

# PROMISING FACTORS PROMOTING INCLUSION

of pupils with mental retardation in  
local schools?

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# Change in policy

- An ongoing ideological movement towards a more inclusive society
- An ongoing contrary practice observed: More pupils than ever receiving different types of special education
- Some argue that segregation is a better way, “Seven signs of setbacks”

# The inclusion concept 1

Tøssebro & Ytterhus (2006) points out:

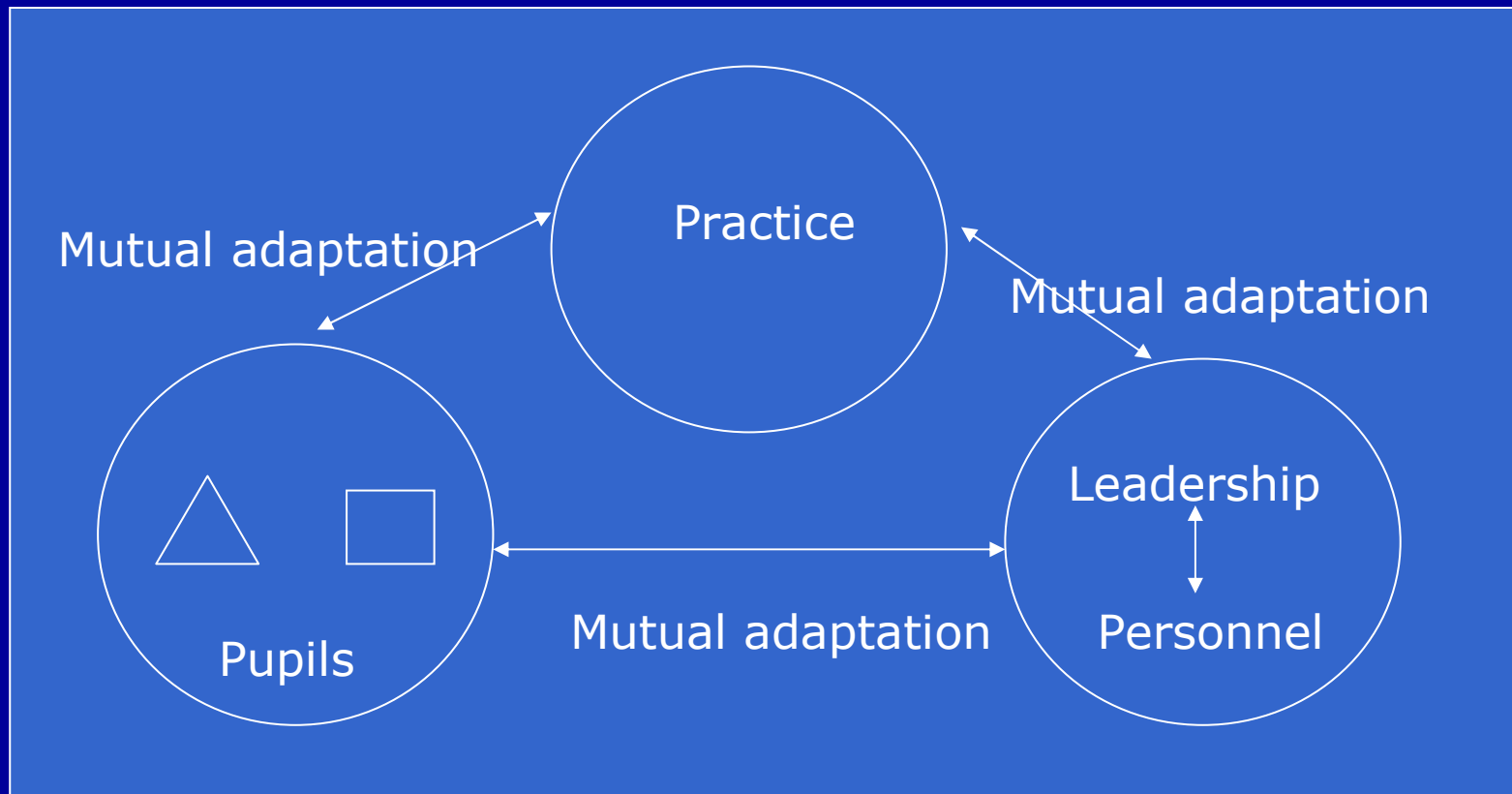
1. There is hardly any correct meaning of the concepts of integration/inclusion – no monopole understanding of them
2. They are used somehow interchangeably
3. There are different types: administrative, physical and social
4. There are varied degrees: From fully in a class to only in a special school

# The inclusion concept 2: Bachke's view

- Hard to define precisely – agrees with T & Y
- Literature reviewed is therefore affected by imprecise inclusion and integration concept
- Metaphors are used to describe it: “the glue between pupils”; “a bridge”
- Subsequently Bachke has proposed definition:  
*“Inclusion strives to become a bridge between normal and special teaching so every pupil can be met according to his/her needs, and at the same time experience a belonging to the school’s/class’ fellowship.”*
- He enjoys models of concepts hard to define, see next pp

# An inclusion model (Alenkær 2008)

## The inclusive school



# Research question

- **What are the factors/variables promoting inclusion of pupils with mental retardation in local schools?**

# Why this question?

1. Cross-Scandinavian comparisons are few
2. Published works are mostly descriptive
3. Need of a presentation of normative findings
4. Scandinavian summaries in the field are hardly published in English

# Other concepts' meaning

- Pupils = Attending compulsory education
- Mental retardation is used as a synonym to the Norwegian designation “psychic underdevelopment”, and the English (complex) “learning disabilities/difficulties” = F 70-79 within ICD-10
- Promoting = Researchers' arguments and beliefs in the effects of certain factors

# Method: Literature review

- Databases selected: BIBSYS; LIBRIS; DANBIB; Norart; Artikeldatabas; Artikelsøg; ca. 60 titles
- Mostly literature published after 1995
- Most of the authors hold a degree

# Findings 1: Norwegian professors' views

## 1. Haug (2004):

- Research is scarce;
- What are beneficial approaches differ in different studies
- The focus on the ideological concepts in the extended society has made being and learning at school better

## 2. Vislie (2003): Norway and Sweden are among the best in not using organizational segregation. Denmark not far behind

## Findings 2: Swedish professor's view, Nilholm (2006)

Promising factors grouped in three:

1. Teacher related: Attitudes, ability to adapt teaching and curricula, ability to train pupils' social skills, access to help
2. School and leadership related: A flexible supportive system, co-operation with other schools, parents, use of IEPs and "helpful" school surroundings
3. Support from government on the ideology of inclusion and on finances

## Findings 3: Danish professor's view: Egelund (2004)

- Compares special needs' teachers and normal class teachers in Denmark and Sweden
- Pupils' experiences of being different disclose that Swedish special need's pupils feel less like being an outsider and less loneliness

## Findings 3: Egelund cont.

Explanation of differences:

- Swedish teachers are generally better qualified in SNE
- There are more SNE teachers in Swedish schools
- There is less diagnostics done on Swedish pupils
- Less use of school psychologists as well

## Findings 4: Results from research in sec. schools and kindergarten

Grøgaard (2000) finds:

1. Pupils with mild mental retardation benefited academically from mainstreaming
2. The explanation is that they experience a cumulative stimulation from the other pupils to perform better
3. Nothing stated about their social wellbeing

# Findings 4 cont.

Myklebust (2002) finds that

1. it is important that pupils with MR start the first year at sec. school mainstreamed – it pushes learning and performance.
2. subsequently he concludes that placement is important to attain inclusion
3. Nothing said about social, subjectively experienced wellbeing
4. Many factors not controlled for

## Findings 4 cont.

Ropeid's kindergarten study (2001)

1. make the child playable by preparing it
2. help the child to be at the right place at the right time (so it can be included in games and activities)
3. Small children are generally willing to play with anybody
4. Most children with MR are placed in a local kindergarten (Tøssebro et al 2006)

# Finding 5: Other researchers' contributions 1

1. Project work
2. Training of the staff
3. Use of varied teaching and learning activities
4. Impact of a collective inclusion culture

# Finding 5: Other researchers' contributions 2

5. An inclusion focused personnel

6. Inclusive teachers' attitudes

7. Training skills of interactions

8 Proper architectural solutions

# What are the promising factors? A summary

- 1. Supporting over all frame factors**
- 2. Factors linked to qualities and qualifications of teachers**
- 3. Project method**
- 4. Skills of interactions**

# Validity/Reliability

- To a certain extent agreement and overlap in pointing out factors between the researchers underpin the conclusion
- An unclear inclusion concept might create validity problems
- The researchers' prior understanding and attitudes towards inclusion may color the interpretations of findings

# Is there only one educational track towards inclusion in society?

- Some school politicians, philosophers,, professionals and parents argue for only the mainstreaming track
- Some want a more segregated track as second option for some pupils
- It is hard to “prove” what is best for each individual by scientific means
- Some factors seem to be more promising than others to attain inclusion for all

## Findings 6: Egilson (2005) On pupils with physical impairment

- Factor 1: Personal characteristics of pupils, some wanted much participation to feel included, other did with much less
- Facilitating factors are also underpinned:
  1. An accessible school environment
  2. Balanced use of adaptive methods and curricula
  3. Access to and knowledge and skills in using assistive technology

# Findings 6: Egilson cont.

4. Qualitative use of IEP
5. Well running school organization
6. Provision of adequate support services
7. Provision of assistance: Clarify roles of assistants to balance the help they yield
8. Knowledge of the pupil's developmental level and his/her resources, The essence of doing proper diagnostic work

# Findings 6: Egilson cont.

