



CHANGING ROLE OF SEN TEACHERS IN (MORE INCLUSIVE) VOCATIONAL/FURTHER EDUCATION

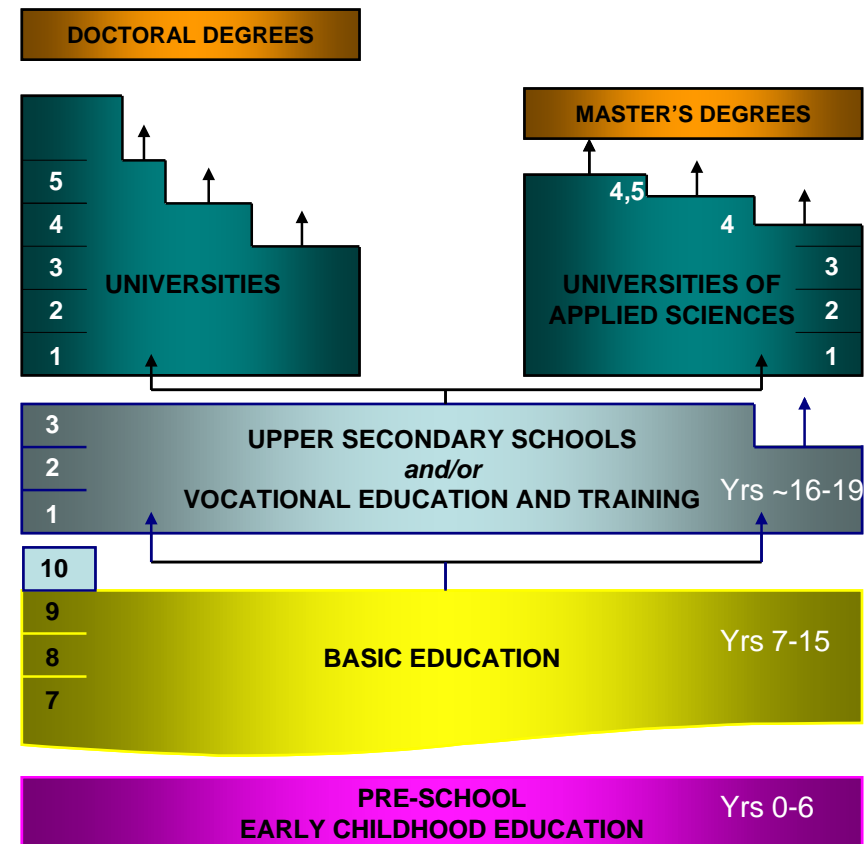


BACKGROUND; Context

Much of the discussion on inclusion is concerning basic/compulsory education and to some extent pre-school education, and accordingly, questions related with learning/teaching of younger children.

The focus of this presentation is on
post-compulsory level and especially
 on vocational/further education (VET/FE)

The study described here is about work of teachers who have qualification of a VET/FE teacher
 AND a special education teacher, and are working in Finnish VET/FE education colleges with young people approx. 16-20 years.



Finnish education system

BACKGROUND: Role of Special education Teachers in Inclusive education

There are lots of discussion world wide about the (changing) role of special education teachers and other special trained experts within inclusive settings;

e.g. some stating they won't be needed at all, some saying they role and tasks should be different.

IF we keep on training specially trained teachers how does the development of more inclusive education affect/ should affect on their work, competences required in it / from them and accordingly, on education of such specialists?

BACKGROUND /

Changing work of special education teachers in Finland

During the last two decades emphasis on vocational special education teachers' work has moved *from being special class teachers to* new challenges of being *experts* not only in issues on special needs but in collaboration, networking and consultation supporting learning of all

Changes in Finnish special/inclusive vocational/further education has been discussed by many but a thorough research was missing on VET special teachers' work and role

=> This study was started



THE STUDY



THE STUDY

- A national study financed by the Ministry of Education
- Conducted within 2008- 2010
- Total sample (N=969) comprising *all* Vocational/Further Education SEN teachers graduated within 1985-2007 from Jyväskylä or Hämeenlinna Teacher Education Colleges
- Number of respondents 532 (55%)
- Research group representing diverse stakeholders
 - vocational teacher education providers (4),
 - national government body (1),
 - vocational special education providers (1),
 - national VET special teacher union (1) and
 - university teacher education (1)

THE STUDY

Questions at focus;

- Reasons behind applying to SEN teacher education and how well the training has responded to the needs of the work
- Experienced changes in own work since own special teacher education and definition of own current work
- Provision of special education in vocational/further education colleges
- Challenges in developing special education
- Attitudes towards inclusion
- Professional identity and own role as a developer in own organisation
- Wellbeing at work

Background factors

Gender, Age, Graduation year, Amount of experience as a teacher, Type of the School/College (general/special), Size of the school organisation, Focus/main task in present job



RESULTS



RESULTS: Background information:

		n	%	N (532)	%
Gender	1 male	172	32,3	530	99,6
	2 female	358	67,3		
Year of birth / Age	1 1940-1955 / 53yrs or over	185	34,8	531	99,8
	2 1956-1964 / 44-52 yrs.	227	42,7		
	3 1965 e/ 43 yrs or less	119	22,4		
Graduation year (SEN teacher education)	1 1998 or before	140	26,3	506	95,1
	2 1999 or after	366	68,8		
Place of SEN teacher education	1 Jyväskylä	248	46,6	529	99,4
	2 Hämeenlinna	281	52,8		

Experience as a teacher so far (in years)	1 Less than 5 yrs	12	2,3	532	100
	2 5-15yrs	221	41,5		
	3 16-25 yrs	182	34,2		
	4 over 25 yrs	117	22,0		
Years within current job	1 less than 5 yrs	179	33,6	518	97,4
	2 5-10 yrs	155	29,1		
	3 10,1-20 yrs	126	23,7		
	4 more than 20 yrs	58	10,9		
Amount of students in the organisation	1 0 - 1999 students	313	58,8	501	94,2
	2 2000 student or over	188	35,3		
Workplace	1 VET school/college	283	53,2	457	85,9
	2 VET special school	174	32,7		
Employment	1 permanent	437	82,1	526	98,9
	2 temporary, full-time	88	16,5		
	3 temporary, part-time	1	0,2		

RESULTS: Experienced changes since SEN teacher graduation and current work

- SEN teachers experienced the biggest change to have been the raise in individuality / individual approach
(=learner-centred approach, student diversity, diverse methods, prevention of drop-out)
- ⇒ As a result, also, amount of internal and external cooperation has increased in their work
- ⇒ However, SEN teachers experience that *in their current work* there is more individual work with students than tasks such as planning, developing and collaboration

RESULTS: Professional identity

65% of the respondents felt their identity to be that of a special teacher

As their reasons their mentioned
students/student groups they work with, organisation they work at and
what their work tasks are

Grounds were firmly given and expressed special VET teachers to
have strong feeling of professionalism/ professional identity

RESULTS: Challenges with students

Student diversity growing

Most challenging students:

- questions related with mental health, and
- 'not-easily-defined' issues related with life management

⇒ SEN teachers experienced as problems in their work

- challenging students and (too) heterogeneous groups
- being constantly busy / lack of time
- growing demands for their work (-teaching and other tasks)

RESULTS: Expectations/wishes for own professional development/learning

Most expectations for own professional development were related with;

- teaching methods
- recognition of students' special needs
- support services
- guidance of students
- skills exams of students (with SEN)
- cooperation with working life / enterprises (etc)

=> All in all; how to teach (individually); less emphasis on e.g. organisational development

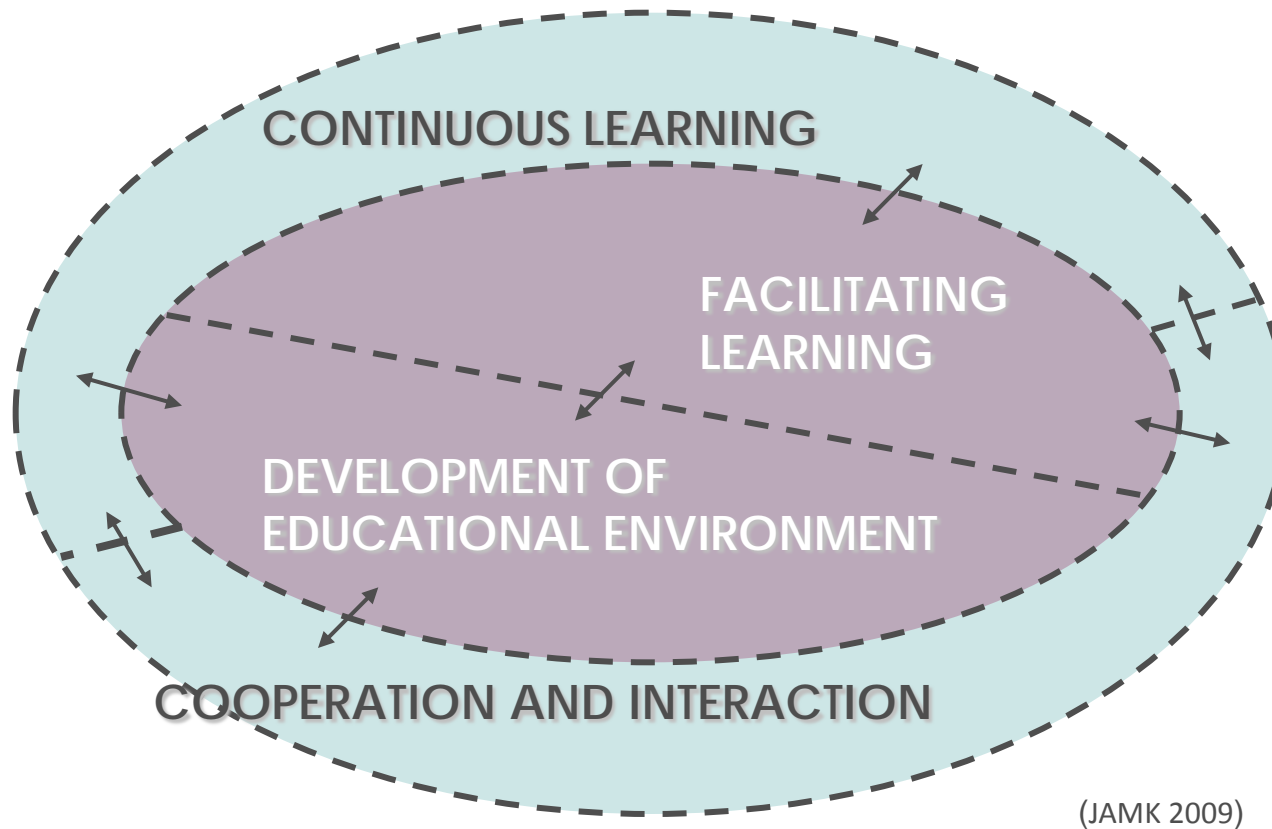
As a summary, it might be said special education teachers emphasise in their current work individual level but their basis for doing so might still be studied more; in order to support well-being of both students and teachers

Individuality/individual ——— Group, organisation,
community, working-life, society

Ease ——— Dis-ease (see Antonovsky)



Competence areas of a vocational /special education teacher



For further considerations:

- changing work/roles of special education teachers → changing competences?
- education/training of teachers and special teachers?

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