

Abstract

Title: Between the sofa and the teacher's desk: Integration of pre-school and compulsory school as developed by pre-school teachers and junior level teachers.

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Keywords: Work-teams, teachers, integration, pre-school and compulsory school, integrated school-practice, social representations, motivated ethnography.

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The present study investigates how four teacher teams construct meaning and content in a common educational practice aimed at integrating pre-school and compulsory school traditions. A socio-cultural perspective, mainly following the theory of social representations, constituted the theoretical basis for the study.

The study was conducted during a period of 3 years. Data was collected by participant field observations, individual and group-interviews, narratives and documents. Data was analysed in order to discern the teachers' social representations of integration and how these were expressed in the school-practice. The analyses were carried out at different levels; the school context; the four teacher teams; the teachers' individual experiences.

The results of the study show two different schools and two different integration processes. It is indicated that social representations of integrated educational practice, shared by the teachers, are constituted in negotiated contracts based on the involved teacher's knowledge of children's development and learning, mainly related to differences in professional roles. Furthermore, the results show that the teachers' notions of integrated practice are somewhat contradictory and contain ideas of both integration and segregation. Four social representations with relevance for integration processes was identified: the mature and immature child; a new and different child; the importance of recognising two unique professional skills; and the existence of three pedagogical arenas for the educational practice. The overall idea of teachers' pedagogical competence, was expressed as situated and legitimated through the ability to encounter "children of the right age with the right instructional content".