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DIVERSE ABILITIES.

POST-SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES:
HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

by

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Abstract

Some English language learners (ELLs) may not be successful in their English language program due to non-language related physical, emotional or behavioural challenges. Some students may conceal their challenges or diverse abilities upon application to a program for fear of not being accepted, and others may have never been assessed and diagnosed in their country of origin due to fear and shame related to stigma against people with disabilities in their culture. Some students may not have learning challenges in their own culture and may face new challenges when introduced to a new language and a new and different education system. This knowledge translation project proposes that all post-secondary English as a Second Language (ESL) students who are unable to achieve success in their English language studies within a reasonable time and without an identified, obvious mitigating cause should be advised and offered a referral for assessment for a learning disability or other condition that may affect their ability to input, integrate, and output what they are being taught in class. Publicly funded post-secondary institutions in British Columbia (BC) are expected to provide accessibility services to students with diverse abilities. Their policies and services are made available to students on their websites. This study investigated whether private post-secondary language institutions in BC are expected to have and whether they do have accessibility policies and services available to their post-secondary ESL students with diverse abilities. A non-native English speaker friendly policy for international ESL students with diverse abilities was created that could be adopted by any private post-secondary language school in BC. Best practices for assisting ESL students with diverse abilities within this sector are recommended.

Dedication

This capstone project is dedicated to all of the post-secondary ESL students who have come to British Columbia to study English with the hope that their educational experience in our culture may be more inclusive than what they had previously experienced in their own culture. I know some have been disappointed and hope that this will change in the coming years.

I also dedicate this project to my son Justin who faced his learning and other challenges with creativity and perseverance. Many of his formative years were spent trying to fit in and keep up with typical learners in our education system. The last few years of his life were spent working with and encouraging children who were not only struggling with their education, but also with diverse linguistic, cultural, emotional and behavioural challenges. Justin taught me that when you spend time building genuine relationships with people and encourage them in their strengths, not only do their weaknesses diminish, but there is no limit to what they can accomplish.

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Chapter One: Introduction, Background, and Purpose

How does one know if ESL students are academically unsuccessful because of their low level of language and/or cultural proficiency or if they have a physical, emotional, or behavioural challenge that is adversely affecting their ability to learn? These kinds of challenges are often referred to as disabilities; however, for the purposes of this paper, I will avoid using the terms disabled or disabilities as much as possible, as they imply a sense of negativity by using the prefix “dis,” which is perceived as negative and can be synonymous with words like denigrate and disparage. We need to be careful that the language we use in addressing the ability-diverse population in our institution does not further impair, isolate or stigmatize them (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012). The language we choose can imply more than just a difference: it can add a positive or negative value to the difference, thus marginalizing those who are different by inferring they are abnormal and less valuable in our community and to our society at large (Anastasiou & Kaufman, 2013). This can be even more damaging for students who may already feel a social or educational disconnect because they are culturally and linguistically diverse. Instead of the word disability, I will use terms such as “exceptional” or “diverse abilities” when referring to people with diverse abilities, and the term “accessibility” when referring to services specifically for people with diverse abilities or diverse needs. In his book *Neurodiversity in the classroom*, Armstrong (2012) cautions educators about terminology:

It’s interesting to me that kids these days often use the phrase ‘He dissed me!’ to indicate that they’ve just been insulted or disrespected Isn’t it possible that we’re doing the same thing, albeit in an institutional way, when we identify certain kids in school according to what’s wrong with them? (p. 3)

I agree with Armstrong and would like to join him in attempting to change our current disability

discourse to a diversity discourse focusing on difference, rather than deficit.

Researchers in the field of special education indicate that differentiation between academic underachievement due to lack of language proficiency or learning disabilities (LDs) and other developmental disorders that affect learning is not easily determined (Chu & Flores, 2011; Hutchinson, Whitely, Smith, & Connors, 2004; McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leos & D'Emilio, 2005; Schulman, 2002). Many students are misidentified, resulting in an underrepresentation of English language learners (ELLs) in special education classes in the early school grades and over representation in the higher grades (Huang, Clarke, Milczarski & Raby, 2011; Liasidou, 2013). A search of the literature, which will be more fully described in a subsequent section, indicated there is very little research on post-secondary international students with diverse abilities. ELLs are generally referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL) students at the post-secondary level. Some post-secondary ESL students are suspected of failing in their academic English programs due to some kind of diverse learning ability, but, because few of them may identify themselves as having a disability upon program application and their educational history in their own country may be unknown, there may be little or no data on which to conduct research (Shulman, 2002). Diverse abilities may often be hidden or ignored in many of the cultures from which these students come (Wang 2016; Zhang, 2015). Academically unsuccessful students in these countries may sometimes be sent away to study so that the family can save face because their child was denied post-secondary admission in their own country (McCabe, 2007; Mortenson, 2006; Supple & Abgenyega, 2011.). If educators suspect students may be diverse learners in addition to being ELLs and offer to assist them, the students may be unwilling to pursue help for fear of being labeled or stigmatized and bringing shame upon themselves and their family (Couzens et al., 2015; Herbert et al., 2014; McCabe, 2007;

Mortenson, 2006; Wang, 2016). These students may mask their disabilities as language acquisition issues by testing into lower English levels and then not progress in their skills along with their peers. Also, post-secondary English language instructors may not know how to assist these students as they may have few options in terms of resources or professional development (Huang, Clarke, Milczarski & Raby, 2011; Liasidou, 2013; Scott, Hauerwas & Brown, 2014; Supple & Abgenyega, 2011).

The BC Ministry of Education (2012) has a comprehensive policy on Special Education that includes a commitment to inclusion with special funding available to students who qualify: however, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) does not. Instead, AVED has put together *The Disability Services Framework: Guidelines for the Accommodations of Students with Disabilities Attending Post-Secondary Education in British Columbia* (2011). This document outlines the legislation behind its recommendations for institutional responsibilities. It provides definitions of accommodations and lists available resources. The Canadian Bureau of International Education (2017) references the Canadian Charter of Human Rights to support its statement:

As an international student in Canada you are afforded the rights and freedoms as outlined above, which includes having your rights protected on campus. This means that you have the right to be free of discrimination based on your race, gender, sex, place of origin, nationality, colour, religion, sexual orientation, age, or any mental or physical disability you might have.

This confirms that there is an expectation that post-secondary education in BC cannot discriminate against students with diverse abilities and must provide accessibility and reasonable accommodations to international students who request them and provide the required

documentation by certified or licensed professionals to verify their disability.

In Canada, post-secondary education is not viewed as a human right, and it is not available to everyone in the same way that public K-12 education is. Therefore, the government is not obligated to provide the same level of funding and resources to public post-secondary education the way it does for students in the K-12 school system. Since there is limited government funding and the law defines “reasonable accommodations” as those that do not create undue hardship on the provider, the accommodations offered in public post-secondary education may be quite limited, and the financial burden may fall back on the students and their families (Kelepouris, 2014). Furthermore, private post-secondary education receives no government funding in BC, which begs the question, are private institutions exempt from providing special services or accommodations to students with diverse abilities?

According to the *Disability Services Framework*, publicly funded post-secondary institutions offer accessibility services to their students, but the responsibility lies with the student to self-disclose his or her disability by providing the correct formal documentation and by self-advocating for accommodations (Banarjee, 2015; British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; Sparks & Lovett, 2014). Students’ educational files from high school, including any Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), may not automatically follow students to post-secondary education (Banarjee, 2015; BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2007; Sparks & Lovett, 2014). Although parents and students may gain access to these files, they may choose not to forward them to the accessibility office at the post-secondary institution to which they have applied (Couzens et al., 2015). If they do forward their high school files, and if the previous evaluations and diagnostic reports are five years old or older, they may not be accepted by the post-

secondary institution, and new diagnostic tests may be required at the expense of the student (Banarjee, 2015; BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2007; Sparks & Lovett, 2014). Smaller or private post-secondary institutions may not be able to afford to run a department or offer services specifically to serve students with diverse abilities. These institutions may not have formal policies and services in place and may instead deal with each case in a reactionary manner as they present themselves. Since international ESL students may not be able to provide the correct documentation and may have inadequate self-advocacy skills due to their limited English language skills, they may end up getting lost in the system, and paying large tuition fees, but not being able to succeed in their programs.

Purpose

Given the foregoing challenges, the purpose of this transformative parallel mixed methods study is to examine whether or not private post-secondary language schools in British Columbia are required to have, and if they do have, accessibility policies and best practices in place to create a reasonably inclusive environment for post-secondary ESL students with diverse abilities. In its *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines* (2016), the BC Ministry of Education states the following:

British Columbia promotes an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners. Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. (p. 2)

The special education manual is specifically written for BC's public K-12 schools. Are private post-secondary institutions required to hold to a similar standard? If not, should they be? If so, are they? After reviewing relevant literature and the policies and accessibility services currently

being offered by public post-secondary language institutions in BC, as described in a subsequent chapter, a policy and best practice recommendations were developed. These policy and best practice guidelines could be adopted by any private language school in BC without causing them undue hardship.

Chapter Two: Project Method

This project used a transformative parallel mixed methods design because both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to answer the research questions, and the goal of this research was to promote change for an underrepresented population (Mertens, 2015, p. 309). The objective of this study was to confirm whether or not inclusion is mandated and implemented in private post-secondary language schools in British Columbia, at least to the minimum extent required by law and by BC government policies. Based on the findings, recommendations for policy and best practices were made.

Research Questions

- (a) Are all post-secondary institutions required to accommodate students with diverse abilities? To what extent?
- (b) Do accredited private post-secondary language schools in British Columbia have formal policies in place to support ESL students with diverse learning abilities in their programs? For the purpose of this study, I will define a ‘formal policy’ as a policy that has been made available to students and staff in a student or staff handbook or on the school’s website.
- (c) Do accredited private post-secondary language schools in British Columbia have best practices in place to support international ESL students with diverse abilities in their programs?
- (d) What kind of policy and best practices could be adopted by accredited private language schools in BC to support ESL students with diverse learning needs?

First, a qualitative approach was used to inquire as to whether or not all post-secondary schools are required to have accessibility policies and services in place. An extensive review of

literature, legislation, and BC government publications was conducted to confirm what laws and government policies mandate inclusion in post-secondary education in BC.

Second, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to investigate whether or not accredited private language schools in BC currently have accessibility policies and best practices in place for post-secondary ELLs. An initial search of BC language school websites was conducted to see whether or not the schools posted an accessibility policy. Following this online search, a quantitative approach was used to invite BC private language schools accredited by Languages Canada to participate in a survey using the online survey application Survey Monkey. Their answers were reported as a binary: yes or no. These data were then used to inform the research of field practices. The invitation to participate in the survey was emailed out by a Languages Canada staff member (A copy of the survey invitation is available in Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was to investigate whether or not accredited private language schools in British Columbia currently have formal policies and best practices in place for students with diverse abilities. They were also asked whether they thought polices and services should be implemented. A copy of the survey questions are presented in Appendix B.

Finally, a qualitative approach was used to create a formal accessibility policy and best practice guidelines that could be adopted by the private language school sector in British Columbia. Mertens (2015), defines qualitative research as an interpretive and naturalistic approach that can include field notes, interviews and conversations. This procedure relied heavily on a review of relevant literature and a review of the existing disability and accessibility polices of public post-secondary institutions published online. Details of these reviews will be provided in the subsequent literature review section subtitled *BC Institutional Accessibility Policies*. After reviewing the policies of public institutions, an ESL-friendly policy was created

that could be adopted by private English language schools in BC. An initial draft of the new policy was presented to the faculty of an accredited private language school in BC for feedback and discussion. This discussion led to edits and the final version available in the appendices of this paper. Best practices were also discussed and developed after the review of relevant literature which can be found under the subtitle *Support and Accommodation*. The purpose of creating best practice guidelines is so that staff and faculty have practical support in carrying out the policy. In addition, policy can be quite limiting due to fear of liability on behalf of the institution. Once a policy is created, the institution is bound by it, and some institutions or faculty may wish to assist students beyond the scope of the policy in certain cases or areas. To allow for this, a list of best practice guidelines beyond the policy arose from the discussion and conversations with the faculty of the language school consulted in this project. Students have no right to demand any of the services or procedures listed or described in the best practice guidelines that are not also listed in the accessibility policy. The best practice guidelines which do not correlate directly with the policy are meant to support students who may not have disclosed or may not be aware of their challenges, or for those who cannot afford the testing required for professional documentation.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

As noted in the previous section there are numerous areas that may contribute to the lack of academic or educational success of ELLs, and more specifically post-secondary ESL students. It is important to review what is currently known regarding these challenges to establish insights into the various facets noted above and to develop recommendations for policy and best practices. A review of the literature was conducted using OneSearch for Education Research which is available through the Trinity Western University Library and Google Scholar.

This literature review is organized to address various factors that may impact international ESL students with disabilities in private post-secondary education. It includes: legislation and international agreements, government policies, identification and assessment, support and accommodations and BC institutional accessibility policies.

Legislation and International Agreements

In his article *Canada's Implementation of the Right to Education*, Shah (2010) investigates whether Canadian legislation protects the rights to education of those with diverse needs or abilities. He narrows his qualitative analysis of the barriers to education faced by students with diverse abilities in Canada to a focus group of students with epilepsy in public K-12 schools in Ontario. Shah explains that the right to education is not constitutionally recognized in Canada. He found that, in Canada, education falls under provincial jurisdiction with each province having its own laws and policies determining whether a student's right to education is recognized. However, he discusses several international treaties and declarations including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) that outline education as a human right on which Canada is a signatory. Shah states that "these

treaties require that primary and secondary education be free and compulsory and that post-secondary education be generally available and that all education promote the full development of the human personality” (p. 9). Shah concluded that although these various treaties and government charters suggest the existence of a right to education for all students, little guidance is given as to the parameters of the right to education for students with diverse needs or abilities. The research described here further investigated what, if any, parameters exist for educating ESL students with diverse abilities in the private post-secondary language sector in British Columbia.

As a member of the United Nations, Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 11, 2010. Article 24.5 refers to this:

States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017)

The B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education (2011), the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the British Columbia Human Rights Code all protect those with diverse physical or mental abilities from discrimination and encourage access to the same opportunities and benefits as those offered to all other individuals in Canada. Accordingly, research investigated whether private post-secondary ESL students in British Columbia have the same access and opportunities as those in the public sector and whether any services or accommodations are offered and how this sector defines “reasonable accommodations.”

Government Policies

British Columbia's Ministry of Education has a 38-page manual of policies, procedures and guidelines for Special Education in grades K -12; however, British Columbia's Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) only provides a 10-page framework of guidelines for accommodating students with disabilities attending post-secondary education in British Columbia. The framework assumes that all post-secondary institutions have policies in place for students with disabilities: nowhere does the document indicate that it is only written for public institutions. It also assumes that all schools are providing reasonable accommodations, as it suggests that in "determining reasonable accommodations, each student situation must be reviewed on an individual, case-by-case basis" (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011 p.7). However, private training institutions, such as language schools that wish to be accredited by the Ministry of Advanced Education and to be allowed to use the British Columbia Education Quality Assurance (EQA) mark, are required to have a multitude of policies in place to protect students, but are not required to have an accessibility policy (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012; Private Training Institutions Branch, 2017).

AVED's *2016/17 Service Plan* claims that its first goal is to ensure that students are supported to achieve their education, and employment and training goals (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2016). In order to achieve this goal, it has created three objectives. The second objective states that it will respond and adapt to the diverse and changing needs of students, and the third objective is to increase participation and successful completion of all students. Unfortunately, these references to diversity and "all" seem to only refer to

indigenous students and not to all diverse students more specifically those with diverse learning needs.

The province of British Columbia has a ten-year action plan entitled *Accessibility 2024*. In this document they declare that they have “set a vision for BC to be the most progressive jurisdiction in Canada for people with disabilities - where disabilities are no barrier to living full lives, contributing to communities, and where no British Columbian is ever told that their goals and dreams are not realistic because of their disability” (Government of British Columbia, 2014 p.1). This plan toward creating a more inclusive province includes twelve building blocks, but sadly none of these refer directly to education.

All of these government policies indicate that education in BC should be available to all students – even at the post-secondary level. We can see that Canadian legislation and government policy that support post secondary institutions in BC are expected to remove barriers that may cause discrimination against students with diverse abilities, as long as no undue hardship or burden is caused to the program that is offering the accommodations and services. The problem is that no clear definition of “reasonable accommodations” and “undue hardship” is given, other than what has been defined by the courts in lawsuits brought against institutions by students who felt they were discriminated against.

Identification and Assessment

According to Statistics Canada (2011), 15% of Canadians live with at least one disability and *The World Health Organization* claims that 15% of the world’s population live with a disability (Government of Canada, 2012; World Health Organization, 2011). The BC government published a factsheet that states that in 2015, there were 67,965 international students in private post-secondary institutions in BC (Government of BC, 2017). Based on these

numbers, approximately 10,195 of these students may have some kind of diverse ability. It is a challenge to find exact information about international students with diverse abilities in Canada as they are not included as a separate category for reporting purposes on any government surveys. Topor and Rosenblum, (2013) confirm that there are no statistics available as to how many international ESL students with disabilities live in Canada (p. 80). Chu and Flores (2011) claimed that the number of students from linguistically diverse backgrounds in the United States is growing, and therefore, identifying ELLs with LDs in order to provide appropriate educational services has become very important. Statistics Canada (2011) reports that “17.5% of the population, or 5.8 million persons, reported speaking at least two languages at home in Canada. In 2006, just under 4.5 million (14.2%) did so” (p. 3). With an increase in this population in Canada as well, this review is timely as to whether private post-secondary language schools have policies in place to identify and assist ELLs with disabilities.

To qualify for accessibility services at a post-secondary institution, students must provide professional documentation to substantiate their disability (Banarjee, 2015; British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; Sparks & Lovett, 2014). According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2007), student files and documentation do not always transition from high school to university with the student, or if they do they may be deemed outdated. Students may be asked to provide more recent or new documentation from professionals. These professional service fees that were once covered by the government in public school may now become the responsibility of the student and their family (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; Herbert et al., 2014; Stamps-Jones, 1994). Also, some of the documentation requirements for students with disabilities in post-secondary institutions are different than K-12 public school requirements to qualify for services. This

means that even if the documentation is current, it may not be sufficient to qualify the student for services (Banarjee, Madaus, & Gelbar, 2015; Kelepouris, 2014). Furthermore some students who do have current documentation may choose not to disclose it due to fear of stigma. (Couzens et al., 2015; Herbert et al., 2014; Kattari, 2015; McCabe, 2007; Mortenson, 2006; National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2017). There is also the possibility that some students may have never been documented because they were able to cope in their former culture or educational setting and were never diagnosed (Helland & Kaasa, 2004; Ho & Fong, 2005; Rontou, 2012; Wai-Ting, 2004). No information could be found on what, if any, international documentation might be acceptable to a post-secondary institution to qualify an international ELL student for disability services in British Columbia.

The added challenge with non-native speakers of English is that it can be difficult to differentiate those with and without learning disabilities from one another (Chu & Flores, 2011; Liasidou, 2013; McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, & D’Emilio, 2015; Shulman, 2002). If a student does not disclose his or her disability or has never been diagnosed with one, it may not be immediately evident to his or her teacher that the student may have a disability (Couzens et al., 2015; Hutchinson, Whitely, Smith & Connors, 2004). Many of the signs or clues of a potential disability can also be common indicators of culture shock, cultural diversity, or difficulty with language acquisition (Chu & Flores, 2011; DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Nguyen, 2012; Rossell, 2006; Shulman, 2002). Even if the student and his or her family decide to pursue testing to see if there may be a diagnosis, many standardized tests may not accurately distinguish ELLs from ELLs with disabilities (Huang, Clarke, Milczarski, & Raby, 2011). Many standardized tests have not been normed on students whose first language is not English and are based on standards of the English-speaking culture (Shulman, 2002). Liasidou (2013) maintains

that CLD students should be tested in both languages formally and informally and that all tests should be student-centered and criterion based. When assessing ELLs with LDs, it can be difficult to discern whether the student did not know the answer or did not understand the question, or if there is another correct answer to the question in the students' culture of origin (Rossell, 2006). Scott, Haurwas, and Brown (2014) found that few researchers have examined the assessment practices related to ELLs with LDs. They caution that research needs to inform policy and policy needs to drive research so that there will be reasonable, ethical, and equitable laws for ELLs with LDs. The intention of this review is to inform policy and encourage further research on providing reasonable services to post-secondary ELLs with disabilities.

Support and Accommodations

Once an ESL student has provided the correct documentation or has officially been identified as being an exceptional learner, the support they are entitled to at the post-secondary level is much more limited than if they were in the public K-12 system (Kelepouris, 2014). If they are seeking services at a private post-secondary institution, services may be even more limited depending on the financial burden created by providing the service. Unlike public institutions, private institutions in BC receive little or no funding and therefore any costly accommodations may be denied on the grounds of creating undue financial hardship. AVED's Disability Services Framework states that it "recognizes that providing services to students with disabilities is a responsibility shared between the Government and universities, university colleges, colleges and institutes" (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011 p. 6). Public universities and colleges that receive government funding, toward services for students with disabilities list their services on their websites. Many of the resources listed may only be available to permanent residents in BC; therefore, international students attending those public

universities and colleges may not qualify for some of the resources that are available free of cost to domestic students and may be charged for similar services (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; Student Aid BC, 2018). Private post-secondary institutions that are accredited by AVED and/or Languages Canada are presently not required to have a disability policy in place. They are only required to establish a written policy for the respectful and fair treatment of students. No guidelines are given as to what should be included or written into this policy (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011; Private Training Institutions Branch, 2017).

Researchers in the field of student accommodations affirm that students respond positively and value efforts made by educational institutions to meet their needs (Couzens et al., 2015; Reinschmidt, Sprong, Dallas, Buono & Upton, 2012; & Schiff 2004). Moreover, these researchers suggest that rather than just trying to assist one student at a time, the adoption of a universal design for learning (UDL) approach may be beneficial to all students, especially diverse student groups. UDL allows for a range of choices in accessing, processing, and demonstrating knowledge. Stamps-Jones and Brigham (1994) admonish educators to be careful to avoid a “one size fits all” mentality when approaching accommodations because even though the same accommodations may benefit several students with diverse abilities, some students with similar challenges may require completely different accommodations. Giving all students choices may help those with challenges to choose what works best for them and may help undiagnosed students or students hiding their challenges to be more successful as well. Sometimes however, specific students will need a specialized service or adjustment that is unique to their own specific challenges. Fossey et al. (2015) discussed the need for collaboration between the student, the accessibility services coordinator or school administrator, and the teachers to ensure that the accommodations are not only effective but of value and respectful to

individual students. The website *Enhancing Accessibility in Post-Secondary Education Institutions: A Guide to Service Providers*, offers practical assistance and best practices to post-secondary educators in developing accessibility policies and services (National Education Association of Disabled Students, 2017). They define accommodations “as any service, adaptation or support mechanism that enables students with disabilities to participate fully in academic, campus and community life”. They provide recommendations in constructing the process for students to qualify for accommodations and they also list the most common types of accommodations and provide resources for institutions to assist them in sourcing professional assistance, funding or equipment (The National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2018). The Government of Australia (2018), has also published a document called *The Good Practice Guide: Supporting Tertiary Students with a Disability or Mental Illness*. This document is a helpful resource in introducing accessibility accommodations and universal design to staff and faculty for the first time. This resource also gives examples of reasonable adjustments and introduces some student-initiated learning management strategies. Using the search parameters previously described, no articles could be found that specifically addressed accommodations for international ELLs in private post-secondary institutions.

BC Institutional Accessibility Policies

After an attempt at finding and reviewing accessibility/disability policies made available on private BC language institution websites was unsuccessful, a review of accessibility/disability policies of public BC language programs was conducted. All public language programs investigated were located on the campus of public BC universities in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The policies found were published on the main university website by the university for all students regardless of which program they were registered in. The university

websites investigated included Capilano University, Kwantlen Polytechnic, Langara College, Simon Fraser University, Trinity Western University, The University of British Columbia and The University of the Fraser Valley. ESL students enrolled at these institutions can find the accessibility policies and support services available to them on their institution website. All of the policies were written in English, and no translations into other languages were immediately available on the websites. The language used in the policies and on the accessibility websites assume English language proficiency. None of the links to the institutions accessibility information were listed directly on the home page of the website. Students would need to know the words accessibility or disability to conduct a search on the website to find the information. All of the policies were quite similar in design and wording, including a purpose or rationale, scope and definitions. The various policies also outlined the student and university responsibilities and obligations in obtaining and providing services and accommodations. All of the policies ensure that the student's right to privacy will be respected and all information and documents will remain confidential. An appeals process is also included. All policies require students to self-disclose their disability and to provide documentation by a professional qualified to make a diagnosis, along with the details of the accommodations required or requested (Capilano University, 2018; Kwantlen Polytechnic, 2018; Langara College, 2018; Simon Fraser University, 2018; Trinity Western University, 2018; University of British Columbia 2018; University of the Fraser Valley, 2018).

Although literature specific to the rights of post-secondary ESL students with diverse abilities was quite difficult to find, Canada's signature on international treaties, along with Canadian legislation and the government of BC policies and published initiatives all support that every student in BC is protected from discrimination and should have equitable access to

education. Reasonable accommodations and adjustments should be made available to any qualified student at any educational institute in BC if failure to do so causes a barrier to only that student and discriminates them from their peers. The literature also indicates that providing services and accommodations to students with diverse abilities can be achieved in many cases without creating undue hardship on the institution.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this project was to explore whether or not inclusion is mandated in private language schools in BC and whether or not private language schools have accessibility policies and services in place. In the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education's 2016/17 – 2018/19 Service Plan, the second objective is stated as "Respond and adapt to the diverse and changing needs of the students" (2016, p. 7). A review of international and governmental legislation, policies, and agreements confirms that although there is no specific mandate requiring private post-secondary language institutions to be inclusive, there is an expectation that people with diverse abilities should be treated without any discrimination in Canada. Does this mean that private post-secondary English language institutions in BC should be obligated to be inclusive and accessible to post-secondary students with diverse abilities? If so, one might assume that the agencies that oversee and regulate these institutions would include an accessibility policy among other required policies to receive accreditation or designation in BC. Although Languages Canada and the Private Institutions Training Branch of BC (PTIB) both have a list of required policies and mandate that all accredited institutions make the required policies readily available to students by publishing them on their websites or in their student handbook, neither organization lists an accessibility policy among the policies required for schools to gain accreditation. The only required policy that appears as though it may include a program's accessibility policy is the Respectful and Fair Treatment of Students Policy required by the Private Training Act (British Columbia Private Institutions Training Branch (2017), Section 3.2.16). Institutions certified or designated by the PTIB are required to establish a written policy that promotes respectful and fair treatment of all students, but the PTIB does not require any specific wording or services to be included in the policy. While reviewing the

policies of several BC private language schools that were posted on their websites, it was noted that none of the Respectful and Fair Treatment of Students Policies included any reference to accessibility services for students with diverse abilities.

Table 1

Survey Results

| Question | Yes | No | NA |
|--|-----|----|----|
| 1. Do you have a formal Disability or Accessibility policy for students in your program with diverse abilities? | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| 2. If yes, where can students and staff find a copy of your Diversity/Accessibility Policy? | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| 3. Do you have best practice guidelines in place for staff who may encounter students with diverse ability in your program? | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| 4. Do you currently have any students with documented disabilities in your program? | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 5. Do you or your staff currently suspect that one or more of your students may have a disability affecting their academic success in your program but no formal documentation has been submitted? | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| 6. Do you agree that post-secondary international ESL students with diverse abilities should have access to reasonable special education services as long as no financial burden is placed on the private language institution to provide such services and as long as the students are not given an unfair advantage over other students? | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the proposed Accessibility Policy and Best Practices Guidelines for Private Post-Secondary ESL Students with Diverse Abilities at the end of this study? | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. Is your language school currently certified or designated by the Private Institutions Training Branch of BC? | 6 | 0 | 0 |

Note. Of the 39 institutions sent survey invitations, 6 participated. Question 2 and 3 contained an open-ended follow-up question; see results section for further information.

After no information about accessibility policies and services could be found on any of the BC private language school websites that were investigated, a survey created on Survey Monkey was sent to 39 private language schools in BC by Languages Canada on behalf of this research. A copy of the invitation to participate in the survey is available in Appendix A, a copy of the Research Ethics Board approval is available in Appendix H. The purpose of the survey

was to confirm whether or not private language schools in BC did or did not have a formal accessibility policy and/or best practices in place for working with post-secondary ESL students with diverse abilities. A copy of the survey questions is available in Appendix B, and a copy of the results is available in Table 1 and Appendix F. Of the six private language schools which voluntarily participated in the survey, five indicated that they did not have a formal accessibility policy or best practice guidelines in place for students with diverse abilities. The institution which did have an accessibility policy, indicated that it could be located in its student and employee handbooks. When asked about best practice guidelines, one institution which did not have an accessibility policy also indicated that they did have best practice guidelines. When asked how these guidelines were made available to their staff, the participant indicated that they could be found in their instructor handbook. The majority of the participants in the survey did not have an accessibility policy in place, and all of these participants were all accredited by both Languages Canada and AVED through PTIB. Therefore, it appears that private language schools in BC are not currently required or expected to have an accessibility policy for students with diverse abilities, and that many do not have such a policy in place. All six private post-secondary schools that participated in the survey indicated that reasonable services should be offered to their students. Five of the six participants requested copies of the policy and best practices created during this project.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, Limitations, and Conclusion

Discussion

Examination of the results would suggest that these policies and services are needed and, according to the research conducted in this project, would be accepted within the sector. In addition to not requiring an accessibility policy, the PTIB and Languages Canada standards for student support services do not require any accessibility services, accommodations, or referral services. Private language schools are required by the PTIB standards to have one staff member available to provide students with information on academic support (tutoring in ESL), employment opportunities, childcare, healthcare insurance, housing, transportation, and cultural and community services. If there was an expectation for accessibility information or services to be provided to students, then they could be included in this list of services required, but they are not. Only one private language school that participated in the survey indicated that they had best practice guidelines in place, and they were made available to their teachers in their Instructor's Manual.

Three of the private language schools indicated that they had some students with documented disabilities currently attending their program, and four schools suspected that some of their current students may have undocumented diverse abilities. Five participating private language schools requested a copy of the policy and best practice recommendations created as a result of this project. All six participants agreed that post-secondary international ESL students with diverse abilities should have access to reasonable special services as long as no financial burden is placed on the private language institution and as long as the students are not given an unfair advantage over other students. This knowledge translation project has confirmed that there is currently a gap between what the Ministry of Advanced Education publishes about

accessibility and inclusion in BC versus what they require and what is offered by private post-secondary language schools that are currently certified under their EQA trademark. In order for a private language school in BC to use the EQA trademark, they must first be designated by the PTIB, which currently does not require any accessibility policy or services by any of their certified or designated private institutions. The survey demonstrates that there is a need for accessibility policies, services and best practice within the private language school sector in BC. Students with diverse abilities are currently registered in these programs, and there may be no policy or best practice in place to guarantee they are not discriminated against, either intentionally or inadvertently.

The Disability Services Framework published by AVED (2011) describes itself as being a voluntary, rather than mandatory, set of guidelines for the accommodation of students with diverse abilities attending post-secondary education in BC. This document outlines all of the federal and provincial legislation and agreements that protect the rights of all Canadians, including those with diverse abilities, and claims it was designed to enhance individual institution policies, rather than replace or override them. The document assumes that all institutions under AVED are public, receive public funding, and already have some kind of policy or service in place. This may have been true in 2011 when the document was first created, since at that time private language institutes were not required to be regulated under AVED, so these institutes were either not regulated at all or joined associations such as Language Canada voluntarily. In 2016, the Private Training Act mandated that all private training institutions, including private language schools offering training of 40 hours or more in length for a tuition of \$4,000 CAD or more, must be certified under the Act and subsequently regulated by the PTIB for AVED. Now that most private language schools are regulated under

AVED, it is not clear whether or not they are expected to be inclusive and to what extent. It is time for AVED to revisit the Disability Framework and to update it to include the private sector it now oversees.

Is an expectation for inclusion in private language schools in BC reasonable and even possible? If the terms inclusion and accessibility only mean gaining access to the classroom and lessons, then most private language schools in BC would already be considered inclusive. For the purposes of this paper and in the context of education in BC in general, true inclusion in a private language school would require students not just to have access to the program and sit in the classroom, but to have an equal opportunity at success in achieving the same learning outcomes and in completing the same program as all of the other students in their class. Equality or sameness is not always synonymous with equity or fairness. According to Edmunds and Macmillan (2010), “Fairness for all students does not mean sameness; rather, fairness means each student receiving what he or she needs to succeed” (p. 55). The content of the program and its objectives should not be simplified or changed, but the methods used in program delivery and assessment could be adapted for students with diverse abilities to even out the playing field for them. Inclusion seeks equity, not just access or equality (see diagrams in Appendix C for helpful illustrations to understand the definition of inclusion). Adaptations to program design, delivery and assessment can be costly, and unlike the public sector of education in BC, the private sector receives little or no funding from the government to pay for accessibility services. When Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it agreed that reasonable accommodation be provided to persons with disabilities. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017). The Disability Framework denotes The Canadian Human Rights Act as declaring, “For a request for accommodation to be considered

unreasonable...it must be established that accommodation of the needs of an individual or a class of individuals affected would impose undue hardship on the person who would have to accommodate those needs, considering health, safety and cost” (BC Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011 p.3). In light of this legislation, it should be safe to assume that private language schools in BC are expected to provide only reasonable accommodations to students with diverse abilities. Since private language schools do not receive government funding and most of their students are international students who do not qualify for government subsidized education in BC, the reasonable accommodations expected might be quite limited, but could still make a notable difference in the success of students with diverse abilities. Giving students choices, such as typing or handwriting assignments or allowing for extra time on exams or assignments, are examples of accommodations that could change a student’s outcome but not bring about additional expenditures for the school.

Since post-secondary education is not viewed as a right in Canada and most international students already pay higher fees than domestic students in public institutions, it is unclear whether or not international students with diverse abilities qualify for all of the accessibility services available to domestic students in public institutions. They may be required to pay additional fees in the public sector for services not deemed as reasonable. In the private sector, schools are allowed to charge the students directly for all services rendered and could easily provide more expensive accessibility services for additional fees or provide referrals to outside service providers such as note-takers, occupational therapists or other in-class assistants, psychoeducational evaluations, assistive technology, and other services.

Recommendations

An accessibility policy that could be adopted by most private language schools in BC without creating any significant financial hardship on the institution can be found in Appendix D. This policy is written in a way that most ELLs can comprehend with or without an electronic translator to translate it into their first language. The policy demonstrates that all students are welcome in the program and that an effort will be made to accommodate them if they identify themselves as requiring assistance. The policy also informs students of other services available to them at additional fees, so there will be no surprise when they arrive and begin the program and find that their school tuition does not include an accommodation or service they require, or that they may have to pay extra for additional services. The policy created during this project is based on the literature reviewed, as well as a review of public sector policies in BC and private sector policies in other Canadian provinces. It is a generic policy that can easily be edited and adapted to fit almost any private post-secondary language school setting. The policy will provide the institution with some options to help students with diverse abilities and will inform students as to what kinds of services and accommodations may be available to them before they apply to the program.

Policies can be rather rigid and limited because they are published and perceived as rights. Institutions try to keep their policies as brief and clear as possible to avoid liability issues that could arise if they cannot be carried out consistently. A more flexible set of unpublishable best practice guidelines has also been created to allow private post-secondary schools to assist students beyond what the policy states on an individual basis, as circumstances allow. These best practice guidelines can be found in detail in Appendix E. Research has indicated that most accessibility policies require official documentation for students to qualify for services and

accommodations. Since many international ESL students may not have official documentation and may be hesitant to pursue it, private language schools often have no idea what kind of challenges their students are facing while in their program. The guidelines set forth in Appendix E are designed to help language school teachers and administrators to explore why a student is not succeeding. They may assume a student is not motivated due to culture shock, homesickness, too much sudden independence at a young age (immaturity), rebellion at being sent abroad to study, or other stressors that lead to demotivation. The best practice guidelines will provide some strategies to help explore why a student may not be progressing instead of making judgements based on stereotypical assumptions. Not all international ELLs who want to be successful are, and it is very difficult to determine whether the cause is language-related, cultural, or if there is some other physical, social, behavioural, or emotional challenge that is affecting their learning. According to the B.C. Ministry of Education (2016),

Learning another language and new cultural norms, adjusting to a different social and physical setting, or overcoming homesickness or trauma can affect a student's school adjustment and learning. These factors, when combined with a disability or impairment, can significantly undermine school achievement. (p. 21)

The province of British Columbia is currently reforming its policies on international student education to ensure the quality of education provided to all students who enter the province on a study permit. All public post-secondary schools are automatically accredited by the British Columbia Education Quality Assurance brand (EQA) by the Ministry of Advanced Education. Private language schools must undergo a rigorous accreditation process to be designated under the EQA brand. Accessibility is assumed in the public sector, and most universities and colleges list their policies and services for students with diverse abilities on their websites. Private

language schools are not currently required to have an accessibility policy or services in place. This may soon change as all accredited institutions are required to participate in annual reviews to maintain their accreditation. As policies are reviewed and compared to the policies of the public sector, services for students with disabilities will need to be addressed. Some international students with diverse learning abilities are conditionally accepted into post-secondary degree programs. This means that they are required to improve their English language proficiency at an approved language center before beginning their degree program. For these students, it is critical that the language school can accommodate them in the same way the university will. If the language school does not have a policy of inclusion for these students, they will not be able to satisfy the condition for admission and will not be able to enter into their degree program. For students in this situation, it is critical that the language school offers the same accessibility services and accommodations as the university they will attend, otherwise they could become disabled by the language program and not by their diverse abilities.

Even if the BC Ministry of Advanced Education does eventually require all private language schools to implement an accessibility policy and services, some students with hidden disabilities may still not identify themselves and provide the required documentation to qualify for services and accommodations for fear of the cultural stigma attached to being “different” from other students (Australian Government, 2018; Couzens et al., 2015; Herbert et al., 2014; Kattari, 2015; McCabe, 2007; Mortenson, 2006; National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2017). For these students the ESL instructors will still be confused as to how to help them succeed in their program.

A potential solution would be for private language schools to implement a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to their program. Many public schools are moving towards a UDL

model for their program delivery. The National Disability Authority of Ireland (2014) describes UDL as:

The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits...Simply put, universal design is a good design. (p.1)

Edyburn (2010), cautions that UDL should not be confused with assistive technology. Although assistive technology can be used in UDL, UDL is available to everyone and not just made available to one student as a solution to that one student's unique challenge. He claims that UDL may in fact pre-empt the need for assistive technology in many cases. Edyburn (2010) purports that UDL in education is the result of intentionally designing instruction for diverse learners. It is not just integrating the latest technology into instruction, but "there must be a prior evidence that the instructional designer understands academic diversity and is proactively building in supports that will ensure that individual differences do not mitigate access and engagement" (p. 36). According to Armstrong (2012), "In education, universal design does not only remove barriers so that those with challenges can succeed, but it enhances everyone's ability to learn" (p. 17- 18). The focus is not just to adapt a lesson to help a few students, but to design the entire curriculum so that all students have more choices in how to learn and how to demonstrate what they have learned. Incorporating choices into the curriculum for all students may not only help

all students in the program but it may also reduce the fear of stigma for students with diverse abilities by not singling them out as being the only one doing things differently.

Many private language schools now use digital learning platforms or learning management software (LMS) such as Schoology or Moodle. These platforms can be used to help teach and to assess students in many different ways and can help create choices for students in a UDL environment in the classroom. For example, a teacher giving a quiz on Schoology can give students the choice to complete it online using a keyboard or in print form filled in by hand. Assessments can also be designed to accept verbal answers rather than written answers, and tests can be timed or not. Schoology also allows for teachers to post their lesson notes and slides so that students can view them while the teacher is teaching and again later if need be. Students required to give speeches in class could either give them live during class or could record them and upload them to Schoology so that they can be viewed by the teacher and classmates online. This would be especially helpful for students with anxiety disorders or speech impediments. For private language schools already using these kinds of platforms, there would be no additional cost for offering these options or choices. Teachers just need to be made aware of the benefits of offering more choices in class to all students so that they will be mindful to intentionally design their lessons and evaluation tools with diverse learners in mind. Research supports that all students may benefit from classrooms that implement UDL (Couzens et al., 2015; Reinschmidt et al., 2012; Schiff, 2004). There is very little research in the field of post-secondary education for ESL students, and especially in the area of ESL students with diverse abilities (Haworth, 2014; Huang, Clarke, Milczarski, & Raby, 2011; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). I believe this research is timely and could lead to further research in this area.

Limitations

This research is limited in that the data provided was all voluntary, and there is no way of knowing if the volunteers are truly representative of the private language school sector, or if only those schools which do not have a policy replied and the others did not reply as they already have a policy in place. Since international students may be extremely hesitant to acknowledge or discuss anything that may be perceived to differentiate them from their peers (Australian Government, 2018). Therefore, they may not inform the language school of their challenges, thus some of the language schools that did participate in the survey may be unaware of students with diverse abilities in their program. Many ESL instructors are not trained in special education and may feel underqualified and overwhelmed when dealing with students whose challenges are beyond typical language acquisition difficulties (Huang, Clarke, Milczarski, & Raby, 2011; Liasidou, 2013; Scott, Hauerwas & Brown, 2014). Due to the lack of documentation and communication provided by their students and the possibility that instructors are not able to clearly articulate suspicions about students who may have learning challenges, the administrator of the language schools who participated in the survey may not have been aware that some of their students may have diverse abilities that are affecting their academic success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although accessibility policies and services are not mandatory at this time for private post-secondary language schools in BC, there is an expectation in Canadian society that all education in Canada be reasonably inclusive. For many post-secondary ESL students, a private language school is their first introduction to education in Canada and to Canadian culture in general. We have seen from the survey results that some of these students currently attending

these programs have or are suspected to have diverse abilities. It is clear that they have a right in Canada for freedom from discrimination. The language schools that participated in the survey all agreed that reasonable accommodations and services should be provided to diverse learners in their programs. It is anticipated that the policy and best practice guidelines created during this project can be made available and adopted by private language schools that wish to be more inclusive. It is also hoped that more programs will work towards creating UDL environments in their classrooms. In a UDL environment all students can benefit, and diverse students can see that others may also choose different approaches to learning and demonstrating knowledge and that difference does not equate to deficit.

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Appendix A - Research Survey Introduction and Invitation to Participate

Dear Colleague,

I am a graduate student at Trinity Western University (TWU) in the Masters of Arts in Educational Studies – Special Education program. I am also the Director of ESLI, the language school on the campus of Trinity Western University. Because you are the Director or a Senior Administrator in a private language school in BC accredited by Languages Canada, I am inviting you to participate in my research.

We have noticed an increase in international ESL students with diverse abilities in our program. By diverse abilities, I am referring to students with emotional, behavioural, physical or learning challenges. Often these students do not disclose their disabilities to us and we are not sure why they are not successful in our program. It can be difficult to determine if they are having difficulties due to their language and/or cultural differences or if they have other challenges. There is little information on international students with diverse abilities available and our program currently has no formal policy in place for these students.

The purpose of this research is to determine whether or not there is a gap in terms of policies and services for international ESL students with diverse abilities within our sector. My goal is to create a reasonable accessibility policy and best practice guidelines for international ESL students that can be adopted and shared within the private language school sector in BC.

The survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete and your identity and the identity of your institution will not be published. There is no compensation for participating in this survey and no known risk. Survey Monkey does store the data in a server in the United States.

If you are not satisfied in the manner in which this research has been conducted please contact: Professor Ken Pudlas 604-888-7511

I really appreciate your support by completing this survey available at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2CYF8HC>

The link will remain active until Dec. 15, 2017.

Kind regards,

Susan Priebe
Director ESLI
7600 Glover Road
Langley, BC
V2Y 1Y1

Appendix B - Survey Questions on Survey Monkey

ESL Students with Diverse Abilities in Private Language Schools in British Columbia.

1. Do you have a formal Disability or Accessibility policy for students in your program with diverse abilities? (Diverse abilities may include but are not limited to physical, emotional, behavioural, or learning challenges that may interfere with a student’s ability to be successful in their education for reasons other than their language proficiency or diverse cultural background)

Yes

No

*Please note if the answer is “No” the survey will go directly to question #3

2. Where can students and staff find a copy of your Disability/Accessibility Policy?

School Website

Student Handbook

Employee Handbook

Other (please specify)

3. Do you have best practice guidelines in place for staff who may encounter students with diverse abilities in your program?

Yes

No

*Please note if the answer is “No” the survey will go directly to question #5

4. How are these best practice guidelines made available to your staff?

5. Do you currently have any students with documented disabilities in your program?

Yes

No

6. Do you or your staff currently suspect that one or more of your students may have a disability affecting their academic success in your program but no formal documentation has been submitted?

Yes

No

7. Do you agree that post-secondary international ESL students with diverse abilities should have access to reasonable special education services as long as no financial burden is placed on the private language institution to provide such services and as long as the students are not given an unfair advantage over other students?

Yes

No

8. Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the proposed Accessibility Policy and Best Practices Guidelines for Private Post-Secondary ESL Students with Diverse Abilities at the end of this study?

Yes

No

9. Is your language school currently certified or designated by the Private Institutions Training Branch of BC?

Yes

No

Thank you so much for helping me in this project. If you would like a copy of the results, please include your email here and I will provide you with a copy at the end of my research.

Appendix C – Inclusion Illustrations



Figure 1. Inclusion Illustration 1 (Diversity Council of Australia, 2018).

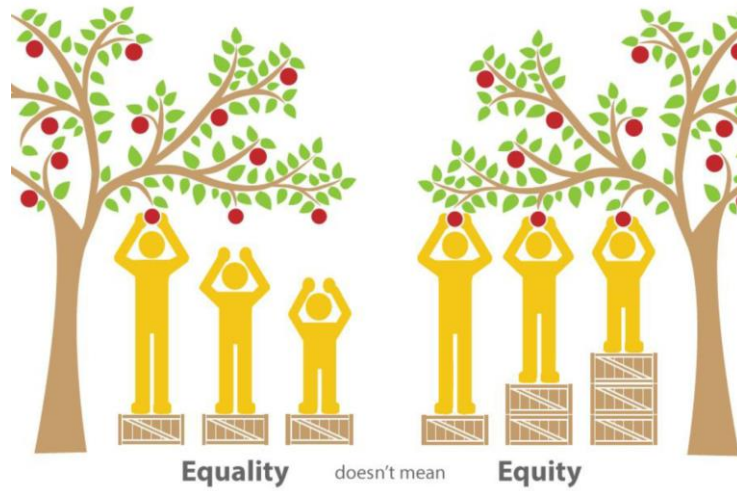


Figure 2. Inclusion Illustration 2 (The University of Hull, 2018).

Appendix D – Accessibility Policy

Accessibility Policy for International ESL Students in a Private Language School in BC

All Student Success Policy

1. Every student is important and different. We all learn in different ways and have different goals. Every student has their own unique strengths and weaknesses. Some students face unique physical, emotional, or social challenges. All students who meet our admission requirements are welcome in our program.

2. Our goal is to help all students reach their goal. If you know you will need additional help or support before you arrive, please let us know when you apply for our program. If a student is not progressing after they arrive, we will try to help them access the tools they need to learn and to successfully complete our program. We call these kinds of tools “accommodations”.

3. Our program offers two kinds of accommodations and services to students with diverse abilities:
 - a. Free accommodations
 - i. More time to complete tests and assignments
 - ii. Copies of teacher lesson notes or classroom slides
 - iii. Permission to audio or video record teacher instruction
 - iv. Permission to stand or take short breaks during lessons
 - v. Permission to use assistive technology in class
 - vi. Permission to take an exam orally rather than in written form
 - vii. Permission to take an exam or give a presentation privately during teacher’s office hours, instead of in class with peers
 - viii. Referrals to doctors and other professionals

 - b. Examples of accommodations and services that may be provided for an additional fee
 - i. Assistive technology such as an FM system and headphones
 - ii. Academic or Life Coaching
 - iii. Occupational therapist or in class assistant
 - iv. Modified assignments and exams
 - v. Level B Assessment

To qualify for any of the above accommodations and services:

- Students must have an official letter from a doctor explaining their challenge and what kind of help or accommodations they need, please send a copy with translation

in English before you arrive so that we can make sure that we are able to accommodate you. If we are unable to meet your needs, we will try and refer you to a program that offers the special services that you require. All official letters or documentation will remain strictly private between the student and the school staff.

- If students do **not** have an official letter from a doctor explaining the kind of support or accommodations that they require, we are happy to refer them to a doctor or professional in Canada to help understand what can be done to help them reach their academic goals in our program. Students will be required to pay all of the fees directly to the physician or professional. All official letters or documentation will remain strictly private between the student and the school staff.
- Students who do not have a letter from their doctor and who do not wish to meet with a doctor or professional in Canada to get a letter or any official documentation can meet with the program director to find out which services and accommodations may be available to them.

Please note: Students who receive accommodations or special services must be able to achieve a passing grade in order to achieve a graduation certificate from our program. No academic advantage can be given to students. Our goal is to remove or minimize the barriers to success for our students but not to give them an advantage over other students.

Appendix E – Best Practice Guidelines

Recommended Best Practice Guidelines for Working with Post-Secondary ESL Students with Diverse Abilities

1. Any international student who is struggling or not passing and has no obvious mitigating cause for failing to succeed should be brought to the attention of the student's advisor.
2. The advisor should meet with the student to explore why the student is struggling.
3. If the student can provide documentation from a doctor or other qualified professional, reasonable accommodations can be offered to the student. The accommodations cannot create hardship for the school in terms of increased cost. However if the student is willing to pay for additional services, after all free accommodations have been exhausted, every effort should be made by the program director or designated staff member of the school to find a way to accommodate the student within the student's budget. Students may or may not be placed on an individualized education plan.
4. If no documentation is provided and if no satisfactory answer or solution is found, the advisor should request that all teachers complete an ALSUP to identify any lagging skills or unsolved problems.
5. The ALSUP reports should be analyzed for common or related issues. These should be discussed with the student to see if an explanation or proposal for a solution can be reached.
6. If no satisfactory resolution can be found, the school should offer to refer the student to a professional for help. If the student declines to seek professional help, the school is not obligated to provide any accommodations or special services but can do so at their own discretion.
7. If the student fails a course, a school policy can be created that requires students who have failed a semester to meet with the director or their advisor prior to repeating the course. At this meeting the director/advisor can explore with the student why they weren't successful and what will change to avoid failing again. Tutoring, academic or life coaching or professional counseling can be offered to the student at their own expense. Policy can also be created that makes academic or life coaching mandatory for all students repeating a course for a second or third time.
8. Undocumented students who fail a course but teachers agree that repeating the course may not be in the student's best interest could be offered the opportunity to take the next course with conditions attached. Conditions may include being placed on academic probation which require regular meetings with an advisor or mentor and agreeing to pay for one of the following in consultation with the program director and local doctor:

psychoeducational assessment, academic tutoring, life-coaching or professional counselling during the next semester.

9. All teachers should offer students as many choices as possible in learning and demonstrating their language skills without compromising the integrity of the program. Every learner has their own unique learning strengths and weaknesses. Offering all students the opportunity to choose what works best for them allows for all students to achieve their best potential.

Choices can include but are not limited to:

- Typing instead of handwriting or vice versa
 - Saying it rather than writing it out
 - Drawing it rather than writing or saying it
 - Audio recording rather than saying it out loud in class
 - Video recording a speech rather than presenting it live
 - Taking a test privately
 - Allowing students to wear noise cancelling headphones in class
 - Allowing students to stand during class or change seats
10. Professional development in teaching diverse learners should be offered to all ESL teachers.

Appendix F – Assessment of Lagging Skills & Unsolved Problems

ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS & UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (Rev. 11-12-12)

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: The ALSUP is intended for use as a *discussion guide* rather than a freestanding check-list or rating scale. It should be used to identify specific lagging skills and unsolved problems that pertain to a particular child or adolescent. If a lagging skill applies, check it off and then (before moving on to the next lagging skill) identify the specific expectations the child is having difficulty meeting in association with that lagging skill (unsolved problems). A non-exhaustive list of sample unsolved problems is shown at the bottom of the page.

| LAGGING SKILLS | UNSOLVED PROBLEMS |
|---|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty doing things in a logical sequence or prescribed order | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor sense of time | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty maintaining focus | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty understanding what is being said | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty managing emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capacity for problem-solving or heighten frustration | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeing the "grays"/concrete, literal, black-and-white, thinking | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty deviating from rules, routine | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me," "You always blame me," "It's not fair," "I'm stupid") | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/lacking other basic social skills | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeking attention in appropriate ways | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how his/her behavior is affecting other people | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person's perspective or point of view | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how s/he is coming across or being perceived by others | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory/motor difficulties | |

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS GUIDE: Unsolved problems are the specific expectations a child is having difficulty meeting. Unsolved problems should be free of maladaptive behavior; free of adult theories and explanations; "split" (not "clumped"); and specific.

HOME: Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning in time to get to school on time; Difficulty getting started on or completing homework (specify assignment); Difficulty ending the video game to get ready for bed at night; Difficulty coming indoors for dinner when playing outside; Difficulty agreeing with brother about what television show to watch after school; Difficulty handling the feelings of seams in socks; Difficulty brushing teeth before bedtime; Difficulty staying out of older sister's bedroom; Difficulty keeping bedroom clean; Difficulty clearing the table after dinner

SCHOOL: Difficulty moving from choice time to math; Difficulty sitting next to Kyle during circle time; Difficulty raising hand during social studies discussions; Difficulty getting started on project on tectonic plates in geography; Difficulty standing in line for lunch; Difficulty getting along with Eduardo on the school bus; Difficulty when losing in basketball at recess

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Figure 3 Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (Lives In the Balance, 2018).

Appendix G – Research Ethics Board Approval



TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY Research Ethics Board (REB) CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Principal Investigator: Susan Priebe
Department: Education
Supervisor (if student research): Ken Pudlas
Co-Investigators:

Title: The exceptional ESL student: Hiding in plain sight

REB File No.: 17G19
Approval Date: December 11, 2017
Certificate Expiry Date: December 10, 2018

Certification

This is to certify that Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board (REB) has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans.


Elizabeth Kreiter for Phillip Wiebe
M.L.I.S. Ph.D.
REB Coordinator REB Chair

**This Certificate of Approval is valid for one year and may be renewed.
The REB must be notified of *all* changes in protocol, procedures or consent forms.**

A final project form must be submitted upon completion.

The required forms for the above are at:

www.twu.ca/research/research/research-ethics/approval-forms.html