

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perspectives as to the suitability of active learning methods in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN in a mainstream class environment. The motivation to conduct this research came from the writer being a Principal in a school with a broad and complex range of pupils in attendance. It was found that there is little available research carried out on this topic in the Irish primary school context and the study seeks to broaden the knowledge base. The study looked at the variety of ways in which pupils learn and how the learning needs of pupils with SEN are met in their classrooms.

The research methodology used was questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data was collected from teachers across three primary schools. The schools were close in geographical proximity but varying in terms of their pupil demographic and infrastructure. Overall, twenty seven teachers were sent questionnaires, with twenty three questionnaires successfully returned. This gave a return rate of 85%. Overall three Principals were interviewed and this data was used for triangulation of results.

The research found that active learning was underutilised across the three schools. It found that teachers were positively disposed as to the benefits of active learning for pupils with SEN. The research also found an over reliance on pupil withdrawal for SEN provision. It also found that the majority of teachers wish to incorporate active learning with other collaborative teaching methodologies in providing in-class SEN provision for pupils with SEN in mainstream classrooms.

The researcher recommended that school management incorporate reflective practice into teacher pedagogy and practice. Schools should avail of external in-service training for teachers in the area of active learning and other collaborative teaching practices as this would increase the efficacy of SEN provision.