

Communication in Inclusive Education: A Qualitative Study in Poland

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Abstract : This study investigates the communication between students and teachers in inclusive education in Poland. Specifically, we examine the communication and interaction of students with special educational needs during online learning compared to traditional face-to-face instruction. Our research questions are (1) how children with special educational needs communicate with their teachers and peers during online learning, and (2) what strategies can improve their communication skills. We conducted five focus groups with: (1) 55 children with special educational needs, (2) 65 typically developing pupils, (3) 28 professionals (psychologists and special education therapists), (4) 16 teachers, and (5) 16 parents of children with special educational needs. Our analysis focused on primary schools and used thematic analysis according to the 6-step procedure of Braun and Clarke. Our findings reveal that children with disabilities faced more difficulties communicating and interacting with others online than in face-to-face lessons. The online tools used for education were not adapted to the needs of children with disabilities, and schools lacked clear guidelines on how to pursue inclusive education online. Based on the results, we offer recommendations for online communication training and tools that are dedicated to children with special educational needs. Additionally, our results demonstrate that typically developing pupils are better in interpersonal relations and more often and effectively use social support. Children with special educational needs had similar emotional and communication challenges compared to their typically developing peers. In conclusion, our study highlights the importance of providing adequate support for the online education of children with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms.

Keywords : Inclusive education, Special educational needs, Social skills development, Online communication

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