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Teachers' perceptions of additional support needs of students in mainstream primary education

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Highlights

- The practice of today's mainstream primary teachers is increasingly inclusive.
- The role of teachers is to address the additional support needs of students.
- Empirical knowledge of these needs is required but lacking.
- Exploratory factor analyses identified four dimensions of student needs.
- The views of teachers are both thorough and differentiated.

Abstract

Mainstream primary education requires teachers to be proactively responsive to a variety of student educational needs, especially because of the increasing heterogeneity of school intake. Despite the increasing interest in learners' additional support needs rather than student deficits, empirical studies on the topic remain scarce. Therefore, this study addresses teacher perceptions ($n = 57$) of additional learning support needs of students ($n = 114$; mean age = 9; 48% male). Exploratory factor analyses (PCA; PAF) identified four dimensions of need: a) instructional support, b) (on-task) behavioral support, c) emotional support, and d) peer support. Interestingly, the views of teachers correlated with the characteristics of students in terms of student attainment, the teacher-perceived task-oriented behavior of students, the teacher-perceived (problem) behavior in the classroom and teacher-perceived relationships with students. The present study shows that the views of teachers are both thorough and differentiated. Accordingly, implications for teacher training are discussed.

Keywords

Elementary school teachers; Special needs students; Individual needs

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