to withdraw from this research study.

Meaning, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason you can tell the co-investigator that you do not want educators at your center to be part of this research anymore.

VI. POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY

Indirect benefits: By allowing the educators to share their work experiences at your center, you will indirectly help the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to examine how different Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) develop their inclusive teaching practices and what role does education and work experiences play in developing their inclusive teaching practices. Additionally, the experiences these educators share can create examples and play a great role in the development of inclusive teaching practices for many other pre-service and in-service educators in British Columbia.

Also, you will be professionally satisfied as your participation will help a graduate student to further their professional and academic competencies.

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Data collected from the interview will not be attached to the educators' or your center's name. Additionally, audio records will be deleted from the co- investigator's encrypted and password protected computer as soon as they are transcribed. The transcriptions and pedagogical narration documents will be de-identified and printed copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigators office at UBC, Vancouver. These transcriptions will be shredded after five years from the completion of the study.

VIII. PAYMENT

A \$10 children's book or a \$10 Starbucks gift card will be provided to educators who will participate in this study. You will be given a choice to choose one of the above gifts at the end of the interview session.

IX. CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the study?

If you have any questions or seek further information about this study, please contact Dr. Jennifer Vadeboncoeur at 604-██████████ or <j.vadeboncoeur@ubc.ca > or Karima Rehmani at 604-██████████ or <karima.rehmani@gmail.com>.

X. CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS

Who can you contact if you have concerns or complaints about this study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

XI. DIRECTOR CONSENT AND SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you consent for the co-investigator to speak with the educators at your daycare/preschool to tell them about the study and invite them to participate. Your signature below also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Participant (or Parent or Guardian) signing above

Appendix B: Consent Form for Early Childhood Educators



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Consent Form for Early Childhood Educators

The Role of Education and Work Experiences in the Development of Inclusive Teaching Practices in Child Care Settings

I. STUDY TEAM

Who is conducting this study?

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, Ph.D.
Human Development, Learning, and Culture
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
University of British Columbia
Phone: 604-██████████
Email: j.vadeboncoeur@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator:

Karima Rehmani, MA Student
Early Childhood Education (ECED)
University of British Columbia
Phone: 604-██████████
Email: karima.rehmani@gmail.com

This research is being conducted as part of a Master's thesis (public document): a requirement for the completion of the degree in progress.

II. INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

Why should you take part in this study?

You are invited to participate in this research study because you are an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) who has a Basic Early Childhood Educator certificate and a Post-Basic certificate in Special Need and you have worked in an early childhood setting for at least 2 years with 3-5-year-old children who may or may not be diagnosed with intellectual, behavioral, emotional, and physical needs.

Why are we doing this study?

Through this research, we would like to inquire the role of education and work experiences in the development of inclusive teaching practices in child care settings. We believe that the best way to

inquire about educators' inclusive teaching practices is to talk with them about their education and work experiences in early childhood settings.

This study will investigate the following:

3. The role of teacher education, preservice and in-service, in the development of early childhood educators inclusive teaching practices in child care settings.
4. The role of work experiences in the development of early childhood educators' inclusive teaching practices in child care settings?

III. STUDY PROCEDURES

If you say “Yes”, here is how we will do the study:

- The co-investigator (Karima Rehmani) will contact you to arrange a time and place to interview you for approximately an hour. The co-investigator will ask you when and where you would like to be interviewed.
- There will be one interview session. A follow-up interview may be conducted for further clarification. This would not be longer than 20 minutes. You have the right to deny the follow-up interview session.
- You will be requested to bring a de-identified copy of pedagogical narrations that you have done at the preschool/daycare you are currently working at.
- The co-investigator and you will meet at the place and time you both agreed upon. This can be at a quiet coffee shop or at a public library meeting room which will be booked in advance.
- The co-investigator will introduce herself, give some information about her background in the field of Early Childhood Education (ECED), answer any questions related to the study/interview/confidentiality you might have, and ask you if you are ready to answer the questions.
- The co-investigator will audio-record the interview so that she does not have to take notes. We think that the co-investigator will be able to engage better in the interview process if she is not distracted by taking notes during the interview.
- As the focus of this study is to inquire about the role of education and work experiences in the development of inclusive teaching practices, any responses you give is a representation of what you think. Hence, your knowledge regarding the development of inclusive teaching practices will be highly valued and it will not be judged.

If you say “No”, we will ensure the following:

- You will not be contacted for the interview, meaning you will not be part of this research study.

IV. STUDY RESULTS

The data from the interviews will be used for data analysis, which will serve the purpose of answering the research questions of this study. The results of this study will be reported in a Master's thesis and may be published in journal articles and books.

A short summary of the results and the thesis will be sent to you after the completion of the Master's degree. If you wish to receive the short summary and a copy of the thesis, please write your email in the space provided below. _____

V. POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY

We do not think this study is going to be bad for you in any way. In case you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you have the right to withdraw from the research. Meaning, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason you can tell the co-investigator that you do not want to be part of this research anymore and that you would like the audio records of your voice to be deleted right there. You do not need to give any reasons as why you do not want to continue with the interview.

VI. POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Direct benefits: You might find benefits sharing upon your ideas and perspectives with the co-investigator who has completed a Basic Early Childhood Educator certificate and Post Basic certificate in Special Needs from British Columbia. The co-investigator has worked in various early childhood settings with children who may or may not be diagnosed with special needs. By participating in this proposed research, you will be able to reflect upon your own practice. As stated in the British Columbia's Early Learning Framework, educators should continually reflect upon their practices and the experiences they create with and for the children (Government of British Columbia, 2008). The value of listening is considered very important in the British Columbia's Early Learning Framework (Government of British Columbia, 2008). The educators who will participate in this study will get an opportunity to be heard and listened to.

Indirect benefits: Your participation in this study may help the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to examine how different Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) develop their inclusive teaching practices and what role does education and work experiences play in developing their inclusive teaching practices. Additionally, the experiences you share can create examples and play a great role in the development of inclusive teaching practices for many other pre-service and in-service educators in British Columbia.

Reference:

Government of British Columbia. (2008). *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*.
Victoria, British Columbia: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family
Development.

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Data collected from the interview will not be attached to your name. In the transcripts of the audio records you will be referred to as Educator # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 (as there will be 6 educators

participating in this study). Additionally, audio records will be deleted from the co- investigator's personal encrypted as well as password protected computer as soon as they are transcribed. The transcriptions and pedagogical narration documents will be de-identified and printed copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigators office at UBC, Vancouver. These transcriptions will be shredded after five years from the completion of the study.

VIII. PAYMENT

A \$10 children's book or a \$10 Starbucks gift card will be provided to the educators who will participate in this study. You will be given a choice to choose one of the above gifts at the end of the interview session.

IX. CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the study?

If you have any questions or seek further information about this study, please contact Dr. Jennifer Vadeboncoeur at 604-██████████ or <j.vadeboncoeur@ubc.ca > or Karima Rehmani at 604-██████████ or <karima.rehmani@gmail.com>.

X. CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS

Who can you contact if you have concerns or complaints about this study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

XI. PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on you.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Participant (or Parent or Guardian) signing above

Appendix C: Interview Guide

The role of education and work experiences in the development of Inclusive teaching practices in child care settings

Thank you for meeting today. I expect this interview to be approximately 60 minutes long. As mentioned in the consent, I will be audio recording this interview session. Please let me know if you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview. Do you have any questions?

This interview is divided into four different sections. The first section of this interview is the Demographics section. During this section we will go over some introductory questions. For example, I will be inquiring about your educational and professional background. The second section is the Education section where we will go over questions that relate to the Basic Early childhood certificate and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs. By special needs, I mean children who may or may not be diagnosed with social, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs. The third section is the professional development section where we will go over questions about continuing education courses and workshops. The last section will be about your work experiences and how it has developed your teaching practices in child care settings. In this section we will also discuss the pedagogical narration/documentation you have brought with you today.

During the interview, I may ask questions about your inclusive teaching practices. By inclusive teaching practice, I mean teaching practices that meet the needs of all children (with and without special needs).

Demographics

Let us begin with some introductory questions about yourself, your educational background, and your work experiences.

1. Tell me a bit about yourself
2. What is your educational background?
3. When did you complete your Basic Early Childhood Educator and Post Basic certificate in Special Needs?
4. How long have you been working in early childhood settings?

Education

Now let's talk specifically about your pre-service education which includes your Basic Early Childhood Educator certificate and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs.

1. Which program did you attend to complete your Basic Early Childhood Educator and Post-Basic certificate in Special Needs?
2. How many courses in your program were geared towards working with children who may or may not be diagnosed with special needs?
3. How many of these courses developed your inclusive teaching practices?
4. Describe the content that was covered in these courses that developed your inclusive teaching practices?

5. How do you feel about your educational preparation with regards to working with children with special needs?

Now let us talk about your practicum experience

6. Describe your practicum experience in a child care center where you worked with children with typical and special needs.
7. Describe your experiences with families who have children with special needs at your practicum setting?

Now let us talk generally about the role of education in the development of educators' inclusive practices

8. In your opinion, how many courses and practica can prepare teachers to implement activities that meet the needs of all children in a child care setting?
9. In your opinion, what content should be covered in the theory and practicum coursework to prepare teachers to work with children with special needs in child care settings?

We are done with two sections already! Now let's move to the third section of this interview.

Professional Development

Let us talk about the professional development opportunities

1. How many professional development or continuing education workshops/courses have you attended after completing your Basic Early Childhood Educator and Post-Basic certificate?
2. How many of these workshops/courses assisted you to work with families and their children with special needs in your child care setting?
3. Describe one course/workshop that focused on the development of educators' inclusive teaching practices
4. How many of these workshops/courses were funded by your child care setting?
5. When it comes to professional development courses/workshops what topics interest you the most?
6. Now let us discuss briefly about the barriers you may have experienced in accessing professional development workshops. Have you faced any barriers in accessing these workshops/courses?
7. If yes, describe any barriers that you have faced in accessing these courses/workshops?

Now let's move to the last section of this interview.

Work Experience

Let's begin this section by asking a bit about the number of child care settings you have worked at.

1. How many child care settings have you worked at?
2. Describe one child care setting experience which developed your inclusive teaching practices?
3. In your opinion, what skills did you learn on-the-job that prepared you to meet the needs of all children?

4. Describe an activity you set up that met the needs of all children in your child care setting?
5. Describe your first year working at a child care setting after your graduation? How did you feel about your educational preparation?
6. Given the amount of education an early childhood educator requires to get their Post-Basic certificate in British Columbia; how do you think early childhood educators can develop their inclusive teaching practices to meet the needs of all children in their child care settings?
7. Now let us discuss about the pedagogical narrations/documentations. How often do you record children's learning?
8. Let us look at the pedagogical narration you have brought today. Describe all the steps or process you engaged in when recording this moment.
9. What factors helped you decide to record this moment?
10. Do you typically record each and every child's learning or engagement in your child care setting?
11. Do you have any examples of children who may not engage verbally? How do you record their learning in the form of pedagogical narration?
12. In general, what makes you decide to record a certain child's learning?
13. In your opinion, do you think documentation can reflect all children's learning in the classroom? If yes, explain.

We are almost done! Do you have anything else to share?

Thank you so much for your time and patience. Your responses are very valuable for my research and my practice. I would like to offer you a small token. Thank you again and I wish you all the best for your future endeavors.

Appendix D: Transcript Conventions

Transcript Conventions

Convention	Description	Example
.	Falling intonation and pause.	I am still in my 4th year of early childhood degree.
?	Rising intonation and pause.	What are some of the positive aspects of your work?
,	Continuing intonation and short pause	Yeah I loved that book, it did make me wonder a lot about my initial ideas about disability.
...	Noticeable Pause	In my workplace we had a child he was not diagnosed but you could see ... there was not a support plan but he was not fully diagnosed so it was hard.
!	Animated tone	Wow! I went there two years ago after my basic and post-basic
CAPS	Emphatic stress	You had FIVE practica in your basic?
=	Continues speech	Karima: Yeah because= Nat: yeah! they accepted my ECE so I went right into third year. Karima: =you had infant toddler certificate as well?