

“Becoming a Different Teacher...” Teachers’ Perspective on Inclusive Education

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Abstract

This article examines teachers’ experience with inclusive education in pre-school, primary and the beginning of secondary education. Drawing on a qualitative approach, this study aims to explore what we can learn from teachers that have already invested in (several) processes of inclusive education with children with significant disabilities. Through semi-structured interviews, we discover that teachers need opportunities to work with the disabled child in their class and create moments of communication around the child and his/her individual curriculum. They learn much more about the abilities of children, while previously they were mainly focussing on the deficits. Therefore, for the teachers the question has shifted from ‘what is wrong with this child?’ towards ‘what is necessary to let the child participate in our group?’ This moves from difference as categorical difference, to difference as emergent continuous difference. This shift in understanding opens up new insights and new ways of teaching, resulting in teachers’ becoming different teachers than before. In this process teachers recognize the importance of close encounters and reflection-in-dialogue.

Keywords

Inclusion, teacher perspective, support, diversity