

A Longitudinal Study of Special Needs Students

Prof. Dr. Jon Olav Myklebust

Volda University College, Norway

Abstract

In many countries considerable resources are spent to assist students with special educational needs, that is, people with somatic, psychological or social problems, or a combination of these. But the effect of these help measures, in the short and the long run, are contested. A reason is that most of the studies are cross sectional or, if longitudinal, have a short time span. However, Norwegian social researchers have for more than twenty years carried out a large longitudinal study to evaluate the effects of special educational measures, especially the effects of special classes and the use of teacher assistants, cf. Båtevik, Kvalsund and Myklebust 2023, Springer's Lifelong Learning Book Series. During five years, 760 SEN-students from six Norwegian counties have been interviewed or have answered questionnaires. Nearly 300 of them have been followed for twenty years. By quantitative approaches, e.g., logistic regression, students' educational outcomes have been analyzed, and their adaptations to adult life have been assessed, e.g., regarding economic independence, family formation, and social relationships. Life course approaches are the main theoretical perspectives in these analyses. In the oral presentation at the conference, only selected results from this research are to be presented. My ensuing paper, however, will discuss thoroughly how special needs students' adaptation to adult life can be understood within sociological life course theories.

Keywords: special educational needs, inclusive education, special classes, teacher assistants, life course