

Let's Chat... *about* *Inclusive Education*

Hosts Gordon L. Porter, Jacqueline Specht and Diane Richler



Guest:

Zana Lutfiyya

Senior Scholar

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Zana Marie Lutfiyya is a native of Winnipeg and has long associated with equality efforts for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Following completion of a B.A. from the University of Manitoba she completed she completed her graduate training and postdoctoral work at the Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University. Zana joined the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in 1992.

Her longstanding research interest has been identifying and examining the factors that help or hinder the valued social participation of individuals with intellectual disabilities in community life. This has included where individuals live, go to school, work and take part in recreational activities. She was part of a multi-disciplinary team that studied vulnerable people and end of life care. She has facilitated the participation of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the research process, both as participants and in helping determine research goals and questions. Zana conducted research that focuses on how individuals with intellectual disabilities understand the concept of human rights, and how they are supported to learn and exercise these rights.

Zana taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels in inclusive education and qualitative research methods. She retired at the end of 2020. Her ongoing research interest has been the social participation of individuals with an intellectual disability in everyday community life.

Key Issues in this Chat Session:

- 1. Change Can Come from the Bottom:** In Manitoba, much of the progress in inclusion can be attributed to the work of parent and educator advocacy groups. While change must also engage those in positions of power, self-organized advocacy groups can make a critical difference.
- 2. Training, Supports and Clear Expectations:** Zana identified three key components that she believes are required for school divisions/districts to be inclusive. Educators must be provided with both professional training to build capacity as well as support that is adequate to address specific challenges and problems that need to be dealt with for teachers to create and sustain inclusive classrooms. Additionally, those overseeing the education system must provide clear expectations of what inclusion looks like in a school or a classroom and the things that should not be seen.
- 3. Differences Between School Divisions/Districts That Are Inclusive and Those That Are Not:** The size of a school division/district, both its geography and its student population, can be seen to make a difference in terms of the level of inclusion achieved. In Manitoba, smaller school divisions have been more inclusive and have supported students and families more successfully. Zana speculates that this could be because smaller divisions have fewer resources and must simply do their work with fewer special programs and services than larger divisions. The result is positive since students are more likely to attend class in their community school with their siblings and neighbourhood peers.
- 4. Learning to Live Together:** Zana asserts that a major goal of schooling is that children gain the social benefit of learning to live with people different from themselves. Inclusive schools result in children with diverse attributes, including those with disabilities, learn to live in communities that provide both inclusion, opportunity and equity.

Potential Discussion Questions (before viewing):

1. What are the social benefits of inclusive education? How valuable are these benefits compared to academic achievement?
2. Have you ever participated in an advocacy group? If so, what did you learn from that experience?

Potential Discussion Questions (after viewing):

1. Based on what Zana shared about current inclusive education parent advocacy groups in Manitoba, do you think that smaller parent advocacy groups should join forces to create a larger impact? Why or why not?
2. Do you think consolidating school districts in Manitoba will result in less inclusive practices? Can you think of ways to ensure that inclusive practices are sustained when this consolidation occurs?

More from Zana Lutfiyya:

Articles (peer reviewed)

- Schwartz, K. & Lutfiyya, Z.M. (2017). Place, space and justice: Considering people with intellectual disabilities. *Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice and Research* v6 15-39.

Articles (non peer reviewed)

- Lutfiyya, Z.M. (2018). Making it work: School administrators support all students and their teachers. Invited commentary for National Inclusive Education Month. www.inclusiveeducation.ca/news/
- Lutfiyya, Z.M. (2013). No one ever said it would be say: Closing Manitoba's institutions for individuals with intellectual disabilities. *Institution Watch* (7)2. A publication of People First of Canada and the Canadian Association for Community Living. www.Institutionwatch.ca

Contributions to edited books

- Lutfiyya, Z.M. & Bartlett (2020). Inclusive societies. In Umesh Sharma and Spencer Salend (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Inclusive and Special Education* (print) and *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education* (on-line). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. <http://DOI:10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1022>
- Lutfiyya, Z.M., Kendel, D. & Schwartz, K. (2018). The community inclusion project in Manitoba: Planning for the residents of the Pelican Lake Training Centre. In Nancy Hansen, Roy Hanes & Diane Driedger (Eds.). *Untold Stories: A Canadian Disability History Reader*. 345-355. Canadian Scholar's Press. Toronto, ON.
- Freeze, T.B., Freeze, R., & Lutfiyya, Z.M. (2013). Attending university: An emerging pathway to devalued employment and social participation for young adults with intellectual, developmental, and multiple disabilities. In *Way on Way: Supporting people with intellectual, developmental, and multiple disabilities in employment*. 185-216. American Association on Intellectual and Development Disabilities. Washington, DC.



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