

Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy in Israel: The Critical Perspective of School Counselors

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Abstract:

This study examines school counselor perceptions of the implementation of the inclusion policy for students with disabilities (SWD) in regular education. Approximately 60% of students with special needs in Israel are included in regular education settings. A recent study revealed a decline in the positive perceptions of school principals and educators regarding the contribution of inclusion, and in their willingness to include SWD in regular education. The current study, which relies on a qualitative methodology, aims to learn about the perceptions of school counselors regarding implementation of the SWD inclusion policy, including the benefits, challenges, difficulties, and professional dilemmas it presents. An open-ended questionnaire, developed for the purpose of the study, was administered to 58 school counselors. The findings indicate their perception of the benefits of inclusion, alongside the challenges they face from the way it is implemented. These include inadequate training, knowledge and tools available to the school educational teams, a shortage of resources needed for successful inclusion, and difficult conditions in classrooms where inclusion is implemented, specifically class complexity and density, which hinder resource allocation. The significance of the study findings and recommendations for the work of school counselors are discussed.

Keywords:

inclusive education, students with disabilities, school counselors, inclusion policy.