A practical-theoretical perspective on the inclusive school in Norway

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The purpose of this chapter has been to examine how the intention to include is revealed in the field of practice in Norway. Norway has high ambitions when it comes to offering an inclusive school, ambitions that are clarified both ideologically and formally. Nevertheless, there appears to be a gap between ideology and how the pupils experience inclusion.

The chapter is based on a qualitative interview survey in which the phenomenon studied is the inclusive school. The focus group interview is used to give an example of how the field of practice may understand the concept of inclusion.

An analysis of the results related to the teachers' narratives on inclusion indicated three main areas: understanding of inclusion, attitudes and the importance of alternative teaching facilities. In an attempt to explain the gap between ideology and experience, this chapter discuss two questions in particular: the question of competence and the question of learning outcomes.

Introduction

In Norway, the principle of the inclusive school holds firm, and the Norwegian authorities have signed several international agreements intended to ensure the implementation of the inclusive school. The principle of inclusion is incorporated in legislation and is also highlighted in central steering documents and national curricula for primary and secondary education.

In a historical context, school policy in Norway has changed through integration from representing a school for the few into the modern school where inclusion is seen as a basic assumption (Olsen, 2013). The Norwegian authorities decided several decades ago that special schools should be discontinued (Simonsen & Johnsen, 2007). All pupils have the right to attend the school that is closest to where they live (Education Act, 1998, section 8-1). The individual pupil will thus experience being part of a wider learning community. Nevertheless,

as Bachmann, Haug and Nordahl (2016) also point out, there is some way to go before the principle of an inclusive school is fully incorporated in practice.

In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in alternative learning arenas in the form of special education units or bases (Utdanningsnytt.no). At the same time, fewer and fewer Norwegian teachers have qualifications in special education, and special education teaching is often carried out by unqualified teachers (Bachmann et al., 2016; Barneombudet, 2017; Nordahl et al., 2018). Ström and Hannus-Gullmets (2015) point out that although steering signals encourage inclusion, the implementation of the intention to include pupils with Special educational needs (SEN) often results in exclusion. Persson and Persson (2012) refer to a survey by Allan conducted in Scotland in which both the head teacher and teachers are positive to inclusion in principle, but the teachers find that they do not have sufficient expertise to implement or incorporate this principle as intended. This also applies to the Norwegian situation. For example, Buli-Holmberg, Nilsen and Skogen (2015) found that teachers with a minimum of a one-year qualification in special education were better able to adapt their teaching when compared with other teachers.

Based on the development trends we observe, inter alia, in the Norwegian school, this chapter discusses the question of whether the intention to put in place an inclusive school is reflected in the field of practice, i.e. the Norwegian school. Data will be presented from a project examining how teachers experience the inclusive school. As a background for the study, I have chosen two key topics, which are discussed in the following section. The phenomenon of inclusion is viewed in a Norwegian context against the background of the Norwegian education system. The situation in Norway is probably not unique. The opportunities and limitations highlighted here in the encounter between the political intention and the actions of practitioners in the field have relevance outside Norway's borders.

Inclusion in the Norwegian context

Inclusion as a phenomenon can be understood in different ways (Olsen, 2010; Olsen, 2013). According to Kiuppis (2014), understanding of inclusion has moved away from a focus on pupils with disabilities and their physical placement, to the school's ability to meet diversity. In a historical study, Kiuppis (2014) shows how UNESCO established the programmes 'Education for all' (in 1990) and 'Inclusive education' (in 1994). These programmes were related to ordinary teaching and pupils with disabilities respectively. He shows how the two concepts have gradually merged, which in his view entails that the focus on pupils with

disabilities is in the process of disappearing. By way of comparison, Haug (2017a, p. 15) states that the concept of inclusion came about as an answer to what he calls 'the lost implementation revolution'. He refers to an international trend in the 1970s whereby the integration of pupils with SEN became the general principle. In Norway, the definition of integration was that pupils should belong to a social community, they should benefit from the community and have shared responsibility. According to Haug (2017a), this understanding gradually changed, so that integration became primarily a question of space. Meanwhile, the question arises as to whether the inclusion phenomenon has been adequately established as an alternative, or if many people still regard it as a synonym for integration.

Inclusion must be understood as a complex concept. Olsen (2010) emphasises that in analysis, questions must be asked about what inclusion is, why should we include, and how should inclusion be implemented. As regards *what*, Strømstad, Nes and Skogen (2004) chose a tripartite approach to the concept: social, academic and cultural. Pupils must perceive an affiliation to a group, there must be academic adaptation to their abilities and needs, and their cultural identity must be accepted and safeguarded. Olsen, Mathisen and Sjøblom (2016) added an organisational perspective as an overarching premise for these three. This means that the various parameters for teaching must be in place, including the ideological, the physical and the administrative. These must stem from a joint understanding of inclusion as both a process and a goal. As a step in examining the *why* of inclusion, an assessment of the surrounding context is necessary. This may, for example, be the historical or the political context. Haug (2005) highlights the lack of contextual focus in the research works he has reviewed. The *how* concept is realised in teaching and it is most often left up to the individual teacher to shape this (Olsen, 2013). In this connection, Florian (2014, p. 291) points to two key factors in particular: teachers' beliefs in their own qualifications, and continual improvement. She claims that one of the challenges to achieving this is 'Changing thinking about inclusion from "most" and "some" to "everybody".'

Actors in the debate on inclusion are to be found on different levels – the societal level, the institutional level, the teaching level and the personal level. On these levels we find actors that define what latitude they have to implement and evaluate inclusion. Involvement in inclusion will differ according to the level the actor represents. For example, reports and white papers are produced at the societal level, there is political involvement and a general social debate on inclusion. At the personal level, in comparison, there will be actors such as parents, teachers and pupils. Their understanding of how thoughts on inclusion should be translated into

practice will be closely linked to their understanding of what inclusion is, and what leeway they feel they have.

Haug (2017b) claims that inclusion can be understood as both one-dimensional and as a complex, diverse concept. A one-dimensional understanding triggers the question of the physical placement of pupils who receive special education. This should preferably be in the ordinary school classroom. Such an understanding entails that an inclusive learning environment is the absence of physical segregation. Swedish researchers, Persson and Persson (2012), states that many scholars still have an understanding of inclusion as being close to practice. Inclusion is understood as a spatial, social and didactic phenomenon. Wendelborg and Tøssebro (2011) claims that physical placement in an ordinary class does not guarantee a appropriate, inclusive learning environment. The other understanding of inclusion is based on the creation of a high-quality learning environment with the aim of securing good academic results (Haug, 2017b). Haug asserts that pupils must have the very best conditions in an inclusive learning environment in order to achieve the school's goals. Hattie (2009) mentions high pupil involvement and good social relations as key indicators of a good learning environment. A Norwegian project "The function of special education" has examined student involvement and found that this is far higher when pupils with SEN receive special education than when they participate in ordinary classroom teaching (Haug, 2014). This is not surprising since pupils have closer contact with adults in special education periods and fewer pupils to compete with in terms of pupil activity.

Through his review of various research reports on inclusion, Haug (2005) believes he has identified four dimensions that are of importance in achieving inclusion: increasing a sense of fellowship, participation, democratisation and strengthening outcomes. In later works (e.g. Haug 2014), democratisation has been replaced by involvement. Pupils must be able to take part in social life and experience affiliation to the group and class. They must be active participants who contribute on their own terms. Their voice must be heard, and they must receive an education of benefit to them in both the educational and social sphere. Janson, Nordström and Thunstam (2007) refer to two categories of participation. The first category concerns subjective, experienced participation. Here they assert that acceptance, involvement and autonomy are vital. The second category is objective participation that is observable to a third party. Affiliation, accessibility and interaction are of central importance in this perspective.

Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) point out that inclusion is something that concerns all pupils, emphasising that the distinction between inclusion and exclusion is crucial. They also stress how inclusion is a continual process in which values are translated into practical action. Booth and Ainscow (2001) describe the importance of an inclusive school culture, including strategies and inclusive practice. This elevates inclusion to a responsibility at several levels. If we examine inclusive practice specifically, an Icelandic study shows that teachers see it as 'good or bad luck' as to whether they get pupils with special needs in the class (Gunnþórsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014). Another Icelandic study (Gunnþórsdóttir & Bjarnason, 2014) reveals that teachers have unclear ideas about the ideological aspect of inclusion. Teachers engaged in reflective practice to a limited degree. Iceland and Norway have many similarities in terms of both the intention to include and school structure. The Icelandic results may therefore be transferrable to the Norwegian context. For example, Olsen's (2016) study shows that pupils with ADHD were unable to find their place in the ordinary school. Their families felt rejected and unwanted by school management.

The Norwegian educational system

As previously indicated, the intention to include stands firmly in Norwegian school policies. In some areas, this is reflected in the structure of the Norwegian educational system, while in other areas the intention is less visible. As a basis for the discussion, we therefore outline how the educational system is built up with special focus on provisions for pupils with SEN.

Since 1997, Norwegian children have started at school in the year they turn six years of age. They attend primary and lower secondary school for ten years, followed by three years in upper secondary school, or four years if they pursue vocational education with a two-year apprenticeship. It is possible to apply for an extension of upper secondary school on the basis of special education needs, or if much time at school has been devoted to treatment, habilitation or rehabilitation. Basic schooling is linked to a right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary school. This means that everyone in the age group from 6–16 must be offered teaching at this level and attendance is compulsory. Attending upper secondary school is also a right, but not an obligation. Young people may also decide not to attend upper secondary school. Those who have a higher education entrance qualification on completing upper secondary school can be admitted to universities and university colleges.

The right to schooling is closely linked to the Norwegian school authorities' principles on inclusive, adapted and equal education (Olsen, 2013). These principles are enshrined in the

Education Act and in other steering documents. Earlier, there was widespread use of special schools in Norway. These have now been closed and pupils receive their schooling in their local environment, see the Education Act (1998, section 8-1). This has represented a considerable challenge for school owners, school management and individual teachers. Some have met the challenge by establishing special education units in the school or municipality where pupils with disabilities or complex learning difficulties receive their schooling.

Pupils who do not or are unable to benefit satisfactorily from ordinary teaching have the right to special education (Education Act, 1998, section 5-1). Approximately 8% of Norwegian pupils receive special education. Haug (2016) points out that the number of pupils who are struggling in schools is much higher. He estimates the number as representing 25% of all pupils in school. He bases this partly on how many pupils score below the critical level on PISA surveys and how many fail to complete upper secondary school. If it is thought that there are special educational needs, the educational and psychological counselling service must carry out an expert assessment (Education Act, 1998, section 5-3). Based on this assessment, an individual decision must be made stating whether a) the pupil is receiving special educational assistance, and if so, b) the extent of such assistance, and c) how this assistance is to be provided. A report by the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children (Barneombudet, 2017) revealed that the quality of the special education offered is inferior in many cases. The following year, a government-appointed expert commission arrived at the same conclusion (Nordahl et al., 2018).

Earlier, the study programme in special education was largely based on a model with Part 1 (30 ECTS), Part 2 (60 ECTS) and a major subject (120 ECTS). This followed a bachelor's degree. Part 1 was a basic module providing a general introduction to special education. Part 2 enabled specialisation in areas such as hearing difficulties, language difficulties etc. In the major subject, there was further in-depth specialisation in a chosen topic. In many years, special education courses were integrated in pedagogics as part of teacher education and pre-school teacher education. In 2001, the Storting (Norwegian parliament) approved a quality reform in higher education in Norway, introducing a degree structure consisting of bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD (Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 2001). This came into effect from the beginning of the 2003 study year and entailed that a master's degree in special education was introduced at many of Norway's universities and university colleges. Parts 1 and 2, and the major subject were phased out. Admission requirements for the master's degree in special education at most study institutions entail that

applicants must have a pedagogics-related first degree. Consequently, students can be admitted to the master's degree course in special education today without having any qualifications in this field.

Since 2017, Norwegian teacher education has consisted of integrated bachelor and master's degree studies. Not all student teachers have the opportunity to take special education as a master's degree subject. One example is the northernmost region in Norway: the counties of Nordland and Troms-Finnmark. The region covers 29% of Norway's land area and 9% of the country's population lives here. Neither of the region's two universities offer special education as a master's degree specialisation in teacher education as of 2019 even though they offer a master's degree in special education as further education. Topics such as reading and writing disabilities, mathematical difficulties and social and emotional difficulties are part of teacher education. These are not offered as separate ECTS courses; the individual lecturer decides how much focus to put on these topics. The extent to which they are included is probably a direct consequence of the lecturer's qualifications and interest in the topic.

The designation 'special pedagogue' or 'special teacher' is not a protected title in Norway, and there is no separate profession. Anyone can call him/herself a special teacher, but as a rule the term is used of either those who teach special education or have special education as an additional training programme. There is no specific requirement for a special education qualification to teach pupils with special needs. This means that even though a child is subject to an individual decision that grants special education assistance, this assistance can be provided by anyone, not necessarily someone with special education competence. Several Norwegian studies have highlighted problematic issues in connection with this practice, including Bachmann, Haug and Nordahl (2016) who have investigated who is identified as having the main responsibility for implementing special education. In almost half of the cases, teachers with no special education qualifications have responsibility. Many of these pupils are taught and followed up by assistants. The authors conclude that pupils who need the greatest competence are in fact receiving special education from assistants. The quality of the special education assistance that pupils are entitled to, and the learning outcomes that pupils who need such help achieve, are a cause of great concern. In autumn 2019, the government presented a white paper on early effort in kindergarten and school (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2019) drawing a direct line between expertise and quality. The government has signalled that action will be taken to increase special educational competence in school. One of the suggestions is to impose competence requirements on those who are to teach students with

SEN while another possibility is to evaluate and perhaps change the education programme within special education.

The present study

The aim of this chapter is to examine how the intention to include is revealed in the field of practice in Norway. I wish, therefore, to examine the reflections of a teacher group as an example of how practitioners in the field understand inclusion. The purpose is to illustrate the first section of the chapter and to provide a starting point for the discussion of the way Norway has established special education in order to meet SEN.

The example is based on a qualitative interview survey (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), in which the phenomenon studied is the inclusive school. The focus group interview (Wibeck, 2010) is used to elucidate a number of teachers' perceptions of inclusion in schools. The use of focus groups lends itself to reflective group conversations on a topic, where the researcher acts as the moderator of the conversation. The teachers' reflections provide examples of how the field of practice may understand the concept of inclusion.

Participants

A criterion-based selection (Jajuga, Sokolowski & Bock, 2002) is undertaken. The relevant criteria are that informants must have a connection with pupils who are subject to an individual decision on special education and that they should work in a special education unit outside the ordinary school. This allowed us to elicit data linked to the topic in question, since the selected participants have abilities that are appropriate in answering the research question. The group of teachers was recruited via a request to the Norwegian Epilepsy Association. Teachers of pupils with epilepsy were contacted with consent from parents and guardians and they have given their independent consent to participating. The main theme of the conversation was how the teacher group understood the concept of inclusion and what they regarded as an inclusive school. Moreover, they were asked about what they saw as the strengths and weaknesses of how the municipality organises special education programmes.

The teacher group consists of three special teachers who teach in a special education base in a building beside the main school. Pupils are divided into groups based on the level of disability rather than biological age. These three teachers work with the same group – seven children aged from 7–12, who have a functional level corresponding to 1–3 years. Pupils in this group have severe disabilities and a need for round-the-clock support. They all have complex

learning difficulties. When it comes to the teachers, Gunn and Gro are both qualified kindergarten teachers but Gro has also a master's degree in special education. Gina is a qualified teacher with additional training in special education. The pupil in focus in the conversation was a girl of ten with epilepsy and intellectual development disorder.

Analyses

By means of an interchange between the participants' narratives and theory, we can analyse the narratives and establish new knowledge. This can be termed an abductive analysis strategy (Blaikie, 2000). In addition, the material has been analysed using thematic content analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, Braun & Clarke, 2006). After completing a coding process, the material has been categorized. The categorisation is based on the theory presented and the participants' narrative. Three categories have been established: 1) understanding of inclusion, 2) attitudes in the ordinary school and 3) importance of alternative teaching locations. The categories are presented and discussed with the aim of finding an answer to the research question.

Research ethics guidelines (NESH, 2016) have been followed in order to safeguard the anonymity of the informants and confidentiality. The project has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Results

An analysis of the results related to the teachers' narratives on inclusion indicated three main areas: understanding of inclusion, attitudes and the importance of alternative teaching facilities.

Understanding of inclusion

Initially, the teachers spoke about how the school was organised. In this connection, Gina said: 'In all the classes, there's inclusion that way (pointing to the school building), and inclusion that way (pointing to the base). So there is cooperation.' The other two teachers nodded their agreement. This use of the word 'inclusion' continued, so at the start of the conversation it was unclear whether inclusion was understood as a form of cooperation. A little later in the conversation I asked, therefore, if they could describe specifically what they associated with the term 'inclusion'. Gro answered:

> ‘How shall I explain it? The pupil isn’t normally in the class, but we visit. She is affiliated with a Grade 2 class […] We use the group room beside the classroom. I select pairs of pupils from the class and organise play groups on my pupil’s terms.’

Here Gro describes an understanding of inclusion based on location, where inclusion is something that happens when they take the pupil on a visit to the ordinary school (attending as a guest pupil). In this case, it concerns a pupil who age-wise should be affiliated with a Grade 5 class, rather than a Grade 2 class. Grete justified this by referring to the cognitive distance to her peers:

> ‘We went to a lower grade level so she could be with someone who could play a bit more. They grow out of this so early. When girls get to Grade 3 or 4, childish games aren’t such fun any longer.’

Later in the conversation, an exchange between Gina and Gro helps to flesh out this line of reasoning:

> Researcher: But what do you think inclusion *is*?
> Gina: I would think that when you include, you must be there on the pupil’s terms. So that they are included.
> Gro: It’s not just being present…
> Gina: … present in the class. There must be something that the pupil can draw benefit from in some way.

Here the informants show that inclusion is not simply understood as physical presence. They are also concerned about adaptation to the pupil’s level, both academically and socially.

Attitudes in the ordinary school

In connection with the visiting scheme, the teachers talked about how they chose classes for cooperation based on what was most suitable for their pupil. This could be related to subjects, or if class pupils showed a special interest in their pupil. In that connection, Gunn said: ‘I feel I change a bit according to how she is welcomed. I see that can differ.’ Gina said: ‘We choose classes based on how we feel the pupils are welcomed. We think this is related to showing respect for the pupil who comes into the class as well.’ The pupils’ attitudes and involvement were of significance for their choice of cooperating class. In addition, Gunn said later: ‘We also hope that this will influence the attitudes of pupils in the ordinary class – their attitudes and being able to see the differences among people.’

As well as often choosing the lowest grades in order to find children who still want to play, Gro pointed out the following: 'Those in ordinary classes often show little interest in our group of pupils at the base.' Based on the context in which this was said, I took it to mean that as the pupils grew older, teachers in the ordinary school could become more negative to admitting pupils from the special school, with the justification that they disturbed the teaching or that they did not master the academic level. It was also difficult to get hold of pupils for music or play groups. The teachers in the ordinary school were worried that their pupils would miss something the rest of the class were working on.

Gunn pointed to the attitudes they meet: 'It's got something to do with how the pupils and teachers approach the whole thing. Sometimes there are attitudes.' She goes on to describe how some teachers think it is fine: 'Just to be met with the attitude that "it doesn't matter if they miss the Norwegian class, they're gaining something much more valuable". It's very pleasant to meet such an attitude.' The group of teachers discussed what the reason could be for some teachers being negative to cooperating with them:

> Gunn: I find that they think it's a bit scary. They don't quite know how to tackle it.
> Gro: Ignorance, pure and simple. And that's a bit frightening.
> […]
> Gunn: It's easier for us to start up cooperation with someone who wants us to visit rather than someone who maybe feels duty obliged.

Here the teacher group highlight different conditions that can affect attitudes to cooperation. They focused mainly on three areas they believed could explain negative attitudes: a lack of knowledge about disabilities, experiencing willingness as opposed to unwillingness, and a failure to understand that pupils in the ordinary school need to encounter diversity.

Importance of alternative teaching locations

The teacher group's main focus was an understanding of inclusion as physical presence in the ordinary school. In that perspective, it was of interest to elicit what their views were of segregated solutions such as adopted at the school where they themselves worked, and whether this was consistent with the intention of an inclusive school. Consequently, the last area that was discussed was the question of inclusion seen in connection with the municipality's choice of school organisation. All three were of the opinion that it was a good solution for the group of pupils with whom they worked.

> Gina: I think it's an excellent model with a special school linked to an ordinary school. I wish there was more of that. It's a matter of getting the best out of every situation.
> […]
> Gro: In a way you have the opportunity to get the best of two worlds, a choice of both the special classes and the ordinary classes. Juggling a bit for the pupil's best.

The teachers were talking here as if a special school is a given dimension and that it is merely a question of location close to or far from an ordinary school. In that perspective, they see it as a clear advantage that the schools are only separated by a school playground. This gives benefits for both parties.

The teachers did not regard it as a drawback for the pupils' sense of inclusion that they attended a special school. They did not use the word 'included' but described in different ways how the pupils enjoyed each other's company, experienced friendship and learned from each other.

The teachers were asked to imagine that the pupil in question attended an ordinary school and was a pupil in an ordinary class:

> Researcher: What do you think she would miss out on that she gets here?
>
> Gunn: The number of people. Our presence. Staying on her level. Following her level all the time.
>
> Gina: Yes, being seen.

What the teachers meant by 'following her level' is somewhat diffuse, but this may be linked to their experiences of cooperation with the ordinary school, where the teaching was not adapted to their pupils.

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine how the intention to include is revealed in the field of practice. Norway has high ambitions when it comes to offering an inclusive school, ambitions that are clarified both ideologically and formally. Nevertheless, there appears to be a gap between ideology and how the pupils experience inclusion (Olsen, 2013). Many pupils find that their physical, psychological and educational needs are insufficiently safeguarded in schools (Ombudsman for Children, 2017). In an attempt to explain this gap, I wish to discuss two questions in particular in this section: the question of competence and the

question of learning outcomes. The question of competence has been chosen, inter alia, in light of Kiuppis (2014) claim that the school's ability to meet diversity plays a key role in an inclusion perspective. Furthermore, pupils must be included academically, socially and culturally (Strømstad, Nes & Skogen, 2004), hence the question of learning outcomes.

The question of special education competence in an inclusive learning environment

Teacher education in Norway has no compulsory training in special education other than three topics for which no guidelines are given regarding amount and extent. The government's intention to ensure inclusive education emerges in steering signals targeting primary and secondary schools. This has not been followed up by guidelines for teacher education, guidelines that could ensure to a greater degree that schools had special education competence. There is a considerable body of research on what special education competence means for inclusion and good adaptation, including the self-reporting of teachers (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2015).

It is difficult to say what impact the restructuring of the Norwegian education system will have for pupils with SEN and their academic and social access to an inclusive learning environment. In all likelihood, fewer teachers will decide to do a master's degree in special education in addition to teacher education since teacher education has increased from a three-year programme to a five-year programme, with an integrated master's degree in other subjects. At institutions offering special education as a master's degree subject, this competes with key school subjects such as mathematics and Norwegian. Special education qualifications give teachers a sense of security as regards utilising measures aimed at adapting the education (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2015). This indicates that special education competence is essential for compliance with the provisions of the Education Act (1998, sections 1-3) regarding adapted learning, which are of key importance in achieving academic inclusion (Olsen, Mathisen & Sjøblom, 2016).

The group of teachers interviewed worked exclusively with special education. One of the three, Gunn, had no formal qualifications in special education. Nevertheless, she appeared to be confident in her role and commented on colleagues who had no knowledge about disabilities. Through her work in the special school, Gunn had probably built up prior learning and work experience related to special education that gave her professional confidence. According to Florian (2014) it is precisely such confidence that is crucial in paving the way for an inclusive school. It takes time to acquire solid competence and demands good support

from staff. The three teachers worked closely with the same pupils and Gunn has probably received the mentoring necessary. Many Norwegian schools have a special education team who supervise teachers and assistants. Although such mentoring schemes provide vital support for teachers, they cannot replace special education training, see Buli-Holmberg, Nilsen and Skogen's (2015) survey of the importance of special education qualifications.

Attitudes at different school levels form part of the barrier to inclusive education. The teacher group described teachers' attitudes. They did not talk about good or bad luck (see Gunnþórsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014b), but about willingness or unwillingness to welcome the pupil. The school where these teachers worked was organised such that the teachers in the ordinary school could opt out of visits from the special education unit. This is not a unique phenomenon in Norway. More and more municipalities are establishing special education units such as this or locate smaller bases in the school. Teachers in the ordinary school thus have the opportunity to exclude unwanted pupils. One of the teachers, Gunn, believed that teachers in the ordinary school viewed visits from pupils with SEN as scary because they themselves did not know how to react. Gro added that this was based on ignorance. In their handbook on inclusion, Booth and Ainscow (2001) referred to an inclusive school culture as a crucial factor for inclusive education. The teachers mention colleagues who they feel have a lack of knowledge about disabilities. At the same time, their level of reflection shows that they themselves are very practice-oriented in their understanding of inclusion. This may indicate that the question of an inclusive school has not been discussed at a general level. A lack of plenary discussions makes it difficult to put in place a school culture with positive attitudes to including all pupils in the class fellowship.

The question of learning outcomes in an inclusive learning environment

Gunnþórsdóttir and Bjarnason (2014) write that teachers have unclear ideas about inclusion and generally do not reflect on this. The teacher group in the study had a practice-related understanding (Persson and Persson, 2012). In terms of the degree of reflection, it was their experiences that dominated the conversation. In addition, they related reflection to experiencing a sense of fellowship and achieving learning outcomes, which represent two of Haug's (2005) four dimensions for inclusion.

The group of teachers was asked whether the scheme with a special school was positive or not. They did not problematise a) the closure of special schools or b) the intention to include. The teachers regard the special school as positive and believe that this focus should be

increased even though they experience problems concerning visits by their pupils to the ordinary school. Such problems with cooperation may be the reason that they are positive to the scheme with a special school. They find that there is a wide divide between their pupils and the others, both in respect of interests and academic level. They see a need to choose affiliation based on function rather than age.

As demonstrated by the conversations with the teacher group, there is still talk of 'the pupil who is included'. Inclusion is thus seen as an us–them relationship (Olsen, 2016; Florian, 2014), where a divide is created between the ordinary group and those who appear different. According to Ainscow et al., (2006), as long as we continue to talk about the necessity of including people, it means that pupils are still excluded. Inclusion ideology must be lifted from the individual level so that the community offers the necessary space for diversity. Kiuppis (2014) is of the opinion that the focus on disability diminishes when the concepts of 'education for all' and 'Inclusive education' merge. Although this represents a danger, we must reach this point if fellowship in the ordinary school is to be dimensioned so as to embrace all diversity among pupils. Inclusive education must therefore become a natural and inherent component of education for all.

The teachers do not reflect to any great extent on the learning outcomes of pupils in the ordinary school. They wanted to include these pupils in play and music groups but found that their colleagues were negative. They attributed this to ignorance. Their reflections on fellow pupils' learning outcomes mainly concerned seeing differences between individuals. When Haug (2017b) highlights academic results as a factor in achieving a high-quality, inclusive learning environment, this includes all pupils, (see also Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) who assert that inclusion applies to everyone). It is essential, therefore, that the teachers discuss what learning outcomes the individual pupil gains from participating in different group compositions. Meeting different kinds of people is an important social skill for everyone. In the long term, increased diversity can create a richer and more inclusive society. Perhaps we cannot expect that children with a considerable difference in mental age should perceive each other as equal academically, but we can expect that they show each other respect. This is good training regardless of age. With this in mind, an important task for teachers is to make provision for all pupils to participate in appropriate learning activities. According to Janson, Nordström and Thunstam (2007), acceptance, involvement and autonomy are crucial for subjective, experienced participation.

Teachers in the special school were concerned that teachers in the ordinary school might not adapt to the level of the pupil with SEN if he/she receives all education in an ordinary school. The Norwegian school is goal oriented and has a set curriculum for the different grades. In light of this, it is difficult for a pupil whose learning has been delayed for various reasons to follow the age-determined level since this would result in low academic learning outcomes for other pupils. In recent years, it has emerged that the Norwegian school has the same problem in relation to pupils who for various reasons are far ahead in their learning. The Norwegian school has been described as a school for the average pupil. Thinking anew about the organisation and implementation of teaching should permit the establishment of a school for a broad diversity of pupils, such that the question of inclusion is seen as more than merely a question of physical placement (see Wendelborg & Tøssebro, 2011).

Conclusion

Experiencing inclusion cannot merely be a question of being present in the ordinary school or not. Some pupils need different parameters to feel included. From that point of view, alternative learning arenas are important for meeting pupils' varied needs. Nevertheless, the question we can ask in Norway is whether the proliferation of special education units separate from the general learning community represents an admission of failure. This type of organisation may be the result of changed conditions for special education training, which in turns leads to fewer teachers with special education qualifications in the ordinary school. The parents who can choose, choose the solution they believe is best for their child socially, academically and from the point of view of health. Many special schools offer an arena in which pupils with SEN receive specialised care and teaching and are closely followed up by adults. Such alternative learning arenas may offer greater opportunities to find both an academic and social fellowship.

On the other hand, the question arises as to whether we want such a society, a society where separate zones for groups of people must be established. This is partly because we cannot find a place for them in the ordinary community and partly because they themselves are unable to find a place where they are respected for who they are. The divide we–they will persist as long as we have separate schools for pupils at different functional levels.

In order to bridge the gap between intention and practice, two areas have been discussed: knowledge and learning outcomes. These areas are interlinked. Knowledge is established primarily through education but also through good mentor schemes in school. However, such

a scheme can merely be regarded as support, not as an alternative to special education qualifications. To achieve good learning outcomes, the teacher must satisfy the individual child's needs for social, academic and cultural support. The dimensioning of the Norwegian school today does not allow for a rich and diverse fellowship.

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