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Editorial: Insights in special educational needs: 2022

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Editorial on the Research Topic [Insights in special educational needs: 2022](#)

The four papers making up this Research Topic on Insights into SEN: 2022 illustrate new ideas, results and perspectives from different countries (England, Scotland, Chile and Estonia) in diverse areas of this field: identification of SEN, the limitations of survey research, and two papers about students with sensory impairments (academic and social-emotional outcomes in special and ordinary schools and perspectives on engaging in leisure activities outside school). These papers reflect the diverse issues and methodological approaches in this specific field that parallel similar diversity in other areas of educational research.

[Taberner](#) addresses the basic issue about identifying SEN in terms of an argument that there are too many kids with special educational needs. She sets the growth in the numbers identified in England in the context of competing tensions within the school system. Her argument calls for rigorous accountability in a system that would adapt to meeting needs rather than pupils meeting system needs.

[Seema and Varik-Maasik](#) make an important research methodological point about the limitations of surveys involving students with learning difficulties using broad samples, in their paper: *Students' digital addiction and learning difficulties: shortcomings of surveys in inclusion*. In an e-survey of teenagers' digital addiction they show higher predictability of perceived learning difficulties in terms of screen time and digital addiction for average students, but poor prediction for students whose scores are very different from the mean. Their study shows, they conclude, that reliable data about students with SEN might not be collected by wide scale e-surveys, especially if these students' participation needs are not addressed.

[Rosas et al.](#) report and discuss a small scale comparative study of deaf and blind students' cognitive and social-emotional outcomes in Chilean special and ordinary school settings in their paper: *The paradoxes of inclusion: Cognitive and socio-emotional developmental trajectories of deaf and blind primary education students in mainstream and special schools*. They report that deaf students attending special schools perform better on most of the studied outcomes. By contrast, blind students generally perform better in ordinary schools, though for socio-emotional variables, they had fewer problems in special schools. Though these differences were not statistically significant, they use their results to discuss how student characteristics need to be considered in deciding on an adequate setting for optimal development.

Hannah explored the perspectives of children and young people with a sensory loss in one locality in Scotland about opportunities to participate in leisure activities in her paper: *Perspectives of children and young people with a sensory loss: Opportunities and experiences of engagement in leisure activities*. Using virtual focus groups she reports that they enjoyed having opportunities to be with other children outside school. This was about not feeling alone and being understood. However, other research has indicated that, despite the benefits, children and young people with disabilities participate less in physical and leisure activities out of school than children without disabilities. The results of the qualitative study reported provide rich findings from the focus groups (28 subthemes grouped into 12 subthemes). These are taken to imply the importance of raising awareness of the needs of individuals with sensory loss for engaging in leisure activities in accessible environments, and identify opportunities, facilitators and barriers relevant to achieving this.

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