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The Norwegian inclusive learning environment: an analysis

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Abstract

After the Salamanca Declaration, integration was replaced with inclusion as an aim in Norwegian education policy. Since then, Norwegian education has sought to achieve the goal that every child and every student is included in the ordinary education and receives a satisfying learning environment. This study presents and analyses some of the fundamental attitudes and thoughts about inclusion in the Norwegian education system, where inclusion is considered an enrichment both for the student and for the environment (kindergarten, school, society). Through both the official document on education and relevant literature, the article presents examples that show that the Norwegian approach could be considered as an interesting model for realizing an effective inclusive learning environment. The article presents in the same time reflections about the fact that, however, there is still a gap between the ideal and the practice. The literature highlights the main reason for this as related to teachers' competence. Suggestions about how to reduce this gap are presented.

Introduction

In the Norwegian context inclusion is a concept that involves all children, grounded on the understanding that each child is different and that children can learn and behave differently because of their different types of intelligence¹. The Norwegian policy guidelines present an inclusive learning environment as a value for all and make an effort to remove barriers to learning and enhance participation for all². In education, the term *inclusion* is used to describe a situation where the school guarantees a teaching approach that can give each child or student a satisfactory educational offer³. Even if inclusion is usually presented as a possible advantage for the included subject, the literature underlines how it also positively modifies the entire environment, whether it be a kindergarten, school or society itself⁴.

However, some aspects must be considered to realise actual inclusion. This article intends to introduce a short historical evolution of the term inclusion in Norway to provide evidence of the connection between inclusion and society. Then, the article will analyse those aspects that

¹ Gardner, H. E. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. Hachette UK.

² Booth, A., Sutton, A., Clowes, M., & Martyn-St James, M. (2021). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review*.

³ Lundh, L., Hjelmbrekke, H., & Skogdal, S. (2014). *Inkluderende praksis. Gode erfaringer fra*.

⁴ Hausstätter, R. S. (2007). *Spesialpedagogiske grunnlagsproblemer: mellom ideologi og virkelighet*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

are important in an inclusion perspective and present some keywords that are considered fundamental, at least in Norway, for making inclusion a reality.

A historical perspective of the inclusive learning environment

In Norway, the socially inclusive environment was constructed nationally, and in particular the care of children with disabilities was linked to a universal schooling policy⁵. The universal schooling policy can be regarded as a tool for reducing differences in the population, both social and economic. With this goal, a common primary school was established in the 19th century⁶. In 1881 a law was established that stated seven years of education were required for everyone, with the idea that the unitary school should be increasingly considered a part of the nation-building process⁷. From 1881 to 1975 a dual school system legislation existed, where the possibility to be included in an ordinary school or special school was established through IQ tests⁸.

In 1955, influenced by the Salamanca statement⁹, the arrangement of special education in specific schools or special classes was identified as a municipal duty. Normalisation was defined more and more as not just living like others but living between them¹⁰. As Befring describes¹¹, it was a mirror of society that had at its core an ideal of social equity. If we look at an individual plan, great emphasis was placed on individual autonomy and freedom, and this had the consequence that it became even more difficult to define what is normal since individualisation “*means that normal life is about to be resolved up into a greater plurality of juxtaposed lifestyles*”¹².

In 1975 the *Integration law* was established, and the Act of special schools abolished. An educational act established the right to special education for those who needed it, preferably in the mainstream school¹³. In the 1990s the special schools closed down. Special institutions were also closed down, and services for the disabled were integrated into the general offer.

In 2008 a survey revealed that “*about 97% of all Norwegian students aged 6–16 attend the common, free mainstream school, run by the local educational authorities. In that respect the Norwegian school system is among the most inclusive in the world. No child, even if he or she is disabled, can be denied access to the local school*”¹⁴. However, this does not mean that

⁵ Befring, E. (2004). *Spesialpedagogikk: perspektiver og tilnærminger*. I Befring, E. og Tangen, R.(2004). In: Spesialpedagogikk.

⁶ Ibidem

⁷ Nes, K. (2014). *Inclusive education in Norway: historical roots and present challenges*. Journal of special education research, 2(2), 81-86.

⁸ Haug, P. (1999). *Spesialundervisning i grunnskulen: grunnlag, utvikling og innhold*. Abstrakt.

⁹ UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all*. Publication No. 978-92-3-100388-2.

¹⁰ Befring, E. (2004). *Spesialpedagogikk: perspektiver og tilnærminger*. I Befring, E. og Tangen, R.(2004). In: Spesialpedagogikk.

¹¹ Ibidem

¹² Befring, E. (2004). *Spesialpedagogikk: perspektiver og tilnærminger*. cit

¹³ Nes, K. (2014). *Inclusive education in Norway: historical roots and present challenges*. Journal of special education research, 2(2), 81-86

¹⁴ Nes, K. (2014). *Inclusive education in Norway: historical roots and present challenges*. Cit.

everything is perfect, nor that further steps forward in the process of inclusion should not be made¹⁵.

How to realise an inclusive learning environment

It is important to analyse the aspects that are important for realising a real inclusive learning environment.

Three conditions for inclusion

In current Norwegian school and kindergarten, the desire is to include every child and therefore place all the children together in a social community. The educational activities are carried out so that everyone participates, but each child (or each student) receives different learning outcomes or has a different degree of participation. However, it is not possible to actually control child's personal experience of inclusion. This is quite important, because the choice of physically placing a child with others into an educational programme from which the child receives no benefit can lead to the child not having an experience of being included. Through what is called integration, the child develops a feeling of segregation instead of inclusion. In fact, integration and inclusion mean two different things: integration means that the school is able to provide its education to all children in the same place, while inclusion means that schools are able to provide a satisfactory school offer to all children, so that no one is excluded¹⁶.

We can, for example, consider children with Downs Syndrome who receive special education as part of strengthening ordinary education. Although it is known that benefits related to learning (for example, related to language) come from inclusion, and that children with developmental disabilities are well accepted by their peers, it has also been highlighted that they are almost never seen as "best friends"¹⁷. This implies a need for a detailed analysis of the situation in order to support the cultural, social and personal development of these children in the best possible way. This can be achieved by increasing teachers' competence, as teacher's lack of knowledge can have the consequence of limiting child's social belonging in the classroom environment^{18 19}.

This highlights that, when looking more closely at inclusion, children with special needs' physical presence in a classroom is not sufficient. To realise a real inclusion, three conditions should be defined²⁰. These three conditions are: social inclusion, academic and linguistic inclusion and psychological inclusion. Social inclusion is about the child being a real participant in the social community. Academic and linguistic inclusion is about the child participating in

¹⁵ Jahnsen, J., Nergaard, S., & Grini, N. (2011). *Er alle med. Smågruppetiltak for elever som viser problematferd og/eller lav skolemotivasjon. En kartlegging på, 1(7)*.

¹⁶ Lundh, L., Hjelmbrække, H., & Skogdal, S. (2014). *Inkluderende praksis. Gode erfaringer fra*.

¹⁷ De Graaf, G., Van Hove, G., & Haveman, M. (2012). *Effects of regular versus special school placement on students with Down syndrome: A systematic review of studies. New developments in Down syndrome research, 45-86*.

¹⁸ Bjøralt, H. (2007). *Inkludert eller.....?: omvendt inkludering-fra bostedsskolen til spesialskolen*. MS thesis.

¹⁹ Strande, V. S. (2014). *Ordinærskole eller spesialskole? Foreldres valg av grunnskoletilbud for sitt barn med Down syndrom*. MS thesis.

²⁰ Nordahl, T., Qvortrup, L., Hansen, L. S., & Hansen, O. (2014). *Resultater fra kartleggingsundersøkelse i Kristiansand kommune 2013*. Aalborg Universitetsforlag.

the educational activity or participating in the same way as the others, and psychological inclusion is about the child personally experiencing inclusion²¹.

A real inclusive learning environment through inclusive practice: focus on the organisation

It is clearly important that inclusion is not just a word, but that it becomes reality. For this reason it is important to talk about inclusive practice²². To succeed in creating an inclusive practice, it is important that the kindergarten or school has a vision that everyone should feel included. Mitchell²³ mentions, among other things, that the vision of inclusion must be anchored in the management of the school or kindergarten; the activities must be organised with inclusion in focus, following the suggestions contained in the educational guidelines. In fact, in the documents that present the contents and pedagogical approaches that should be used in education, inclusion is clearly presented.

The main document for Norwegian kindergartens is the Framework Plan for Kindergarten²⁴. It states:

“Kindergartens shall use diversity as a resource in their pedagogical practices and support, empower and respond to the children according to their respective cultural and individual circumstances.”²⁵

For schools, the main document is the Core Curriculum²⁶, and it states:

“School shall give pupils historical and cultural insight that will give them a good foundation in their lives and help each pupil to preserve and develop her or his identity in an inclusive and diverse environment.

Insight into our history and culture is important for developing the identities of pupils and their belonging in society. The pupils shall learn about the values and traditions which contribute to uniting people in our country.”²⁷

Mitchell further describes that the school or kindergarten must actively work to create an inclusive practice, and this means that everyone affiliated with the kindergarten or school

²¹ Ibidem

²² Buli-Holmberg, J., McGuire, E., & Winsnes, M. R. (2022). *Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Education in Norway*. In *Special Education in the Early Years* (pp. 169-184). Springer.

²³ Mitchell, D. (2020). *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Routledge.

²⁴ Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2017). *Rammeplan for barnehagen: Forskrift om rammeplan for barnehagens innhold og oppgaver*. In: Udir.

²⁵ Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2017). *Rammeplan for barnehagen: Forskrift om rammeplan for barnehagens innhold og oppgaver*. Cit.

²⁶ Regjeringen. (2017). *Overordnet del–verdier og prinsipper for grunnsopplæringen*. In: Utdanningsdirektoratet Oslo.

²⁷ Regjeringen. (2017). *Overordnet del–verdier og prinsipper for grunnsopplæringen*. Cit.

shows acceptance, which means to understand and believe that everyone has their natural place in the community²⁸.

Literature highlights that when organising an inclusive practice, it is important to facilitate that as many children and young people as possible have a psychological experience of inclusion²⁹³⁰. This means that the educational practices should be organised flexibly, where for flexible is described a situation where all the children and students spend some time together with the whole class or group, some time in groups with different skill levels, and some time in groups with equal skill levels. In the groups with equal skill levels it is highlighted the importance of all children and students receiving individual adaptations³¹.

A real inclusive learning environment through inclusive practice: focus on the relationship

If we focus on what can be relevant for building a real learning inclusive environment, we should consider that teacher's role is fundamental for supporting children's learning³². This means that the relation between teacher and child or teacher and student should show some specific elements that lead to an inclusive environment. In accordance with what presented before in the section related to organization, the teacher should be inspired by the educational guidelines as the Framework for Kindergarten and the Core Curriculum, and teach to all the children that human diversity is natural and expected and that variety has a positive effect in the environment and in learning. This will have the consequence that people with different levels of development can learn together, because learning may take place at different paces, but through contact and interaction³³. Another important consequence of this point of view is that a socially inclusive environment will be evaluated as the best for all children, which means that the classroom (or department in the kindergarten) should be an environment where everyone feels welcome³⁴. However, this has been presented sometime partly contradictory with the educational aim of increasing children's higher level learning³⁵.

The idea that a socially inclusive environment is evaluated as the best for all children is in accordance with the critical theory, where recognition is the most relevant element. *Recognition* describes how a relationship between teacher and child (or teacher and student) should be built for realizing a real learning inclusive environment³⁶.

Recognition is an important concept that describes an equal relationship between two persons, where one puts oneself in the other's position. As a consequence, one confirms the

²⁸ Mitchell, D. (2020). *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Routledge.

²⁹ Ibidem

³⁰ Nordahl, T., & Hausstätter, R. S. (2010). *Spesialundervisningens forutsetninger, innsatser og resultater*.

³¹ Mitchell, D. (2020). *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Routledge.

³² Howie, D. R. (2019). *Thinking about the Teaching of Thinking: The Feuerstein Approach*. Routledge

³³ Nordahl, T., & Hausstätter, R. S. (2010). *Spesialundervisningens forutsetninger, innsatser og resultater*.

³⁴ Hausstätter, R. S. (2007). *Spesialpedagogiske grunnlagsproblemer: mellom ideologi og virkelighet*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

³⁵ Fasting, R. B. (2013). *Adapted education: the Norwegian pathway to inclusive and efficient education*. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 17(3), 263-276.

³⁶ Petherbridge, D. (2013). *The critical theory of Axel Honneth*. Lexington books.

other's perception of reality as valid and also sees things from a different perspective³⁷. Recognition theory highlights that all people want to achieve a complete self-relationship, which means developing a self-image that helps them see themselves as equal in relation to other people³⁸. Recognition theory is important to understand how people with special need or disabilities are seen and should be seen. The need of recognition is a fundamental human need, but it is not always satisfied. In the theory of recognition three types of relationships can be described³⁹:

- *self-confidence*, which is established and developed in childhood, in connection to the context of friendship and love;
- *self-respect*, which is established when a person in a community recognises his/her rights;
- *self-esteem*, which is established when a person feels honoured by the community for his/her contribution through work.

Recognition is also connected to two other important elements that should constitute the relation between a teacher and a child (or a teacher and a student): the inner recognition^{40 41} and the identification of the child as a subject and not as an object⁴².

The literature defines *inner recognition* as the ability of seeing the other persons' inner his/her own world of experiences and appreciate it. This inner recognition demands an attitude and demeanour that includes empathy, understanding and acceptance, and which helps to create an atmosphere of security and empathic interpersonal relationships between teacher and child²⁵. The attitude described needs three ethical demands that teachers should have, as making an effort to act and think idealistically and nobly towards the child, acting on the basis of what serves the child's best and meeting the child so that he or she can feel seen and understood in the meeting⁴³. Literature affirms that those children and students who experience recognition over time will be able to develop an affiliation relationship, a fundamental trust in the teacher, because they know that the teacher values them as a subject. This will in turn strengthen the students' self-esteem, as described in literature^{44 45}.

³⁷ Jensen, P., & Ulleberg, I. (2011). *Kommunikasjon*. I I. Ulleberg., & P. Jensen (Red.), *Mellom ordene*, 1, 19-51.

³⁸ Skoglund, R., & Amot, I. (2019). *Anerkjennelsens kompleksitet i barnehage og skole (The complexity of recognition in day care and school)*. In: Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

³⁹ Honneth, A. (1996). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. MIT press.

⁴⁰ Schibbye, A.-L. L. (2012). *Relasjoner: et dialektisk perspektiv på eksistensiell og psykodynamisk psykoterapi* (2. utgave). Universitetsforlaget.

⁴¹ Schibbye, A.-L. L. (2013). Betydningen av indre anerkjennelse i relasjoner. I A. Greve, S. Mørreaunet & N. Winger (red.), *Ytringer om likeverd, demokrati og relasjonsbygging i barnehagen*, 37-47

⁴² Skjervheim, H. (1974). *Deltakar og tilskodar*. Instituttet for sosiologi, Universitetet i Oslo.

⁴³ Løgstrup, K. E. (2020). *The ethical demand*. Oxford University Press.

⁴⁴ Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 365-386). Springer.

⁴⁵ Pianta, R. C. (2013). *Classroom management and relationships between children and teachers: Implications for research and practice*. In *Handbook of classroom management* (pp. 695-720). Routledge.

The second important element is teacher's ability of recognizing the child as a subject⁴⁶. Both in kindergarten and in school, the teacher may in some cases make the mistake of meeting the student as an object. This happens when the teacher is most concerned with doing something with the child or the student, rather than building a relation with the student based on equity, where both teacher and child analyse a problem together for finding a common solution. This form of relationship therefore becomes a meeting between a subject and an object, which Skjervheim describes as the instrumentalist mistake. Teachers need to be aware of this risk and use their knowledge and their competence for avoiding this position. In fact, this position causes in child and in the student a sense of inferiority. It is therefore important that the teacher in the meeting with the child or the student seeks to meet him or her as a subject. When two common subjects meet, and talk on a common objective topic, the relationship between them can be strengthened.

Inclusion as an added value to kindergarten, school and society

Based on the critical inclusive view⁴⁷, many benefits can be highlighted for children who receive special education. The first is that through a special education offer, the kindergarten and school show that inclusion is the goal, and that the kindergarten or school wants to be a socially inclusive environment. The consequence is that all children feel welcome, recognised and not inferior. This has been identified as the key to achieving complete self-awareness and as a way to strengthen children's self-confidence⁴⁸. In addition, being included in the kindergarten or classroom can have positive effects on children's learning⁴⁹ with positive consequences for their lives⁵⁰.

When we focus on kindergarten and school, many benefits can also be described for the environment. The literature has identified variety in the kindergarten or classroom as a positive factor for the children's environment and learning. In particular, the literature has described inclusive education as a way to ensure that all children: develop a positive identity and sense of belonging; participate actively; and receive good pedagogical support and teaching⁵¹. Teachers can start from authentic problems and offer children many different problem-solving activities through a competence that helps children to learn better.

If we consider the kindergarten and the classroom as the first environments where children experience society outside the family environment, many of these benefits also apply to the society itself. The offer of special education and the consequent realisation of an inclusive learning environment stimulates a human community, where diversity is natural and

⁴⁶ Skjervheim, H. (1974). *Deltakar og tilskodar*. Instituttet for sosiologi, Universitetet i Oslo.

⁴⁷ Hausstätter, R. S. (2007). *Spesialpedagogiske grunnlagsproblemer: mellom ideologi og virkelighet*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

⁴⁸ Alshutwi, S. M., Ahmad, A. C., & Lee, L. W. (2020). *The impact of inclusion setting on the academic performance, social interaction and self-esteem of deaf and hard of hearing students: Systematic review and meta-analysis*. International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 19(10), 248-264.

⁴⁹ Dessemontet, R. S., Bless, G., & Morin, D. (2012). *Effects of inclusion on the academic achievement and adaptive behaviour of children with intellectual disabilities*. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 56(6), 579-587.

⁵⁰ Faragher, R., Brady, J., Clarke, B., & Gervasoni, A. (2008). *Children with Down syndrome learning mathematics: Can they do it? Yes they can!* Australian primary mathematics classroom, 13(4), 10-15.

⁵¹ MacArthur, J. (2009). *Learning better together. Working towards inclusive education in New Zealand schools*.

expected. This means that society will tend not to focus on a pathological definition of normality and deviation but place more emphasis on individual freedom and autonomy. If children learn to cooperate and find common solutions, they will maintain the same attitude even when they are adults and they become actively involved in the definition of society.

Good examples and challenges in the realization of an inclusive learning environment in Norway

In the Norwegian system exist good examples of successful inclusive learning environments.

In a study conducted in a kindergarten, the findings indicate that a good organization and an educational offer adapted to the individual child, together with a good competence and sufficient number of employees have allowed a better inclusion of children with disabilities during playing activities⁵². Another study, conducted also in kindergarten, discussed how inclusion had been increased through teachers' decision of having a better focus on the interaction between children and adults, where each child is considered as a subject and not as an object⁵³. Another example related to kindergarten shows that collaboration is important in order to facilitate and organize good measures for children with special needs. In this study, children with special needs had the opportunity to participate in activities to the same extent as all other children in kindergarten, while they receive adapted education. In order to do so, the measures initiated by the teachers had been oriented towards each child's development and focused on each child's development zone. The adult had then realized a mediational approach⁵⁴.

Examples of a good practice can also be identified in school.

One study, for example, points out that increasing the teachers' awareness about the fundamental values that are presented in the educational guidelines about inclusion can be the bases for realizing a successful inclusive practice. For example, it is important that the teachers base the educational approach on students' resources rather than on his or her challenges. Moreover, supporting an environment where students have good attitudes to diversity and students support each other, has been presented as a key for developing a realizable inclusive learning environment⁵⁵. Also teachers' self confidence in using the different instruments for observations and children's support has been presented in literature as fundamental for succeed, and the importance of a satisfactory preparation during university courses has been highlighted⁵⁶.

As mentioned before, the fact that inclusion is deeply related to the Norwegian society and is built in accordance to important theories describing inclusion, does not mean that everything

⁵² Grindset, E. C. J. (2021). *Inkludering i lek for barn med nedsatt funksjonsevne*. Dronning Mauds Minne Høgskole for Barnehagelærerutdanning].

⁵³ Pedersen, K. (2008). *Rom for alle, blikk for den enkelte. Utviklingsarbeid i profesjonsutdanninger*, 44.

⁵⁴ Hage, M. K. (2007). *Tilpasset opplæring for barn med spesielle behov i barnehagen. Tilrettelegging og organisering av spesialpedagogisk arbeid i barnehagen for å sikre inkludering og tilpasset opplæring*. MS thesis.

⁵⁵ Kirkebøen, E. M. (2018). *Skoler med en inkluderende praksis gir alle elever en mulighet til å lykkes i sine ordinære klasser. En kvalitativ studie rettet mot inkluderende praksis og utviklingsarbeid*. MS thesis.

⁵⁶ Tveit, S. (2021). *Hvordan legge til rette for inkludering og deltakelse for ASK-brukere i skolen?* Høgskulen på Vestlandet]

is perfect. In fact, although there are many good examples that can be described, it is possible to highlight some challenges too.

The first challenge that we want to highlight is for the children or the students who have special need and who are included. The practical example that we have presented before, related to students with Downs Syndrome, has been useful for highlighting that to be physically in the classroom is not enough to reach a satisfying level of inclusion. What is needed is a teacher's detailed analysis of the situations to support the cultural, social and personal development of these children in the best possible way. A key factor is identified in the teacher's competence^{57 58}. The same conclusion is found if one considers that the individualised education offer must be implemented effectively for the benefit of children, together with a continuous evaluation to highlight the need for any changes in special teaching offer. Teacher's lack of knowledge about the three conditions for inclusion can have the consequence that child's social belonging in the classroom environment is limited.

From kindergarten and school's perspective, different challenges can be highlighted. The first is, again, linked to the competence of teachers. In order to develop an inclusive environment, the school and the teacher, should, as presented before, put themselves in a participant position⁵⁹. This happens when one subject (the teacher), together with the other (for example, the student with developmental disabilities) draws attention to the phenomenon and engages together about the problem⁶⁰. This process is resource-intensive, because it takes time to be able to analyse and decide together what is best for the child or for the student being included, namely, to recognise him / her and to define a common goal together. It is also demanding to succeed in a collaboration that involves all the agencies that work for the best interests of children. For example, the kindergarten or school should work effectively with the social service in charge of the child's special support. In Norway, this service is called PPT (Pedagogisk-Psykologisk Tjeneste). The kindergarten or school has the responsibility to arrange the general educational offer for all children and students, based on the child's or student's needs and prerequisites. If the need cannot be covered within this offer, parents, or a kindergarten/school in collaboration with parents, can request an expert assessment of whether the child or the student needs special educational assistance. In addition, PPT must be a network builder and mediator with other support agencies. The special educational assistance must also include parent counselling⁶¹. Research shows that this cooperation is not always so effective⁶². Research shows, in addition, that the guidelines that should be followed to define and develop a child's special didactical plan are not always respected⁶³. One of the

⁵⁷ Pantić, N., & Florian, L. (2015). *Developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice*. *Education Inquiry*, 6(3), 273-11.

⁵⁸ Pit-ten Cate, I. M., Markova, M., Krischler, M., & Krolak-Schwerdt, S. (2018). *Promoting Inclusive Education: The Role of Teachers' Competence and Attitudes*. *Insights into Learning Disabilities*, 15(1), 49-63.

⁵⁹ Skjervheim, H. (2000). *Objektivismen-og studiet av mennesket*. Gyldendal akademisk.

⁶⁰ Hverven, S. (2016). *Hvordan leve med andre?-Hans Skjervheim, objektivisme og natursyn*. *Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift*, 51(02), 93-106.

⁶¹ Fasting, R. B. (2015). *PP-tjenesten en merkevare. Om tolkningsfelleskap og PP-tjenestens rolle i barnehager og skoler. [Is ECPS a brand, 53-62.*

⁶² Gressgård, L. J., Teig, I. L., & Gätner, E.-M. (2013). *Interorganisatorisk kompleksitet og tidlig innsats overfor barn og unge i kommunal sektor*.

⁶³ Tollefsen, M. (2012). *Fra sakkyndig vurdering til sluttvurdering med karakter*

characteristics of a good special educational offer is to have room for the assessment of goal achievement in order to possibly develop new strategies. This can be a challenge because it requires competence and time. Challenges can be also identified in the fact that it is fundamental that teachers are able to see the individual from different perspectives and to appreciate each one of the child or student's attitudes, because this is clearly one of the keys that allows the inclusion process to succeed. Literature highlights that it requires a broad knowledge for example about observations of how the environment and staff support children's development. A last challenge that can be discussed is related to Peders Haug's description of an inclusive framework. He points to four characteristics that should exist in order to talk about the kindergarten or the school as an inclusive environment. The inclusive environment should: be democratic (everyone should hear what others say and everyone should participate with their own voice); participatory (the kindergarten or the school should be organised to get full participation from all children or all students); contribute to development and growth (everyone should learn, and everyone should develop); and offer community (because it is from working together that the most difficult goals are achieved). The challenge is then linked to the feasibility of these characteristics, which are the kindergarten and school's goals, but of course also society's goal. Ogden, for example, writes that the concept of integration is utopian, and a failure to achieve it is strictly linked to a lack of teachers' competence⁶⁴. This idea points to an organisational problem, because teachers who work with children who need special support are not always prepared for this task through their educational path, or they have not enough time for realizing each task as it should be. This means that, as the literature highlights, there is a need for increasing even more the special education policy, as suggested in other countries where problems about special education were highlighted⁶⁵. For example, it seems more and more current that the teachers' knowledge is not only increased in relation to their own specific disciplinary area but also in relation to what is happening in the various agencies that work with children or students with special need⁶⁶.

Conclusions

As this article has highlighted, both Norwegian society and the educational system are deeply related to the idea of inclusion. Norway, in fact, presents in its educational guidelines indications for creating and implementing an inclusive learning environment through inclusive practice, both in kindergarten⁶⁷ and in school⁶⁸. Those suggestions are in accordance with the main theories that describe how to implement an inclusive learning environment. Norwegian literature and the educational guidelines recognise diversity as an enrichment in kindergarten

⁶⁴ Ogden, T. (2012). *Atferdsproblemer og myten om den inkluderende skolen*. *Bedre skole*, 4, 23-27.

⁶⁵ Kirby, M. (2017). *Implicit assumptions in special education policy: Promoting full inclusion for students with learning disabilities*. Child & Youth Care Forum,

⁶⁶ Lyngseth, E. J., & Mørland, B. (2017). *Tidlig innsats i tidlig barndom: innledning*. *Tidlig innsats i tidlig barndom*.

⁶⁷ Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2017). *Rammeplan for barnehagen: Forskrift om rammeplan for barnehagens innhold og oppgaver*. In: Udir.

⁶⁸ Regjeringen. (2017). *Overordnet del – verdier og prinsipper for grunnopplæringen*. In: Utdanningsdirektoratet Oslo.

and school, and all children in kindergarten and school are entitled to their own experiences, as a subject. Through such an intersubjective dialogue, with room for equity, the children are able to get in touch with their own world of experience, and at the same time become more open to taking in other people's experiences⁶⁹. The article has presented some examples in the Norwegian context that have shown a successful realisation of an inclusive learning environment.

However, some challenges lie ahead. There is a need to increase the competence of those teachers who will work with students who have special needs, and this includes both those teachers who are in charge for their special education and those who are in charge for the whole inclusive learning environment. Those teachers are entitled to adjust the pedagogical and learning offer to each child, and this requires more competence and time than usual⁷⁰. General pedagogical and special pedagogical collaboration, information sharing among all the figures involved in the inclusive learning environment, the organization of the offer through individual work and playgroups, are just some suggestions that should be even more implemented during teachers' education at the University⁷¹. Those considerations clearly point out to the need of a policy implementation in order to reach an even more inclusive learning environment in a Country where a high level of inclusion is already reached.

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