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Document Version
Other version

Publication date:
2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

de Leeuw, R., de Boer, A., & Minnaert, A. (2017). *Voices and Preferred Solutions of Socially Excluded Students in Primary Schools*. Abstract from ECER 2017 (European Conference on Educational Research), Copenhagen, Denmark.

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Voices and Preferred Solutions of Socially Excluded Students in Primary Schools

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Abstract

Advocates of inclusive education argue that the social participation of students with special educational needs (SEN) increases by educating them together with typically developing peers. However, research indicates that this is not obvious for all students with SEN (Guralnick, Neville, Hammond, & Connor, 2007). Especially students with social emotional and behavioral difficulties (SEBD) are not automatically socially included in regular education. Sociometric data is commonly used in social inclusion studies, meaning that others such as peers often indicate if a student is accepted or not (Frostdad & Pijl, 2007). When social participation is addressed the perspective of socially excluded students, including their experiences and preferred solutions, are often not taken into account. In order to effectively address the social participation of these students, with and without SEBD, their voices should be heard. The aim of the current study is to explore: 1) the experiences regarding social exclusion of students, with and without SEBD, in primary schools and 2) which solutions the students preferred in situations of social exclusion. In total 35 socially excluded students (age range 9 - 13 years) from grade 5 and 6, in regular primary education (N = 14) and special primary education (N = 21), were interviewed with an interview protocol to explore the experiences of social exclusion in play and victimization. To analyze the interviews a multigrounded theory approach was used to generate themes in the students' experiences and their preferences to address social exclusion. The results show that students' experiences with social exclusion often take place outside the classroom. The preferred solutions provided by the students cover a broad spectrum, with a main role for the teacher as initiator of the solutions. The results are discussed in light of need for further studies addressing students' voices of all students, not only the students with SEN, the importance of including students' insights when designing interventions that target the social participation of students in inclusive education and the need to shift the interventions from the classroom to skills outside the classroom on the playground.

References:

Frostdad, P., & Pijl, S.J. (2007). Does being friendly help in making friends? the relation between the social position and social skills of pupils with special needs in mainstream education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 22(1), 1530.

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