

The Search for Successful Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This study primarily aimed to find the factors which can facilitate or, alternatively, hinder inclusion efforts.*

Method: *Results from a number of student theses, which dealt with common issues in the area of inclusion of pupils with special needs, were brought together systematically. The method has been called area-delimited meta-study, where increased validity and generalisability are expected to strengthen development at the schools where the thesis work is carried out. A total of 18 thesis projects with a representation of 24 classrooms were included. The results of these projects have been categorised with the help of two models, positive and negative labelling, as well as inner and outer inclusion capital.*

Results: *The respondents in the various studies were quite positive towards inclusion. The teachers stated that inclusion offers a range of possibilities even if problems often occur during implementation. For efforts to succeed, personnel should internalise the values intrinsic to inclusion. Staff knowledge, perception and empathy are examples of the inner inclusion capital necessary to achieve the goal of inclusion. Courage, self-confidence and self-awareness are additional factors that are essential for success. Outer inclusion capital such as clear leadership and effective teamwork are conditions that promote inclusion.*

Conclusion: *Based on the results, it would be logical to invest in the positive labelling factors that are identified and at the same time work towards minimising the negative factors. The work can be further developed with area-delimited meta-studies, and future thesis projects could be initiated with a structure that is more participatory and action-oriented.*

Limitations: *One problem in evaluating the circumstances around inclusion is that the respondents' interpretation of the definition of the word inclusion may vary. Even the experience of how inclusion works can differ between the teachers involved in the study. Despite these difficulties, the overall results provide a robust picture of the problems and opportunities that fit within the*

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area. Differences in teacher interpretation could also be an important element for the research.

Keywords: *Inclusion, integration, positive and negative labelling, inclusion capital, pupils in need of special support.*

INTRODUCTION

For many years the people responsible for teacher-training at Linnaeus University have felt a trifle frustrated that the knowledge and experience developed from the students' theses seldom lead to school development in the regions where the training placements have been carried out. Rarely does the completion and evaluation of individual final essays make a concrete impression on the schools where the thesis work was implemented. One of the reasons is that the validity and generalisability of the thesis work is rated lower in comparison to other studies (Karlsudd, 2015a). While the thesis is primarily a way to consolidate students' professional knowledge, it is also expected to contribute to knowledge dissemination and development of professional activity. Unfortunately, seldom does the school take advantage of the knowledge and experience generated by the students' work. Therefore, a key question discussed is how teacher-training can strengthen the status and significance of the thesis projects carried out.

One idea that is tested in the present study is to gather the results from several thesis projects in a common analysis similar to the method used in meta-studies (ibid). When certain issues are particularly current and relevant for students, as well as for the schools where they are expected to work, it is common that several studies would deal with the same problem area. This article focusses on the issues that overlap in a number of thesis projects and related work regarding the inclusion of pupils in need of special support. The investigations under study were carried out by students of the Linnaeus University teacher-training programme during the period 2012-2014. With the aim of increasing the value of thesis work carried out by students, principles are constructed for a method denoted here as area-delimited meta-study.

Objective

The purpose of the study is:

- To bring together systematically a number of thesis projects for increased accuracy, validity and generalisability of common research issues,

- To analyse and discuss results using the same theories and models,
- To develop proposals for a renewal of pedagogy.

Research Question/ Problem Statement

The problem area of the thesis work deals with a common question:

- Which factors can facilitate or, alternatively, hinder inclusion efforts?

Conditions for Inclusion

The Swedish Education Act (SFS, 2010:800) and school guidelines (SFS, 2011:185) make it clear that the organisational principle for pupils in need of special support is inclusion. The special support should be given as far as possible within the framework of the regular school activity. From an inclusion point of view it is accepted that children are different, while equality, participation and group solidarity are key to prevent rejection and stigmatisation. Given values based on social justice and equal rights to participation, there is the principle that all people, regardless of their conditions, interests and performance capabilities, participate in a community. The meaning is to see the importance of group differences and to individualise within the framework of the community. Differences become assets and not problems (Stukát, 1995). The concept of inclusion can and has been defined in various ways in a number of studies. In this study, inclusion is defined as a process aiming to unify what is often called the regular schooling activity together with the special schooling activity. An inclusive school is a school that encompasses all pupils on equal terms, regardless of their circumstances, interests and performance capabilities, and where all pupils feel secure and can participate.

Theory and Model

One of the analysis models that will be used in this study is negative and positive labelling (Karlsudd, 2007) which is based on Goffman's (1990) well-known labelling theory. This theory has been used in numerous investigations as an explanatory model regarding "deviant behaviour," particularly for the strengthening of deviance. Labelling or stigmatising involves people or groups being ascribed deviant personal characteristics that are valued negatively (ibid). When a person is in a certain environment, it can be that he or she shows somewhat less desirable traits that make him or her different from the others in the group.

Due to this characteristic this person's position in the group is reduced, which in turn leads to a discriminatory reaction from the environment which works against social recognition. This negative labelling can occur at different levels and arise in a variety of forms (Karlsudd, 2007). The principle of negative labelling and examples of the negative labelling factors are illustrated in the figure below (Figure 1). In an example such as this, it is hard not to view the separation as anything other than discrimination.

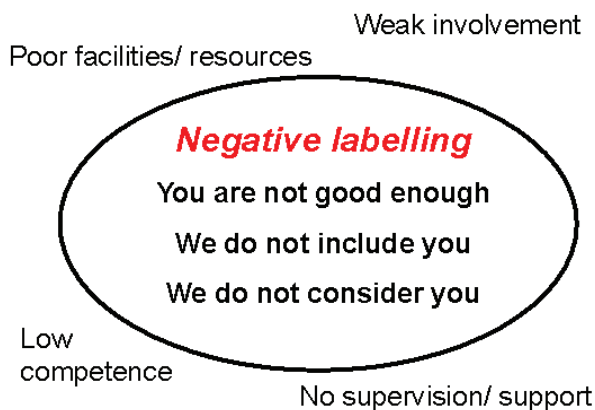


Figure 1: Principle for the process of Negative Labelling

In its extreme form, negative labelling leads to the pupil being excluded and stigmatised. At schools where disabilities are seen as something strange, the risk for stigmatising is significant (ibid).

The same personal characteristics that are valued negatively in one context can be valued positively in another more tolerant climate. Labelling can therefore be both a positive and a negative action. Activities and efforts that lead away from integration and towards separation are called negative labelling. Activities and tasks that work towards inclusion are called positive labelling. "If the climate in the staff group is positive and the teachers' attitudes towards special children are built on respect and acceptance, the child in the group is going to be labelled positively" (Karlsudd, 1999). Positive labelling can be seen as a seal of quality that proves the child who is the focus of various interventions is important and meaningful. The principle of positive labelling and examples of the positive labelling factors are illustrated in the figure below (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Principle for the process of Positive Labelling

The above effect can take place in an inclusive as well as a segregated environment. Another model that will be tested on the results is the model of inclusion capital. Inclusion capital can be divided into “inner and outer inclusion capital” (Karlsudd, 2015b). The inner inclusion capital is made up of factors linked to the individual teacher’s competence, such as values, knowledge, creativity, patience, perception and empathy. The outer inclusion capital consists of the factors surrounding the teacher, for example, the environment, technology, personnel resources, cooperation and leadership.

METHOD

This study, an area-delimited meta-study, is expected to throw light on the research area through:

- A unified set of questions,
- The application of more than one method,
- A larger selection of schools and respondents within a defined area,
- A number of autonomous report writers who independently of each other collected data and interpreted empirical data,
- A group of investigations carried out at different times,
- A framework of common theories/models.

Sample

This investigation focussed on 18 thesis projects where the issue of inclusion was central to the study and where the students graduated during the years

2012 - 2014. All the projects included in this study were written as part of Linnaeus University's compulsory school and special education teacher-training programmes and correspond to theses at the Bachelor and pre-Master levels. The students' work was carried out under the supervision of qualified teachers and approved by examiners holding university instructor competence. Overall responsibility for the thesis course structure and implementation was held by instructors with professor competence. All work used in this investigation was rated as 'pass' or 'pass with distinction'. Data collection was carried out at the schools where the training placement took place.

Data

A qualitative approach dominates the students' choice of methodology in the thesis projects that are included. For data collection, 15 reports used interviews, one study combined interviews and surveys, 2 investigations used only surveys, and one investigation used observations. The summary analysis included 222 teachers, where 76 have been interviewed, 126 have answered surveys and 20 have participated in both an interview and a survey. In total, 24 schools were represented in this study. Besides the practising teachers, 3 compulsory school pupils and 13 student-teachers were interviewed. All students were aware that the outcome of their investigations could be included in a major study. In order to maintain anonymity of schools, teachers and students, the results were presented without giving the titles and name of authors. All the authors approved this approach. All the thesis projects were studied carefully, and the results from each investigation were categorised based on the concepts of inclusion capital and negative and positive labelling.

RESULTS

The theoretical framework used in the studies varied, but the majority used a social-cultural approach as the basis. It was not difficult to identify the results because the reports were well-structured and several writers have provided result summaries. The implementation of the studies has been safeguarded through supervision and examination.

In the following presentation of results, the collected findings from the 18 thesis projects under study have been categorised according to the models of inner and outer inclusion capital, and negative and positive labelling. First, there is a presentation of the qualities that recurred in the various thesis project results

(Tables 1 and 2). Accompanying the presentation of results are links to relevant research. This study does not deal with the children's various deficits (disabilities) but focusses on the teachers and the learning environment.

In the analysis of the results, 9 clearly positive labelling factors take shape within what is defined as inner inclusion capital. The same number of positive labelling factors is used to form the factors called outer inclusion capital. The aspects that are classified as negative labelling are not new factors, but instead represent the shortage, lack or unexpected outcome of the positive labelling factors.

Table 1: Categories of Factors representing the Inner Inclusion Capital

INNER INCLUSION CAPITAL		
Positive Labelling (according to respondents)		
Clear values		
Something referred to in many investigations was the importance of the teacher being well-grounded in the principles upon which inclusion rests.	Interpretation and operationalisation of policy documents Several investigations showed that personnel refer to policy documents that provide guidance for working toward inclusion.	Education and knowledge Most investigations emphasised that teachers' knowledge was crucial for successful inclusion. Many respondents in the reports requested special skills.
Perception and empathy Being a present and reflective educator with an empathetic approach was something frequently mentioned in the studies reviewed. Seeing the pupil and not just his or her difficulties.	Flexibility, imagination and creativity Being able to change plans quickly or find a learning strategy that has not been tried earlier and which is based on the teachers' imagination and creativity was considered significant in the reviewed results.	Will and positive attitude Being positively disposed towards the task and towards the children in need of special support appeared as essential in the results. Giving the pupils encouragement and praise, without which the work was thought not to have any real possibility to succeed.
Courage, self-confidence and self-awareness In word and action, standing up for inclusion when there is reluctance in the surroundings, is something defined as courage, and several respondents saw this as important.	Patience Another important trait mentioned was patience. Several investigations carried out by students reported patience as an important characteristic of teachers. Being able to listen and express oneself clearly were also factors recurring in the thesis project result sections.	Experience Some investigations mentioned experience of working with children in need of special support as a factor for successful inclusion. Experienced colleagues were mentioned as important support in the classroom.

Negative Labelling (according to respondents)		
Vague values Lack of clearly defined values or absence of the values upon which inclusion rests.	Narrow interpretation and operationalisation of policy documents Too high and inflexible expectations. Inability to take advantage of the possibilities offered by policy documents.	Insufficient knowledge Narrow view of the concept of knowledge. Lack of educational and /or special educational knowledge.
Poor perception and empathy Difficulty in putting oneself in other people's situations/ positions.	Rigid behaviour patterns Severely limited abilities to see and meet new opportunities.	Unwillingness and negative attitude Negative attitude. Low expectations.
Weak stance Unclear about one's own attitude.	Poor patience Poor patience, self-confidence and self-awareness.	Lack of experience Little or no experience in working with children in need of special support.

The results from several of the thesis projects included in this study report the teachers' values as the most important factor for success with inclusion. Many teachers perceived inclusion as an organisational form encompassing the values and qualities that benefit all children regardless of their developmental level or need. The conditions for this, of course, require a high quality of inclusive schooling. The importance of personnel's values for high goal achievement regarding inclusion has been highlighted in several studies (Carrington and Robinson, 2006; Fullan, 2011; Ware et al, 2011).

The same teachers referred to the policy documents which specify inclusion as an overriding principle for their work. Many nevertheless felt frustrated over the discrepancy between what is stated in the Education Act and curricula, and what is happening in the schools. Such a relationship is discussed in previous research (Wah, 2010; Gadler, 2011).

Education and knowledge are ranked high in the thesis reports of results. The teachers' knowledge regarding an inclusive approach is based on the teacher-training and is often inadequate. The teachers therefore demand more continuing education, and support to be able to work inclusively; similar requests are recorded in several studies (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Sari et al, 2009; De Boer et al, 2011). The respondents represented in the investigations stated that it was important, for example, to develop knowledge about various instructional strategies; this is discussed in a study by Florian (2006). One way to help with

competence development could be to have special education teachers or resource teachers supervise staff and pupils towards a more relational approach (Soriano, 2008). In some of the studies included here, it would appear that continuing education is designed in this way.

To possess the ability to perceive and empathise is important, according to many respondents in the thesis projects. To be able to create an environment where interaction among the pupils is characterised by consideration and empathy, the teacher must exercise the same abilities. The teacher plays a significant role in the children's development, because he or she must put himself/herself in the place where each child is in development in order to be able then to challenge the pupil with appropriate tasks (Hattie, 2009). An empathetic approach on the part of the teacher increases the children's abilities to respect and understand other people (Gerrbo, 2012).

It is important that the teacher or educator can solve problems on the spot and is prepared to improvise sometimes so that all pupils feel included in the instruction and meet the objectives, say the respondents; this result is presented in previous research (Jordan et al, 2009).

In several reports of results, flexibility, imagination and creativity are at the forefront of the factors that respondents regarded a vital to achieve the goal of inclusion. A collection of action plans and the ability to combine these in different ways are required, according to several of the respondents who participated in the studies. Inclusive work is full of complex problems that do not have a clear solution. What one should do and not do in order to attain inclusive instruction depends upon the actual situation (Wah, 2010).

The majority of the teachers were positive about inclusion in principle, but not all were willing to work inclusively. They mentioned that more resources were needed in the form of additional staff, the right learning aids and instructional material for the pupils, and above all, access to resource teachers or special education teachers. Here, there was the tendency to place the responsibility on someone else or on other people. Often the resource teacher was considered the most suitable person to deal with the work. That teachers are positive or have a neutral attitude towards inclusion has been shown in earlier studies (Ali et al, 2006; Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Sari et al, 2009). However, there are some who are negative towards working inclusively in their classrooms (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007). There are also studies that report a clear unwillingness to

include (Singhanias, 2005; Chuckle and Wilson, 2012). Elliot (2008) states that the teacher's attitude is critical regarding whether and how pupils with disabilities are included. A teacher who is committed and positive is more productive and effective in work (Florian, 2006).

The thesis projects in the study mentioned traits of courage, self-confidence and self-awareness as important characteristics for individual teachers. An earlier study reports a connection between self-confidence and self-awareness among teachers and how one could work successfully toward inclusive instruction (Gökdere, 2012). If one gives the teachers during their training the tools and courage to see the opportunities with inclusion, it would lead to more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Feng and Johnson, 2008). Patience and experience are also factors linked to successful inclusion. De Boer et al (2011) have shown in a study that teachers with experience of inclusive work are positively oriented towards this way of schooling.

Table 2: Categories of Factors representing the Outer Inclusion Capital

OUTER INCLUSION CAPITAL		
Positive Labelling (according to respondents)		
Personnel resources and smaller groups of pupils All the result-descriptions find it important that there are enough personnel and fewer pupils in the groups. Resource teachers, special educators, and pupil assistants are requested.	Participation and belonging Group belonging and social interaction are reported as very important. Several of the surveyed respondents in the studies emphasise this clearly. That a pupil or pupil groups participate in the planning and carrying out of the instruction is reported as a significant aspect.	The physical environment Many mention the physical environment as an important factor for successful inclusion. The inside environment is deemed more important than the outside environment. Enough space and the opportunity to work alone and have peace and quiet are considered to be important.
Leadership The principal's attitude is indicated as very important in the majority of the thesis project results. This also applies to teachers in influential positions, such as guidance counsellors.	Technology and instructional material The results from a number of thesis projects suggest that instructional aids are considered important for inclusion. An instructional aid can either be individually designed for a pupil or even material the teacher can use with the whole class.	Teamwork, cooperation and common values, and operationalisation of policy documents That all on the team work towards the same goals and clearly show their intentions towards inclusion is considered important. Contact with other personnel and cooperation with other professional groups are other examples of significant factors for goal achievement.

Good contact with parents/ guardians Good contact with the parents/ guardians of the children in need of special support is important for successful inclusion. This contact is deemed to be more important than the contact with parents of children who are not labelled.	Pedagogy and methods Well-planned pedagogy and methodology are considered important. These benefit all children, according to many respondents who are represented in the result statements. Examples of aspects of clear pedagogy can be good structure, clear rules, group work, a safe and permissive approach, and ability-level adaptation.	Diagnosis In some projects it is of importance that the child gets a diagnosis; primarily so that resources can be allotted, and in some cases the understanding for the child's problem increases, say some teachers.
Negative Labelling (according to the respondents)		
Lack of personnel resources and large groups of pupils Lack of special skills, lack of personnel, too large groups of pupils.	Separate groups and special teachers Instruction in separate groups with special teachers.	Poor environment Poor facilities, lack of adaptation.
Poor leadership Weak competence. Leadership that does not take direction and establish decisions about inclusion.	Technology and instructional material Lack of resources, or if a pupil is given an instructional aid he or she feels singled out.	Poor cooperation. Lack of common values and different interpretations of policy documents Solo work where the assistant often takes sole responsibility. Not in agreement about the values of inclusion. Narrow knowledge goals.
Poor contact with parents Poor contact with parents and other guardians.	Lack of or poor choice of pedagogy and methods Too many non-concrete tasks, too high or too low expectations.	Diagnosis If the pupil receives a diagnosis, there is a strong risk that he or she feels singled out and deviant.

Regarding the factors that come under the category of positive labelling outer inclusion capital, personnel resources and smaller pupil groups were considered to be very important by the respondents in the thesis projects. These factors were most frequently visible in the various study results. Many teachers requested additional resources, such as extra teachers, resource teachers or pupil assistants, and also smaller groups of children. It is common that teachers request more resources to be able to work inclusively (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007), but according to several researchers, the resources have little significance for successful inclusion in comparison with the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion

(Tideman, 2000; Boyle et al, 2012). Often, discussions about the shortage of resources in school lead to the focus being on the pupils' difficulties rather than on the school's vision and strategies (Tideman, 2000).

According to the results of all the thesis projects, social interaction between pupils is very important. Participation and belonging are important for self-esteem, and they strengthen group solidarity for all pupils (Asp-Onsjö, 2010). Inclusive activities in social contexts are meaningful so that pupils can feel a sense of belonging (Philips and Soltis, 1985). Creating a school environment where the social community is positive and where the pupils feel a sense of belonging to the class, is something that the teachers must actively work with (Molin, 2004). That the pupils actively participate in planning is also something that appears in earlier research. Szönyi (2005) and Brodin and Lindstrand (2010) request the pupils' viewpoints on how they see their schooling. Previous research shows that pupils' thoughts about their own obstacles to learning seldom get to be heard. If pupils had more influence over their own learning, the teachers would be able to reach farther with their instruction (Feng and Johnson, 2008). Instructors who are attentive to pupils' interests can find an interesting work area so that there is knowledge development for everyone (Hattie, 2009; Bråten, 2011). Teachers face the challenge of having all children participate in common activities, at the same time as they must challenge each pupil based on his or her own individual conditions and needs (Nilholm, 2005).

The physical environment as a factor for successful inclusion is mentioned in some studies. In general this means the indoor environment. The teachers say that there must be ample space and the possibility of maintaining peace and calm. Depending on how the physical environment is designed, it can create either obstacles or opportunities for participation (Frithiof, 2007). A loud and noisy environment reduces these possibilities. The children often have very limited opportunities to influence the environment, and it is important to increase their influence on this point (ibid).

It is very difficult to work towards inclusion if the leadership is not positive and supportive of personnel. Several studies show this clearly. Often it is the principal who is responsible for carrying out change, and if he or she has the will and belief in making the change towards inclusion, it will have a strong positive labelling effect. This relationship has been reported in previous research (Mayrowetz and Weinstein, 1999; Karlsudd, 2007).

Many thesis projects mentioned technology and instructional material as important for creating an inclusive environment. Opportunities afforded by digital learning tools were highlighted. It is important that these are not considered as special learning aids which then can be perceived as negative labelling (Karlsudd, 2014a, 2014b). Technology support is recognised as something with future potential for children in need of special support (Mitchell, 2014).

Team work, cooperation and working towards the same goal with similar values were judged as important in the thesis projects. Contact with other personnel and collaboration with other professionals are examples of factors necessary to achieve success. Everyone in the work team possesses competence and, through sharing different points of view, the various difficulties can be perceived. The educators may thereby gain a deeper understanding of the various situations for which interventions should be taken, which in turn can contribute to developing more inclusive children groups (Boyle et al, 2012). At school there should be bonding among teachers, so that responsibility for the pupils' individual differences and special needs are recognised by everyone. Inclusion is about ensuring quality and access for all pupils. It is the feeling of belonging to a context where primarily inclusion is happening (Persson and Persson, 2012). Florian (2006) argues that more time should be given to foster cooperation among colleagues. Teachers should be able to share each other's experiences so that together they can decide what support the pupil needs in the various situations he or she encounters in school.

In several thesis studies the importance of having good contact with the pupils' parents/ guardians is reported. This means particularly with the parents of children and pupils who are deemed in need of special support. That the communication and information function well in both directions facilitates inclusion work (Mitchell, 2008).

Several studies emphasised the importance of well-thought-out and grounded pedagogy and methods. These are required in order to lay the foundation for social interaction between the children defined as pupils in need of special support and the other children. Most often what is needed here is help in starting and maintaining communication and play with other children. The importance of having a structured environment with fixed routines also appeared in the material. That the schooling is fundamentally characterised by rules and structure often appears in work with pupils with special needs (Deris and Di Carlo, 2013). In addition, teachers pointed out the value of being reflective educators in order

to conduct their actions consciously with the children and group of pupils. Farrell et al (2012) mention that there must be structures, a system, methods and a comprehensive strategy for meeting the needs of all children. It is important to find each pupil's strengths and thereafter find suitable instructional methods to make further progress (Walker and Berthelsen, 2008). By making children's strengths visible, their self-esteem becomes strengthened, and their perceptions and attitudes towards other individuals become positively influenced (Linikko, 2009).

Interaction is a condition for learning. Through communication, listening and imitating, one develops an understanding for what is considered important. Pupils who are in need of special support often need to increase their self-esteem and need to believe they can succeed in the tasks they have to perform; and here the teachers' expectations that the pupils will be successful are most important (Hattie, 2009; Bråten, 2011). More time spent on each individual would benefit inclusive instruction. If one uses an overly academic and difficult curriculum or course content, then one is going to exclude the pupils who are in need of special support rather than including them (Feng and Johnson, 2008). This means that teachers must adapt activities and material to the children's abilities and conditions (Gerrbo, 2012).

The respondents in the current study viewed diagnosis of the pupil as a double-edged matter. On the one hand, while diagnosis can open up increased resources and can create increased understanding for the pupil's difficulties, on the other hand the consequence could be that the child is stigmatised and receives segregated treatment in regard to both instruction and contact with the regular teacher and other pupils. Several teachers in the investigations have expressed concern over the increase in diagnoses and the adverse consequences arising thereof. To set a label on a pupil or place a child in a category may lead to overlooking the individual's possibilities and focussing only on the pupil's limitations and diagnosis, stated many teachers; their view is supported by several researchers (Florian, 2006; Vinterek, 2006).

DISCUSSION

This investigation leaves out factors that are based on the individual child and which are not included in the concepts of inner and outer environment. The method design could be an effective way to focus on the factors concerned with personnel and schooling. The presentation of the results from the 18 thesis

projects included in the study, with empirical data from 24 schools, shows that there is similarity in the teachers' understanding of the inclusion issue. There are no results from this study that are in contrast to previous research; instead this adds to the collection of significant factors referred to in earlier research.

The factors considered to be most important represent the inner capital. The personnel's values, perception and empathy are some factors that are associated with their attitude and ability. It is important in educational work to discuss and take into account the view of people and knowledge that will shape the foundation of one's work (Karlsudd, 2011.) This position makes up the basis of the teachers' attitudes and actions, which in turn have much influence on the schooling activity (Hattie, 2009). It is clear that the personnel consider staff resources to be the most important factor as this is frequently mentioned as a highly critical factor for not being able to attain inclusion. Despite this, in the thesis project results there are examples of schools with hardly any resources which are far along in inclusion efforts. It is therefore more likely that the lack of a clear strategy or mission statement is the explanation for failure. Very often increased resources lead to increased interventions involving ability-grouping or individualised separate instruction with special teachers in segregated environments. The requirement for increased resources must therefore be complemented with a discussion about which organisation and work forms should be applied. Resources are important, but they do not automatically lead to inclusion (Skolverket - Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009; Karlsudd, 2011). Schools must have a clear educational vision and a well-established strategy for their work. Here the school management, and most importantly the principal, play a significant role in taking the lead and assuming responsibility.

Since this study clearly shows there is a problem common to the schools covered by this report, it may be appropriate for them to come together for a common intervention. Schools could coordinate to organise pedagogical support; this would have economic advantages as well. Clear criteria and continuous monitoring from management would be required. To invest in the positive-labelling factors that are identified and, at the same time, to reduce the negative factors is a logical conclusion of the study overall. Here, the schools can support each other and, for example, conduct staff-development days in common so that special competence is accessible to all.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To add more value to the thesis projects that students work on, the teacher-training should encourage and facilitate students to collaborate on common issues, investigations and research presentations. A progressive step could be for student teachers to carry out suggested interventions based on the area-delimited meta-studies when working on more action and development-oriented studies. These can be excellent work assignments during the training placements, and the results can advantageously be presented at common staff-development days or at principals' meetings. It is hoped that the personnel involved in the research results and other interventions feel some affinity with their nearby schools, and initiate discussion and development based on factors that are regionally local and valid.

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