

## ABSTRACT

## Inclusive Education in Tobago: The Perspectives of Stakeholders

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The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago proposes to introduce inclusive education. This constructivist grounded theory inquiry explored stakeholders' perspectives on Tobago's readiness for this educational change using a symbolic interactionist conceptual framework. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, parents and students of two special schools and three primary schools in Tobago. Data was also collected from direct observation of five classrooms and analysis of school documents. Data revealed that participants possessed an eclectic model of disability that included elements of the medical, social and religious models. Inclusive education was being introduced within a survivalist matrix of exclusionary beliefs and practices which threatened its success. Recommendations for successful implementation and eradicating the survivalist matrix of exclusionary practices and beliefs included engaging in effective change management, providing adequate supports and changing stakeholders' attitudes to persons with disabilities. The results of this study could assist policymakers in developing an effective preparation programme for this major educational change.

**Key Words:** Joan Bobb-Ward; inclusive education; disabilities; constructivist grounded theory; concepts of disability; social justice; symbolic interactionism.