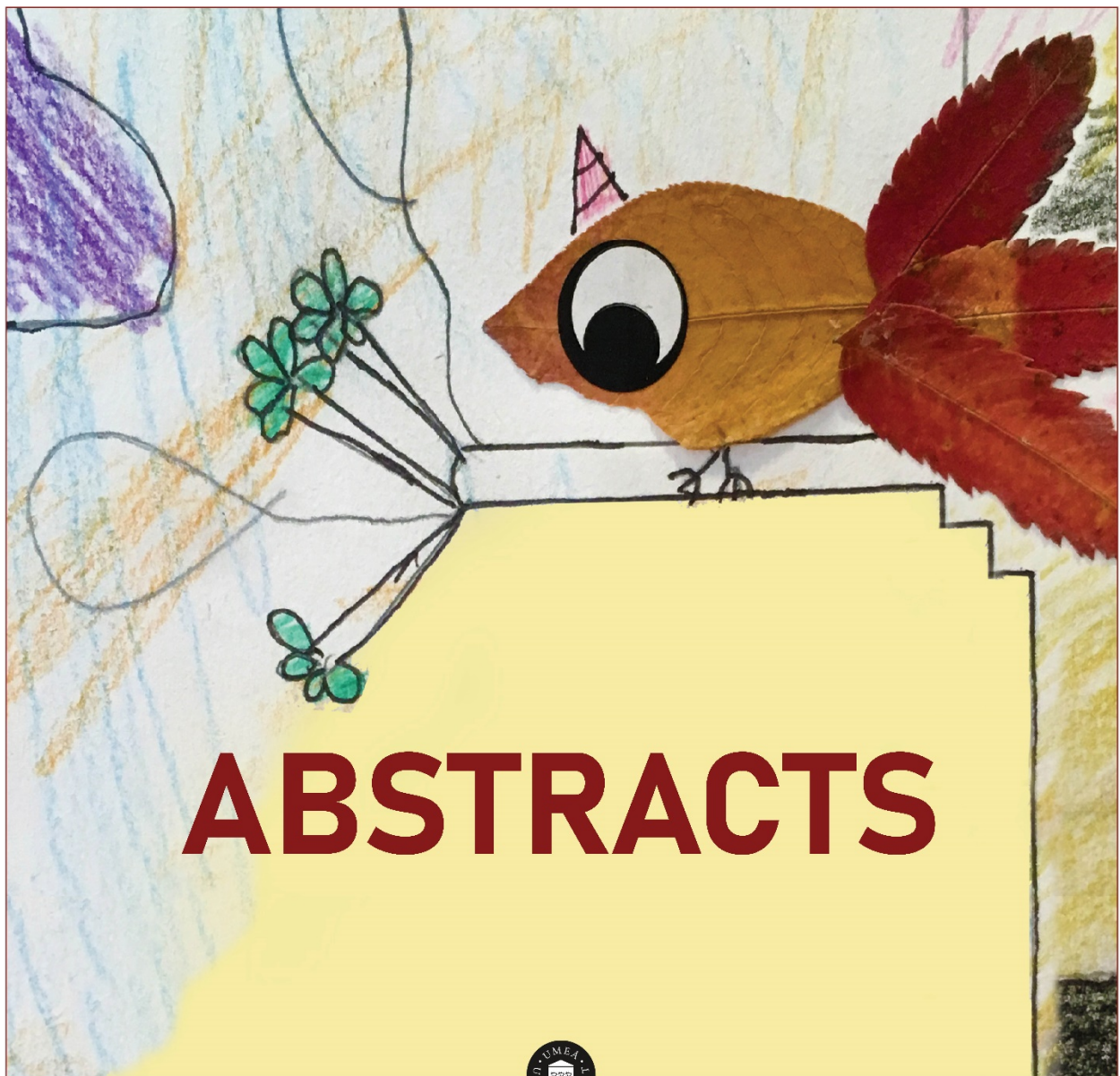


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RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE:
Current Influences on Special Education



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

Anna Westin
PhD student in Special Education
School and Intellectual Disability
e-post: anna.westin@umu.se

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2053-1397>
Department of Education at Umea University
901 87 Umeå, Sweden
Phone: 090-786 70 87

School and Intellectual Disability

Abstract

Background: The dissertation project's overall problem is whether pupils with intellectual disabilities (ID) feel a sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) in school, and which key components the pupils point out so that the schools can facilitate the pupils' learning environment based on belonging so that inclusion (Pesonen 2016) can take place. Belonging and inclusion are close to each other, and therefore it is important to find out what belonging is for the individual pupil in order for inclusion to take place.

Method: The methodology is empirically grounded in semi-structured qualitative interviews with (n = 5-10) pupils diagnosed with ID. The data will be analysed thematically based on Yuval-Davis' (2006, 2011) Politics of Belonging.

Results: The analysis will shed light on aspects of belonging to enable inclusion. In order for the school to be able to meet all pupils' needs, it is necessary to meet the pupils based on their social and cognitive abilities. Only the pupil him/herself can tell about his/her sense of belonging. By listening to the pupil's stories about their sense of belonging, opportunities are created for inclusion if the school arranges the learning environment based on the pupils' conditions and needs.

Conclusion: For inclusion to take place, the pupils need to feel a sense of belonging in school. A pupil's well-being is important for the acquisition of knowledge. The school needs to arrange the learning environment to meet the pupils where they are both cognitively and socially. Therefore, it is important for the school to investigate belonging aspects for a social sustainability in the school. A pupil who feels safe, is socially accepted, and has friends, finds it easier to acquire knowledge and then the school situation also becomes more sustainable for the pupil.

Special educational group supervision in preschool. A study about expectations, needs and conditions

Abstract

This doctoral project aims to contribute with in-depth knowledge of special educators' and preschool educators' perceptions of the function and significance of special educational group supervision (SEGS) in preschool, as well as underlying assumptions to this type of supervision. The purpose includes contributing with increased knowledge of the role of special educators as supervisors. Previous research shows for example that special educational supervision is appreciated in preschool (Gäreskog & Lindqvist, 2020). However, the special educational competence is not clearly expressed in the preschool's policy documents. This could result in different expectations among the participants about supervision and thus, create obstacles for the supervision to be helpful in relation to children in need of special support (abbreviated CINSS). Reviews (Skolinspektionen, 2017) also show that many Swedish preschools need to develop their work with CINSS.

The research questions are:

- 1) What type of supervision does the supervisor strive for and what type of supervision does the supervisee request in the work with CINSS? What do the participants think that SEGS should contribute in relation to CINSS?
- 2) What is the relationship between the participants' expectations of SEGS in preschool and perceived outcomes of the same?
- 3) What is the relationship between the preschool educators' perception of SEGS and their sense of coherence in a preschool context as well as in relation to e.g., the participants' educational background, age and supervision experience?

The empirical basis of the study consists of responses from questionnaires to special educators and preschool educators, semi-structured interviews and interviewees' written reflection logbooks. Antonovsky's (2005) theory of sense of coherence partly forms the theoretical basis for the doctoral project and focuses on salutogenes, general resistance resources and deficiencies, and the components manageability, comprehensibility and meaningfulness.

Keywords: special educational group supervision, preschool, sense of coherence, expectations, children in need of special support

Undervisningsstrategier för elever med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning (IF)

Abstract

Mitt doktorandprojekt handlar om undervisningsstrategier för elever med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning (IF). Det framgår att undervisningen ska vila på vetenskaplig grund och beprövad erfarenhet, vilket blir extra utmanande när det kommer till denna elevgrupp. Detta fält är underforskat och i synnerhet när det kommer till svensk kontext. Skolformen Särskolan finns bara i Sverige, en skolform utformad enbart för elever med IF. Hur skolan organiseras för elever med IF beror alltså på vart i världen du befinner dig och påverkas såklart av andra faktorer, exempelvis ekonomi, utbildningsnivå på lärare, inkluderingsarbete, etcetera.

Daniel Östlunds (2012) och Diana Berthens (2007) avhandlingar om särskolan är fortfarande aktuella och har hög refereringsgrad och det säger något om forskningsfältet. Det finns väldigt lite forskning i svensk kontext och nästan ingenting om undervisningsstrategier.

När det kommer till begreppet undervisningsstrategier så finns det även svårigheter att navigera då de engelska begreppen används olika beroende på kontext. I nuläget skannar jag av fältet och har identifierat teaching strategies och instructional strategies som användbara, men kan komma att ändras beroende på pågående inläsning.

John Hattie's (2008) metaanalys om olika undervisningsstrategier och dess effekt har fått stort genomslag, vilket kan bero på att den framhävs som evidensbaserad. Även David Mitchell's (2015) bok om inkluderande undervisningsstrategier har fått stort genomslag i det specialpedagogiska fältet, men när det kommer till elever med IF är det svårare att hitta sammanställning om vilka undervisningsstrategier som kan användas i undervisningen.

I mitt doktorandprojekt vill jag undersöka just detta och jag kommer göra en sammanläggningsavhandling och har precis påbörjat en forskningsöversikt om undervisningsstrategier för elever med IF. Jag kommer genom översikten att kartlägga forskningsfältet och forskningsluckor och sedan fastställa riktning för framtida studier, vilka kommer vara mer praktiska.

Jag är anställd som doktorand (började höstterminen 2021) i pedagogik, inriktning specialpedagogik vid Örebro universitet. Jag har mångårig erfarenhet som speciallärare, föreläsare och författare med fokus på undervisning för elever med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning (IF). Jag är också anställd på Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten (SPSM) som projektledare på läromedelsavdelning. Jag intresserar mig för klassrumsnära forskning för elever med IF och i synnerhet undervisningsstrategier som skapar förutsättning för både pedagogisk och social delaktighet.

Martin Holmgren, Ph.D. student
Department of Education, Umeå University
martin.holmgren@umu.se

Using Digital Technologies in Special Education – a complex activity involving complex competencies

Abstract

With society getting increasingly digitalised comes expectations of the school to respond to that development. Several arguments about the effects of this process have stated that school is going through a transformation, often called 'digitalisation'. This development changes how we answer the didactic questions of *what* and *how* we teach and learn. Accordingly, the digitalisation process affects the conditions for identifying and organising teaching and learning for students with special needs, a perspective of school's digitalisation that is sparsely researched. The body of research claiming that use of digital technologies can have positive outcomes in special education is broad and still growing. In terms of equality, digital technology can, if adequately used, enhance the conditions for learning and inclusion for students with special needs. The amount, standard and access of digital technology in the Swedish education system is today very solid. Thus, a strong digital infrastructure in combination with proven positive outcomes of adequately using digital technology in special education, formulates the background of the questions that this paper investigates.

In this study, two aspects of the digitalisation of special education are examined: to what extent digital tools are being used in special educational practice, and what competencies the SENCOs/SETs see as important for working in a digitalised special educational practice. The results, based on a mixed method consisting of surveys and interviews, show a highly positive belief about using digital tools in special educational practice. Yet, digital tools are used to a low extent, most often due to a lack of knowledge. Furthermore, the informants report facing a variety of tasks connected to digital technology, requiring a complex set of digital competencies. The lack of knowledge is expressed as a problem in the interviews, and training/CPD regarding digital technology is requested.

Jenny Lindberg
Department of Education, Umeå University
jenny.m.lindberg@umu.se

Relationships, norms and identity constructions in preschool everyday life - from the children's perspective

Swedish title: Relationer, normer och identitetskonstruktioner i förskolevardagen – från barnens perspektiv

Abstract

The available opportunities for participation for children with disabilities vary greatly. They are less likely than children without disabilities to be involved and express opinions in contexts that affect them. Studies with children's perspectives as a starting point are in short supply in the research field. The research in my upcoming dissertation work will explore how these children experience their time in preschool. The aim of my dissertation is to develop knowledge about norms and identity constructions in preschools, by looking into the relations between the children and them and the staff within the social, pedagogical, and physical environments in preschool. With a special interest directed towards power dynamics, the children's perspectives, stories, and actions will be in the foreground of the study. The research questions will be about what content can be found in the children's narratives about their time in preschool and their actions in it, how those narratives and actions can be understood and which the connections are between the preschool's power structure and norms and the children's identity and how those connections can be understood? The participants in the study will be 4-6 years old. Their experiences are in focus. A case study will probably be used, and data will be collected through several methods. A research strategy with respect for children's perspectives was sought. The choice fell on the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001), which can be explained as a mixed method. It's a toolbox developed to ensure different ways of expressing oneself, which utilizes children's strengths and allows them to be experts in their own lives. The data collection methods are for instance observations, transcripts from semi-structured interviews, photographs, and field notes. The material will be analysed according to the Mosaic approach.

Key words: preschool, identity construction, children's perspectives, Mosaic approach

Elisabeth Nilsson, PhD student
Department of Language Studies, Umeå University
elisabeth.t.nilsson@umu.se

Inkluderande bedömning i förskoleklassen

Abstract

Sedan begreppet "inkluderande utbildning" myntades i samband med Salamanca-deklarationen 1994 har dess innebörd diskuterats flitigt. I föreliggande presentation är bedömning av flerspråkiga elevers språk i en inkluderande undervisning i fokus. Den ökande globaliseringen i samhället ger en heterogen sammansättning av språk i den svenska skolan och skapar en allt större utmaning för skolan. Bland de elever vars familjer använder andra språk än svenska hemma finns givetvis många som klarar skolgången utmärkt men som grupp har elever med utländsk bakgrund sämre betyg i årskurs nio. En orsak är dilemmat hur elever med olika språkliga och kulturella erfarenheter ska bli inkluderade i en undervisning som sker på svenska. Precis som Läroplanen för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet beskriver kan nämligen språk och lärande inte särskiljas. Den observation som kommer att diskuteras i presentationen är en del av en större datainsamling som ska utmynna i en avhandling. Observationen görs under en av de aktiviteter som ingår i språkkartläggningen Hitta språket som är en obligatorisk del av Regeringens Garanti om tidiga insatser vid läs-, skriv- eller räknesevårigheter. Deltagare i studien var lärare och elever i en förskoleklass. Vårdnadshavare för 12 elever gav samtycke till deltagande i studien. Av dessa 12 elever talade fler än hälften fler språk än svenska i familjen. Aktiviteten genomfördes i grupper av varierande storlek beroende på vad läraren bedömde var lämpligt för aktiviteten och eleverna, oftast i grupper om 5 elever. Observationen analyseras utifrån olika perspektiv på inkludering. Det är komplicerat att bedöma flerspråkiga elevers behov av stöd på ett tillförlitligt sätt vilket har lett till att flerspråkiga elever har varit överrepresenterade i specialpedagogisk undervisning. Lärare behöver därför få de förutsättningar som behövs för att genomföra och tolka de kartläggningar och bedömningar som de är ålagda att göra.

Malin Ekesryd Nordström
Department of Education, Umeå University
malin.ekesryd@umu.se

GIFTEDNESS AND SWEDISH PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Abstract

The focus of my research project is to investigate how the concept of giftedness is discursively constructed in the Swedish public debate and in preschools, and, further, how preschool personnel and principals practise, and parents of gifted children view teaching and learning for gifted children in preschool settings. The latest updates in the policy documents for education (SFS 2010:800; Skolverket, 2018a; Skolverket, 2018b), emphasizes that education should take its point of departure from childrens (preschool) and pupils' (school) already acquired knowledge and experience to reach as far as possible. This indicates a new direction in Swedish education policy that have been criticised to overlook or even neglect gifted children in need of educational challenges (Persson, 2015). A lack of Swedish research on young gifted children and research that explores a correlation between early interventions and children's continued learning and development (e.g. Lundqvist, 2018; Silverman, 2016) motivates my focus on giftedness and the preschool context.

First results show, that giftedness has not had much coverage in the Swedish public debate, and that preschool personnel lack of education on giftedness. Further, several dilemmas occur when teachers try to balance preschool education between focusing on both the group and individual children in the strong discourse of egalitarian education in Sweden.

Noticing a child's different behaviour and knowledge at an early age can contribute to improved understandings and support as well as increased risks of ending up in permanent exclusion. Therefore, a further aim of my research is to contribute to knowledge of giftedness and these dilemmas, the tension between deviance and normality and the role of giftedness and special education. Suggestions for future research include the transition processes from preschool to school, longitudinal studies, participant observations at preschools and collaborations with researchers of the new Nordic Network for Gifted Education.

Karoline Holmgren

Department of Science and Mathematics Education, Umeå University

karoline.holmgren@umu.se

Hur rimmar skolans breda uppdrag med synen på svårigheter?

Abstract

This paper reports an extended analysis of aspects that affect vocational students' goal achievement in mathematics. The results derive from a study among teachers working with vocational students in risk of not achieving the goals in an upper secondary school in Sweden. Teachers' perceptions of difficulties connected to mathematics were analysed in relation to the mission of school formulated in Swedish governing documents. The result indicates that causes of school difficulties to a large extent are linked to schools' mission to contribute to the students' personal and social development, a mission not mentioned in the governing documents of how schools' special educational activities are to be designed. The paper discusses the implications this may have for practice as well as research.

Keywords: vocational education; mathematic difficulties; school's mission; special needs

Pär Sehlström
Department of Language Studies, Umeå University
par.sehlstrom@umu.se

Swedish (L1) and English (L2) argumentative writing of upper secondary students with reading difficulties

Abstract

Students with different types of reading difficulties have challenges with L1 and L2 writing (e.g. Herbert et al., 2020). Although good argumentative skills are conducive to academic success, making a career, and participation in society (Ferretti & Graham, 2019), there is a lack of studies examining L1 and L2 writing of the argumentative genre in upper secondary students with reading difficulties. This study explores argumentative writing in L1 (Swedish) and L2 (English) in a group of upper secondary students with typical reading (N=19), poor decoding (N=19), and poor comprehension (N=9). Most students attended vocational programmes. Written text quality was assessed by using an analytic scoring scheme including 7 categories: content, organisation, cohesion, vocabulary, language use, spelling, and punctuation. Students with reading difficulties (regardless of reader subgroup) performed poorly in all categories in both L1 and L2, with spelling being particularly challenging in L1, and cohesion, language use, spelling, and punctuation in L2. Significant differences were found between students with poor comprehension and students with typical reading in cohesion, language use and spelling in L2. Few other significant differences were identified possibly due to an overall poor writing outcome also for students with typical reading. This general poor outcome in writing is discussed in relation to previous studies on writing among students with reading difficulties and writing in vocational programmes.