

Abstract of Contribution 310

ID: 310

Symposium

3P Network (Policymakers, Politicians, Practitioners)

Topics: Improving education for marginalized groups (e.g. refugees and migrants, children with special needs)

Keywords: Inclusive education, refugees, special needs, collaboration, collaborative research and development, interactive research

From Excluding to Including – Collaborative R&D Projects on Education for Marginalized Groups

Chair(s): **Karin Hermansson** (Ifous, Sweden)

In this interactive symposium we will address inclusive education for refugees, migrants and other marginalized groups. It will invite participants to share experience and knowledge, thus deepen our collective understanding.

In 2015, almost 163.000 people sought asylum in Sweden – a record high. This created high demands on the educational system, from preschool to adult education. Today, although the number of asylum seekers has decreased, there are still challenges.

Four ongoing R&D projects will be presented to highlight different perspectives on inclusive education. The first has a broad perspective on inclusive education – from preschool to secondary. The second concerns education for newly arrived pupils in primary school, whereas the third addresses Swedish for adult refugees and migrants. The last is an analysis of a school that due to poor academic performance has been subject to several improvement programmes, without any significant results.

We invite participants to discuss questions that arise in the projects, such as: What is the purpose of (inclusive) education? How can research and practice collaborate to improve education for marginalized groups?

The projects are based on a model for R&D, developed by the Swedish institute Ifous (Institute for Research & Development in School) which also coordinates the projects.

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Presentations of the Symposium

Inclusive Education – What's the Problem?

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The tension between how the concept of inclusive education is verbalised in various educational policies and practices, and how it is realised in classroom practices, is examined in this paper. The data derive from an ongoing research and development programme (in Swedish: Inkluderande lärmiljöer/Inclusive learning environments) in seven municipalities in Sweden, orchestrated by a research institute (Ifous) over three years (2017-2019). The aim is to enhance inclusion within the schools taking part in the programme, through for example lectures and seminars arranged as collegial and continuing professional learning (CPL) for the participants. The programme includes administrative management at municipality level, school management, teachers and student health professionals from across the school sector. It also includes a group of researchers, conducting different studies, with ‘inclusive learning environment’ as a common and overall orientation.

This paper is theoretically framed by the ‘theory of practice architectures’ and ‘ecologies of practices’ (Kemmis et al, 2014). According to the theory, practices are shaped by three kinds of overlapping arrangements: Cultural-discursive arrangements such as discourses and languages affect what is possible to say in and about practice (e.g., deficit discourses, critical discourses, discipline-specific discourses, languages). Material economic arrangements – for example material, technological, financial, organisational, and other resources – affect what it is possible to do in practice (e.g., buildings, schedules, workload calculators, funding). Social-political arrangements are those that affect the ways in which it is possible for people to relate to others (and things and places) in practice (e.g., organisational rules, mandates, solidarities, hierarchies). These arrangements form the practice architectures of practices such as leading, teaching, and learning. In this paper, focus is on how ‘inclusion’ is verbalised and enacted in the various practices.

The empirical data consist of written notes from observations of two classrooms and eight municipal meetings, informal interviews with two principals and transcripts from two focus group meetings with teachers (total 15) from two different schools. The teachers were asked to write a fictive letter to ‘their double’ (a twin or a clone) and describe as carefully as possible to the clone the first part of their working day so the clone could replace and not reveal that the teacher took one day off. The letters were discussed in the focus groups.

The first analysis shows a gap between the different levels involved. The administrative management and the teachers have different views on whether or not there are student groups divided into smaller ‘special need’ groups. Furthermore, there is an ambition at the administrative level to transfer students, labeled as ‘students with special needs’, into ‘ordinary classes’. Hence, ‘inclusion’ at an administrative level seems to focus on ‘labeled’ students placement and the physical environment. This understanding and ambition clashes sometimes with the teachers’ (as well as parents’) understanding of how to promote inclusion. One of the problems with ‘inclusive learning environments’ seems to be the concept itself. Who is to be included? For what and by whom?

Dilemmas in Transitions for Newly Arrived Students

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The topic of this presentation is to outline central aspects in developing education for newly arrived students. The data used has been gathered at two different schools. The method used was a form of action research, called research circles, in which practitioners and researchers together discuss and define areas of development. The practitioners perform the development work in their practice, and the researchers follow the process. The participating practitioners were for the most part teachers but also school counselors, study guides and principals, who worked with us as researchers to identify areas in need of development.

In Sweden, it is common for newly arrived students in compulsory school to be placed in an introductory teaching group for a period of time of no more than two years, in order to learn Swedish and when needed make up for lost schooling. The development work during the course of the program focused mainly on transitions from introductory groups to ordinary class for the newly arrived students, as this is a process which poses problems for most schools and students. In this presentation, we put forth the idea that alongside with the actual and well-known problems in the process of transitions for newly arrived students, a number of dilemmas also arise to which there are no easy solutions. Over the course of the R&D-program, we as researchers alongside practitioners at the schools identified a number of dilemmas in this process. The dilemmas can be sorted into three different categories; organisational (e.g., should the students start in a group with other newly arrived students or should they be integrated from day one?), pedagogical (e.g., how to support and encourage a student while also having to fail that same student?) and social (e.g., should students be allowed to socialise with whom they want, even if it leads to segregation?).

The theoretical framework of the presentation is the concept of liminality, which can be understood as any "betwixt or between" situation, and as applicable in both space and time (Turner, 1967; Thomassen, 2009). The concept contains three areas; type of subjects, temporality and spatiality. Each area holds different dimensions which can function together in a variety of ways. The analysis in this presentation will make use of all three areas, and examines the dilemmas in relation to when they arise, where they arise and who they affect.

The outcomes of the R & D-program points to two main aspects. One is that the teachers at the schools have further developed their routines for transitions, and discovered that they are competent in handling dilemmas that arise rather than getting stuck in problem-solving. The other outcome points to a shift being needed in how we view transitions for newly arrived students on a policy level, from solving problems to dealing with dilemmas, and what that would entail for school practice. The analysis presented here aims to offer ways of understanding and handling the dilemmas, and how the dilemmas set conditions for the spaces and places the students inhabit.

Working for Social Justice Through Pedagogical Translanguaging in Adult Education for Immigrants in Sweden

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The aim of the study presented is to analyze how questions of social justice and inclusion were negotiated among students and teachers in adult education when they were introduced to pedagogical translanguaging. In such pedagogical approach, teacher make deliberate choices to include the diverse linguistic repertoires of the students in the classroom practices and to encourage a flexible use of language. The educational setting for the study was the program Swedish for immigrants (sfi), which targets adult students lacking basic competence in the Swedish language. Social justice is a central part of pedagogic translanguaging and in relation to adults, Garcia (2017) suggests that linguistic integration of adult migrants needs to involve meaningful participation in society rather than acquiring a grammatically correct national language.

The study presented is part of an ongoing Research and Development Project (2018-2020) with an overall objective to develop the instruction in sfi-program in cooperation with teachers and school leaders in seven schools in Sweden. Hence, the objective of this study is to highlight teachers' perception of multilingualism in order to develop a pedagogical approach that builds upon the students' experiences and needs.

The empirical material analyzed includes group interviews with teachers and mind-maps made by the students. During one semester the teachers had been introduced to the concepts of multilingualism and translanguaging. They were asked to form an activity with their students in which they worked on constructing mind-maps about the concept of multilingualism in a school context. Teachers arranged the activity differently according to the classes; working with the whole class, in groups and with a variation of teacher support. 140 mind-maps were collected. The teachers at each school met with the researchers, where they presented and reflected about the activity in a group interview. The interviews were recorded (in total 15 hours) and transcribed.

The analysis demonstrates how students initially defined multilingualism as a competence in different named languages. Furthermore, students addressed that translanguaging included them as competent participants to develop new knowledge built on their experiences. Therefore students often explained and translated for each-other. However, students also addressed negative aspect of multilingualism and translanguaging in the classroom as unjust and disturbing the lesson as well as the focus on learning the Swedish language. Teachers expressed a positive attitude towards using the linguistic repertoires as a resource in the classroom. Still, they were hesitant in how to move beyond translation only and concerned about questions of losing control over the content. The question of using English as a lingua franca in the instruction was negotiated.

School Leaders and Teachers Ask Themselves: Why are the Results Declining Despite All Our Efforts?

Anette Jahnke, Åsa Hirsh
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This presentation focuses on the results of an investigation of the current state of a school where no efforts seems to improve student's result. The data used has been gathered during a commission from a municipality in Sweden to investigate the declining results of a secondary school facing complex socio-economic and cultural challenges. The school has been the subject of an extensive number of initiatives and reforms from national, municipal and school levels the last 5-10 years. These initiatives fit into three of Virkkunen's (2013) four categories of improvement interventions: concept-driven change, improvement and problem-solving interventions.

In addition to analyzing documentation of the school's results and prior efforts the first phases of the Change Laboratory method (Virkkunen, 2013) has been used. Change Laboratory is a set of instruments for developmental Intervention and is based on collaboration between researchers and practitioners in analysis and realization of developmental possibilities.

This has involved forming an analyzing team of teachers, school leaders and personnel in charge of students' healthcare working with researchers in workshops analysing the current state and the school's history of development work. Data has been collected during the workshops. In addition, focus group interviews with students have been made. The theoretical framework of the study is activity theory (Engeström & Sannino, 2011).

The result of the analysis will be presented, and the aim is also to contribute to the understanding of practitioners and researchers working collaboratively. For example, the analysis shows that the school needs to create interventions that are more in-line with the fourth category of interventions: the formative intervention. This implies that the whole practice has to be reconceptualized (Virkkunen, 2013) and the "full range of stakeholders must be at the 'design table'" (Dimmock, 2016, s. 51).

Moreover, the teachers need to a greater extent to collaboratively develop instructions which in a higher degree are adjusted to a deepened knowledge of student's needs. A shift is needed from interventions targeting teachers' learning to students' learning.