

Chapter 26

Business and Technology Educators: Practices for Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

Business educators face the challenge of operationalizing the global converging initiatives of technology integration and inclusion of students with a disability in K-12 education. A survey of business educators was conducted to ascertain how they were implementing these initiatives in the United States. Results indicated that business educators received little training and felt moderately prepared to teach students with a disability. Inclusion occurred in all courses taught and some differentiated instructional activities and assessments were utilized. Findings indicated additional training in the use of technology and assistive technology are needed.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of technology into K-12 education is a global trend. The last two decades have seen greater emphasis on incorporating hardware and software technologies into the K-12 educational systems worldwide. For instance, successive British governments have promoted information and computer technology (ICT) in schools (Hurd, 2009). Additionally, the majority of Slovak schools gained access to computers and the internet within the last decade (Fančovičová & Prokop, 2008). The Jordan government has also allotted funds to integrate new technologies into Jordanian schools, and research findings suggest that even greater emphasis should be placed on the integration of computer technologies into education in that country (Al-Zaidiyeen, Mei, & Fook, 2010). In the United States, the accelerated integration of technology into K-12 education, across the content areas, has been supported or mandated by professional organizations, state education agencies, and the federal government (Redmann & Kotrlik, 2004).

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In order to promote best practice when integrating technology into educational systems, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has worked in conjunction with educators from around the world to develop the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), which are a set of standards for “learning, teaching, and leading in the digital age, and are widely recognized and adopted worldwide” (ISTE, 2007). The NETS for students (NETS-S) provide standards that address the knowledge and skills that students need to know in a technology-enhanced world, while the NETS for teachers (NETS-T) provide standards and performance indicators for teachers as they incorporate technology across the curriculum. The NETS-T standards encourage the use of appropriate digital tools to address the diverse needs of all learners in the K-12 environment.

As the push for integration of technologies into educational systems world-wide has increased, another growing global educational trend in K-12 education has been the inclusion of students with a disability into the general education classroom. In Korea, the Special Education Promotion Act has mandated free public education for children with disabilities since 1977 (Hwang & Evans, 2011). In that country, special education has rapidly developed to the extent that in 2011, approximately 68.4% of the special education population eligible to receive services was educated in a general education school (Hwang & Evans, 2011). In Ghana, traditionally students with a disability had not been formally educated, but current laws establish free, compulsory education for all students including those with a disability, and specify that educational reforms in the general education system also apply to special education (Nkansah & Unwin, 2010). In the United States, two major federal laws have focused attention and resources on students with a disability. For instance, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has specified that all students be provided with access to and the ability to make progress within general education curriculum. Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) mandated equal access to technology for all individuals regardless of their abilities, while also mandating that assistive technology devices be available (Lee & Templeton, 2008). Assistive technology can improve the performance of an individual with a disability (Puckett, 2005), can help to ensure equivalence in accessing the general education curriculum for all students, and can enhance the social participation of persons with a disability (Mavrou, 2011). Puckett (2005) suggests that all students with a disability need more access to assistive technology tools, and promotes the use of an assistive technology toolkit that involves such technologies as text to speech word processors, word predicting technology, voice recognition word processors, and alternate keyboards.

The intersection between these two major world-wide initiatives, namely the integration of technology into the K-12 curriculum and the inclusion of students with a disability into the general education classroom, is realized through the business education curriculum. The business education curriculum in K-12 educational systems is comprised of courses that include keyboarding, computing applications, career information, entrepreneurship, and personal finance or economics (Crews, 2007; Rader & Meggison, 2007). Rader and Meggison (2007) project that there will be a significant increase in the number of students with a disability who are included into general education business courses, and highlight that business teachers will need to be proficient in technologies and instructional strategies that will allow them to meet the needs the students. Currently in the United States, more than 6 million school age students are identified as having a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a), and studies show that high percentages of general education teachers (74%) report teaching students with a disability in their classrooms (Olson, 2004).

While inclusive practices are becoming more common around the world, we have found few studies that focus on the classroom practice of teachers, and in particular business education teachers, in terms

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