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Teacher Experience During Paradigms Shift - in Deaf Education

The aim of this ongoing study is to describe teachers' experiences of paradigm shifts within the special education area, education for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, in three Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway). Special attention is paid to the choice of language in education and teachers' experience of how it has affected their work, both linguistically and in other respects.

Focus is on teachers' own stories of their lived experience of 20 years as teachers. Research on the experience of public change and its impact on a specific area such as Sign Language in education is very limited (SOU 2006:29). No study has previously investigated the teacher's experience over time.

The paradigm shifts that may have occurred in line with governmental policy decisions will be visualized in this project. Comparisons can be made over time between the three Nordic countries and the project can involve clarification of the impact these decisions may have had and how or if the various countries have developed in the same way. Such knowledge may be relevant not only for the understanding of teachers' work in Deaf Education over time, but also for other educational venues in the various Nordic countries.

Method

The project is a life story study in which 10 teachers each from Sweden, Finland and Norway will be asked to tell about their experiences of change within the profession over at least the past 20 years. Participants' stories will be videotaped when using Sign Language, and audio recorded when speaking.

All three researchers in the project have extensive experience of research in the field of deaf and hard-of-hearing education and the special requirements for the management of data from such a small group and of Sign Language use.

Possible implications from the study

The results are interesting at group level and the comparison between countries. Thus the study's findings may increase the understanding of teachers' professional role and of teachers' own understanding of their professional history when the results are related to others. The results of the project may have implications for future planning and increase the awareness of the consequences of decisions made concerning teachers' professional role, professional status and occupation.

Keywords

deaf education, paradigm shift, sign language, life story study