

The investigation of the perceptions and experiences of primary school teachers and SNA's who teach children with special needs in mainstream primary schools.

Amanda Brazil (1347568), Supervisor Name: Dr. Niall Hanlon

Abstract

Teachers attitudes to children with special needs may be one of the most crucial components of inclusive education, as according to Atta (2002), teachers attitudes not only affect what goes on in the classroom but also the instructional opinion that's chosen for children. The aim of this research study is to investigate what are the perceptions and experiences of primary school teachers and SNA's who teach children with special needs in disadvantaged Dublin mainstream primary schools. The evidence from this study indicate that teachers and SNA's believe that the majority of children with special needs should attend mainstream school, even though it is tough and challenging for all involved, it usually provides a more holistic education for the children in question.

Introduction

The way we think about special education and how special education should be delivered in our schools has changed in Ireland (Griffin & Shevlin, 2007). The aim of this research study is to investigate what are the perceptions and experiences of primary school teachers who teach special needs children in disadvantaged Dublin mainstream schools. Special needs Education in Ireland is an vast area to be explored and this topic is very important as the attitudes that teachers hold concerning special needs children are tactical for good teaching practice and therefore educational results for children (Levins T. 2005).



Method

A Qualitative method approach was chosen for this research as it was best suited to the question. The research was carried out by conducting 8 semi-structured interviews with teachers and SNA's whose level of experience, age and role all vary. This was done to get a more diverse sample and therefore result. Enlisting the project participants was achieved through contacting informants and using purposive sampling. After all interviews had been conducted, each one was transcribed and coded using Nvivo 9 software. These initial codes were then generated into themes. Which led to the data within the results section.



Results

The results found that the perceptions of teachers were generally quite encouraging, they believed that children with special needs should attend mainstream school as it was felt that children received a more rounded education, but this did not come without its challenges. The integration process was seen as positive but very case specific. it was also found that parental involvement is important for the child, parent and teacher. It was also found that there was a severe lack of training available in the area of special needs education. It was also established that the role of the SNA in the mainstream class differed from the role set out by the Department of Education.

Discussion

The current findings enhance our knowledge of teacher's and SNA's perceptions and experiences of having children with special needs in mainstream classes. Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that teachers and SNA's ultimately feel that mainstream school is the best place for the majority of children with special needs although this can be case specific it was felt on a whole that mainstream provided a much more holistic education than a special school could which is in line with findings from the literature review.

References

- Atta, M. Shah, h & Khan M. (2002). Inclusive School Inclusive Teacher. *The Dialogue*, 272-284.
- Bruce, T, & Meggit, C. (2006). *Childcare and Education*. Dubai: Hodder Arnold.

