‘As an educator you have to fix many things on your own’: A study of teachers’ perspectives on organizing inclusion in various welfare contexts.

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Book Chapter


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‘As an Educator you Have to fix Many Things on Your own’ –  
A Study of Teachers’ Perspectives on Organizing Inclusion in Various Welfare Contexts


Text

Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg

Although the school and welfare systems in Japan, Germany, and Sweden are organized differently, public school teachers from each of these countries express common concerns about the possibilities and challenges of organizing inclusive educational settings in general school contexts. These results come from a comparative study based on focus group interviews with teachers in these three countries. The teachers discuss the possibilities and challenges of multiprofessional collaboration in their respective school systems. Rather than analysing differences between the systems, this chapter focuses on common needs from a teacher’s perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to describe possible dilemmas occurring in relation to the inclusion paradigm of schools in different national school systems. This chapter illustrates how taking teachers’ perspectives into account is an important precondition for developing inclusive practices in school settings. Children meet the welfare system through the teachers; with their central position in schools, teachers have the potential to facilitate the meeting between the individual and the social institutions. Accessibility of services and communication that functions well with and between different professional groups is crucial when organizing support structures. The chapter takes as its point of departure discourses on inclusion as part of a human rights agenda.
**Introduction**

A policy of inclusion is understood around the world as part of a human rights agenda that demands access to and equity in education (Florian, 2008). In other words, we recognize a right to education, but we must be aware and monitor conditions of the rights in education. This distinction is related to access to educational institutions, on the one hand, and to the creation of educational processes adequate for all groups of people, especially children in need, on the other hand. We define children in need as pupils who experience difficulties in relation to either cognitive learning or social interaction. They are one of the most vulnerable groups in the school system. This study focuses on children who attend ordinary classrooms and on the possible answers to their needs from a teacher’s perspective.

This study uses the term ‘teachers’ perspectives’ to express teachers’ experiences and perceptions of meeting children’s needs in collaboration with other actors in the school and the welfare system. Teachers’ perspectives are relevant in the context of organizing support structures for children in need. Teachers are the ones who meet the pupils on a daily basis, and it is crucial to understand how teachers reflect on collaboration with other actors in the search for supportive school environments.

We have some knowledge about Swedish teachers’ experiences organizing support for children in need (Einarsson, 2011; Tornberg, 2006); an international study will provide a good opportunity to understand how the globally accepted need to achieve inclusive school environments is progressing in different systems. This study, which builds on an international sample, allows us to gain some insight into teachers’ perspectives on different welfare and school contexts. It covers a Nordic welfare context in Sweden but includes perspectives from the welfare regimes and school systems in Germany and Japan. Learning about educational practices in other countries can stimulate deeper reflection on pedagogical realities in our own country.

Many interpretations of what constitutes educational rights are possible, and the realization of inclusion varies between different school and welfare systems, countries, and democracies (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education [EADSNE], 2011). Inclusion in Sweden is
regarded as a basic right within the welfare state, one that gives all persons a chance to participate in the working market, in society, and especially in education – one that gives all children a chance to be on equal terms at all levels of the educational system, from preschool to upper secondary school. Sebba and Ainscow defined inclusion as follows:

Inclusion describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricula organisation and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (as cited in Skidmore, 2004, p. 23)

In order to include all pupils, schools need to build good support structures for both pupils and teachers.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe possible dilemmas occurring in relation to the inclusive paradigm of schools in the school systems of different nations, namely, Sweden, Germany, and Japan. The study sheds light on teachers’ perspectives on support systems for children in need, support that comes from different professionals in and around their schools. It elaborates on the role of communication, from the teachers’ perspective, with different actors in the welfare systems and on the challenges or dilemmas teachers face in supporting children in need.

Rather than analyse differences between the systems, this chapter focuses on common needs from a teacher’s perspective. Taking teachers’ perspectives into account is an important precondition for developing inclusive practices in school settings. Children meet the welfare system through the teachers; the teachers’ central position in schools allows them to facilitate the meeting between the individual and the social institutions. Our focus group interviews show that the accessibility of services and well-functioning forms of communication with and between different professional groups are crucial when organizing support structures.

The chapter introduces some results from an international comparative study of teachers’ perspectives on organizing support structures in public
schools for children in need. The study is based on focus group interviews about multiprofessional collaboration with teachers in Sweden, Germany, and Japan. We relate the results in this study to relevant models of democracy by shedding light on the importance of communication between different interest groups for realizing political rights. Nilholm (2006) has argued for a combination of participatory and deliberative democracy in the context of school policies. Deliberative democracy, which is advocated by the sociologist Jürgen Habermas, tries to bridge the conflict between majority politics and the interest of individuals and minorities. Within school systems, deliberative democracy entails that, in addition to political representatives and professionals, teachers, school administrators, parents, and pupils also should have influence regarding education and matters concerning inclusion.

**Inclusion in the light of international conventions**

The Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action (United Nations [UN], 1994) documented an international consensus on the future direction for special needs education and represented a breakthrough for the development of an inclusive approach in schools in European and other industrialized countries. This trend was further followed up in the Dakar Framework for Action, which focused on the challenge and vision of *Inclusive Education and Education for All* (UNESCO, 2000). These documents have set the scene for countries all over the world to reform their educational policies, deal with exclusion and marginalization, and broadly promote inclusive education (Beacham & Rouse, 2011).

The documents follow up the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006). Helldin and colleagues (2011) have shown how these documents reflect on inclusion and discussed the relation between human rights, inclusion, and democracy. According to article 3 in the Salamanca Statement, ‘schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other condition’. This is developed further in the Dakar Framework for Action:
In order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education system[s] should respond flexibly. . . . Education systems must be inclusive . . . and respond flexibly to the circumstances and needs of the learners. (UNESCO, 2000, § 33, cited in Helldin et al., 2011, p. 107)

The demand for inclusive education builds on the rights to and in education stated in the Declaration of Human Rights and in article 2 of the Convention of the Right of the Child. This right is stipulated in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), which demands all state parties realize ‘the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children’ (Preamble) and ‘inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live’ (art. 24). All children are entitled to an education that does not discriminate or differentiate on grounds of ethnicity, religion, language, gender, or disability.

In other words, inclusion is the mainstream policy recommended by the international organs and in the policy agendas that were ratified by the nations included in this study. ‘Inclusion’ is an umbrella term that refers to the way educational systems are being reformed and reorganized. However, ‘inclusion’ has also become a buzzword in education, and sometimes ideals seem to overdraw the reality teachers face in realizing demands for inclusion in times of reduced economic resources (e.g., Secher Schmidt & Langager, 2012). This makes it relevant to understand teachers’ reasoning about inclusive practices, their possibilities, and their challenges in general schools as they are approached in this study.

**Special needs education and inclusive education**

Policies of inclusion challenge the organization of education systems in many countries, and the organization of special needs education has to be restructured. Special needs education is a discipline with a history of providing solutions to achieve justice in education while critical perspectives
target injustices that can occur in systems with special forms of educational provisions for specific groups. Special needs education is often seen as one of the mechanisms with the potential to both include and exclude students who experience difficulties in learning (Florian, 2008).

Special needs education has been criticized for building on exclusive support practices, whereas inclusive education promotes acceptance of differences among students and the development of corresponding educational practices within a common classroom. Inclusive education aims to remove barriers to learning and participation. Inclusion has become a political agenda in many countries, but being educated in regular schools does not automatically mean being included (Pijl, Frostd, & Flem, 2008). We can distinguish between organizational forms where special needs units or classrooms prevail, whether integrated into or associated with the general school, and practices where all children are included within the general classroom, receiving support according to their needs within this classroom.

According to UNESCO’s *Open File on Inclusive Education* (2001), inclusive education concerns all learners, ‘with [a] focus on those who have traditionally been excluded from educational opportunities – such as learners with special needs and disabilities, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, and so on’ (as cited in Thomazet, 2009, p. 556). According to Thomazet (2009), the fundamental principle of inclusive education is that schools should provide as ordinary an education as possible for all pupils, adapting it to the needs of each.

Along with Vislie (2003), we define inclusion as an ongoing process rather than a state in which the school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals. It is the opposite of and related to processes of exclusion. Inclusion is relevant to all phases and types of schools. Finally, inclusion takes into account that in all educational provision, teachers face groups of students with diverse needs and are required to respond to this diversity.

**The implementation of inclusion**

Persson (2003) has described inclusion as a social justice project that might start with education but nevertheless cannot be limited to education. In the
example of Sweden, but also the United States for comparison, three phases of implementation can describe inclusion. The first one is an ideologically or politically oriented phase. In Sweden, this phase was related to party policies with the introduction of a comprehensive school system in the 1960s. Political documents from the 1970s reflect, by using the term ‘a school for all’, ambitious messages about inclusive schools and pedagogical support in preschools and leisure centres. However, not everything could be realized; the 1990s were overshadowed by grave budget cuts and a reorganization of the school system. In the second phase, inclusion is reflected in education research. After a two-decade-long phase of extreme loyalty to political messages, critical research on inclusion softened consensus and came to express an easy adaptation of policies into practice. The third phase is related to the development of adequate pedagogical practices. Trends towards inclusion are realized, for example, in special needs education reform (Persson, 2003). It is this field of education practices and actors’ experiences with these that need to be explored in much more detail.

Method

This study has an international comparative character and applies qualitative methods in a school context. We conducted focus group interviews with teachers in three different countries: Sweden, Germany, and Japan.¹ A focus group interview is a special kind of group interview, usually with five to ten members in a group (Hylander, 2001). Communication during the interview focuses on a specific topic relevant for all participants. The interest lies in gathering different experiences and opinions as well as common discourses. Results and understanding gained by means of focus group interviews are similar to knowledge production in a daily context, where participants learn and understand by listening to a variety of opinions (Bryman, 2011).

The focus group interviews touched on teachers’ experiences of collaboration with other professionals in efforts to achieve an inclusive school. Dilemmas and challenges became clear; practitioners experienced such issues when confronted with the difficulties of answering all children’s needs through their daily classroom practices. But they also had to meet the
challenges of organizing support structures and making a common demand for developing sustainable structures of communication between the actors involved in the pupils’ education process.

**An international study**

Sweden, Japan, and Germany are examples of three different welfare regimes undergoing constant change. Welfare studies have long integrated international comparative perspectives on so-called welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1999). Esping-Andersen’s ideas have been dominant in welfare state discussions for more than two decades; the ideas distinguish between so-called universal, liberal, conservative, and other types of welfare regimes. All welfare regimes answer social/societal challenges differently, and globalization has different consequences for the individual, depending on the institutional and political conditions of the respective welfare state (Aspalter, 2004). Schools and their surrounding social support systems are an important part of the welfare system, and the choice of countries to study builds on an understanding that specific organizational structures and welfare ideologies are reflected in the school system. In this study, we selected three countries known in comparative welfare studies as representatives of different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Goodman, 1998).

**Sweden**

The Scandinavian welfare state regimes were classified by Esping-Andersen (1990) as a social democratic–inspired type of welfare regime, sometimes also called the ‘universalist model’ because many subsystems, like pensions and health care, are organized universally for all citizens. These subsystems include, to a high degree, the school, which is organized as ‘a school for all’, without early differentiation among programs. The Swedish school system is known for its tradition of universalism and comprehensiveness with minimal tracking but has undergone a strong transformation towards marketization and individual choice since the early 1990s (Berhanu, 2010). National statistics do not provide figures on how many children who receive special needs education are included in regular classrooms. About 2% are educated
in segregated classes or units, but segregated schools exist for only a few hundred pupils in the nation (EADSNE, 2011), mainly for students with grave hearing disabilities.

**Germany**

In Esping-Andersen’s terms, Germany is the prime example of a conservative welfare regime (Aspalter, 2004). The conservative regime is guided by a ‘one-breadwinner model’, with day care and family services conspicuously underdeveloped (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In all federal states, a parallel school system exists, with different schools serving certain groups of pupils. The crucial feature of this so-called tripartite system is the selection depending on ability of all children for one of the three school types as early as at the age of ten. A ‘comprehensive school’ exists in only a number of länder, and usually beside other school forms (Ertl & Phillips, 2000). The number of children attending segregated special schools – almost 5% – is high in comparison to the other countries investigated (EADSNE, 2011).

**Japan**

We investigate Japan as an example of an East Asian welfare regime, sometimes characterized as Confucian (Goodman, 1998). Japan does not fit only one of Esping-Andersen’s models, and there have been discussions on how to categorize this East Asian state. Japan began to set up a Western-style (conservative) welfare state in the early 1970s, but it also has elements of liberal welfare regimes more common in Anglo-Saxon countries. Goodman (1998) applied the term ‘Japanese-style welfare society’ to stress the role of the family and community. The Japanese educational system is, to a certain degree, similar to the U.S. school system. Japan has a comprehensive school system with public and charter schools existing beside one another; 2.2% of pupils receive special needs education, 1.2% visit special needs schools, 0.6% attend special needs classes in ordinary schools, and 0.5% of the pupils are included in ordinary compulsory schools with so-called resource rooms (Journal of Special Education in the Asia Pacific [JSEAP], 2009).
Data collection and analysis

The selection of interview partners follows rules of convenience (Bryman, 2011). We contacted teachers in general public schools with the help of colleagues in some of our international partner universities. We conducted up to 12 interviews, mostly with groups or pairs of teachers and some with individuals, in each of the countries. All teachers were informed that ethical principles were being followed in this study. We shared the purpose of our study with our informants and guaranteed that all material would be handled confidentially and used only for research (Codex, 2013). We analysed information from seven of the focus groups, two or three from each country, through qualitative content analysis (Johannessen & Tufte, 2003). The focus groups interviews chosen for this analysis comprised at least six teachers and took about 1.5 hours.

The first step of the analysis was conducted with the material – both the recorded files and transcripts – in the original language of the interviews. For the presentation of the results, selected quotes were translated into English. Each teacher’s country is indicated, with S for Sweden, G for Germany, and J for Japan. The numbers represent the page number in the transcript or the minute in the audio file.

Results

In this section, I focus on teachers’ perspectives on organizing inclusion and multiprofessional collaboration in the general school system and thus on some common topics that became clear during the focus group interviews with teachers in different welfare regimes. Their stories touched on somehow similar needs, although the organization of schooling and inclusive education is diverse. Quotes from the interviews are grouped according to topic and not nation because the chapter focuses on identifying common needs, not on comparing the specific situation in the three school systems. The topics that became clear in teachers’ narratives are the possibilities of organizing support structures and accessibility, the relevance of communication in collaboration, and the dilemmas that teachers experience.
Possibilities of organizing support structures and accessibility

As mentioned above, the target group of the study was teachers in compulsory schools. In the context of inclusion, support for children in need must be organized, and the following results shed some light on how teachers experience the access to support systems.

When the teachers were talking about the organization of support structures, they talked often about the possibilities of contacting with other professionals. These were not necessarily related to formal organized systems but grounded in their daily experiences. Routines were described in various ways. Here are some quotes from teachers in Sweden:

We have a culture where we are in direct contact with each other; there are not so many written routines. (S1, 101216:6)

Practices seem to depend on the general context of the school and the community as well. Another teacher described her situation:

This was a small town, so we came to know each other. (S1, 101216:1)

And clearly, access was described as easiest if support personnel were available directly in the school:

And because the school nurse is in the school, it is easier to contact her than if she were not there, but this is obviously a question of resources. (S1, 101216:7)

A description of accessibility similar to the one given for school nurses by teachers in Sweden and Japan was presented for social workers in Germany:

And then there are also the [school] social workers [Sozialpädagogen] . . . with them you can always talk, and they have lots of networks. They are important communication partners.
Q. The social workers?

Yes, the social workers; they are very central for us and always accessible. (G1, 20101001:10)

Although some professionals are highly regarded because they work on a regular basis in the schools, there are other support structures teachers can access if they need support in their work with pupils. Teachers described different routines for contacting with these resource persons. The following teacher pointed out the individual teacher’s possibilities and responsibilities:

It [contacting other professionals like psychologists] was very much up to the individual teacher. . . . My experience is that these functions, such as psychologists, which are part of student health, are free and easy [fritt fram] to contact if or when one wants to do so. . . . This is like a central division, and all schools have the possibility to get in contact. (S1, 101216:4)

The focus here is on the positive aspects, like accessibility. The following German teacher expressed her situation somewhat more critically:

The contact is always through other people. We do not have the therapist here in school. They are always outside of the school [außerschulisch]. (G1, 20101001:2)

Accessibility seemed to be a key question for many teachers. Central divisions may supply services, but many teachers described the access as difficult and appreciated possibilities for informal support and easy ways of communication.

**The relevance of communication in collaboration**

The focus group interviews reflected the relevance of communication in collaboration with other professionals. A Japanese teacher described a
situation in her ordinary class with a boy with grave visual impairments. In this case she received regular advice from a specialist 2–3 times a year on, for example, how she could adapt the classroom environment and teaching situation:

This expert gave me advice about what I should be careful about; this was really an advantage [to get this kind of guidance]. (J9_4:10-4:40)

The pupil went one day a week to a special school and attended the ordinary school during the other days. The teachers communicated with the help of regular written messages in the form of a school diary (techô, renrakushô). The teacher described how regular communication with both the mother and the boy himself helped her get a handle on the situation. Another Japanese teacher described positive close collaboration between the special-school teachers, the mother, possibly the pupil, and the ordinary classroom teachers as important. She described it as feeling ‘how problems can be solved’ in collaboration (J3:15’). The descriptions put communication between the individuals at the centre of attention.

Insufficient communication, on the other hand, can be experienced as a problem. Sometimes it is unclear whose responsibility it is to coordinate learning support, for example, for a pupil in need. A quote from a focus group interview with teachers in Germany illustrates this:

I can get quite a bit of support, from this person or from a teacher student, but this is not real cooperation. Nobody has enough time for that. I cannot control what the different help teachers are practicing with the pupil. I could get some information, but I am not part of this. . . . It is difficult to coordinate all this [alles unter einen Hut zu kriegen], and there is no common effort to solve the problem. (G2:40’)

Teachers often described themselves as being actively in charge of the
teaching process, but as soon as other actors came into the classroom or worked with the children in other settings, coordination of teaching efforts became difficult. They did not experience this as their own responsibility. And there was nobody else who would coordinate the different supportive measures for a child in need. The following quote from Sweden focuses on the importance of a sustainable form of communication for all teachers:

We have certain routines. First we discuss within the teaching team, and then we might go further to the student health team. There we decide which further steps to take. There are many resources, psychologists, and different types of therapists. They are working both with supporting teachers as well as pupils and parents, both individual parents and parent groups. (S2, 110331:18’)

These steps were often described in relation to a problem-solving pattern and in relation to getting support for Swedish teachers: First the teacher tries to solve the problem by her/himself, and then s/he takes it up as a topic with colleagues in the working team s/he belongs to in the school; another step is to contact resource personnel in the school, like the abovementioned school nurse or special needs teacher or special needs pedagogue. Finally, often through these resource personnel or the headmaster, the teacher contacts centrally organized student health or respective personnel (see also Hylander, 2011).

Teachers both described the strength of this system and, at the same time, criticized the reduction and the distribution of resources:

Yes, I guess resources on the side of psychologists have been reduced. For example, it is decided that the psychologist should be in this school one day per week, but this is not really what happens. She has her base in another specific school, and she also belongs to the school-based health team. At that school she is [there] a few days and cooperates with others. This is a more centralized position. (S1, 101216:4)
The teacher continued by describing difficulties accessing the school psychologist in her own school. From a teacher’s perspective, there are clear tensions between the possible shortcomings of centralized systems and the hope for more sustainable systems with organizational structures for support functions accessible to all teachers. At the same time, immediate contact and direct communication with resource personnel were experienced as a facilitating factor.

**Dilemma experienced by teachers**

In the above, I referred to support structures that are closely related to schooling and to health or special needs measures. In this subchapter, I present teachers’ comments on collaboration with external services like psychological counselling. The teachers seemed to experience more complicated dilemmas in this area. For example, a Swedish teacher described the situation with a pupil who was in contact with external social and psychological services.

> We know an evaluation is underway, and I started to dig into understanding the whole, but it took a very long time to find someone who knew something at all. That’s a problem if the system is too big. (S1, 101216:2)

A Japanese teacher described a similar problem:

> We were talking also to the parents and heard that the child would go to a public children’s counselling centre. However, when we inquired after a while, we realized that nothing at all had happened, that the child did not receive any counselling at all. So when the principal called [the centre], he heard that the conditions and persons in charge had been changed, and that this time there was no opening for the child. This finished the case for them. So leaving it to other professionals was maybe a too high expectation from our side. Somehow, we felt relieved when we could leave it to them. This is not about the question of responsibility, and who should
have contacted whom; that is maybe on both sides. However, there is a bad feeling remaining. We had a feeling that things were not developing properly, . . . although we are leaving it to professionals, we should maybe not forget that we are the ones who are closest to the child’s position. (J1 20101109, 10/18 09-10)

The teacher described a situation where she first felt relief knowing that a pupil would get external support. However, after a while it became clear that not much had happened; this led her to a certain scepticism and reminded the teacher of her own closeness to the pupil and of the advantages of taking care of as much as possible herself.

Another teacher, this time in Germany, described feelings of frustration when children were sent to other support personnel but without any possibility for the teacher to follow up in this process or get support for her own interaction with the pupil:

I think that these other people, a therapist here and a psychologist there, or where you might send the children, that is always a very indirect contact. Often, this goes via parents. There you never know what is happening [was rüber kommt]. That I experience as very narrow, often you don’t know . . . I don’t experience that as help. . . . That happens quite often, because they are not in-house. It’s the families going there, and then the parents might tell you something, but you probably don’t get the report. That’s a bit difficult, I think. (G1, 20101001, 1)

A similar experience is described in relation to a longer absence of a pupil who received some kind of psychiatric support:

I did not experience any collaboration there. I did not experience that as productive; there was no exchange at all. That was not planned for either. I tried to call them, but there was no possibility for exchange. Although I would appreciate this, also in relation to later care, when the children are coming back to school. However,
we are ‘hanging in midair’ without information [da hängt man dann im luftleeren Raum]. (G1, 20101001, 8)

These teachers gave examples of support when the pupils were, for a certain time, excluded from the school and the classroom. These were described as extremely difficult to follow up on or handle in a satisfying way in the ordinary school context. The teachers supported external services with information about the pupil and schoolwork to be done, but no information came back in exchange; this might have been out of respect for the child’s privacy. The teachers, however, felt alone in the need to meet the pupil’s needs and give appropriate support. This is a typical dilemma that Nilholm (2006) describes as necessary to cope with in special needs education contexts.

Discussion of results

Inclusive education clearly embraces the whole field of education and is not limited to special needs education. The right of children to be included in ordinary classrooms is an obligation for all schools to realize. Teachers are mediators who need to support children and adapt their teaching practices to meet these needs (Tornberg, 2006). In the focus group interviews, it became clear that teachers need access to support functions that can assist them in developing adequate classroom practices.

Many teachers seemed to be in favour of professionals who are easily accessible directly within the school. At the same time, all services and functions cannot be at hand in every single school, so building centralized systems for support is a high priority. However, if these systems are to provide sustainable solutions, communication needs to satisfy a number of needs evident in the teachers’ descriptions. It became clear, for example, that small units, direct accessibility, and personalized communication are advantages. This is in line with other studies where teachers described that it felt like a long time until they received some support for difficult-to-tackle problems (Einarsson, 2011) and that they often felt alone in their efforts to support pupils.

According to our results, organizing inclusive schooling seems to be a
complex puzzle where questions of networking between different stakeholders play a central role. Results from this study also show the importance of taking teachers’ perspectives into account in connection with the need to realize children’s rights in education. Nilholm (2006) has argued that inclusion needs to be reflexive, taking different actors’ perspectives into account. He related this explicitly to particular views of democracy. Depending on the particular view of democracy, different social groups have more influence. If we follow a model of deliberative democracy, it is professional and expert groups; in the law-governed model, it is individuals; and in the participatory model, users have more influence (Nilholm, 2006). Accordingly, Nilholm argued for a combination of participatory and deliberative democracy, where pupils and parents as users as well as professionals and teachers influence the organization of education and matters concerning inclusion. Clearly, matters of inclusion concern not only the special needs education community or policy makers, but all stakeholders in education need to be involved with the questions and possibilities of adapting the education and social system to children in need in order to realize their rights in education.

**Reflections on policy implementations**

Without an understanding of possible dilemmas that can occur in the daily schooling process, it is difficult to build a sustainable organization and solve this challenge of finding inclusive solutions in education. Our study shows that teachers described dilemmas with insufficient or difficult collaboration with social support structures that were not directly connected to the school. Communication with actors outside the school system was often frustrating, as teachers in Sweden, Germany, and Japan described. Thus, serious considerations about the realization of support in the context of schooling are perhaps not limited strictly to matters of the educational system but also related to issues of cooperation with other institutions of the welfare state.

Berhanu (2010) has described an international trend in which even though inclusive education has become a policy catchword and strategies against inequity are put into practice, marginalization and social segregation of socially disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups have increased. This
coincides with dilemmas that some of the interviewed teachers described. Budget cuts and the reduction of other professionals who are in the school on a regular basis are only one side of this coin. Berhanu pointed out that authors like Arnesen and Lunddahl (2006), Englund (2005), and Dahlsted (2007) have written about developments where perceptions of citizenship are being replaced by human rights. In this perspective, stressing the individualization of rights and the dominant promotion of social interests might interfere with conceptions of welfare state solutions that focus on the well-being of all individuals. Berhanu (2010) described a risk that governments will call for more inclusion and recognition of diversity but promote social and educational policies that do not support inclusive schools and will not help all students meet their academic targets, much less involve all in the same daily learning events.

**Conclusion**

Although the language of inclusion may have changed, there are, according to Beacham and Rouse (2011), those who argue that practices have changed little. Studies in Sweden have shown that inclusion is no easy thing to introduce into education practices (Pijl, Frostad, & Flem, 2008; Tornberg, 2006). There are also studies that have shown that the education system in Sweden has become less inclusive during the past two decades (Vislie, 2003). It has been debated internationally whether simply changing terms – for example, from ‘integration’ to ‘inclusion’ or ‘special needs education’ to ‘inclusive education’ – necessarily changes pedagogical realities (Thomazet, 2009). Clearly, there is an international need to engage critically with issues of exclusion, diversity, and inclusion if changes are to occur in the longer term. A broad approach calls for, among other strategies, the introduction of such inclusion-related questions to all teachers as early as possible in teacher education programmes (Beacham & Rouse, 2011).

Our international results illustrate a number of convergences between the situations teachers experience in different educational systems. Each school and each school system has to find its own balance between patterns of realization that fit local school systems but also follow international standards.
as stated in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (Helldin et al., 2011). The surprising aspect of this study was that although structures and practices differ greatly among education systems, teachers seemed to voice common concerns and needs in order to meet what they experienced as the challenges of an inclusive classroom. That does not mean, however, that all realities are really the same. Different countries can stand at different points in what Vislie (2003) called a *process* of organizing inclusion.

In this chapter, I described some teachers’ demands for sustainable communication structures within support systems in and around inclusive educational settings and some of the challenges teachers experience in their efforts to support children in need. However, divergences among the different welfare systems need to be explored in more detail in another place. Understanding how support systems for children in need are organized in and for schools and how teachers access these to provide children with educational and social support should be further investigated in order to deepen the understanding of the consequences of global agreements for local actors.

**Endnotes**

1 We conducted the focus groups in all three countries in autumn 2010. Gunilla Jedeskog, Linköping University, joined me for the interviews in Germany and Sweden. In Germany, we were supported by Birgit Lütje-Klose and her team at Bielefeld University. In Japan, Yasuo Imai (University of Tokyo) and Chie Nakazawa (Tokyo Gakugei University) helped me to contact schools and teachers. All interviews were carried out in the respective languages – Swedish, German, and Japanese.
References


AS AN EDUCATOR YOU HAVE TO FIX MANY THINGS ON YOUR OWN


