

Leadership and Teacher Agency in Inclusive Education: Insights from International Schools on Supporting Students with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

As international schools expand, they must address the inclusion of students with diagnosed learning needs. Teacher agency plays a critical role in implementing inclusive practices, yet limited empirical research explores its relationship with school leadership in international schools. This qualitative study examines how school leaders promote teacher agency to support inclusive education. Through in-depth interviews with three school leaders, six primary class teachers, and six learning support specialists from three international schools in Europe, the research identifies key factors influencing teacher agency: participation in policy development, collaboration structures, professional development, self-advocacy, colleague influence, and leadership support. Findings highlight that school leaders enhance teacher agency by fostering trust, prioritizing interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating learning support specialists in decision-making, and providing meaningful professional development. These leadership practices contribute to more effective implementation of inclusive strategies and support educators in meeting diverse student needs. This study fills a gap in the literature by examining the intersection of leadership, teacher agency, and inclusion in international schools. It offers insights for school leaders, policymakers, and educators aiming to strengthen inclusive practices through leadership-driven support. Future research should explore these dynamics across diverse educational contexts to further understand effective leadership strategies in fostering teacher agency for inclusion.

Keywords: policy development; collaboration structures; professional development; selfadvocacy; interdisciplinary teams