

24 - 26 July 2026

Dublin , Ireland

Professional Competencies for Inclusive Education in Kindergarten and Early Primary Classrooms: Preliminary Findings from Quebec

Prof Dr. Nathalie Goulet , Boily , Manon , Desrosiers , K. , Allaire , Marie-Christine

University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada

Abstract

The successful implementation of inclusive education depends largely on teachers' competencies to create learning environments that promote participation, belonging, and educational success for all students. International frameworks emphasize that inclusion extends beyond access and requires teachers to respond effectively to learner diversity through flexible and equitable pedagogical practices (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). Although professional competencies are widely recognized as essential to inclusive education, limited research has examined how teachers themselves perceive and mobilize these competencies in everyday classroom practice. This qualitative study investigates the competencies deployed by kindergarten and early primary teachers working with children aged 5 to 8 years in Quebec, Canada. Drawing on contemporary frameworks related to inclusive education (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023) and professional competencies for inclusive practice (Majoko, 2019), semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from kindergarten and the first years of primary school. Preliminary findings suggest that participants view inclusive practice as requiring a combination of professional knowledge, practical skills, and reflective dispositions. Frequently identified competencies include adapting learning opportunities to diverse needs, recognizing students' individual characteristics, collaborating with families and multidisciplinary teams, and creating classroom environments that support participation for all learners. Emerging analyses also indicate the importance of professional judgment, responsiveness to diversity, and reflective practice when addressing complex educational situations. These findings contribute to a growing body of research on inclusive teaching by highlighting the multidimensional nature of competencies required to support inclusive education in the early years of schooling. Implications for teacher preparation, professional learning, and educational policy are discussed.

Keywords: Collaboration; Inclusive Education; Primary Education; Professional Competencies; Teacher Education