Abstract
Children with special educational needs (SEN) are less well accepted and integrated in comparison to their typically developing classmates. Trainings aimed at strengthening the social participation of SEN children focus on the child with SEN and thus accept the risk of stigmatization. We developed an intervention that focuses on particular an elaborated four facets model of cohesion. We report first results from an intervention study with 1065 students showing only small numerical changes in cohesion in both control and experimental group. We discuss possible explanations for further research in this field.

The Inclusion „Strong Class“ (Starke Klasse)

Aims
Promote cohesion in primary school classes with an intervention at group level

→ Increase social participation of all students (with and without SEN)

→ Avoid the risk of stigmatization

Implementation
Further development of the Swiss “Sirius” intervention (Garrote & Dessemontet, 2015)

→ Teachers received training and were familiarized with the different activities

→ Default frequency for different types of activities, but free choice of specific arrangement

→ Teachers implemented intervention within regular lessons

Cohesion
• “the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and / or for the satisfaction of member affective needs” (Carron et al., 1998, S. 213)

• The combination of two perspectives (How much is the individual attracted to the group? vs. How well are the group members interconnected?) and two domains (social relations vs. group tasks / aims) results in four facets of cohesion

• No elaborated concept of cohesion in school research so far → We transferred the concept and developed a standardized questionnaire


Instrument
“GruGo4” (four facets of group cohesion; Schürer et al., 2017)

Results
Has social participation of SEN-children nevertheless been improved?

Maybe the intervention did not work on group but on individual level.

Participants
46 classes of grades 2 & 3 from 11 German primary schools
1065 students (25% female) aged 6 to 11 years (mean 7.6, sd = 0.74)

Design
experimental group: n = 25
waiting control group: n = 21

Further Questions
Decrease of cohesion over time both in experimental and in waiting control group

→ Was intervention properly implemented in all classes?

→ Check qualitative data from teacher interviews and intervention diaries

→ Maybe higher sensitivity for group interactions after the intervention led to more critical evaluations of cohesion facets?

→ Check for more objective cohesion measures from sociometric data Has social participation of SEN-children nevertheless been improved?

Maybe the intervention did not work on group but on individual level.


Cohesion
Inclusion
• Aim of inclusion: social participation of all children especially those with special educational needs (SEN)

• Social participation in class = work together and experience positive relations with peers

• Inclusive setting itself not sufficient to ensure social participation for all children (e.g. Huber, 2016)

• Strong differences in quality of inclusion between classes (e.g. Krull et al., 2014)

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