Book Review

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Current special education practice is increasingly relying on scientific data. The growing need for reliable data and the multiplication of practices require a more in-depth methodological approach. The reviewed book is a collection of researches, made in a Finnish educational context. The book has two major qualities:

1. The book presents qualitative methods for data gathering and interpretation of educational issues. Although most of the research is from a constructivist or emancipatory paradigm, they are well presented and transferrable in different contexts.
2. All researches are contextualized in educational settings, so the ecological validity of the results is high.

The structure of the book is pretty straightforward. It contains an introduction, four thematic sections, and a conclusion. Each thematic section presents two or three applied researches. All researches have at least one of the editors as an author, which gives the book a high grade of consistency.

The introduction provides a short but useful introduction to the current situation and challenges of Finnish special education system. Most of the European countries adopted inclusive education as the main path of schooling children with special needs. However, as the author clearly states, that does not mean it is a clear success. We are facing either success or failure and we should strive to create the condition for the first. In order to

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implement that, the authors suggest that we should respond to several questions regarding broadening participation of students, adapting the school to children's needs, broadening support services, developing successful inclusive teaching, and using research in order to have a better understanding and practices. All the research from thematic section respond to one or several of these questions. Furthermore, the ethical position and theoretical approach are firmly grounded in a student-focused approach.

The first thematic section is *Boosting belief in learning among students with intellectual disabilities and students with autism spectrum disorder*. The overarching aim of the section is to present methods for broadening participation of students by involving them in shaping the learning environment.

The first research (*Children with ASD as members of Social Learning Environments* by S. Kangas, S. Uusiautti, and K. Maatta) is focused on the analysis of the interaction patterns of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in educational settings. The selected method for this research is ethnographical analysis based on direct observation and videotaping. There were 45 students in the study, and the transcripts of observation were analyzed by content analysis. The data support the description of several patterns of initiating, maintaining, and ending the social interaction by children with ASD. The results give valuable insight for practitioners on how to interpret behaviors related to social interactions.

The second research (*Viewpoint to facilitated communication methods among people with autism* by A. K. Sipila and K. Maatta) describes the Facilitated Communication Method (FCM) from the practitioners' point of view. In this case, the methodological option was a phenomenographic approach of different individual understanding of using FCM with clients that have limited intellectual and/or communication abilities. The data were gathered from 11 practitioners by semi-structured interviews. As the method requires, there is a comparative and interpretative approach of different views about FCM practice. The content of the interviews was focused on the ethical aspects of practice, especially power relation, and that adds a very original note. The practitioner should be mature enough to interpret the power relation adequately and to refrain on decision-making on behalf of the client.

The third research (*A good study path according to young adults with intellectual disability* by A. Hermanoff, K. Maatta, and S. Uusiautti) uses a narrative approach to find out how youngster with intellectual disabilities can assess their study path. The research is grounded in Rawls' second principle and the capabilities theory of Nussbaum and Sen. Fourteen students with intellectual disabilities and their parents were interviewed about their educational path. The results were analyzed by content analysis and grouped based on similarity. It resulted in three different models of educational paths and their strengths

and weaknesses. Based on the results, the authors draw the image of an optimal educational path and recommend possible measure to build it.

The second section of the book (*Encouraging children with socio – emotional difficulties*) is focused on different approaches of researching challenging emotional, behavioral, and social behaviors. Each of the three research focuses on a different actor (teacher, parents, and students).

The first research (*Development of emotional coping among elementary education students* by E. L. Peletokorpi, K. Maatta, and S. Uusiautti) is seen from a teacher's perspective. The selected method is action research, so there the paper reflects a way to design a didactical approach that is boosting children's coping abilities. The data were gathered through direct observation and self-assessment forms. The content of the intervention was group activities. The children were initially assessed about their coping abilities. The group activities helped them to develop a more mature and social reliable coping with stress abilities. The lack of a control group makes difficult to assess accurately the impact of proposed activities, but the progress that was made by children is sound, so the method is a valid option for other teachers.

The second research (*How to raise a child with a challenging temperament* by M. Heikkala, S. Uusiautti, and K. Maatta) investigates the parent's perception on what is a challenging temperament and on their daily experiences and struggles. The research is interesting because is based on natural data gathered from Internet forums. The authors used qualitative categorization in order to analyze the content of several forum discussions from different years. The results give a clear picture of what the parents find challenging and how they are coping.

The third research of the section (*Toward a pedagogy of preventing social exclusion* by T. Aarela, S. Uusiautti, and K. Maatta) is focusing on young offenders' previous schooling experience and their transition to small group schooling. Narrative research is employed to explore the young offenders' experiences and memories. The method was free-form interviewing that allowed establishing the focus of the interview. Content analysis revealed that their difficulties in school systems in the organization of class, lessons, and norms. The small group teaching provided a better framework for them and helped them to stay more engaged with the school. The authors argue for pedagogy of preventing social exclusion based on student's need and focused intervention.

The next section (*Providing opportunities to students with extreme illness*) is the most unusual because it approaches the topic of severe illness that is not so common in educational literature. The lack of data is mentioned by both papers. Anorexia is an increasing condition but there is little insight from survivors. Narcolepsy is even rarer, but

the incidence rose in Finland due to the usage of an insecure vaccine. Both papers allow us to have a more in-depth understanding of the challenges of students with severe illness and of the lack of educational provision for them.

The paper of M. Savukovski, S. Uusiautti, and K. Maatta (*Ex-anorectics' experiences of finding their appetite for life*) investigates the efficiency of different treatment and support services from survivors' point of view. The paper focuses not only of the lived experience of surviving anorexia but also on assessing the effectiveness of different treatments and supports. The authors used the method of content analysis based on survivors' life stories. Medication, hospital and clinics, social support, health care professionals' support, and mixed methods are analyzed through the interpretative lens of the survivors. The most important result is that most of the treatments are not properly addressing the emotional need of anorectics. In addition, each support has its usefulness, but no single treatment covers the need of all clients.

The last paper of the section (*Going to school with narcolepsy* by S. Karjalainen, A. M. Nyrhila, K. Maatta, and S. Uusiautti) offers a unique perspective into the challenges that children with narcolepsy are facing. The characteristic of this rare condition requires not only a specialized educational approach but also significant accommodation at school level. Although the sample is small, the data provided by students, teachers, and parents are valuable. The data were collected by semi-structured questionnaire. The results provided information about the challenges at the mental, physical, and social levels.

The last section (*New ways of collaboration as the strengths of special education*) is focused more on teaching and teacher profile. All three research focuses are the implementation of qualitative inclusive teaching. The first paper is about the experience of inclusive education and the changes that happened in special education as a result of implementing it. The second is about implementing an inclusive curriculum and the third one is about the profile of success teacher.

In the first paper of the section (*Teachers' perception of the possibilities of inclusion* by S. Lakkala, S. Uusiautti, and K. Maatta), the authors capitalize on the experience of teachers in implementing inclusion and inclusive practice. They used a qualitative survey, with open questions, on a large sample of teachers ($n = 327$) and ask them to describe their experiences in implementing inclusion and working in inclusive settings. The results showed that one of the most important issues is to build an inclusive culture at school level, in order to implement actions based on principles of inclusion. Collaboration between experts and a good collaboration between teachers are other important issues.

Designing cross-curricular activities for special education is not an easy task. Although this is one of the preferred methods in current pedagogy, it is difficult to say if it is

beneficial for special students. The paper of T. Kankainen, K. Maatta, and S. Uusiautti (*Opportunities for sustainable education in the special education classroom*) tries to answer this question. The authors decided to do a teaching experiment on a classic research design, pre-test – intervention – post-test. The aim of the experiment is to develop attitudes for sustainable life in a cross-curricular fashion. Although the pre-post comparison did not generate a clear answer, the results are interesting and emphasize the difficulties of implementing complex didactical action in the setting of special education, where the need for clarity is bigger.

The last research made by M. Salmela, S. Uusiautti, and K. Maatta (*Strength-based teaching as the means to approach the most talented students*) changes the focus from students with disabilities to talented students. The research is based on essays made by students with the highest level of accomplishments. They describe the teacher-related factors that were important in their success. They trusted in teacher, enthusiasm and zeal, appreciation of achievements, student centeredness, and dialogue.

The authors' conclusion is that we need further advancement toward a school that respects the right of every child to a happy and accomplished life. Therefore, we need to educate love for life, to focus on student's well-being through a caring pedagogy.

As a final conclusion, we could appreciate the main qualities of the book:

1. The book provides a socially engaged research framework, based on clear moral values regarding the inclusion of children with special needs. This is why most of the researches fall into an emancipatory or constructivist paradigm of research. We could see the preoccupation to give a voice to those disadvantaged, underresearched groups.
2. The book is a good repertoire of researches, designs, and strategies of investigation.

In summary, the book provides a useful reading and is a good guide in the field of research in special education. For any professional who is interested in the new trends in special education, this book is an interesting lecture.