

ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on the knowledge, opinions and teaching strategies of Czech higher elementary school teachers in relation to learners who have special educational needs (SEN); more specifically to students with ADHD and specific learning difficulties (SpLD). The data were drawn from interviews with two less experienced and two experienced teachers, and an anonymous online survey. The interviews were coded, emergent themes for each teacher were identified and broad thematic categories were developed; the categories were then further refined. Next, the themes for the two pairs of teachers – experienced and less experienced – were compared and contrasted in order to find shared patterns. Lastly, the four teachers were analysed jointly to find out whether the themes for the younger and the more experienced teachers differed. As for the survey, the data were analysed using qualitative, as well as quantitative methods. The qualitative methods included coding of the responses to the open-ended questions. The quantitative analysis was performed using several statistical tests. The findings show that most teachers seem to possess at least some degree of knowledge about the problems SEN students experience, and the strategies they can use to facilitate the learning process for them. Especially teachers who have the most experience with SEN learners are then the most likely to be interested in further education in the area of teaching SpLD and ADHD students. Conversely, teachers who have the most experience overall are the least likely to show an interest. As for the opinion on inclusion, there are significant differences only in the case of ADHD students. In this respect, teachers with three to ten years of experience appear to be the most likely to be in favour of inclusion, but also the most likely to be in support of special schools. Thus, there is considerable variation among this group. While both overall teaching experience and experience with SEN turned out to be significant predictors, the teachers' participation in specialised courses does not appear to play a significant role. The thesis has numerous implications for further research.