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INCLUSION THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF ADAPTED EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF THE NORWEGIAN CHALLENGES

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Inclusion has since the UNESCO conference in 1994, been the global denominator and ideology of most western societies school policies and practises. The debate has mostly focused on how to respond to and facilitate education for the diversity of pupils within the public school. In Norway, the debate about *inclusion* has not captured the same attention, and instead the focus has been on how to understand and implement the principle of *adapted education*. The principles of inclusion and adapted education have common denominators, implying sensitivity and responsibility towards the multiplicity of pupils. In educational settings *inclusion* also comprises that schooling from its outset should be designed with pupils' diversity in mind.

The aim of the paper is to discuss inclusive education with a particular view to Norwegian education and special education policy and practise. The paper describes and discusses educational trends from the establishment of the Norwegian compulsory school in the first half of the 1900 sensory up to current challenges in the latter years. In the end of the paper, some current challenges regarding the implementation of an inclusive school are discussed in the light of findings showing a growing body of pupils advised to special education.

Keywords: *adapted education, inclusion, Norwegian education, special education.*

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to describe and discuss trends in the promotion of an inclusive school in Norway. The paper is structured as follows: first, some background information regarding the Norwegian demography and school policy are given, in order to outline the development of special education services and the developmental process from segregation, through integration, towards inclusion. Then, characteristics of the Norwegian principle of adapted education are described and discussed; followed by a discussion of current and future challenges.

Although the Norwegian experiences and approaches to some are extent unique, they reflect parallel processes and discussions in the Nordic countries. At the same time it should be noted that education systems and policies is complex and under constant revision, and there are likely to be exceptions to many of the issues described in the paper.

Norway – some facts

Norway is located on the western part of the Scandinavian Peninsula between Sweden and

the Atlantic Ocean. The country is sparsely populated with about 4.8 million inhabitants. The country is divided into five regions, East country, South country, West country, Mid-Norway and North-Norway, all separated by the Scandinavian mountain system. Another characteristic is the Norwegian coastline. Compared to the Norwegian area, the coastline is longer than any other major country in the world, and it extends more than 20.000 km including fjords and offshore islands. In accordance with its fragmented topography, the country is divided into a total of 430 municipalities, one-third with less than 3.000 inhabitants, and with just a few cities having more than 100.000 inhabitants – all situated in the four southern regions. The East country is most populated, counting almost half of the population, but cover less than 15% of the area. Although Norway have received a substantial proportion of immigrants the last decades, the population and the schools, at least outside the larger cities, are fairly homogeneous and relatively low in socio-economic segregation compared to most OECD countries.

Similar to the other Scandinavian countries, Norwegian education is based on a grand consensus about equality and democratic

aims. These principles is manifested through a equal right to education, financed through taxation all the way from comprehensive school, throughout upper secondary and university, irrespective of gender, age, skills, origin and socio-economic status (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007; 2009). The foundation of the school system is a common unitary school that almost all children join at the age of six. The compulsory part of education comprises primary school, year 1-7, and lower secondary school, year 8-10. In addition, upper secondary (year 11-13) are a statutory right for all citizens rooted in the Education Act (Department of Education and Training, 1998). More than 98% of all pupils continue from lower secondary to upper secondary general studies or vocational education and training, and about 75% of adolescents students graduate three or four years later.

The Norwegian education system is close to a so called “one-track” education system (Pijl & Meijer, 1991), indicating that extra support and special education are assigned and arranged within the common compulsory school. In total, about seven percent of the Norwegian pupils receive special education (GSI, 2009-10), mostly as part-time measures, and about 0.5 percent of the pupils receive special education as segregated measures, often arranged outside the local school or community depending on school-size, population, municipal policy and topography. The Norwegian demography, including a lot of rural communities and small schools, indicate that pupils with special education needs do not have equal opportunities for support, irrespectively of where they stay (Vislie & Langfeldt, 1996; Skårbrevik, 2005).

Trends towards the ideology of inclusion; a review of the Norwegian unitary school policy

The provision of education in Norway can be traced back to 1739, but education in the sense we look at it to day, was first legislated some 150 years later, in 1889. By this measure, the schooling was declared compulsory, meaning that all children seen as educable were obliged to attend a seven year elementary school. Some 50 years earlier the first attempts of teaching children with special educational needs (SEN) took birth. Even though the introductory steps were carried out as segregated measures, it focused impaired children’s right to education. The first initiatives addressed schooling for pupils with sensory

impairments (1817), followed by a teaching measure for children who were social neglected (1841). These attempts to establish education for children at that time seen as uneducable, were all rooted in private initiatives (Befring, Thousand & Nevin, 2000). Some fifty years later, in 1881, a statutory framework of the teaching of abnormal children was passed, first with respect to children with sensory impairments and severely retarded children, followed by a state initiative (1896) for “neglected” children. The latest commitment paved the way for the establishment of a municipal child welfare system preventing problems related to the upbringing of children. The child welfare system heralded some major principles: Firstly, the responsibility for children was both a parental and a state matter. Secondly, behaviour problems and juvenile delinquency are areas for educational responsibility that could be prevented through care and educational measures. The focus towards children’s welfare contributed to the decision to fix legal responsibility to the age of 14 more than one hundred and ten years ago. The state driven initiatives were followed by a number of special schools the first decades of the 20th century to support the teaching of children with impairments and behaviour problems.

The focus towards a unitary-school system and educational measures for pupils with SEN can be traced to the age of enlightenment and the philosophy of equality that inspired the French revolution. Until 1905, Norway was governed by Sweden, and even though the alliance ended in a peaceful independence agreement, it claimed an economic and administrative reconstruction of the country. To encourage the process, it was important to gather the people by means of social equalization and reconciliation as well by educational measures. The implementation of a unitary-school system was supported by the fact that Norway had no class-divided society, and that nearly all Norwegians belonged to the Lutheran Evangelical church. Accordingly, there were no segregated educational traditions, as for example the English boarding schools, or education rooted in different denominations, as for example in the Netherlands. The principle of a compulsory school for all from the age of seven, regardless position in society, was later legislated by the Norwegian parliament (1920), and a public compulsory school has been the foundation for Norwegian education policy ever since.

Reconstruction and unification through education

The first national curriculum, introduced in 1939, was a tool in the process of administrative and social-economic reconstruction of Norway. The curriculum pointed out specific learning objects to be achieved by all pupils at given grades. At the same time, the individuals' learning process was given attention by stating that the teaching should be given in accordance with the pupils' abilities and aptitudes, and that all pupils should be trained in independent learning; ideas that can be traced back to the mid-20th progressive education inspired by Dewey. The introduction of specific learning objects, however, challenged the variety of pupil, and it prepared the way for the legislation of state-run special schools (1951). Some years later (1955), in an amendment to the Public School Act, the municipalities were ordered to provide remedial instruction for pupils who did not fulfil the demands of the curriculum. These initiatives paved the way for a "two-track" education system (Pijl & Meijer, 1991); a public school system combined with state and municipal driven special schools and remedial classes (Befring, Thousand & Nevin, 2000).

During the 1960's several education reforms were tried out, and gradually a nine year compulsory school took precedence (a six year elementary school followed by a three year lower secondary). At that time in the western society, there was an increased emphasis on democracy, indicating participation, social justice and equality for all (Befring, Thousand & Nevin, 2000). The focus was not only restricted to education, but covered all areas of life implying that all people should have access to the same resources and given the same rights. The debate fuelled the discussions about how to facilitate education for pupils who did not manage to cope with the demands in the curriculum, and a white paper released in 1967 committed a breach with the "two-track" education system. The White Paper emphasised that people with impairments and disabilities were unalienable parts of the society (Ministry of Social Affairs, 1967), and forced the way for an abolition of the special-school legislation of 1951/ 1955. The socially separating of children into special institutions and schools was to be the exception rather the rule. The change of focus fostered a debate in how to integrate (or include) pupils with SEN in the public schools that is still present.

From segregation to integration

The principle of nine year compulsory education and the integration of pupils with SEN in public schools were put in force in the 1975 amendment to the Education Act. The term *integration* referred to the reforming of special education through the facilitation of regular classrooms for pupils with SEN by the means of pedagogical and environmental adaptations (Haug, 1996; Dyson & Millward, 1997). At the same time, a revised curriculum (M-1974) underscored that all children, regardless abilities, social class or special needs were to be governed by the same regulations and attend their local class during the compulsory schooling. The fundamental principle stated that every child should have equal opportunities to be part of their local community and to live and grow up with their families. The curriculum focused *pedagogical differentiation* within the classroom as the tool to accommodate the education for the individual. All pupils were to take part in a professional and social community of learning, regardless skills, ethnic, social or emotional conditions; all current prerequisites for inclusive education. The revised understanding of a "school for all", focusing the educators' responsibility to facilitate learning for the variety of pupils, were confirmed in the later curriculum revisions of 1987 and 1997. In addition, the inclusive perspectives in the Salamanca declaration (Unesco, 1994) inspired the following curriculum and policy revisions.

Although both the curriculum and Education Act emphasised integration, the implementation of the policy in school took time. An evaluation report in the early 1980th showed that the ideology of pedagogical differentiation slightly had been implemented in educational practise. In spite of the state policy, Norwegian education was still organised in a "two-track way" (Pijl & Meijer, 1991), a public school system combined with a system of special schools and remedial classes for pupils with SEN. A White Paper, named "*Some aspects of special education and the educational psychology service*" (Ministry of Church and Education, 1984-1985), was a driving force in the abolition of the remaining special schools. Since the early 1990th, about 0.5% of the pupils have been given education in special classes or special schools (Pijl, Meijer & Hegarty, 1997; Skårbrevik, 2005; GSI, 2009-10), mainly pupils with severe impairment and disabilities.

To support the process of integration and differentiation, the municipality authorities were instructed to provide an Educational and Psychological Counselling service (EPC) involving various professionals (i. e. educational psychologists, specialized teachers and pre-school teachers and social welfare workers). The EPC-service should support kindergartens and schools by providing competency in diagnostic assessment of pupils with SEN, and support the development and execution of the individual pupils' educational plan and program. In addition, the EPC-service was assigned the responsibility for the assignment of extra resources to schools with pupils in the right of special education.

A unique Norwegian approach in the implementation of inclusive education is ideological principle of *adapted education*. The term, frequently used in Norwegian school policy documents since the 1980th, was given significant attention in the curriculum revision of 1987, 1997 and 2006. The principle was promoted as an ideological guideline for school policy as well as a standard for all teaching with a particular reference to the variety of pupils in need of additional support. On the school level, adapted education included local curriculum programs adapted to the school's culture, neighbourhood and community. On the individual level, the revision stated that adapted education should support the variety of pupils' with appropriate and individual adapted challenges, included the challenges immigrants as cultural and linguistic minorities encounter in school. Schools and teachers were told to accommodate both the physical and social learning conditions as well as the learning content to the pupils' ability, skills and needs – not the other way around (Ministry of church and Education, 1987). The introduction of adapted education in the curriculum can be seen as a characteristic of the postmodernism in putting the learner at the centre through participant management, differentiated instruction and individually designed and tailored teaching (Krejsler, 2004).

The following revision, Curriculum 1997 (L-97) challenged the school policy in several ways. The revision introduced a curriculum framework in two parts: A general part, the "*Core Curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education in Norway*" (Ministry of Education Research and Church affairs, 1996b), promoting a pupil-centred ideology through diverse and

productive learning conditions in inclusive communities. The second part of the curriculum included the subjects curricula (Ministry of Education Research and Church affairs, 1996a), focusing specific learning content and classroom activities to use in school. In contrast to the earlier curricula, the new subject curricula gave a greater priority to theoretical leaning and knowledge. In addition, the revision lowered children's entrance to school to the age of six, leading to an extensive demand for new teachers, and the provision for pre-school teachers to work in the primary school first years. Finally, inspired by the Salamanca declaration (Unesco, 1994), the L-97 revision introduced the term *inclusion* in to the framework. As for most value-loaded concepts, the term was implemented without any prior discussion or conceptual clarification. The term was used in contextual settings, for example regarding the acceptance of diversity of cultures, values and beliefs, or the acceptance of pupils in need of different kinds of support. On the basis of L-97 revision, the principle of inclusion can be summarised in the following aspects:

- Inclusion concerns participation in a community of learning where every pupils are given responsibilities and opportunities to achieve one's learning potential. The principle requires adaptation of the teaching and learning conditions with regard to issues such as aims, learning content and material, working methods, and evaluation.
- Inclusion concerns the participation in social and cultural communities. Inclusion requires cooperation and democracy, where the pupils take part in common learning activities, and where diversity is understood as enrichment. The principle applies to pupils as well as staff and parents.
- Inclusion concerns the entire school, not just a particular pupil or groups of pupils, where everybody have the right to be a part of the local academic, social and cultural community of learning, as well as provided responsibility to the community.

The L-97s' use of the term inclusion is an extension of the ideology given in the 1967 White Paper emphasising that all people are unalienable parts of the society (c.f. Ministry of Social Affairs, 1967). The use of the term is also close to the simple understanding stated by Meijer et al. (1997): "*The term inclusive education stands for*

an educational system that includes a large diversity of pupils and which differentiates education for this diversity” (p. 1).

The elaborated understanding of the unitary-school, expressed in L-97, attaches the importance to the promotion of equity and democracy, learning and well being for all that “...inspire individuals to realize their potential in ways that serve the common good; to nurture humanity in a society in development (Ministry of Education Research and Church affairs, 1996b, p. 40)

The promotion of knowledge in the light of inclusive education

As a key factor in the latest curriculum revision, The “*Knowledge promotion*” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), international research comparing pupils learning outcome has to be added. In 2001 the results from the PISA (2000) study was published, and the Norwegian results attracted some attention. In spite of the Norwegian unitary-school system and the total of resources spent on education, the over all result was considerable lower than the neighbour countries – more precisely at the OECD average. Further analysis showed low between-school variance, and that the distribution of the pupils’ skills was due to differences within schools (Turmo & Hopfenbeck, 2006). A characteristic in the Norwegian results was the spread in the left tail of the distribution, indicating a disproportionately high number of pupils showing low advantage of the teaching regarding subject learning and the acquisition of basic skills. On the other hand, surveys regarding the students’ well-being indicated that the majority of pupils enjoyed being at school (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2007). The reports showed that the Norwegian “one-track” education system had to some degree supported pupils’ well being at school, but the ideological principle of adapted education had not succeeded in providing sufficient knowledge for the variety of pupils as intended in the curriculum and in school policy documents.

As a consequence of the worrisome indicators, a government appointed committee, the “Quality Committee” (2001), was given mandate to work out proposals for the improvement of the compulsory school and secondary education. The committees’ suggestions and the following international studies (PIRLS 2001;

TIMSS 2003 and PISA 2003), cleared the way for the current reform, the “Knowledge promotion”, summarised in the following characteristics:

- The promotion of basic skills (i. e. reading, writing, mathematics, English as a foreign language and the use of I.C.T.) as the prerequisites for learning in all grades within all subjects
- New subject curricula, initiating a shift from in detail pointing out specific content and classroom activities, to focus learning objects and goals, combined with local responsibility for pupils’ learning outcome and the quality of school.
- A system of national tests and transparency, providing information on whether the pupils’ basic skills and subject learning satisfy the aims and goals in the curricula.

The revision introduced explicit standards for the pupils learning with a specific focus on basic skills learning, including screening of pupils’ progress from the early years. In addition, the reform introduced national tests and the principle of transparency to monitor the effects of the measures. The Core Curriculum (implemented in 1996), emphasising a pupil-centred educational ideology, was taken further in the Knowledge Promotion. At the same time, the principle of adapted education was given a revised understanding. Until the 2006 revision, adapted education was mainly understood as measures taken to promote learning in pupils who did not respond satisfactorily at the ordinary teaching. The Knowledge Promotion introduced a revised understanding of the term, stating that *adapted education* should be applied to optimize the opportunities for *all pupils* to realize every pupils academic potential (Ministry of Education and Research, 1998; 2006). By the measures, the reform signalled a shift in terms of what learning involves, how learning shall take place and how learning outcome are to be measured. From an inclusive perspective, an important issue is the consequences of the policy for pupils who experience difficulties to fulfil the demands of the curriculum; pupils in need of special support.

The construction of normality

At the hart of the debate in facilitating schooling for the variety of pupils, is the question of *normality*. The question pinpoints some ethical challenges in education in general regarding what

is “expectable” and “normal”, and whether “disabilities” are social constructed or unchangeable parts of the society (Fulcher, 1989; Gallagher et al., 2004; Vehmas, 2008). The foundation of the term “disabled” is often anchored in the mechanisms of labelling and categorising, focusing the discrepancy between what is regarded as normal and what is extraordinary. A parallel term is “impairment”, often indicating limitations regarding individuals’ physical properties, although the use of the terms is often varying. Vehmas and Mäkelä (2008) draw a distinction between the concepts *impairment* and *disability* in terms of cultural and social conditions:

Thus, impairment is a physical or organic phenomenon whose identification and definition are determined culturally and socially; it is inevitably about attaching some meaning to individual properties (p. 44).

In defining disability, the authors expand the perspective by also including the social understanding of the impairment:

Disability, on the other hand, is a relational phenomenon that consists in the relation between the natural properties or features on the one hand, and the surroundings social and physical conditions on the other. Disability often involves very general social structures and mechanism that cannot be reduced to peoples physical or mental characteristic (ibid., p 44).

In accordance with Vehmas and Mäkelä, loss of hearing, blindness or severe brain injuries are not depended of social structures. On the other hand, problems related to schooling, subject learning and pupils’ behaviour at school, challenges our understanding of normality in regard to the standards we all want human beings to approach. The human solution to bring order in daily practises, are the introduction of labels and categories to cluster pupils in groups of ability, behaviour, attitude, ethnicity, impairment or disability. These categories are not ready-made, but shaped with reference to the attitudes, values and expectations of those who invent them. The unfamiliar traits and needs present challenges the teachers’ understanding of how to interact and to facilitate learning, and the educational challenges are associated within the pupil.

The purpose of education is to challenge the child’s knowledge, skills and emotions by

constructing expectations and standards in reach of the individual. To support the process of learning, education employs mechanism to cope with the given challenges, academically and socially. The support shows up as a variety of educational measures; for some pupils as *special education*. Emanuelsson (2001) pinpoint the mechanism in force by the discrepancy between what is expected and what the individual pupil is able to handle:

Once children are identified as ‘different’ ... they become problematic to mainstream schools and teachers. From within the categorical perspective the process of labelling children as ‘having difficulties’, has the effect of investing the source of any difficulty or problem within the child. Once this process is complete, then it becomes easier to transfer the responsibility to ‘specialists’ trained to deal with the ‘problems’ exhibited by the child. (ibid., p. 135)

This discrepancy, often seen in school as learning or behavioural problems, is often perceived from a categorical perspective and attributed individuals’ characteristics, and some teachers tend to explain pupils’ responses on teaching solely by home environment and genetic causes. On the other hand, a lot of the learning related problems pupils experience in school is an interplay between individuals’ characteristics (Kirk, 1962), the given task psychological significance (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978), contextual factors related to the processes of teaching (Emanuelsson, 2001) and social expectations (Vehmas & Makela, 2008). The terms and categories used to describe the pupils’ in question, do to some degree mirror how schools and educational systems deals with those who fall outside the “standards” of normality.

To handle the variety of learning related problems, schools most often uses combinations of individual training-based models and tolerance-response based models. Training-based models are focusing treatment of the individuals’ dysfunctions, and the prevention of educational failure, by optimizing the environment and the learning methods, for example by using individual or peer-group lessons. Specific knowledge regarding dysfunctions and disabilities are used to facilitate the learning process to cope with obstacles in school and society. Tolerance-based models, on the other hand, indicate that

difficulties might be attributed to environmental, cultural, socio-economic or familial factors. From this perspective, at least two approaches are available. On one hand, the focus can be turned towards the development of a broader acceptance for human variations and differences, promoting pupils with SEN to become integral parts of school and classes; acknowledged and accepted for what they are. Andrews et al. (2000) pinpoint this postmodernism perspective by saying “*disability resides more in the minds of the beholders than in the bodies of the beheld*” (p. 259). On the other hand, measures may be taken to change and adopt the environment to fit the variety of individuals; to give pupils with SEN the support and assistance they need to experience meaningful and social interactions with classmates (Persson, 2006). Some professionals in the field, however, may have overstated the prospect of a change-oriented or accepting tolerance-based model, and been inclined to rule out individual variables in the name of normalization. Obviously, there are limits to what can be accomplished by focusing environmental adaptations for people with for example severe cognitive impairments or specific learning problems.

In the light of these perspectives, Norwegian educators are on one side taught to be more tolerant of children’s disabilities as well as to become more skilled in meeting these pupils’ instructional needs. The pedagogical approaches most often used are interventions to enable the individual to achieve an acceptable level of performance in respect of post-school expectations. These measures often include temporal segregation of pupils with learning disabilities; however, the measures taken do not necessarily advance the inclusion of pupils who vary from the school-standard of normality. Reports have shown that the dividends do not always pay off the effort, and that some of the measures have been directly counterproductive in terms of pupils’ cognitive and social learning (Haug, Tøssebro & Dalen, 1999). In addition, individual training-based models has been criticized to promote ulterior motives, for example, teachers’ epistemic authority in the domain of learning disabilities, or even to maintain jobs and positions for the staff. These kinds of controversies have contributed to less individual oriented focuses and greater emphasis on schools as inclusive communities

that can facilitate learning for the diversity of pupils.

As outlined in the previous, the promotion of adapted education is a part of the Norwegian approach to implement inclusive education. Haug and Bachmann (2003; 2006) have outlined two different views of adapted education; *a broad* and *a narrow understanding*. The broad understanding is tied to the basic values of inclusion, promoting participation and equality in an inclusive community of learning; basic principles that embraces the social aspects of education in general. This view includes the craftsmanlike processes of fruit full teaching and learning in groups of individuals’. From a *narrow* viewpoint, adapted education is understood as individual differentiation and optimization through individualised learning programs and individualised education – an understanding close to what usually is associated with education for pupils with special needs. A balanced “tolerance-response” based – “individual-training” based approach accentuates the relations between individual characteristics’ and environmental factors. Accordingly, the pedagogical focuses are to be widened beyond the individual’s limitations to comprise the educational settings in which all pupils belong. In this context, the schools’ and teachers’ classroom practise are the cornerstones to facilitate and optimize learning conditions for all pupils.

Inclusion - a prerequisite for adapted education

The properties of inclusion can be seen as a project resting upon humanistic values such as equality, solidarity and man’s inviolability (Persson, 2006), and the principle’s ideological foundation can be traced back to the civil rights movement in the USA in the late 1980th. Inclusion has to be considered as a process rather than a state, by which institutions attempts to respond to all humans as individuals. In a school context, inclusion comprises the norms, the standards and the measures that influence school policy at all levels (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996). The process of making complex institutions as school in to a inclusive and cooperate environment, involves the totality of the school, where the staff, the pupils and the parents are involved, and where the processes in facilitating pupil interaction and learning are in focus (Unesco, 1994; Meijer, Pijl & Hegarty, 1997; Unesco, 2000).

One challenge in the implementation of inclusive education is the current focus towards comparing pupils learning across countries, aiming to raise school efficiency and quality. The political education debate in some countries seems captured by conceptions embedded within the Thatcher- / Hirsch-inspired, English/ American systems of assessment and accountability; solely focusing academic performance. Rarely alternative standards are introduced, and from some special educators, the idea of standards focusing learning outcome is often rejected. On the other hand, educational measures involving pupils with special needs have to be assessed and validated to ensure that the measures provides the pupils with skills and knowledge as intended. The challenging question is what kind of assessment procedures and standards can be regarded as valid in the assessment of learning in pupils with SEN?

From an individual perspective, inclusion can be seen as the “special eye” for educational needs to raise participation in class and school activities, focusing the pupils’ interaction and learning within the classroom. From this perspective, pupil’ expectations, valued as significant by teacher, the parents and the pupil them self, are relevant to use as standards. In this context it is noteworthy to emphasise that the chief use of *standards* is to focus pupils learning and individual goals as uttered by Cohen: “...it is student work that we want to improve, not standards or scholars’ ideas about standards” (Cohen, 1995, p. 155). The assessment of pupils with SEN has to include these kinds of ipsative standards, and use these together with group related academic expectations as indicators for individuals with SEN learning.

From the school perspective, values related to equality are fundamental to facilitate educational settings. Viewed from this perspective, inclusion denotes a process to change schools into educational environments that embraces all pupils, regardless of intelligence, mobility, or learning ability. The process implies the recognition of heterogeneously composed schools, classes and groups, and thereby counteract organizational solutions such as ability grouping, tracking or streaming (Persson, 2006) – standards that are significant for the idea of changing schools into inclusive institutions. In this context it is appropriate to refer to research showing no adverse effects on pupils learning by including pupils with special needs in public schools and

classes (for a review Kalambouka et al., 2007; Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009; Hattie, 2009)

In the previous I have tried to point out that the process of inclusion includes individual and context-oriented perspectives, respectively. An inclusive school is obliged to develop a relativistic view of what it means for pupils to experience learning related difficulties, and act by intervention and measures so the pupil can cope with their difficulties. Consequently, the pupils’ learning problem must be recognized interactively – that is, as a condition caused by an interplay between individual-specific characteristics and environmental factors. In the extension of this notion, inclusion is a premise for adapted education based on a mutual platform of values and culture, focusing both the processes on the policy level, at the school-class level as well as the teacher – pupil interaction. In addition, inclusive and adapted education comprises challenges to the individual, where responsibility and obligations are balanced according to the pupils’ capacity and potential.

Discussion: current challenges and the future

First, it is important to underscore that the properties of education, special education and inclusion have complex and tensional relationships, and it would be wrong to consider the terms as separated as well as converted phenomena. Still, there are several common denominators. The processes that pushed the Norwegian education reforms in the 60th and 70th were based on the ideas of reconstruction and equality through equal access to education. One fundamental goal was to bring up unrealized talents and abilities in the people by using education as a tool for social and economic growth and development. Education should give all citizens opportunities to become productive and well being humans. The latest step in the chain to free unrealized talent and to promote equity is the “Knowledge Promotion”. To fulfil the project, pupils and students have to respond with sufficient academic competency in a variety of subjects within international standards. The understanding can be summarised by a heading taken from a current report analysing Norwegian education: “*Quality development and learning outcomes on the agenda*” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2008 p. 4). Taken together, Norwegian schools and

teacher are once more put in charge of two partly contradictorily ideological principles: the principle of *inclusion*, framed by the ideology of a “school for all” and the *promotion of knowledge*, focusing theoretical learning and accountability. The ideology of an inclusive “school for all” is based on the expectation that all pupils can be included in most classroom activities. From this perspective it has been argued that special educational measures are on retreat due to the full inclusionists’ call for an end to all special education (see: Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). On the other hand, Vislie (2003) summarises the international trends in making schools more inclusive by redesigning regular education for pupils with SEN by stating:

“[However], these efforts have not fostered inclusive education, but rather the expansion of special education thoughts and practises into regular education, most likely with the effect to impede otherwise requested reforms in regular education settings”... ..“The point is that the status of inclusion will not be much changed, probably not even touched, by such manoeuvres” (p. 30).

Findings of Flem and Keller (2000) support this notion, showing that the ideological foundation of inclusion was accepted by most Norwegian professionals. On the other hand, the study showed a distance between acceptance of the principle and its realization in to practise. In spite of the regulations and the official policy, they discovered a continuum of different educational solutions for students with SEN, ranging from in-class support, combinations of in-class placements and support and out-of-class support to full-time segregated, special school support. The Flem and Keller findings are in line with recent findings reporting that special education consists of a variety of organizational solutions even though most pupils with SEN are supported in public schools (Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009). One of the main challenges schools and teachers face is not the mutual recognition of individual differences, however, the facilitation of social interaction and cooperative learning through out lower secondary school (Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009).

The second ideological principle is the use of accountability and a test regime to raise school efficiency. Since the implementation of the “Knowledge Promotion” (2006), focusing

academic learning as a key issue, test results and grades have been the main indicators of school successfulness. The question is if these variables are valid indicators to report the effect of educational measures for pupils with SEN. A recent study of Nordahl and Hausstätter (2009) uses grades as the dependent variable to compare the effect of special education (i.e. grades in the subjects Norwegian, mathematic and English as a foreign language). Their findings are not surprising, showing that pupils receiving special education, performed significantly lower than pupils who did not receive such, and that the measures taken did not succeed to give the pupils an academic boost to catch up with classmates. Using academic knowledge as the key indicator of learning for all pupils, most individuals’ interests and competencies are narrowed down and partly neglected – especially regarding pupils with special needs. The challenging turn in the evaluation of schools’ efficiency, is to include relevant indicators that capture what learning and education is about for the variety of pupils in question.

The last years change in focus towards accountability and academic learning has also shown effect on how Norwegian schools are coping with pupils who do not fulfil the demands of the curriculum. Since the implementation of the “Knowledge Promotion”, there has been a growing body of pupils advised to special education. The proportion of pupils receiving special education has increased from stable average of 5.5% of the pupil population in 2005–2006 to 7.9% in 2009–2010, and the volume of special support are increasing as the pupils get older (Fasting, 2008; Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009; GSI, 2009–2010), supposedly to meet the increased academic expectations in the curriculum and education policy. The reports show an increasing body of segregated part-time measures. The consequence may be that the schools gradually implement the policy requirements as their frame of “normality”, and the teachers “stream-line” the teaching for those pupils who respond positively on the measures taken. Consequently, learning related problems may be conceived as solely residing within the individual, excluded from the educational contexts in which the problems appears, and additional pupils are labelled “learning disabled” supported by given segregated special education.

The developmental process towards an inclusive school rests on the acceptance and acknowledgement of the diversity of pupils, thereby also recognising the diversity of skills, interests and learning abilities that are present. To implement this ideology into practise, it is necessary to facilitate learning opportunities for all pupils, focusing objects and goals that promote participation, growth and development in various areas. These goals are mutual both for inclusion and adapted education, and do not interfere with the idea of an efficient school promoting knowledge. The challenging turn is to include foci recognizing what schooling comprises. For pupils with special needs, the foci have to go beyond traditional school subjects and also address competencies and skills important for successful post-school participation in society (DeSeCo, 2005). In the process of designing standards, goals and objects, professionals, parents and the pupil him / her self have to be included. The premises for such a systemic approach are given in the ideological foundation of the educational framework: a “school for all” – an inclusive school – that takes care of and respect characteristics in the variety of individuals.

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