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The teaching practices of teachers when welcoming a student with special educational needs: a study among teachers in France and Haiti

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Abstract

This article is part of my doctoral study; it aims to identify the teaching methods implemented by teachers welcoming a student with special needs into their class. A first, introductory section addresses certain factors of educational inclusion; particular importance will be placed on the training and work of teachers in the inclusion process. The following part presents the practices used by teachers in the two countries. From the outset, this research is not a comparative study; we opt for a case study of the two countries in question. The analysis is based on declarative data collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews conducted with secondary school teachers in France and Haiti.

Introduction

Nowadays, education policy discourses and initiatives are converging in the same direction, that of an inclusive school capable of meeting the needs of all students [1]. According to UNESCO and UNICEF (2019, p.6) inclusive education refers to the fact that all "students can fully access and participate in learning through reasonable accommodations and teaching strategies adapted to their specific needs". From then on, we understand that inclusive education designates "a way of "doing school" and understanding what specifies the disability of students recognized as disabled" (Ebersold et al. 2016). Indeed, inclusive education places particular emphasis on "physical access" to school and on the "adaptation" of the student to its "standards" to the detriment of the various dimensions involved in the school. "Adaptation of the school to the diversity of educational profiles" (ibid. p. 18). This new paradigm invites us to rethink school, taking into account the particularities

and learning difficulties of each student [2]. This consideration reveals the attribution of all the actors, thus, for the most part being the responsibility of the teacher. Teachers in particular are impacted by the changes imposed by the aim of this new paradigm [3]. In terms of inclusive education, reforms impose particular challenges on teachers, notably changes in their educational, pedagogical and evaluative practices and the roles they are called upon to play in the context of their daily work [4]. Thus, the teacher is called upon to take on new challenges, that of preparing to better support students in their learning potential (ibid.). In this vein, teacher training is of great importance, it represents a priority angle capable of providing teachers with the skills and competencies allowing them to adapt their teaching for the benefit of all students [4,5]. However, according to some authors, the observation is that teachers in the context of their initial training are hardly prepared to deal with the increasing diversity of their class (ibid.).

¹ Towards inclusive education: highlights of the UNICEF and IIEP-UNESCO technical roundtables on disability-inclusive education planning. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372193_fre, accessed, January 13, 2023.

What about the teaching practices of teachers?

Some authors highlight nuances that exist between these concepts Teaching practice, teaching practice or pedagogical practice (Talbot, 2019) for others these concepts share common points and all concern cognitive interactions between teacher/learner (Mache 2022). By “pedagogical practice” we mean all the actions implemented by the teacher during lessons, more or less consciously, with a view to helping students acquire knowledge [6]. These are the activities that the teacher mobilizes, they aim “the development by the learner of precise skills and the acquisition of knowledge, know-how and know-how to be defined by the study programs” These activities are carried out by through teaching methods and didactic tools whose choice and nature depend on the teacher (Mache, 2021p.39). Silva (2021, p.118) for his part describes educational practice as the union of theory and practice in the exercise of teaching and the apprehension of knowledge, in educational action. These practices involve the entire educational process and all the tools that a teacher uses to achieve their objective. For Duguet [6] pedagogical practice refers to all the actions implemented by the teacher during lessons, more or less consciously, with the aim of enabling students to acquire knowledge. A teaching method refers to the teaching method adopted by the teacher to promote learning and achieve his or her educational objective. These are the activities that the teacher mobilizes, they aim “the development by the learner of precise skills and the acquisition of knowledge, know-how and know-how to be defined by the study programs” (Mache, 2021p. 39). Furthermore, Clanet [7] indicates that teaching practices have impacts on students’ education and these impacts can be approached from several angles. For example, they can have a negative impact on learning if the teacher does not have “teaching skills” and if he is not “concrete” (Ménard,2012 cited in Duguet [6]).

From teacher training to the mobilization of inclusive teaching practices

Inclusive education requires not only adequate preparation before welcoming students with special needs into a regular class, but also accommodations with regard to the specificity of their needs. In terms of inclusive education, the reforms impose particular challenges on teachers, notably changes in their educational, pedagogical and evaluative practices and the roles they are called to play in their daily lives (Op. Cit.). In this context, Perrenoud [8] specifies that the teacher will need pedagogical know-how allowing him to design educational differentiation systems capable of meeting the specific needs of his students. This approach allows us to understand how complex the teacher’s task is.

Several studies highlight concerns relating to the challenges faced by teachers and also the important role they are called upon to play within the framework of their profession. The main idea is that the teacher working with students with disabilities must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills so that they can intervene in an appropriate way [9-11]. Thus, for Gombert and Guedj [12], “including a student with a disability in an ordinary class would change the school and all its components” In this

case, it is necessary for the teacher to develop adjusted practices to compensate the student’s disability [13]. Richard-Roussel [14] indicates the inclusive reception of students with disabilities, “cannot be improvised, but learned”. Peslouan and Rivalland [15] emphasize that the first aid to be provided is that provided by the teacher in his class by implementing differentiated teaching. For other authors, this reception requires specific professional skills such as: “having knowledge about the student’s disability, about their school learning, knowing how to adapt content to transmit, co-acting with other educational professionals” (Ibid., p.3).

Teacher training is at the heart of debates as one factor contributing to the success of educational inclusion. According to the European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education “teacher training is also an important lever for the broader systemic changes needed for inclusive education in general” (AEDEPBP, 2012. P. 10). Many authors persist on the role of training, which is so important, in supporting inclusive practices. Some associate the development of teaching practices with how teachers prepared [16]. It must be admitted that some teachers experience difficulties welcoming students with special educational needs into their class [17]. New challenges also for teacher training: “that of preparing and supporting teachers capable of supporting students in the actualization of their own learning potential” (op. cit. p.3). During their training, teachers must acquire the necessary knowledge allowing them to respond effectively to the different needs of all students (AEDEE, 2011). The teacher in carrying out their task will need the educational approaches to implement to respond to the diversity of their class.

It is clear that some teachers experience difficulties welcoming students with special educational needs into their class [17]. New challenges also for teacher training: “that of preparing and supporting teachers capable of supporting students in the actualization of their own learning potential” (op. cit. p.3). During their training, teachers must acquire the necessary knowledge allowing them to respond effectively to the different needs of all students (AEDEE, 2011). For example, a teacher from his initial training had not received all the necessary baggage and who receives a student with a particular need in his class (op.cit.), he will need educational guidance to be implemented to respond to the diversity of their class. With this in mind, for teachers to be able to fulfill their daily tasks well, it is necessary to adapt or strengthen training programs with regard to new contexts with the aim of improving the quality of learning for all students. This study seeks to understand how teachers in France and Haiti perceive this new way of doing school? What educational practices do they use in terms of adaptations or professional gestures to make their educational content accessible to everyone? What difficulties do they encounter when welcoming a student with special educational needs into their class?

Research Methodology

Our methodological choice is largely anchored in a heuristic aim. In order to answer our questions, the mixed method was chosen as part of this research aimed at collecting information on

the educational practices used by teachers. Mixed method research is a type of research that combines qualitative and quantitative within the same investigation [18].

Through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, teachers were questioned regarding several categories of variables, some referring to previously cited work, others being the subject of choice depending on the objective of the research. The questionnaire and the interview guide include requests for general information relating to: the identity of the teacher (number of years of experience, his or her background in teaching, level of education, training, etc.); their understanding of inclusive education: on the student they welcome in their class (support, the

modalities of solarization, knowledge of laws with the specificities of each country, criteria to take into account for the schooling of these students); the encountered difficulties; items to collect information on the practices and types of arrangements used to welcome these students. They are also questioned about their personal assessments regarding the schooling of these students. In the context of this article, we are particularly interested in what teachers say about their practices.

Data presentation

The sample consists of 67 teachers from France and 192 teachers from Haiti. The distribution of teachers according to their status is as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: Distribution of teachers according to their status.

Country	Title	Gender		
		Women	Man	Total
France	ASH educational advisor	3.00%	0.00%	3.00%
	Certified teacher	0.00%	1.50%	1.50%
	Ordinary or general teacher	46.30%	25.40%	71.60%
	Specialized teacher	17.90%	6.00%	23.90%
	Total	67.20%	32.80%	100.00%
Haiti	Ordinary or general teacher	40.20%	33.90%	74.10%
	Specialized teacher	15.90%	10.10%	25.90%
	Total	56.10%	43.90%	100.00%

The distribution of teachers according to their title made it possible to see for the French respondents that more than 70.0% of them are ordinary or general teachers and 23.9% are specialized

teachers. In Haiti we also have more than 70.0% generalist teachers and 25.9% are specialized teachers (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of teachers according to their status.

Country	Gender	Make accommodations to accommodate students with disabilities			
		No	Yes	Not quite	Total
France	Women	6.00%	43.30%	17.90%	67.20%
	Man	0.00%	20.90%	11.90%	32.80%
	Total	6.00%	64.20%	29.90%	100.00%
Haiti	Women	14.30%	22.20%	19.60%	56.10%
	Man	5.30%	17.50%	21.20%	43.90%
	Total	19.60%	39.70%	40.70%	100.00%

For France, the teachers surveyed use this practice in a moderate way, namely, 64.2% of teachers say they have made adjustments and adaptations to accommodate a student with a

particular educational need. In Haiti, 39.7% of teachers answered yes and 40.7% answered not quite.

Educational adaptations

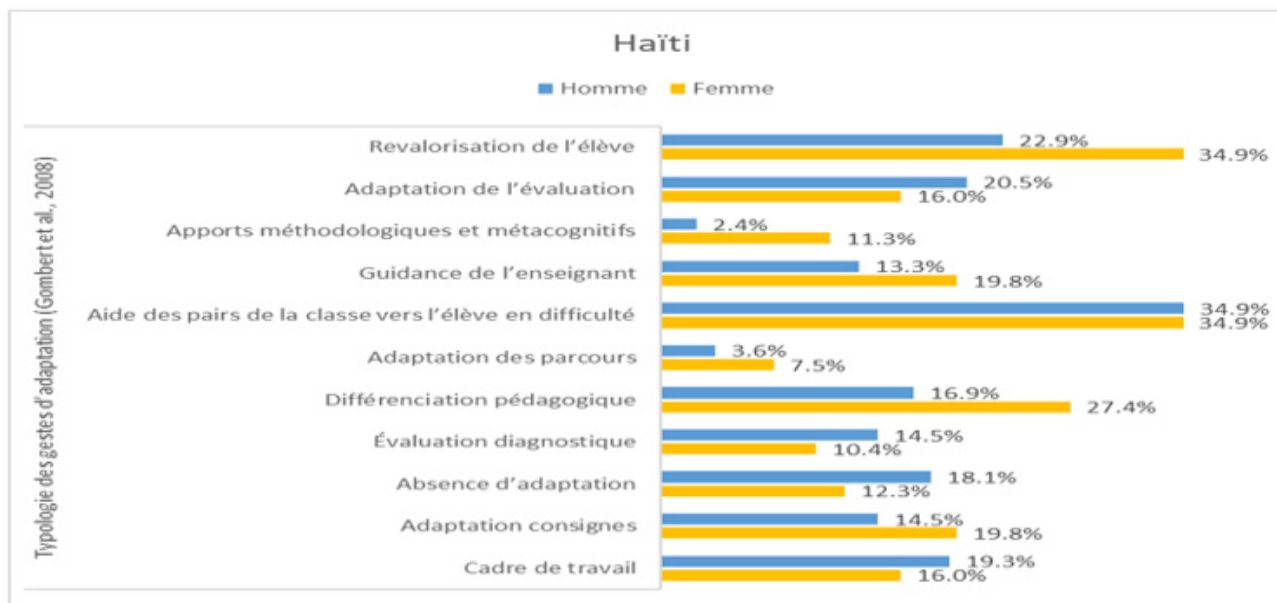


Figure 1: The distribution of educational adaptations mobilized by primary and secondary teachers in Haiti.

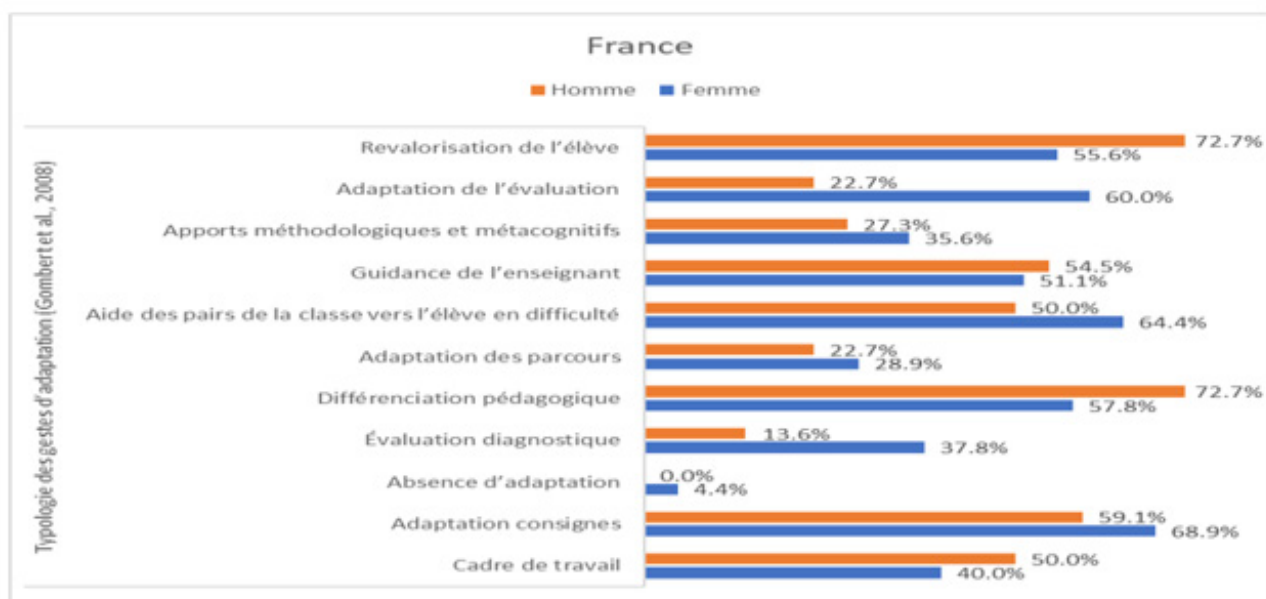


Figure 2: The distribution of educational adaptations mobilized by primary and secondary teachers in France.

Data processing and analysis

In order to study the nature of educational adaptations, all statements relating to educational practices for students with special educational needs were taken into account, whether they be modifications of educational practices or specific techniques. We have listed several proposals made from an analysis allowing us to construct a typology of adaptations declared by teachers, drawing

inspiration from the typology [19]. To carry out a thematic analysis.

Results

Teachers' perspectives on their students' disabilities, the inclusion process and teacher training

In this part, we wanted to assess teachers' understanding of the student's disability they receive in their classes and also of the

inclusion process. We were able to speak with them on general issues such as: their understanding of disability, inclusive education, diversity." We received several responses which were compared to the different definitions in official texts. We used a scale of 10 to 100%, when teachers' responses contained more than 50% of the key information from the definitions they were classified as correct and less than 20 to 30% classified as incorrect. The answers had a high percentage classified as correct. Furthermore, regarding this question we note the words of a teacher:

Teachers understand that they have students in front of them who have special needs, but in terms of taking the time to really help them individually in class or adapting their teaching method to these students, it is more difficult. They have the reality in front of them to see that certain things are not accessible for the students, this is not what will stimulate them for the following times to think better about what they are going to do in class, to speak more their lessons or to think about giving us the documents to adapt but in the urgency of the lessons and with the very large classes which sometimes have around thirty students it is still a lot, it is not easy for them to think to adaptation and inclusion" (E4).

Other important points to point out, these teachers were also questioned about the difficulties they encounter in welcoming these students into their training courses. For most of these teachers, it seems that these students can be educated in an ordinary class even if for them welcoming a student with a disability represents a very heavy burden, " Yes... well, it's extremely difficult, at first I was even afraid when I learned that I was going to have these students in my course which scared me it's...., I said to myself it's impossible to be able to transmit to them the same knowledge as to others and it will be extremely difficult for them to be able to take notes even to check their exercise (E2)". "The problem when we are going to do an exercise for example, this exercise has a figure, very often in mathematics the figures are not always written in braille books or other and the number of times I give an exercise, the figure n does not appear in his book, I am obliged to give him a simplified figure. You can imagine while I'm accompanying him, there are other students who are in difficulty that I can't answer at the same time, I haven't had time to look into them and that bothers me" (E2). As part of this survey, we counted teachers with years of experience, these years do not all say that they encounter a lot of difficulties, according to (E3) professor in physics " my difficulty is not being able to find the words so that a student can understand a diagram. Or when we draw a diagram on the board, manage to explain it to them as clearly as possible [...] there, I can't and it's not necessarily obvious." According to them, these difficulties should be compensated for by specific training that can help them better meet the learning needs of these students.

We were interested in knowing if the teachers were trained to welcome these students. Overall, teachers were asked about the training they had received on the care of students with disabilities. We got almost the same answers, "No not at all, I had never had before for children not even an hour of training" "No, no training" (E2).

Practices declared by teachers

Overall, the teachers interviewed say they have changed their practice and mention a range of adaptation gestures in relation to the students with special needs in their class. "Yes obviously, I changed my practices in their own interest" Specifically, the most mentioned adaptations mainly concern: i) upgrading of the student; ii) educational differentiation; iii) instructional adaptations. On the other hand, teachers rarely mentioned actions such as adaptation of courses, methodological and metacognitive contributions to students in difficulty, and adaptation of evaluation. They say, however, that they often implement peer tutoring and group work. Some of them declare that they have individualized the content. Furthermore, other teachers admit that they hardly adapt due to lack of time (see figure 2). On the other hand, teachers emphasize that the presence of these students represents an "incentive" with regard to the implementation of these educational adaptations. Some teachers say that taking into account a student with a disability in their class makes them change their practice. They claim that the presence of the students provoked them to mobilize adapted teaching practices. This result coincides with the research results of Grimaud and Saujat [20]. From this point of view, the first observation that can be made from the results: the teachers interviewed implemented several types of adaptations which are for the most part general: gestures which are intended for the whole of the class.

Discussions and Conclusion

This research aims to describe the practices declared by teachers; the results show us heterogeneity and diversity in teaching practices. The analysis of the data collected from teachers allows us to advance several avenues of reflection. However, one question is important in relation to the training of these teachers, almost all of the teachers interviewed say that they have not been trained to welcome students with difficulties. According to the results, teachers feel ill-equipped to respond to the difficulties these students encounter. They mostly say they use specific techniques. Likewise, teachers wish to benefit from other partners.

Including a student with a disability in a regular class would change the school and all its components [19], including the need to develop adjusted practices to compensate for the student's disability [13]. As clearly pointed out by Grimaud et al., [20] "the presence of a student with a disability in a regular class would act as a revealer of the professional practices of teachers". The teachers interviewed said they had implemented educational adaptations. This implementation requires that teachers be prepared to manage the difference and diversity of students as required for educational inclusion. In this regard, the first observation that we made in relation to the results was that the teachers interviewed, whatever their levels of experience, did not receive training that could provide them with the knowledge to develop practices that best meet the needs. education of students with disabilities. The results also show that there is an absence of training or continuing training that can help teachers to better understand the difficulties of the students welcomed. This research shows that the teachers

interviewed from two countries, some teachers mobilize a variety of professional gestures to welcome a student with a special need in a mainstream environment. For the most part, they resort to personal and particular techniques to compensate for the difficulties.

All this leads to a deep reflection on the impact of practices on teaching-learning. One avenue of research would therefore be to study the impact of training on teacher practices as well as student learning. Thus, these avenues of research constitute possible avenues allowing food for thought around the teaching practices implemented by teachers.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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