The antithesis of inclusion? The emergence and functioning of ADHD special education classes in the Swedish school system

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Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
DOI:10.1080/13632752.2016.1165978

ABSTRACT

The neuropsychiatric paradigm has substantial impact on schools. The increase in the number of pupils being diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is an expression of the medicalisation of deviance. There is also an increase in educational classes specially designed to meet the needs of children with ADHD. This is contrary to the notion of inclusion and in conflict with the Swedish school law. Thus, it is important to obtain knowledge about Swedish ADHD classes. A questionnaire was sent to all Swedish municipalities (290, response rate 76%) regarding schooling for pupils with ADHD. As many as 40 Swedish municipalities have classes specifically designed for pupils with ADHD. Although the classes are said to be specifically designed for ADHD problems, they are not properly evaluated. Municipalities with ADHD classes also exhibit ambivalence towards these classes. The emergence, prevalence and functioning of the ADHD classes are discussed in light of the notion of inclusive education.