

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LESSON
PLANNING AND LESSON WORK FROM A
STUDENT INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the multifaceted concept of inclusion referring to a study (Kotte, 2017). It aims to contribute with deeper knowledge of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education regarding students' diverse learning prerequisites. The methodology is a combination of a quantitative and qualitative data analysis related to teachers participating in a Swedish national research and school improvement program. The analysis is performed through Biesta's dimensions of the aim of education, Uljens' model for analyzing didactic action; Hedegaard-Sørensen's situated professionalism and Tomlinson's differentiation of teaching. Some main results show that teachers have a positive attitude to inclusion but they also understand it as a difficult task to carry through during lessons. They experience a dilemma between single students' needs and the interests of the class as a whole. Further results indicate that collegial collaboration is regarded as a valuable aspect for the inclusive didactic lesson planning and lesson work to be successful.

KEY WORDS

collegial collaboration; differentiated teaching; lesson planning; mainstream classroom; teachers' perceptions.



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**EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA E PERCEPÇÕES DOS PROFESSORES SOBRE O
PLANEAMENTO DE AULAS ATRAVÉS DA
PERSPETIVA INCLUSIVA DO ESTUDANTE**

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RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o conceito multifacetado de inclusão, conforme estudos de Kotte (2017). O trabalho pretende aprofundar o conhecimento sobre percepções dos professores sobre educação inclusiva a respeito dos diferentes pré-requisitos de aprendizagem dos estudantes. A metodologia aplicada foi uma combinação de métodos quantitativos e qualitativos usados em dados levantados sobre o trabalho de professores que participam num programa nacional de pesquisa sueco sobre melhoria nas escolas. O estudo emprega os conceitos de Biesta sobre as dimensões do objetivo da educação, o modelo de Uljens para análise da ação didática, o profissionalismo conforme Hedegaard-Sørensen e a diferenciação de ensino de Tomlinson. Concluiu-se que os professores têm uma atitude positiva a respeito da inclusão, mas também a consideram difícil de ser implementada durante as aulas. Eles vivenciam um dilema entre necessidades estudantis individuais e o interesse da turma como unidade. Resultados adicionais indicam que a colaboração colegial é considerada um aspeto de valor para o sucesso no planeamento e trabalho na aula inclusiva.

PALAVRAS - CHAVE

colaboração colegial; ensino diferenciado; planeamento de aula; sala de aula típica; percepções dos professores.



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**EDUCACIÓN INCLUSIVA Y LA PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS EDUCADORES SOBRE
EL TRABAJO DE PLANIFICACIÓN DE LA LECCIÓN,
DESDE UNA PERSPECTIVA INCLUSIVA DEL ESTUDIANTE**

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RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza el concepto multifacético de inclusión refiriéndose a un estudio (Kotte, 2017) cuyo objetivo es contribuir con conocimiento más profundo sobre las percepciones de los educadores sobre educación inclusiva respecto los diversos prerrequisitos de aprendizaje estudiantil. La metodología es una combinación de análisis de datos cuantitativos y cualitativos relacionados con los educadores que asisten a un programa nacional sueco. El análisis utiliza los conceptos de Biesta sobre las dimensiones del objetivo de la educación, el modelo de Uljens con la acción didáctica, el profesionalismo según Hedegaard-Sørensen y de la diferenciación de Tomlinson. Algunos resultados principales muestran que los educadores tienen una actitud positiva, pero entienden como un área difícil durante las lecciones. Experimentan un dilema entre las necesidades individuales de los estudiantes y el interés de la clase. Otros resultados indican que la colaboración colegial es un aspecto importante para la planificación didáctica y el éxito de lecciones inclusivas.

PALABRAS CLAVE

colaboración colegial; enseñanza diferenciada; planificación de lecciones; aula convencional; percepciones de los profesores.



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Inclusive Education and Teachers' Perceptions of Lesson Planning and Lesson Work from a Student Inclusive Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

The context of inclusive education in this article relates to a study (Kotte, 2017) incorporated in a research and school improvement program dealing with inclusive learning environments at the compulsory school in Sweden. The program in question was a joint national project in collaboration between Malmö University and the Institute for Innovation, Research and Development in schools and pre-schools (Ifous, 2015) with the overall objective to discern questions that can lead to inclusive teaching. Twelve municipalities and 31 schools are involved with participating actors in different instructive positions, including principal administrative officers on municipality level, school leaders at local level, and teachers and students on classroom level. The aim of the study is to contribute with knowledge concerning teachers' perceptions of lesson planning and lesson work from a student inclusive perspective. Focus is on teachers' perceptions of the multifaceted teaching in heterogeneous classes where the diverse qualifications of the students bring different challenges.

Inclusion related to schooling questions is a current topic of interest in society and it might be conducive to students' goal attainment concerning the content of curriculum (Persson & Persson, 2012; Skolverket, 2016). The concept of inclusion comprehends several understandings and meanings. In the study, it is interpreted in a teaching context where the frame of reference for inclusion has a terminological understanding, a pedagogical change in outlook, and a pragmatic reply in teaching. These are issues that I will return to further on.

The fast developing contemporary culture of knowledge should belong to every person but the complexity around individuals' participation in society and schools demands diverse efforts on different levels of official responsibilities. Teachers' perceptions about implementation of inclusion in education can therefore be regarded as crucial, when their professional ethical objective is considered to put every student's learning in the centre. Access to knowledge applies likewise to a question of fairness in both schools and society. This point of view consequently brings a great responsibility to teachers' work. All students, regardless of background or prerequisites, should thus be prepared by their teachers to achieve the best opportunities for success in education as a preparation for participation in communities (Hargreaves, 2004).

Furthermore, the understanding of inclusion takes a standpoint that requires a classroom climate where all students in a classroom have the right to participate and engage socially as well as knowledge-wise (Farrell, 2004; Haug, 2012).

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The following research questions are highlighted:

- how teachers, whose schools take part in a national program on inclusive learning environments, perceive the prerequisites for implementing inclusive teaching,
- how nine teachers in a case study perceive and relate to lesson planning and teaching with the intention to include all students in the classroom.

Perceptions is in this context understood from an everyday meaning and synonymous to point of view or opinion and is not applied as in the phenomenographic research approach where it has a central position (Uljens, 1989). The issue is here referring to teachers' perceptions as well as to what these could mean in relation to didactic in teaching. The concepts of lesson planning and lesson work are in the study used for the teachers' preparatory work before the lessons as well as their work during teaching.

The first research question is answered in a mapping survey. To answer the second research question, a case study is conducted to get a deeper understanding of the teachers' thoughts on lesson planning and teaching in relation to pedagogical actions, which strive to include all students in the classroom.

A TERMINOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

The term inclusion does not automatically have an obvious meaning concerning educational matters. As inclusion refers to different areas of interest, the awareness of the expression multifaceted interpretations might help teachers form their own opinion on the subject. Clough (2002) underlines that the term inclusion in teaching contexts ('inclusive education') presents challenges that can create confusion when used for various purposes by politicians, bureaucrats and academics.

Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2013) discuss what an inclusive teaching system may mean related to how it works in practice, wondering which recommended criteria should be applied and what common values should be advocated. The authors, based on the questions *Inclusion for whom, into what and for what purpose?* argue that different understandings of the term would generate different explanations and accordingly they mention three possibilities of response. The first defines inclusion being about all students with disabilities participating in the public school system and being offered the same conditions that apply to other students. The second declares that inclusion refers to students with disabilities and in need of special education; increasing their participation in the educational system that must adapt to these students' individual needs in special support. The last interpretation explains that inclusion refers to the active participation of all students in public schools, where schooling is organized in an educational way that values students' differences and constantly problematizes the notions of inclusive and exclusive learning aspects. In a similar way, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) argue about wherever there is a fundamental distinction in that inclusion can be perceived from either a *narrow* or a *broad* perspective. The narrow approach supports the inclusion of specific groups of students, i.e. students in need of special educational support, in the mainstream school. A broader approach of inclusion, however, focuses not on

separate student groups but rather on differences in learning and on how the school can use the benefit of pluralism among every student in a school for all.

In the absence of a clear and general conceptual statement, inclusion risks being interpreted arbitrarily, both on political and institutional standpoints. Since the opposite would be upsetting, i.e. to deliberately exclude students from school, inclusion is perceived as a fine concept with a *feel-good rhetoric* that no one could be opposed to, nor necessarily need to specify with any serious commitment (Armstrong et al., 2013).

The concept of an overall democratic approach may be in need of a didactic improvement in the educational field. Accordingly, an appropriate definition is to be found on the general comment 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016):

Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. (p. 4)

In this article, I refer to the broad understanding that assumes that everyone can be included in society and in the community of the school. However, the complexity of the problem presents several challenges in the issue of implementation. Therefore, the study concentrates first and foremost on teachers' perception of inclusive education in the classroom, where the term involves an aspiration and willingness to design didactic lessons based on the participation of all students, regardless of their capabilities and/or difficulties.

A PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE IN OUTLOOK

Based on moral, social, political and educational responsibilities, the concept of inclusion brings hence the opportunity for a specific approach to the educational responsibility for an equal education in the mainstream schools (Cummings, Dyson, & Todd, 2011; Persson & Persson, 2012; Thomas & Vaughan, 2004). A change in the view of current school problems may imply that inclusion should no longer be questioned as a realistic ideology. Such an ideal can thus be achieved if inclusive education is seen as a constant journey of development with obvious complications and openings in the creation of pedagogical innovative initiatives. All narrative around challenging educational matters and theoretical methods could then be shifted from being only individual oriented to general didactic grounds linked to pupils' prerequisites and their meeting with the learning environment. Also, Tetler (2015) refers to inclusion both as a theoretical concept and as a pragmatic endeavour. She discusses the issue based on: a) the political ideal of a school for all, b) the paradigm shift between special education reform and the integration of pupils in need of support, as well as c) the challenge of implementing the inclusion perspective into the schools' learning environment. Inclusion as an international fairness discourse has a moral perspective, while the responsibility for implementing the ideas for an inclusive school lies at the national, municipal and institutional levels (Haug, 2012; Tetler, 2015). According to Tetler (2015), coordinated inclusion preparedness at the national level is a priority. Further,



development plans with encouragement of inclusive models and competence-improving projects, are part of the municipal area of application. Finally, at the institutional level, the school's administration has a responsibility for implementing inclusive learning cultures and choice of adequate strategies.

The study consequently focuses on teachers' understanding of an inclusive perspective, where the school's values are based in the society's democratic beliefs through the Swedish curriculum Lgr 11 (Skolverket, 2011). With teachers' understanding of an inclusive pedagogical context, the study refers to their contribution and participation in the national school development program, where the aim interest is to promote inclusive learning environments.

A PRAGMATIC REPLY IN TEACHING

Armstrong et al. (2013) analyzes the complexity of inclusion by discussing varying perceptions related to the concept. One of these views concerns how the actual implementation of inclusive education can be realised. Facilitating or aggravating circumstances surrounding the implementation are indirectly linked to how the basic concepts are perceived. For example, while Ainscow et al. (2006) advocate that schools should oppose existing exclusion barriers that complicate inclusion, Leo and Barton (2006) discuss schools' very limited ability to maintain inclusive education, depending on political contradictions and current school policies. For schools in vulnerable areas, where special needs for support among students are common, the challenge is greater, according to the authors. Haug (1998) expresses that a dilemma in learning environments, from an inclusive and specialised pedagogical perspective, is that one and the same action has both advantages and disadvantages (p. 35), and argues further that it is easy to cross the subtle line between an individually adapted activity within the collective and an individually adapted activity that breaks with the collective. The dilemma may therefore also be about the impossibility of simultaneously promoting both the individual and the collective equally (Egelund, Haug, & Persson, 2006). The question can be if inclusion should be perceived as the individual's right and thus backing a narrow view of the concept or should institutionalized democratic values, which support each child's learning potential, dominate (Tetler, 2015). The latter approach advocates the broad aspect to inclusion, which focuses on inclusive teaching, but at the same time it also risks making students in need of special support invisible.

As mentioned earlier, the focus of the study contributes to teachers' perceptions of inclusion from a learning environment perspective. The intention is the participation of all students in the classroom. However, the concept of inclusive education is a complex issue in a complex school and social context and cannot therefore only be assessed based on the responsibilities of individual teachers. Yet, teachers' perceptions of inclusion can influence their didactic choices, which in turn affect their lesson practices. Awareness of students' right to study together, regardless of variances in their learning potential, can play a crucial role in this matter. Teachers' confidence in their capacity to teach all students in the classroom can thus be linked to a broad inclusive perspective. In addition, Carrington (1999) discusses teachers' beliefs and values regarding the growing school organizational paradigm of inclusive education. Her critical approach emphasizes the need for changes in schools (and society) as well as teacher training for the improvement of an inclusive schooling.

THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

The framing perspective of the study takes its point of departure in a pragmatic preunderstanding of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in relation to their lessons work. The theoretical analysis, applied through Biesta's (2011) dimensions of the aim of education, Uljens' (1997, 2009) model for analysing didactic action, Hedegaard-Sørensen's (2013) approach on situated professionalism and Tomlinson's (2014) perspective on differentiation of teaching, as a basic pedagogical principle, made a harmonised contribution to the analysis of the empirical material in the study.

Biesta (2011, 2015) presents a framework for the purpose and goals of education, that includes three central dimensions containing the educational functions of qualification, socialization and subjectification. The combination of these dimensions is of importance for determining what good education entails. Qualification refers to the school's crucial task, which is considered knowledge transfer, competence and abilities, as well as an understanding of Western values, culture and political insight. Socialization thus stands for the identity of the students asking *Who am I? Am I part of this community or its tradition?* The individualization process of becoming a subject is referred by Biesta (2011, 2015) as subjectification and is about questioning *how I am and how I am with others*. For instance, if inclusion is considered one of the objectives of good education, teachers' voices on the issue can be of great significance for the implementation of inclusion in schoolwork. Teachers, who are constantly confronted with events where these dimensions are balanced and practiced in heterogeneous student groups, should be the most appropriate persons to assess issues related to inclusive lesson situations that involve all students in learning. From an inclusive perspective, this reasoning can accordingly provide students with knowledge acquisition as well as acceptance of schoolmates' differences.

In addition to Biesta's dimensions, even teachers' values about education have an impact on teachers' didactic choices of how teaching should be conducted. Likewise, Uljens' (2009) model for analysing critical school didactic brings clarity to pedagogical aspects linked to teachers' planning, teaching situation and evaluation of lessons practices. Considering an inclusive perspective, Uljens' didactic theoretical scheme can support teachers assessing students' learning, both from the whole class point of view and from the individual student's condition.

As a continued reasoning about teaching Hedegaard-Sørensen's (2013) refers to the term "situated professionalism", which relates to teachers' special educational and inclusive perspectives in a teaching situation. In complex learning situations, situated professionalism means that the teacher has knowledge of the students' need for special support, without having to explain the didactic work based on students' disabilities. This means that the teacher develops a didactic and pedagogical reflective competence based on actual teaching situations in the practical school activities.

As a further interpretational, Tomlinson's (2014) concept of differentiation for practices is also being used in the analyses. The author considers typical, for a differentiated classroom, that the teacher acts on two critical conditions: the first is a requirement that highlights students' learning and the other is the students themselves who are inevitably different as learning individuals. In a differentiated classroom, teachers must hence ensure specific options for individual students to learn as much as possible and as quickly as possible without assuming that a student's *map for learning* is identical to someone else's. The teacher's work involves helping each student to understand that everyone has his or her own learning pattern. Finally, Tomlinson's (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008) perspective on differentiation instructions, as a



basic pedagogical principle, has been an appropriate tool, in the study, to consider different strategies teachers use to cope with the pragmatic of lesson planning and lesson work in the inclusive mainstream classroom.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The study contains two surveys. Firstly, a quantitative methodological approach (Bryman, 2013; Creswell, 2014) was used in a web-based questionnaire directed to all teachers in grade 1-9 in compulsory schools taking part in the national research and school improvement program 'Inclusive Learning Environment' (Ifous, 2015). Out of 1100 teachers, at 31 schools, 417 chose to participate. The main purpose of this investigation was to map prerequisites for the teachers to carry out inclusive education. In the online survey, the concept of inclusion is related to question areas regarding the educational topics of teaching, planning, assessment, special education, special educational interventions and collegial collaboration. The questionnaire contains various issues and statements that teachers answer by marking the option that best matches their opinion. After an analysis of the statistically processed data, generalizing variables are estimated that distinguish their understandings. The results are, after that, used as the basis for a following qualitative survey in which the statistical descriptive outcomes on teachers' perceptions are deepened and further analyzed.

The most central findings from the survey study show that the majority of the teachers have a positive attitude to the idea of inclusive education. Mediating knowledge, in an inclusive teaching context, is regarded as important but also as a difficult task to carry through in the classroom. According to the analysis of the statistical data, the teachers consider that they teach a large number of students in need of special support. However, the interpretation of findings suggests that they might be alone in their work. The result indicates therefore that the teachers need advice provided by the teacher for Special Needs Education and more collegial collaboration with teacher-teams concerning their common students' prerequisites in order to include them in the schoolwork.

It can be considered motivating that the overall statistical survey shows that most teachers have a positive opinion of inclusion but another question, however, is how prepared teachers are to make adjustments in their work. A mere positive perception of inclusive education cannot alone solve problematic teaching situations. According to the statistical material, 75% of the teachers think that it is a difficult task, but in this context, it is also important to note that 25% consider inclusive education to be an easy task to achieve. In addition, it is of interest with further research about teachers' practical work and didactic actions with the focus of including all the students in the classroom lessons.

The second study has thus a qualitative research design with empirical data from a case study, employing a multiple case design (Merriam, 2006; Yin, 2007) where the informants were teachers from three schools participating in the national program. The starting point for the analyses comes from a data collection in the form of individual written lesson plans from nine teachers and complementary audio recordings of collegial discussions among three school teams of teachers who teach different subjects for Year 6-9 (students age 12-15) in three compulsory schools, participating in the program. Lesson planning here refers to teachers' preparation for teaching in the classroom based on knowledge of students' prerequisites. Class work refers to the approach when and how teachers' teaching is conducted in the classroom, as well as based on students'

circumstances. Responses to the following tasks, linked to teachers' lesson plan, were e-mailed to each teacher-team and me, weekly for two months:

- give two examples of situations during lessons that you think were successful from an inclusive perspective,
- explain the reason why the teaching situations became inclusive.

The discussions in each teacher-team provide a more nuanced picture of the written documentation through the teachers' further reasoning when they present their respective lesson plans, from an inclusive point of view, and give each other feedback.

They explain for example that the students are encouraged to help one another in order to exchange social and knowledge-based learning. Students' different ways of participating in school assignments are recognised as a useful part of the lesson work. The intention seems to be to create an understanding that each student's contribution should be counted as a resource in the lesson work. A teacher expresses:

The problems are called rich problems because they can be solved in several different ways; they have a low entry threshold, and at the same time a rich mathematical content.

I think the situation can be described as inclusive, as students had to take a stand and discuss other mates' solutions and did not have to take a stand or defend their own solutions. At the same time, they were still able to learn about how to develop reasoning or increase their problem-solving skills.

In the case study as well, the research question is answered by pointing out that the teachers have a positive attitude to inclusive teaching and that mediation of knowledge is viewed as a central inclusive aspect. The teachers show an interest in gaining further knowledge about inclusive education by their striving to plan and implement inclusive lessons in their classrooms. However, they experience a dilemma balancing their teaching between single students' needs and the interest of the class as a unit. They express worries about not being able to cater sufficiently to the needs of all students. Differentiation in the content of the curriculum and teaching-instructions that take into consideration the different learning capabilities of all students, are considered important aspects concerning the schooling from each student participatory point of view.

The complexity of teaching in general and inclusive education in particular implies an answer to the research question with many aspects. The findings in the case study are discerned as three themes: A) a balancing in knowledge mediation, B) a navigation among the varieties of students' prerequisites, and C) a preparedness in lesson work. Finally, collegial collaboration, before, during, and after the lesson, is regarded as a valuable part of the inclusive didactic lesson planning and lesson work.

The theme A entails a professional ensuring of all students' participation in the classroom learning process, which in the study, is related to the teachers' positive attitude to inclusive education, self-confidence in their subject competence, creativity and teaching experiences. The teachers also explain that they value every student's schoolwork, take into account their different abilities and encourage the students to collaborate with each other. The visibility of students' different ways of solving school tasks is reflected as an asset that enriches the community in the classroom learning situations.



A teacher reflects about how she, according to the study's theoretical analyses, balances between the three aims of education (Biesta, 2011):

Now that I have been involved in this inclusion research, I am forced to process the concept more (...) that this is really how to think: How do I make students understand that it is important for them, to develop in learning? If you have that perspective, the risk of the excluding of any student will reduce.

Many of our students do not have much study traditions. Then I think that we teachers have to work a lot to clarify, that you (the student) are part of the group and that what you do contributes to the group's joint development. You are each other's learning environment. That is knowledge that is important in here (in the classroom). It is a group dynamic and we will all benefit from it.

Theme B refers to teachers' 'navigation among students' prerequisites and focuses on their approaches to students' needs. Contradictions between the needs of the individual and the collective affect possibilities of choices in the didactic work. Regardless of the individual students' diverse capabilities and difficulties, the teachers strive for all students to be engaged in meaningful learning activities. The teachers thus try to find forms of navigation by creating differentiated lesson-situations and school tasks.

The lesson does not contain different assignments for different students because it would limit the students' ability to be challenged and developed from where they stand. Level-based tasks can entrench their attitude to their level of knowledge, that they only can solve a certain degree of difficulty in the tasks. It also makes it impossible for a joint discussion in the whole class because not everyone shares the same starting point. However, the problems should be designed so that they can be completed in different situations so that everyone feels that they are finished.

A good lesson is not too long and includes both pictures and video in addition to my storytelling. I also have time to give breaks sometimes. My storytelling is broken up by small short questions or tasks that students should do, individually or in groups, to consolidate knowledge and learn from each other.

The material at the tables was quite similar, but at one table, the questions were more structured. They also had the opportunity to choose what tasks they wanted to do. The tasks could be solved practically, but also by drawing and writing. Different things around the concept of uniformity.

Theme C explains the teachers' preparedness in the pedagogical process of the lesson work consisting of a preparatory planning activity, the execution of the activity and an evaluation of the activity. The didactic structure contains teachers' intention → action → reflection → new action that leads to a 'situation-related didactic experience' (Uljens, 1997). Teachers' reflections enable solutions through their analytical point of view, for example in difficult teaching situations. As a result, teachers' inclusive didactic intentions can have better opportunities to succeed. The following situation exemplifies the teacher's intention through a situated professionalism (Hedegaard-Sørensen, 2013; Uljens, 1997):

The student had deliberately cheated. Maybe he didn't understand the seriousness of his act. The student reacted coldly but I noticed that it felt more than it seemed. I helped him make a planning based on the material that was the starting point for the cheating, even if he wanted to do something completely new. Let us make something good out of this, I said. You know a lot about bandy now. We wrote a mind map that he will now process. If it was a teacher, in the same situation, who had not worked in a process, then perhaps the lesson might not have brought the same message. I have not been judgmental but explained that this was a good way to learn despite the cheating. I can see that preventing a cheat trend can have a direct link to inclusion.

The teacher thus takes into account multifaceted pedagogical qualifications such as her own knowledge of inclusion, the assessment of the teaching situation, the evaluation of the student's knowledge process and her understanding of the student's interest. Her pedagogical competence, of communicating to the student without being judgmental, resulted in an improvised and positive use of the *cheating material* for further lesson work.

Of importance is that the statistical results in addition indicate a deviation regarding how the lesson planning is designed from a student inclusive perspective. The majority of teachers, who feel that they plan according to the students' prerequisites, at the same time believe that a common planning for all students' best benefits the class as a whole. These ambivalent approaches can thus be interpreted as either the lesson planning is being carried out based on a common foundation, which afterwards can be adapted to individual student's needs, or that the common planning is initially based on all students' different abilities and difficulties. The respondents mean that they usually complete the lesson planning as intended but that they also experience a certain anxiety about the opposite, i.e. that the lesson cannot be carried out according to the planned didactic intentions.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The complex everyday professional life of teachers is filled with the transfer of knowledge and fundamental values and, according to several researchers, the teacher factor obviously has a prominent position concerning the students' ability to learn (Hattie, 2008; Nordenbo, Sjøgaard Larsen, Tiftikçi, Wendt, & Østergaard, 2008). Current reports about students' lack of successful schooling accomplishments (OECD, 2016) show that this can have problematic consequences for both individuals and the society. Teachers' teaching and commitment therefore affect children and young people's current and future opportunities. Contemporary discussions about education furthermore link the idea of inclusion with students' goal attainment and the school's capacity to involve all students in education (Skolverket, 2009; Tomlinson, 2014). Well thought out lesson plans can represent a potential contribution in the effort to include students in the lesson work (Young & Luttenegger, 2014). Based on the qualitative empirical data, I conclude that the assumption, that teachers' teaching skills from an inclusive perspective may be greater than they themselves consider, is consistent with the results of the case study since teachers show several elements of positive understanding of the concept of inclusion and implementation of inclusive didactic activities. It is important in this context to stress that



the teachers, who expressed their interest in participating in the case study, have a positive opinion of the inclusion idea from the outset.

Preserving the fellowship of knowledge mediation in lesson planning and during lesson work seems to be a difficult task for the teachers. The three themes emerging in the qualitative case study are reflecting the multifaceted situation of teachers' everyday schoolwork when implementing inclusive approaches. The biggest challenge for the teachers in the case study is understood as a navigation between the needs of the class as a whole and the needs of the individual student. In order to accomplish a successful inclusive teaching, the teachers need, according to the findings in this study, a combination of several strategies.

These strategies are e.g.

- a democratic understanding of the idea of inclusion,
- a positive attitude towards inclusive teaching,
- knowing how to differentiate the content of curriculum and teaching,
- having access to collegial collaboration, before as well as during and after completed lessons,
- to acquire knowledge about special needs education,
- to implement lesson plans that take into account the diversity in students' learning,
- access to didactic tools to cater for the students' needs,
- sufficient time for communicating with individual students.

Thus, a main prerequisite for teachers' inclusive mission can be an awareness of the democratic meaning of the concept and its connection to the curriculum's values of community as well as the students' right to knowledge in the mainstream public school education. Lack of previous experience in the field can imply that the concept has a different meaning to different teachers in different contexts. The meaning of inclusion is consequently likely to include everything or nothing at the same time (Armstrong et al., 2013). Gunnþórsdóttir and Bjarnason (2014) also see the problem if teachers are not encouraged and supported to professionally reflect, act and become critically aware of the complexity associated with the inclusive ideology. For example, an emerging clarification of the concept's connection to the teaching has meant that the participating teachers in the case study eventually began to perceive inclusive education as a continuous process.

The teachers' perceptions of inclusion in relation to the everyday school practice might, in the study, be interpreted as students' democratic right to learning in fellowship from the perspective of their different ways of learning. Such perceptions influence the didactic choices that the teachers in the case study make by, e.g. differentiating teaching and giving the students access to a variety of learning materials and media. Among other things, the teachers explain that the knowledge processes in lesson work should always end by bringing to the fore what all students have learned individually and together. The teachers choose lesson tasks that have a low entering threshold but at the same time a rich content, a task which can be solved in different ways by e.g. writing, drawing, or configured in elaborative and creative ways of expression.

Inclusion is thus in this study interpreted from an overall democratic perspective on students' rights to mainstream education. The main findings contribute to an attempt to gain further understanding of the implementation of inclusive education through a deepening holistic picture of teachers' perceptions about inclusive

education. Innovative lesson planning and lesson work, which strive towards the participation of all students in learning and doing something meaningful in lesson tasks, taking into consideration the prerequisites of the class as well as individual students, contribute to an inclusive education.

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