

Teacher Agency as a Means to the Inclusion of Students with Diverse Learning Needs: A Qualitative Cross-Case Analysis of a Primary Class Teacher and a Special Education Learning Support Teacher at an International School in Central Europe

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Abstract

International schools continue to grow around the world and are forced to consider how to be inclusive and meet the needs of a multicultural population of students. In order to support policy changes and school reform towards being more inclusive, schools should consider how they are incorporating teacher agency in these decisions. Currently, there is limited empirical evidence regarding teacher agency and inclusion in international schools. For this reason, this qualitative case study/cross case analysis sought to understand how teacher agency is developed within an international school in Central Europe through the eyes of a primary class teacher and a special education learning support teacher, to determine if teacher agency is a factor that promotes the inclusion of students with diverse learning needs. The primary class teachers and primary learning support were interviewed following a semi-structured protocol, and observed during team meetings using an observation protocol. This study analyzed the data using inductive methods, a thematic analysis, and the constant comparative method. The findings of this investigation showed that agentive factors such as communication and relationships with colleagues, teamwork, and opportunities for collaboration helped build the case participants capacity for agency, and in turn, developed their efficacy towards using inclusive teaching practices.

Keywords: agency; collaboration; efficacy; inclusion; learning differences