

Togetherness in Play and Learning

Special Needs Education in Mainstream Settings



**Change work in
kindergartens and schools**

1.1



Change work in kindergartens and schools

Developing an inclusive community that provides all children and young people with opportunities to express themselves, participate and learn based on their own prerequisites in community with others, is an important task for kindergartens and schools. This requires good learning environments that contribute to learning and development – not only for children and pupils, but also for educators and managers.

To achieve this, scientific literature indicates that kindergartens and schools must have a collective learning culture and base their educational practice on updated research. The three chapters that follow each in their own way demonstrate what this may entail in practice.

Anita Sande:

Leadership in inclusion processes

Anita bases her chapter on a pupil case study and describes how development of inclusive communities is a process that requires efforts in several different areas. The chapter centres around the importance of leadership and the role of the principal.

Leadership in inclusion processes

Since the 1990s, inclusion has been a central principle in national governing documents and is embodied in international conventions to which Norway is party. However, research shows that inclusiveness can be difficult to achieve in practice.

Anita Sande

In this chapter, we follow Viktor and his school in their efforts to develop an inclusive learning community. Our goal is to show that the development of an inclusive community

is a process that entails awareness and effort in a wide range of areas and that requires focused leadership.

Viktor is a sixth grader at Fjelltoppen School, a primary school with around 250 pupils. In the class roster, he is assigned to 6B, but has not been part of that class since halfway through second grade. Viktor has been diagnosed with a moderate developmental disability. He has considerable language problems, but also a great deal of factual knowledge about several topics that interest him. He is in the process of cracking the reading code.

At Viktor's school, there are seven other pupils in learning programmes that differ significantly from the regular curriculum. In terms of age, they are distributed over most grade levels and have different diagnoses, including multifunctional disability, childhood autism and mild intellectual disability. The school has always provided education for these pupils in a separate group, as one-to-one teaching or in pairs. But the school is experiencing challenges in teaching these pupils due to their very different needs, and school management would like to take a different approach to special needs education.

Based on David Mitchell's factors for inclusiveness and his emphasis on seven important leadership roles, we discuss the school's opportunities to develop inclusive learning environments that respond to the needs of all pupils. We wish to especially emphasise the importance of management in achieving this goal.

We pose the following questions:

- How can management work towards promoting an inclusive community that accommodates all pupils?
- What role must management play in ensuring that the staff succeeds in creating an inclusive learning community?

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is all about adapting the learning environment to the diversity of children and pupils and providing a genuine opportunity to participate in the academic and social community. An inclusive school values diversity, which research has shown to be an essential prerequisite to creating an inclusive learning environment. In an inclusive learning environment, everyone belongs without discrimination and no one is designated as 'included'.

Inclusive teaching is embedded in international conventions, Norwegian law and other governing documents.

Inclusiveness as a process

Inclusiveness can be described as a continuous process. This means that we cannot characterise a school as inclusive or non-inclusive, but inclusive to a certain degree. In the process of developing an inclusive learning community, the school needs to reflect on the factors that affect its practice. David Mitchell has studied several thousand research articles that address inclusiveness (Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). In summary, Mitchell finds ten factors he claims are necessary to successfully create an inclusive learning environment. Together, these factors constitute his mega-strategy or multi-component strategy. Mitchell's mega-strategy emphasises that inclusiveness requires effort on the organisational level.

Mitchell's ten factors for an inclusive learning environment

In this chapter, we use Mitchell's (2014) ten factors to show that the process of developing an inclusive learning community at Viktor's school requires an effort in all areas described. All the same, we focus most on the factor of leadership, as we consider this fundamental to making the switch. We start by briefly describing each of the ten factors in order to provide an understanding of how the factors are mutually dependent:

Inclusiveness requires a *commitment to a vision* that everyone belongs to the community and that this is reflected in the attitude and practices of all employees. In an inclusive learning environment, everyone has access to peers in their local environment (*placement*). The content of the curriculum for each individual pupil is quality-assured through *adapted curricula* that links up well with the regular curriculum. *Adapted teaching* offers the greatest possible variation in the working methods within the framework of the regular education, while *adapted assessment* promotes learning, supports good learning strategies and functions as a theme in the learning process of each individual. An inclusive learning community means that staff, fellow pupils and parent groups show *acceptance* of the fact that everyone has his or her own natural place in the community. All pupils have access to the school and the outdoor areas of the school in order to take part in joint instruction and activities. The school staff experiences *support* from management, colleagues, parents and external support services in their efforts to create an inclusive learning environment. The school has access to sufficient *resources* in the form of personnel, expertise, time, technology and materials. The school's *leadership* works to implement the school's vision on inclusiveness and is a driving force behind the development of an inclusive culture.

The role of leadership in the development of an inclusive learning environment

Leadership is considered a central factor in the development of an inclusive learning community. *"Developing a positive school culture for learners with special educational needs requires the exercise of leadership"* (Mitchell, 2014, p. 345). Seven important leadership roles are also described that must be fulfilled at a school that is to develop an inclusive culture (Heller &

Firestone, 1995; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999 as cited in Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020):

1. Provide and sell a vision
2. Provide encouragement and recognition
3. Obtain resources
4. Adapt standard operating procedures
5. Monitor improvement
6. Handle staff disturbances/resistance
7. Exercising leadership that creates learning climates free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives and expecting teachers to set high objectives for themselves and their pupils

All of these roles are necessary to transition from intentions and visions to an inclusive approach that is supported and promoted by all staff members. Taking a closer look at these roles, we see that several of them cannot or should not be addressed by anyone other than management. At Fjelltoppen School, not all leadership roles were equally as central in the transition efforts, which is why some of them are attached greater importance, while others are not discussed in this article.

Although school management plays the most decisive role at the school, the school culture can be represented by many different persons who can assume a leadership role that supports an inclusive learning environment (Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). But if management does not take responsibility for these roles, they can be performed by informal leaders in the staff (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999), who may just as easily lead the school towards becoming less inclusive.

Mitchell's ten factors show that the process of developing an inclusive school culture includes numerous themes that require reflection, practical steps that must be taken and new expertise that must be acquired. The process must involve the entire school and be led by management that knows what direction it wants to be headed and how to reach its desired destination. The seven leadership roles demonstrate important strategies that management can or should pursue in leading the process forward in a way that provides staff with support and leads to the desired results. Awareness of the ten factors, as well as the seven leadership roles, can help management succeed in this process.

The path towards an inclusive learning environment

Despite our best efforts, we can't seem to make it work!

Hilde is the headmaster of Viktor's school and she and the other members of the management team are focusing efforts on the school developing an inclusive learning environment. They want to change the school's approach to special needs education, by which pupils are removed from the classroom by either a special needs education teacher or assistant.

Hilde is striving to change the established approach at the school. She is aware that the staff members have different opinions about this. Some would like a more inclusive approach, while others believe that the current approach is the best one. During meetings in which inclusiveness is discussed, she is often unable to answer questions about how challenges are to be addressed in practice.

She understands that it is demanding for staff to teach pupils like Viktor together with the rest of the class. Initial efforts have been made to facilitate special needs education in the classroom, but the majority of experiences have been of failure, resulting in a return to the established practice.

School management knows where it wants to go but is not entirely certain about how to get there. Hilde feels that management needs to be supported in its efforts to change attitudes and practices and believes that the staff also needs support, which it does not currently receive. So, she contacts the Educational Psychological Counselling Service (PPT) with a request for pedagogical counselling. The PPT contacts Statped for assistance.

Developing an inclusive learning environment is an organisational matter that requires effort on many levels (Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). However, when good intentions do not lead to changed practices, this is often because the responsibility for inclusive practices is placed with a few individuals who do not have the framework or mandate needed to succeed.

The management of Fjelltoppen School wanted to develop an inclusive practice and was aware that there were several staff members who did not share this desire. This was an important starting point to begin changing practices throughout the entire school. Several of the leadership roles were used. In the beginning, it was important to formulate and implement the vision of an inclusive learning community (leadership role 1). In addition, management realised that it was responsible for much of what was needed to follow up on such change activities, such as obtaining resources (leadership role 3) and monitoring improvements (leadership role 4) through close contact with employees and by prioritising allocated time together and focal areas. Most importantly, they recognised the importance of supporting and acknowledging the staff in their work (leadership role 2).

What are our strengths, and what do we need to work on?

The headmaster establishes a resource group consisting of employees in different positions: two special needs education teachers, two contact teachers, one social worker and management. The group is to work together with the PPT and Statped. She selects those who are already favourably disposed to improving the school's inclusive-ness practices. Viktor's contact teacher and special needs education teacher are on the team. The group is tasked with assessing the school's current inclusiveness practices: "What are our strengths, and what do we need to work on?" They use Mitchell's ten factors in their analysis.

The analysis showed that the school has a vision that contains inclusive values, but the entire staff were unable to agree on what this meant for the school's efforts pertaining to an inclusive learning environment in practice. Much of the special needs education activities took place outside of the classroom community and the placement of developmentally disabled learners in groups worked unsatisfactorily. There was no general acceptance among teachers that all pupils should primarily learn together in the same classroom community.

School accessibility was good, both indoors and outdoors. All teachers and special needs education teachers who worked with pupils with major complex challenges felt that competence was lacking with regard to adapted plans, adapted assessment and adapted teaching. There was insufficient cooperation among the contact teachers and those responsible for special needs education, making it difficult to provide special needs education in the classroom. Several staff members experienced a lack of sufficient support on a daily basis and that they were very much alone in their work with the pupil. The school lacked good collaboration structures, and they experienced that the assistance received from the PPT was inadequate. Several were also uncertain about who was responsible for what. In spite of tight finances on both the municipal and school level, the school had the resource that several of the contact teachers and special needs education teachers were interested in developing a more inclusive practice. The resource-related challenges were primarily that the staff felt that they did not have enough expertise to prepare a curriculum and teach pupils with severe learning disabilities in the classroom community. School management had a strong desire to develop an inclusive school culture.

A review of the school's practice using Mitchell's factors revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the organisational aspects. This helped management determine which focal areas were important to address in making changes. The use of Mitchell's mega-strategy made clear to both management and staff that the practice in the classroom is only one aspect that must be considered in developing the school's inclusive practices. The resource group recommended working further on the *vision, accept, adapted plans, adapted curriculum, support* and *resources*.

The school continued to work on all of the recommended improvement activities, but this chapter only highlights what the analysis revealed in terms of *vision, support* and *resources* and discusses which leadership roles were assumed by the management of Fjelltoppen School in working on these three factors.

Management had closely considered the composition of the resource group in terms of attitude, occupational group, roles and professional standing. This can be viewed within the context of the leadership role that focuses on obtaining resources (leadership role 3). They used the personal resources (expertise) already possessed by the staff members, which ensured that they could start working on the tasks right away. Shared attitudes towards inclusiveness enabled the resource group to do their work without internal resistance. A drawback to this group composition might be that those who oppose the change process experienced that their views were not heard during the initial phases and that resistance could grow when the entire staff was to be involved in the work.

Management's choice of group members is supported by many implementation theorists. To ensure sufficient support for and a proliferation of the intervention, it can be strategically wise to direct efforts towards groups or individuals in the organisation who can help influence others in a positive way (Sørli, Ogden, Solholm & Olseth, 2010). Management's use of the resource group to 'pave the way' for the rest of the organisation was an indirect way to handle resistance among some of the staff (leadership role 5). This enabled them to prevent the process from being slowed down or stopped before it got going. This proved to be a good strategy that led to good progress in the process.

Working towards a common understanding of inclusive education

Following the resource group's analysis and prioritisation, the headmaster wants a period of intensive effort with a strong focus on inclusion among all staff. This means that other themes that are also important must be put on hold. Initially, management decides to schedule a monthly three-hour staff meeting for the next three months that is also to be attended by the PPT and Statped. The school is in charge of the process between the meetings and afterwards. During these staff meetings, the school starts working to create a common understanding of the term 'inclusiveness', addresses problems and discusses future practice. To ensure a common knowledge base, enabling them to discuss the school's inclusive practice, Hilde asks the PPT and Statped to provide professional input during the staff meetings.

Providing and selling a vision is one of the seven leadership functions that are needed to successfully create an inclusive learning community. At Fjelltoppen School, it was essential that management put this on the agenda and set aside time to work on the vision of an inclusive school. Although the school had a vision that contained an inclusive mindset, not all of the school staff interpreted the concepts in the same way because a systematic approach was not taken towards a common understanding. Different understandings resulted in different practices. When the headmaster prioritised allocated time for working together on a shared understanding of the inclusiveness concept, she initiated the process of creating a new practice.

School management devised a strategy for how the approaches taken during the staff meetings would advance the process. Personally, they believed they lacked the experience and legitimacy to provide professional input. That is why they asked

the PPT and Statped to contribute. The external contributors had both professional standing and experience with other schools that had succeeded in creating an inclusive school culture. Sørli et al. (2010) point out the importance of ensuring that those who support the transition efforts have practical experience with this type of interventions. Together with communication skills adapted to both the intervention and audience, this contributes to legitimacy and credibility (Sørli et al. 2010). This kind of strategy can be viewed within the context of leadership role 5 and aimed to reduce the risk of resistance. The professional input alternated with theory and reflection on problems and cases. Reflection took place in individual groups and was shared with the entire staff. Some of the group work entailed randomly comprised groups, while other groups were put together carefully by management. The goal was to combine positive and negative feedback. In this way, management was able to utilise the resources among staff, which also helped *deal with resistance and monitor improvements* (leadership roles 3, 5 and 6). Viewpoints and experiences from the group work was shared with the group and written on a flip chart sheet as provided. The work on a case in particular proved to be an effective method that resulted in particularly good reflections. The case work provided both proximity and distance to the problems, while the individual group and overall staff discussions were less dominated by a discussion and focused more on problem solving.

What does a vision on an inclusive learning community look like in practice? At Fjelltoppen School, the three meetings were followed by efforts aimed at operationalising the vision on an inclusive learning environment into visible indicators, such as: *"At Fjelltoppen School, special needs education takes place in the classroom insofar as pedagogically justifiable"*.

The resource group formulated the indicators before discussing them with staff. This was an important part of providing and selling a vision (leadership role 1). School management expressed clear expectations of a changed practice (leadership role 7), while at the same time trying to facilitate the staff in experiencing a sense of mastery in their work.

Utilising the school's own resources

Teachers and special needs education teachers interested in creating an inclusive learning community are excellent resources for both the school and management. At Viktor's school, management used these resources in a targeted fashion. Parallel to the work initiated by the resource group to assess the school's practice, they also began working to incorporate Viktor in the classroom community. This meant that the team had experiences that could be shared with the rest of the staff when discussing inclusiveness. Knowledge about different methodologies and ICT also became an important asset. Management was also concerned about bringing other relevant competencies to the forefront. Teachers who were not initially the strongest supports of the new inclusive practices had knowledge of digital aspects that were important in an inclusive classroom. This approach enabled management to recognise and acknowledge existing competencies and was an effective measure to *reduce resistance*. Management's search for existing competencies among staff paved the way for a more extensive knowledge-sharing culture than in the past. Experience sharing and discussion arenas were important for several contact teachers to open up for more inclusive practices.

Handling staff resistance

According to Mitchell, an important leadership role involves dealing with resistance. The management of Fjelltoppen School made little effort in terms of counter-argumentation but was more focused on highlighting good experiences and offering support. All processes that involve a change in practice are met with resistance (Skogen, 2004; Sørli et al., 2010). At the school, resistance was expressed during staff meetings, nonverbally through multitasking on computers and other body language, as well as verbally through the expression of views that problematised having learners with severe and complex learning disabilities in the regular classroom. Some of the teachers did not teach classes that included pupils with severe and complex disabilities, so the perceived level of relevance varied.

Management organised discussions in smaller groups, which helped to articulate the views to a greater extent. This made it more difficult to withdraw from the discussions. Resistance was allowed to materialise and was taken seriously during the group discussions, while management monitored the amount of attention devoted to this. Participants of the resource group were deliberately dispersed among the various groups to enable them to contribute their positive attitudes and experiences with an inclusive classroom. When problems or proposals were presented, management took these into consideration and attempted to make changes and adaptations.

Management's facilitation of staff success in inclusiveness efforts

Per is the 6B contact teacher for Viktor's class at Fjelltoppen School. Gry is Viktor's special needs education teacher. Viktor also has two assistants who know him well. Viktor's entire team is positive about Viktor participating in the learning community together with the rest of the class to a larger

degree, but none of the team members has much experience with adapting the classroom teaching to pupils whose learning programme differs so significantly from the regular curriculum.

Viktor's reintroduction to the classroom community did not mean that he would be together with the other pupils all the time. During certain parts of the day, he would receive instruction one-to-one or together with a few of the pupils from the class. The school was in the process of arriving at agreement on the details of the school's inclusive practices, developing and establishing new routines, increasing the competency of the teachers, finding teacher strategies and practicing them.

Although the staff supported the intention underlying inclusiveness, lots of new procedures, routines, competencies and practices needed to be developed and applied by the staff if they were to succeed in practice. Against the background of the resource group's analysis of the situation at the school, there were numerous aspects that the school had to address in order to progress in the process. The headmaster realised that, even if there was a willingness to let Viktor be a natural member of the class, the school had a long way to go to succeed in facilitating this in practice. The leadership roles '*creating encouragement and recognition*' and '*procuring resources*' were important tools in these efforts.

Clear division of responsibilities

"Who is responsible for the content of teaching in classes with pupils who have a special needs education assistant?" asks special needs education teacher Gry. "I manage to plan my daily lessons and sometimes even a bit more, but not all lessons for the entire school week."

The headmaster realised that there was not enough clarification here. She understood that many of the contact teachers already had a packed schedule and few considered pupils with severe and complex learning disabilities as their responsibility. She also saw special needs education teachers doing far more work than could be expected of them. She realised that the non-professionals were given much too much responsibility and felt uncomfortable in the classroom because they did not know what they were supposed to do there or felt like they were in the way. School management decided to prepare an overview of responsibilities for the various tasks involved in an inclusive teaching environment.

Inclusiveness in practice requires clear roles and tasks. The responsibility clarification form created by Fjelltoppen School contains columns for management, special needs education teachers, contact/subject teachers and non-teaching staff (childcare and youth worker, social worker and assistant). It clarified responsibilities for individual subject curricula (IOP), period plans, work plans, collaboration, meeting attendance, coordination, information procurement, contact with parents, and so on. By initiating this clarification of responsibilities, management demonstrated educational leadership (leadership role 7), thereby eliminating uncertainties, concerns and conflicts associated with the distribution of tasks. Through this clarification, management showed that all teachers were responsible for the academic content for all pupils in their classes. The clarification showed that the entire team around the pupil was expected to be involved in the pupil's education and to contribute to the academic and social benefits of the education. For many of the contact teachers, this meant that they had to assume responsibility for tasks that they had previously delegated to the special needs education teachers and

assistants. The clarification of responsibilities also defined management tasks, making it easier for the staff to receive support from management when challenges arose, or things did not work as planned.

Resources – time

Viktor's team spent little time together. It was a practical challenge to get the entire team together, as one of them needed to be with Viktor during the time of the meeting. The other teams faced the same challenges.

“How much time do the teams need together to ensure an inclusive education for all pupils?” Hilde asks the resource group. How can we schedule collaboration meetings so that staff members who do not have time for planning can also attend?

Collaboration in a team assigned to children with severe learning disabilities is essential for the success of an inclusive education, which Michell mentions under the ‘resource’ factor (Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell & Sutherland 2020). The educational objectives and teaching methods must be planned in order for every pupil to benefit, but also to enable the deployment of staff in the best and most effective way. If staff who do not have time set aside for planning and collaboration are to participate in meetings and academic guidance, management must both recognise the need and have the resources available to facilitate this. At Fjelltoppen School, this problem was resolved by having management facilitate a meeting every sixth week to be attended by the contact teacher, special needs education teacher and social worker in order to prepare a six-week plan for Viktor. This plan was coordinated with the plans for the rest of the class and was so detailed that information and guidance could be provided to the non-teaching staff during brief weekly meetings. Management reallocated resources to enable the teams for

special needs education pupils to meet. They expressed an understanding of the challenges entailed in changing practice but showed through this reallocation that they wished to facilitate staff in overcoming the challenges involved in the new practice. Resource procurement is absolutely an important part of the leadership role in creating an inclusive learning community. The headmaster was concerned about the quality of the meetings and that they were assigned a clear theme and fixed structure. Management occasionally took part in the team meetings, enabling them to perform several of the seven leadership functions. By devoting attention to and prioritising time to take part in the meetings, they recognised the work that was done, while at the same time contributing to and ensuring that the content of the meetings promoted the progress of the process. Consequently, they demonstrated educational leadership (leadership role 7), which contributed to the quality of the process. Management gained insight into the problems faced by staff and their experiences in practice. This made it possible to monitor and quality assure the process. It also enabled them to assess the need for competencies and resources and, equally as important, to determine which competencies are possessed by the staff, such as the ability to facilitate inclusive learning.

Resources – competencies

Hilde is in a meeting with Viktor's team. They are summarising their experiences – both positive and negative – during the first few months that Viktor has received instruction together with the class. “I find it very demanding to include Viktor in the academic material,” says Per. “The class curriculum is too difficult for him to follow.” Hilde understands that this is a real issue. Both Per, who is the contact teacher, and Gry, the special needs education teacher,

explain to Hilde that they lack the expertise to assess Viktor's learning possibilities and especially how to organise the instruction to be inclusive.

Viktor's return to the classroom exceeded all expectations. He enjoyed being in the class and appeared much happier and less frustrated than in the past. But a number of questions arose: What was a ‘good education’ for Viktor? What was he to learn? And how was his team to organise the instruction in the classroom? Hilde understood that the need for competencies in Viktor's team, as well as the teams for the other children with severe and complex learning disabilities, revolved around a few aspects that activated the need for both expertise and support:

1. *How can we teach in ways that encompasses all learners in the classroom?*
2. *How can we understand Viktor's challenges and potential? What is realistic – and important – for him to learn?*

Supporting the development of new teaching methods

In an inclusive learning environment, the educational programme/teaching is adapted with the widest possible variety of working methods within the framework of the regular education. Individual adaptations are based on or associated with the class/department.

Initially, Viktor's teachers were more concerned with placement and organisation and less with the academic content. The change in practice began in the middle of the school year and the plans for the class and Viktor's individual subject curriculum (IOP) were anything but coordinated. Management included the collaboration activities in the lesson plan, making it possible to coordinate the class plan and Viktor's plans and providing a point of departure for planning learning activities that included Viktor. The success of an inclusive education demands a high degree of

planning and information flow between various adults in the classroom.

An argument such as “*He or she does not understand what is being taught in the class*” was often expressed when Viktor's school discussed inclusiveness. The school staff required expertise in how to facilitate an inclusive education in practice. This primarily concerned learning practical skills and teaching strategies. School management responded to this need in several ways. They devoted time during staff meetings to familiarise themselves with the teaching methods of ‘peer tutoring’ and ‘cooperative learning’. These are two ways to organise the education that research has shown to be effective, both for learners with severe learning disabilities and learners within the normal variation range. The teachers were challenged and required to some extent to try these teaching methods and share their experiences during the staff meetings. Management also used the internet, municipal network and personal contacts to find literature, courses and schools where the staff could visit. They listened actively to the staff's competence needs and obtained tips and advice from the PPT and Statped. These measures can be viewed within the context of the leadership role of resource procurement. Knowledge and competence are basic resources in an inclusive learning community.

Expectations for the new practice can result in teachers experiencing less mastery or uncertainty initially. Competence in inclusive teaching methods is essential for staff to succeed with physical, academic and social inclusion. The headmaster made every effort to provide every team with enough internal and external support and assistance to succeed. She was aware that if the vision were to create change, the teachers needed to experience a sense of mastery. It was important that not only a few of the staff members experienced a sense of

mastery, but the entire school. *Personal mastery* is one of the five disciplines necessary for a *learning organisation*, in addition to a *shared vision*, *mental models*, *team learning* and *systems thinking* (Senge, 1999). The combination of shared vision and personal mastery makes us *work towards common goals* (Senge, 1999), which is an important aspect of going from re-creation to innovation. A lack of mastery increases the risk of reverting back to old habits and a halt to the implementation process.

School management was very important during this phase. The headmaster and deputy headmaster facilitated the success of the process. They provided awareness, *encouragement and recognition* of the work carried out by the staff, as well as making demands of the staff to develop their inclusive practices. The level of resistance among the sceptics diminished as it became clear that the experiences of Viktor's team and their own personal experiences were positive. As the school made progress with the new organisation of special needs education, they discovered that the time and resources they used to plan the inclusive education also provided them with resources in the form of flexibility in that there were always at least two adults in the classroom. The goal developed to 'become the best school at inclusiveness in the municipality'. As the school developed its practice, it was challenged by the PPT and the municipal authorities to share its experiences with other schools. This created a sense of pride among the staff that increased their motivation to make further improvements.

Management scheduled time for staff to receive guidance from the PPT and Statped. The PPT had limited experience with the inclusive teaching of learners with severe learning disabilities, but was an important collaborative partner, nonetheless. Frequent observations in the classroom made the PPT an important reflection partner. They contributed not only expertise in facilitating the inclusion of individual pupils in the classroom community, but also observations of and reflections on the situation as a whole. Management's prioritisation of guidance during this phase made it possible to address many of the challenges and frustrations experienced during the guidance meetings, instead of them being expressed in anger and resistance during staff meetings (leadership role 6). This was also a way to provide support (Mitchell, 2014) and it gave the staff the feeling that their challenges were taken seriously.

Support in facilitating individual pupils

The learners with severe and complex learning disabilities or who required special needs education were quite different. The challenges associated with adaptation were equally as varied. Management realised early on that the teams needed support and additional competence in order to feel a sense of mastery. It is not enough to simply 'push a vision onto' the staff without helping them to resolve the challenges this brings with it. Management ensured that staff members had the opportunity to discuss their challenges with the PPT and anonymously with Statped. They expressed the desire to have the PPT more closely involved and took issue about both more mapping of the learners and guidance on how the school could improve at adapted assessments. The entire team was expected to take part in such guidance.

Management's need for support in organisational development

"If we were to have done this alone, it would have taken us many years to reach where we are today," concludes Hilde after around six months of intensive efforts to create an inclusive learning environment. In retrospect, they admit that it was resource-intensive to implement these changes, but they thought it was worth it.

Hilde had wanted to make these changes for a long time, as mentioned above, but struggled to get into a position to do so. In many instances, it can be both useful and necessary to receive external support. The PPT has a mandate to work with system-oriented services, making it an important partner in the development of an inclusive learning environment. The PPT has both the system-oriented competence and expertise on pupils who require special needs education adaptation to succeed with inclusive learning. It is precisely the combination of this expertise that makes the PPT an important partner in such matters. At Fjelltoppen School, Statped was involved in the efforts, but this is often not necessary.

The process at Fjelltoppen School shares similarities with the model referred to as the *problem-solving strategy* (P-S) (Skogen, 2004). This model is based on the *need* for change experienced by those working in an organisation. Phase 1 is to define the need, after which the need is defined as a *problem* (phase 2). Phase 3 entails finding *resources*, such as relevant experiences, ideas, information and knowledge. Phase 4 involves the search for solutions and phase 5, the implementation phase, entails putting the solutions into daily practice (Skogen, 2004).

Skogen (2004) highlights the need for access to external expertise in innovation efforts. That external expertise should entail experience with similar problems or change efforts and should first and foremost contribute by informing, proposing and participating in dialogue on the regular participants' terms.

"An expansion of the model in this way can enhance the learning effect and, consequently, enable the development efforts to function as part of the internal qualification to an even greater extent" (Skogen, 2004, p. 55). As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the advantages of external expertise are also supported by Sørli et al. (2010).

For the management of Fjelltoppen School, external support was an important part of the process. All the same, according to the P-S model, the school remained the primary owner of the process. They owned both the needs description, problem definitions, majority of resources and reflections. The headmaster's decision to bring in external assistance can be viewed within the context of the leadership role of '*resource procurement*'. The external support was a resource in that it supported management in the process, contributed a number of tasks to be performed and gave management legitimacy in its own efforts.



Conclusion

This is a success story inspired by real-life experiences. It is the story of a school that developed an inclusive school culture through targeted management. The development of an inclusive learning environment is a process. By carrying out an analysis based on Mitchell's ten factors for an inclusive learning environment, a foundation can be created for prioritising. Focusing attention on the seven leadership roles will help management drive the process forward effectively. Several of the factors and the leadership roles can be the responsibility of management since, after all, an entire organisation culture is to be changed.

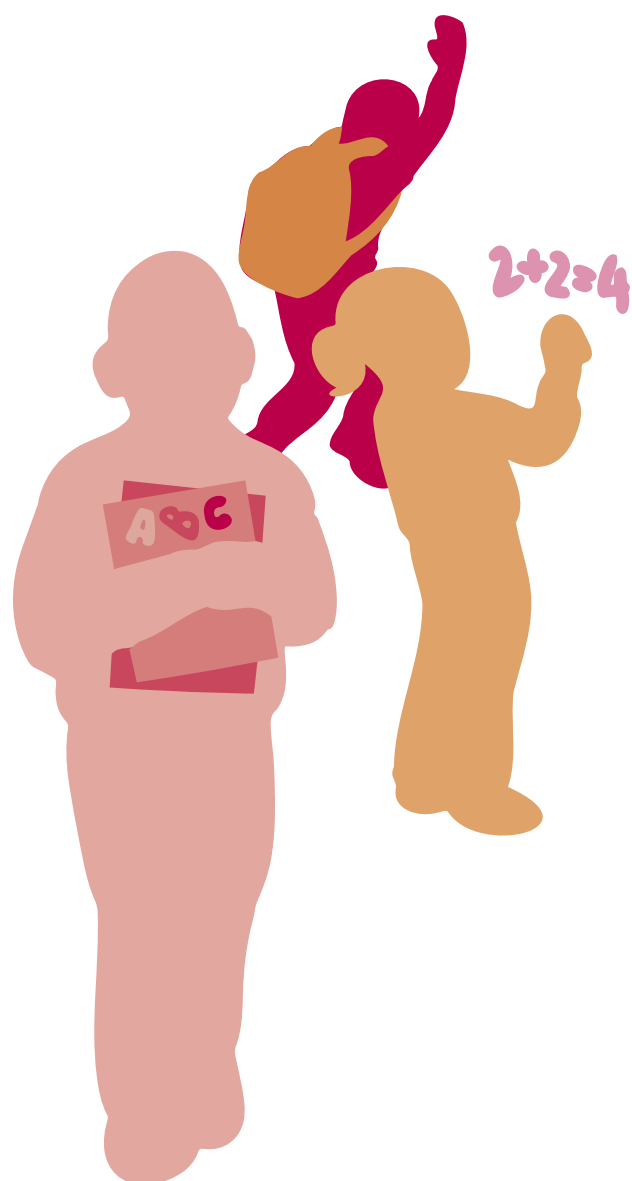
Management promotes an inclusive community by formulating and implementing a vision on this. It is also important to follow up on staff by procuring resources, especially those related to time and expertise.

At Fjelltoppen School, management managed a process that expected change, while listening to staff and providing the necessary support. Management's well-thought-out approach, positive involvement, support and procurement of resources helped reduce resistance within the organisation. Support from management, colleagues and external support from, for example, the PPT, is important for staff. Management in an organisation may also need support. Employees can be important source of support, but it may also be necessary to obtain support through external expertise.

The Fjelltoppen School example shows that school management is of vital importance in the process of developing an inclusive school culture.

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Togetherness in Play and Learning

Special Needs Education in Mainstream Settings



**Change work in
kindergartens and schools**

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Change work in kindergartens and schools

Developing an inclusive community that provides all children and young people with opportunities to express themselves, participate and learn based on their own prerequisites in community with others, is an important task for kindergartens and schools. This requires good learning environments that contribute to learning and development – not only for children and pupils, but also for educators and managers.

To achieve this, scientific literature indicates that kindergartens and schools must have a collective learning culture and base their educational practice on updated research. The three chapters that follow each in their own way demonstrate what this may entail in practice.

Sonja Bjørnbak:

‘The most important measure was to close down the special needs unit’

Sonja’s discussion is based on interviews regarding the importance of knowledge, support, and engagement to change the facilitation of special needs education, from a traditional practice to a practice that ensures an inclusive community for all children in the kindergarten.

“The most important measure was to close down the special needs unit”

This chapter discusses how knowledge, support and engagement can help change the organisation of special needs education, from a tradition-bound practice to a practice that ensures an inclusive community for all children at a day-care facility.

Sonja Bjørnbak

A tradition-bound special needs education practice strongly emphasises an individual-based approach, with a focus on diagnoses and treatment (Allan, 2017; Simonsen & Kristoffersen, 2017). In recent years, this view has been challenged by a practice that emphasizes more on play and learning in the community, inclusive practices, universal solutions and system-oriented approaches (Arnesen, 2017; Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Lundh, Hjelmbrække & Skogdal, 2014; Sjøvik, 2014b).

To find out how a traditional approach could be changed, I interviewed individuals in various positions in a municipality that had changed the organisation of its special needs education for children who require special adaptation. I chose this topic because it underscores the need to shift the focus from an individual-based to a more system-based approach. It shows that, as a society, we are responsible for ensuring that all children can participate in an inclusive community. In other words, it is not the characteristics of the individual child that are to be a barrier for participation (Arnesen, Kolle & Solli, 2017).

For many years, the day-care centres in the municipality took a traditional approach

to special needs education. This meant that the majority of children who required special adaptation were offered a spot at a kindergarten with a special needs education unit. The municipality has carried out a reorganisation in recent years, so that all children are now enrolled in the regular units. It is therefore natural to ask the following questions:

- What was the background for the desire for change and what made it possible to change this practice?
- What kinds of experiences do the municipality and kindergarten now have after this turnaround?
- How can this reorganisation inspire other municipalities and kindergarten that would like to achieve greater inclusiveness?

A committee of ten individuals on both the municipal and kindergarten levels was established to explore these questions based on their views, experiences and knowledge. Interviews were held around three years after the start of the reorganisation after they had been working with the new routines and system for around a year

and a half. The committee comprised the head of the municipal kindergarten director, a counsellor from the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (PPT), an administrator, three administrator assistants, two educational supervisors and two special education teachers, all of whom provided consent in accordance with the Personal Data Act. In the description below, the municipal kindergarten director, PPT counsellor, administrator and administrator assistants are referred to as managers or management, while the educational supervisors and special education teachers are referred to as educators. All of the kindergarten staff members worked at a kindergarten with a special needs education unit in the past and all of the informants had in common that they had been critical of the municipality's approach to special needs education and desired a change. The informants were selected by having the management of the kindergarten ask relevant individuals whether they would be interested in participating and informing them that the intention was to reveal the positive sides of the change.

The kindergarten as an inclusive community

Kindergartens must help ensure that everyone is part of a community (Arnesen, 2017; Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Mørland, 2008; Sjøvik, 2014b). Many children who require special adaptation do not receive the help to which they are entitled because, for example, they are removed from the group community, the adults lack the relevant competence, they are met with low expectations or receive help too late (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Some children are enrolled in special needs education units and may experience a greater sense of social belonging here than in the regular units, but it is an explicit goal that these children also should be included

in the regular community (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, 2019). If kindergartens are well-organised for everyone, this will reduce the need for individual solutions (Sjøvik, 2014a). It is an important principle that all children are included in the community, not only one of the children or a specifically defined group (Sjøvik, 2014a).

These special needs education services are organised differently by each municipality and some still have special needs education units in their day-care centres (Solli, 2017). The services are sometimes experienced as fragmented and with little connection to the other activities at the kindergarten (Moe & Valseth, 2014). For children to experience a coherent and safe daily routine at the day-care centre, closer collaboration and a comprehensive approach within the community of children is needed in kindergartens (Hillesøy, 2019; Moe & Valseth, 2014; Solli 2017). The collaboration between the educational supervisor, special education teacher and other staff members is key to a successful implementation in practice (Mørland, 2008; Simonsen & Kristoffersen, 2017). We often see little to no collaboration between the educational supervisor and the special needs education teacher in the unit. This may be due in part to lack of resources but is also often the result of traditional organisation models and insufficient knowledge (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019; Moe & Valseth, 2014).

The Framework Plan for Kindergartens states that inclusiveness is about facilitating social participation and that the most important arena for this is play (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Play is a lifestyle for children, with its own intrinsic value and of fundamental value (Sundsøl & Øksnes, 2017; Wolf, 2017). It is through play that children experience values that are of increasing saliency in today's society, as well as teamwork, creativity and imagination (Hoven & Mørland, 2014). In kindergarten,

inclusion efforts can help children experience a sense of community, of being 'seen' by others, of being useful to others and of together contributing to the community. All of this is important for a person to experience good quality of life and health (Antonovsky, 2012; Sjøvik, 2014a). By way of extension, efforts to create an inclusive community at a day-care centre can be viewed within a larger framework in which it is clear that this equips children to face adversity and stress later in life. Shared experiences, including play and experiencing joy together with others, help make life worth living. Parent-school cooperation and the cooperation of the child in his or her everyday routine are regarded as important contributions to determining what is needed for the children to thrive at the day-care centre and to facilitate a good playing and learning environment (Franck & Glaser, 2014; Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Moe & Valseth, 2014; Mørland 2008; Nytrø, 2014).

Kindergarten is to serve a health-promoting and preventive function in which well-being, a sense of achievement and the joy of living are among the goals (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Moe & Valseth, 2014). Health-promoting efforts in kindergartens are regarded as increasingly important in terms of system-oriented measures to enhance the quality of life and health of the general population (Green, Tones, Cross & Woodall, 2019). The possibility for children to contribute in kindergarten through their presence and participation in the community, together with the adults and their peers, has a profound impact on them (Franck & Glaser, 2014). Children who require special assistance from the staff can be extra vulnerable to adult control and experience a lower degree of participation (Hoven & Mørland, 2014).

Background for change in special needs education practices

Traditional organisation

In the municipality, special needs education practices primarily entailed enrolling children who required special adaptation in a separate special needs education unit in kindergarten. This unit went by different names, such as a reinforced unit, special unit, base, special needs education group, and so on. In this chapter, I use the term special needs education unit.

It refers to the increased use of special needs education units in schools and kindergartens, although the majority of children who require special adaptation attend regular units (Solli, 2017). The interview subjects stated that they reacted to the fact that the children in the special needs education unit were not regarded in the same way as the children in the regular groups. They said that the children spent much time alone in the group room with an adult, working on different programmes or methods. Some of the children were also enrolled in the regular units in kindergarten to some degree, but staff members were specifically assigned to the special needs education unit. The special needs education units had several small group rooms and an activity room where the children had 'one-on-one instruction' with an adult at some point in the day. Insofar as they also took part in the regular group, the informants experienced that the special needs education children often received either close individual supervision by the staff or were left unsupervised. The educational supervisor for the regular units had little to no knowledge about the child's challenges and the needs for which adaptation was required in order for the child to be a part of the community in a regular group.

The special needs education unit had separate meetings and sessions, as well as

individual supervision and training from other support services. Part of the support was provided to assistants and specialists, who were responsible for applying the methods in practice in kindergarten. At times, much of the training took place in the group room with one adult and one child. However, the informants pointed out that these children were attended to by caring adults with an understanding of the individual assessments, follow-up and adaptation. In their opinion, the challenge was the degree to which consideration was given to how the children learn, play and express themselves together with other children.

Segregation measures

Excluding children from the regular community of children by removing them from the group and placing them in a separate unit is an example of a segregation measure. These children are not given the same opportunity to play and learn in a community, develop different friendships and contribute and experience joy in play with others. Play is meaningful, and children should be actors in their own lives, not an object for learning (Mørland, 2008). Play is universal, and, for most children, play and friendship are extremely important (Hoven & Mørland, 2014; Moe & Valseth, 2014). Play and friendship can be regarded as a mastery strategy for understanding themselves and, consequently, can help give children a sense of coherence in life. The emphasis of the Framework Plan for Kindergartens is on the child's right to participation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). This may mean that, by implementing segregation measures, we deprive the children of their right to participate in both informal and formal participatory processes like play and group activities. Measures or arrangements that are perceived as stigmatising or demeaning for some children should be changed or removed entirely (Sjøvik, 2014a).

The educational supervisors in the regular units stated that they had had too little knowledge about special needs education and felt that they fell short. They gradually began to question the overall vision on learning with regard to children who require special adaptation. They began to ask questions about why these children were not also a natural part of the regular community and wondered how the system could be changed to achieve this in practice. Asking questions is an important inclusiveness tool (Sandmel, 2014). The reason is, among other things, that questions allow for reflection and a critical examination of one's own practice and can contribute to greater openness and a common understanding (Allan, 2017).

Desire for change

Some managers and educators stated that they initially felt that because they had insufficient knowledge about special needs education, they did not dare discuss it or have an opinion on it. One of them expressed this as follows: "Without knowledge, it's difficult to engage in a discussion." Another mentioned wondering: "What am I supposed to think? What's right? The only thing I can trust is research, since everything else is merely opinion." They started asking questions like: "Why are things done like this?" Management experienced that several staff members desired a change and understood that there were other ways to organise special needs education. Some members of management started reading up on the concept of inclusiveness and gradually launched processes in the staff group to bring about change. Management said that they requested system guidance from the PPT and that this support was vital. One of the educators stressed this by saying the following: "Collaboration with the PPT has been essential. And very productive.

It's easier when there are several people with the same views." Collaboration with other organisations is decisive for achieving an inclusive community (Kolle, 2017; Mørland, 2014). Some management members said that they had considered discontinuing the special needs education units in the past, but it was not until the educators themselves proposed change that they saw the opportunity to do this.

"They were missing out"

One of the educational supervisors said that she also looked back on the special needs education unit with fondness: "There were many positive aspects about it; it wasn't like the kids were not taken care of well, quite the contrary. But they were missing out." She said that it was easy to see the progress in the children when they practiced in the private room with adults, who crossed off a checklist as they worked. I asked how this compared to the individual-oriented approach in the past and she responded: "I saw the same progress, the same joy at seeing children uttering long sentences after not being able to say a word when they first started, unable to stop. So, I did not have negative thoughts about this." I think they are many who can identify with this. We can easily see individual progress, but perhaps do not dare to challenge ourselves to try this out in the group. The educational supervisor also expressed the following: "It's nice to have all the registrations, forms and programmes. It's a nice way for us to work. It's also positive that we are monitored closely. The system reinforces itself."

Another one of the educators said that when she worked in the special needs education unit, she began taking more children on a walk in the woods to see if progress could be achieved there. Her experience was that this was possible, but required that progress was viewed a bit differently, perhaps without using the form in the same way as when working on an

individual basis. Another educator stated that he always thought about how the individual goals could be achieved in different ways than in the past. He said that they used small groups more often, which offered new possibilities. Now that extra staff, such as a special needs education teacher and/or assistant, have been added to the unit, it is possible to divide the children into flexible small groups more often. He commented: "Having prior knowledge before the joint meeting can be important, but you don't need to do everything alone. There's a lot that can be done to help children feel like part of the group. We need to consider the big picture." When a child experiences being an equal member of the community, he or she has a greater experience of a coherent everyday life.

The child may experience being dependent on an adult to manage in life. When the child always has a familiar adult nearby, situations can easily arise in which that adult helps a little extra with other things as well (Moe & Valseth, 2014).

For example, there may be a child who struggles to comprehend communication around him or her and therefore requires a little more support. The adult may also remind the child to put on socks when barefoot or to tidy up before leaving somewhere, without pointing this out to the other children who are also there. If this happens repeatedly, the child may have the feeling that he or she is unable to cope with life without the adult. These kinds of situations will also affect the children's understanding of each other and who needs extra help, even when they can deal with this on their own in principle. An educator commented: "I thought that we needed to do things differently here. Obviously, I can't grab hold of him all the time since this may send the wrong signal to the other children." Another one commented: "The child should not be followed by an employee at all times. I think that's the worst approach. We need to secure the system, not the child."

Change and a difference of opinion

Change activities and reorganisations are often demanding processes, especially for management (Bøe & Thoresen, 2017). In addition to enhancing their expertise on inclusiveness, management also increased its competence with regard to managing a kindergarten undergoing a change process. One of the managers said that she had developed a new view of disagreement and explained it as follows: "Disagreement is good for change. Having a difference of opinion forces us to find something on which we can agree." She was particularly concerned that the special needs education field seemed to be difficult to change and that perhaps we would not be able to find a solution right away. The change processes that this kindergarten had undergone were demanding on the staff. Disagreement can arise on the best direction to follow. In some change processes, the price that needs to be paid by one individual may be considered too high to continue the process. If individuals do not experience a sense of coherence and meaning in what they are going through, they may end up in a dilemma in which they have to decide whether or not to continue. This is exactly what happened in this process.

Diversity as a resource for everyone

One of the educators expressed the benefits of challenging the kindergarten staff to use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The educator saw how this benefited several of the children and also emphasised that the entire kindergarten now worked with the same method. If a child needed AAC, it was the responsibility of the entire kindergarten to make sure that this child was understood and could communicate with others, children and adults alike. It is important that everyone considers this their responsibility (Mørland, 2008). All children should feel that they are a resource for the group, that they have

qualities that the group needs and that everyone has the right and obligation to contribute to the community (Moe & Valseth, 2014; Nytrø, 2014; Skogdal, 2014). This also helps the children experience everyday life as coherent and meaningful in that the children's needs are met by everyone and concurrently. The educators pointed out that, in the past, AAC was used by only a few, select adults and in a fragmented manner throughout the day, sometimes only together with one child.

One of them stated that being different offers opportunities for everyone to be more open-hearted and understanding in the unit:

We all have different needs. Some, for example, have to eat more often and we can respond to this by saying: "I know that you're also hungry, but you're going to have to wait a little while. Line needs to eat right now." This teaches acceptance of differences and of the fact that we all have different needs. All children can go through periods when they need a little extra something or other, and this approach facilitates that. The children become more generous and open-hearted as a result.

Turning point

After several years in this field, I have seen practices that can be perceived as segregating. Although they are based on the best intentions, they can lead to further difficulties for the children we want to help. There is reason to assume that these practices are still encountered in various places. An example of a traditional approach may be that we say things like: "Who's got him today?" "She needs a break now." "It's no big deal since she doesn't understand anyway." "The other children need to be protected from that child." Other examples are removing a child from play to work on a specific part of a programme (without considering how this could have been done

in the group), that a child with uncontrolled movements eats alone with an adult because the child needs peace and quiet or that the physical therapist takes a child to a private room for motor skills training, while the rest of the group takes a walk in the woods. We also often see that assistants and specialists are assigned knowledge-intensive tasks, such as the continuous observation of individual children in terms of both special needs education measures and adaptation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

An educator mentioned that the moment she understood that something needed to be done was when a special needs child looked at her and asked: “Who’s got me today?” In this case, the child clearly had an understanding of being different and needing a special adult in order to function together with others. All children need adults, but most children have more alternatives from which to choose and access to more adults. One of the managers said: “The child should not be followed by one employee at all times... I think that’s the worst approach.” In the example above, the child is incapacitated to some extent because she is not given a say in the choice of adults she can reach out to in the unit. It was therefore important for the staff to explore other ways to facilitate special needs education. Several of the managers and educators talked about situations that bothered them and that they gradually began to question. These are experiences that can be defined within the traditional view that entails a child not participating in outdoor play at the same time as the others, who has an adult as his or her most important playmate – in some cases the child’s only friend – or that methods and training arrangements ‘outweigh’ joint activities.

Measures implemented

The interviews show that a series of measures were implemented. Two of the managers said that they searched for a theme that all kindergarten staff agreed was worth pursuing. This turned out to be the importance of play at the day-care centre and the inclusiveness perspective. Other important measures were that the educational supervisor was given primary responsibility for all children in the unit. Collaboration among the staff in the unit was strengthened through joint meetings and joint responsibility for all children. Giving the educational supervisor primary responsibility for all children proved to be one of the most important measures implemented (Moe & Valseth, 2014). The educational supervisor in the unit still has this responsibility and works closely with the assistants, specialists, early education teachers and special needs education teachers in the unit. It is the unit as a whole that is to meet the different needs of all children.

The kindergarten staff began reflecting on terms that we encounter in everyday life in which views on teaching in particular were the subject of discussion. Other measures were also implemented, such as changes to the description of tasks for specific positions in the municipality and wording of measures, educators were enrolled in courses on inclusiveness, the financial frameworks were changed, and the educators were provided with guidance from assistance organisations.

How is the municipal special needs education system now organised?

In kindergarten, they have now spent a year and a half working according to the new model in which the entire unit is responsible for all children. The motto for the kindergarten is that all children are to participate in play and that the staff is to prioritise this in the daily routine. There is no longer any special training for individual children, but children and adults are often organised in smaller groups. Some said that a group can be as small as only two children. Two of the educators reflected a bit on the individual approach. They were concerned about there still being the opportunity to raise questions about the individual approach in discussion and reflections. In units with children with an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), this plan is jointly prepared by the educator and special needs education teacher. The unit staff also works together in preparing joint plans for the unit (weekly plan, monthly plan and annual plan), so that individual needs can be met as best as possible as part of a whole. Achieving a balance between individual considerations and the group is a classic dilemma in kindergartens, and how we define this may affect our actions and reflections (Franck & Glaser, 2014).

The day-care centre staff also reflected on how traditional views were in the process of changing. One mentioned that their work approach affects those who are assigned to work individually with children. An example of this was the physical therapists, who sometimes brought individual children with them to the activity rooms in the past. One manager commented: “How easy is it to take a child with them who is used to participating in the community together with the other children? This might perhaps be easier if done in connection with the activity already taking place.” She also said: “And that requires a different approach.” One of the educators added that the collaboration with

other organisations had changed in that discussed more thoroughly and wondered about how the goals could be achieved without removing the children from the day-care centre community.

Collaboration with the PPT is mentioned as an important contribution, both in the process already completed and, equally as important, in the current collaboration work. They have developed good routines for collaboration in recent years. The PPT visits the kindergarten regularly, offering the possibility to provide advice and guidance, first and foremost on the system level. One of the managers stated that vulnerability is reduced due to more adults in the unit who are familiar with the children. If one of them is on sick leave, there are still several other adults who know the needs of the individual child, which is a significant change from past practice.

Both the educators and managers referred to inclusiveness as a process. They were concerned about not having achieved their goals yet. They reflected on the question of whether this actually is a process with a start and finish or whether it is a theme that will always be of relevance. This is also reflected in the research literature, which describes it as a continuous process, by which successful inclusiveness renders the concept redundant (Skogdal, 2014).

Sense of coherence

In conclusion, in light of the theory chosen, I would like to attempt to shed light on what may have contributed to the joint success of management and the staff members in this demanding change process to develop a more inclusive practice. Health-promoting perspectives are important within all areas of society and theories and research can contribute to greater insight into what it takes for us to master challenges (Green, Tones, Cross & Woodall, 2019). What does it take for people to find solutions for the challenges

they face and experience a sense of mastery and meaning in everyday life?

The theory of salutogenesis aims to provide a better understanding of what promotes good health, life mastery and well-being. The Israeli-American sociologist Aaron Antonovsky developed the theory of salutogenesis as a contrast to pathogenesis (Antonovsky, 2012). The salutogenic model regards health as a continuum and stress as potentially health-promoting. A pathogenic approach, on the other hand, emphasises stress as disease-promoting and focuses on diagnosis and whether the person is healthy or ill (Antonovsky, 2012). The two understandings are not opposites but can be understood as equal and complementary. Antonovsky discovered that our sense of coherence (SOC) helps determine how we handle stress. He points out three components – comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 2012). During change processes, we experience events to varying degrees as comprehensible, i.e., the extent to which we understand what is happening to us. The same applies to manageability, which refers to the resources we have available (on both the individual and system level), and for meaningfulness, which deals with our level of engagement and experience of our actions being meaningful. Every person experience meaningfulness differently and this can entail social relationships, friendship, cultural experiences, spiritual experiences and being a resource for others (Antonovsky, 2012). Experiencing a meaning in events is said to be the most important of the three components and decisive for experiencing that life is coherent. Experiencing a situation as meaningful does not mean that we find meaning in every situation in the concrete events taking place, but that we find a calling or motivation to cope with the stress that it brings.

Knowledge, support and engagement

Management and the educators realised at the start of the reorganisation process that if they were to be in a position to achieve change, they would require knowledge about the following: What inclusiveness really means, the research-based knowledge available and the consequences this would have for their practice. Some management members expressed amazement at how clear the research really was. Among other things, the framework plan's themed booklet on children with disabilities became an important inspiration.

(Mørland, 2008). They gradually realised that, with the knowledge that they had acquired, there was no turning back. Change was necessary and they believed that this was clearly expressed in the mandate for kindergarten. This ranged from everything from human rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, laws and frameworks to parliamentary and research reports. When individuals become more knowledgeable, this can help set in motion processes that provide the necessary strength to achieve change and development. The knowledge they acquired therefore contributed to a better understanding and, consequently, comprehensibility, as one of the SOC (sense of coherence) components in Antonovsky's theory (2012).

Experiencing collaboration and social support from colleagues creates a sense of safety, trust and motivation (Bøe & Thoresen, 2017; Moe & Valseth, 2014). It may seem that those who experience social support are more inclined to experience a sense of coherence in life (Antonovsky, 2012). The manageability component can be linked in this coherence to the experience of support from colleagues, a resource for maintaining and managing the changes.

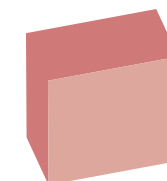
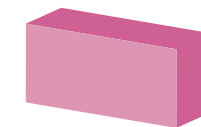
When faced with conflict, change and concerns over time, a need arises to find meaning in the work they do, but, as mentioned above, not everyone defines 'meaningful' in the same way (Antonovsky, 2012). The various interview subjects talked about their commitment to facing the challenges that arise. This commitment, or engagement, has a common denominator, namely the belief that an inclusive community is in the best interest of all children. The central factors of the meaningfulness component are motivation and engagement (Antonovsky, 2012). Experiencing that the work that is being done is important and worth pursuing is a strong motivation factor. One aspect that particularly engaged the interview subjects was how the word 'special needs education' can create a sense of distance: "What is so special about it?" They were highly motivated to change the field of special needs education and the following comment illustrates their drive to achieve a change: "Why can't we change the field of special needs education? Everything is to simply stay the same. That is unfair – especially to the children"

Inclusive community gives personal meaning

What is it that engaged management and the educators to implement and pursue change over time? If a change is to be made, it must feel meaningful enough to foster engagement. The managers and educators said that they found meaning by seeing and experiencing what this meant for the children in practice. They experienced that the children who previously had been assigned to the special needs education unit were part of an inclusive community in a different way than in the past. They were a natural part of the community and there was no longer a distinction. In spite of the educators experiencing that they had greater responsibility and more tasks, they experienced both meaning and joy on seeing the results.

One of the educators expressed this as follows:

It is extremely important that we have a diverse society. It is both exciting and important and enables people to relax and not always feel the need to perform. Everyone has something to contribute to the group. If you are able to learn in a more relaxed setting and have fun, you will also learn more.



Those who wanted to change the special needs educational approach experienced a sense of coherence by strengthening their own knowledge – which helped make the change efforts more comprehensible and they experienced social and professional support through the work – which in turn made the change process manageable and, last but not least, they experienced an inner drive and sense of engagement – which in turn gave meaning. Motivation and meaningfulness in the commitment to the processes appeared to largely relate to the significance this will have for the group of children.



Summary

Three main themes emerged during the interviews: knowledge, support and engagement. The informants recognised the need to strengthen their knowledge of inclusiveness and the views on learning that underlie the choice or organisation of special needs education in kindergarten. Management and several of the educators eventually requested support from each other and the PPT, which laid the foundation for a closer collaboration between professionals. Joint reflection sessions provided many with a better understanding of both what needed to be changed and how they could achieve this. The motivation and level of engagement among both management and the educators appeared to be linked to a belief that a reorganisation would help create a more inclusive community for all children in kindergarten.

The most important steps taken by this kindergarten to change its special needs education practices and the most important driving forces behind the change are summarised below:

- Collaboration with the PPT on the system level
- Positive attitude towards the change on the part of the kindergarten management team
- Clear managers with knowledge of change processes
- Questions from staff members
- Greater knowledge about inclusiveness among all staff
- Collaboration and support among colleagues
- A change to the educational supervisor's role: responsibility for all children in the group
- Collaboration among assistants, specialists, special education teachers and educators on the best interest of all children
- Guidance from other organisations of educators
- Reflection on individual understandings of different views on learning
- Finally, the closing of the special needs education unit

Concluding reflections

In Norway today, there continue to be children, young people and adults who are not part of the community. We are missing out on resources, both human and financial, if we continue to organise the special needs education field in the same way, by which we are more concerned about diagnoses and treatment than the collective knowledge we can develop jointly as a society. Can methods, activities and exercises be implemented in the community of practice in kindergarten? Have attempts been made to make changes, but to no avail? But are there other ways to approach this?

The conclusion is that changes on the system level demand a unified and coordinated effort in which each individual experience having the knowledge that is needed to make changes that are comprehensible, manageable, and consequently, meaningful. Inclusiveness is both a goal and a continuous process. If we are to succeed at making changes, we must dare to test out the inclusiveness perspectives in practice and not give up if the efforts are not fruitful after the first attempt.



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Togetherness in Play and Learning

Special Needs Education in Mainstream Settings



**Change work in
kindergartens and schools**

1.3



Change work in kindergartens and schools

Developing an inclusive community that provides all children and young people with opportunities to express themselves, participate and learn based on their own prerequisites in community with others, is an important task for kindergartens and schools. This requires good learning environments that contribute to learning and development – not only for children and pupils, but also for educators and managers.

To achieve this, scientific literature indicates that kindergartens and schools must have a collective learning culture and base their educational practice on updated research. The three chapters that follow each in their own way demonstrate what this may entail in practice.

Ann Therese Stamnesfet and Tove Theie:

Creating an inclusive community throughout the entire organisation

Ann Therese and Tove use a case study to describe how you can work systematically on changes throughout the entire organisation to develop more inclusive communities in kindergartens and schools.

Creating an inclusive community throughout the entire organisation

In this chapter, we show how we used a working model to structure meetings to enable us to take a systematic approach throughout the entire organisation as much as possible. In this context, we refer to two Statped advisers

Tove Theie and Ann Therese Stamnesfet

The meeting structure we show here can be used by anyone entrusted with the management of a change process. We found our inspiration for this approach in numerous models and programmes, including School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS), The Incredible Years, the LP-model, pedagogical analysis, International Child Development Programme (ICDP) and systematic family therapy.¹ After several decades of working together with the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (PPT), kindergartens and schools, we have developed an approach that our partners have found to be effective. The feedback we received indicates that kindergartens and schools achieve greater effectiveness than in the past in promoting an inclusive practice.

Our experience suggests that it is necessary to be familiar with the practices at a specific organisation before changes can be implemented. Roald (2012) points out that complex challenges are most often associated with situational social, cultural and economic conditions. Consequently, each organisation must perform its own

analyses and find its own solutions. During joint meetings, participants must be willing to explore such dimensions as values, structures, relationships, strategies and the setting. By exploring these dimensions together, the PPT, Statped, the kindergarten/school management and staff can create a solid basis for a joint understanding. To achieve collective competence development and change in a day-care centre or school, an analysis must be performed, and development processes initiated that activate the staff.

During the process of jointly examining the practice and obtaining research-based theory and empirical evidence, the staff is activated and given the opportunity to determine which factors prevent or promote inclusiveness.

Prerequisites for an inclusive community

Nordahl and Overland (2015) suggest that a mastery-oriented learning culture is most effective at promoting the positive development of self-perception, motivation and learning for children and young people in

kindergartens and schools. If we are to succeed in creating inclusive communities in practice, the organisation as a whole must be willing and able to consider all members (children, youth and employees) as equals. This means that there must be willingness, ability and knowledge to organise and facilitate routines and tasks in a manner that includes everyone in the organisation in an effective, appropriate and equal way. This is what we call a universal learning environment, which translates into possibilities and measures that encompass all individuals in the organisation. At kindergartens and schools, this means that the better and more extensive the possibilities and facilities for all children/pupils, the fewer the children/pupils who require special arrangements outside of or in addition to the regular facilities and options (Nordahl & Overland, 2015).

Apart from directing attention to the learning environment, we must have knowledge about change processes. What enables some organisations to succeed in their change efforts, while others use a great deal of time and effort on change activities that do not lead to change in practice? To answer these questions, we need to examine the differences underlying mastery-oriented and performance-driven cultures. An organisation characterised by a performance-driven culture is often the greatest obstacle to the development of talent, ability and the joy of mastery. This type of culture emphasises monitoring, ranking and evaluation, and performing better than others is rewarded (Johansen, 2019). Studies show that children who demonstrate a natural joy of mastery by drawing lose interest in drawing and show a reduced quality in their drawings when their work is monitored, evaluated and ranked.

In performance-driven cultures, a fear of mastery is developed that in turn interferes with creativity and the joy of mastery (Johansen, 2019). The individual-focused performance and ranking culture is destructive for natural human curiosity, creativity and the ability to learn. But, at the same time, it is precisely a curiosity for knowledge, creativity and having the ability to learn that are the most important success factors in the knowledge society, making them the most important factors within an organisation (Johansen, 2019). Nordahl and Overland (2015) point out that Norwegian schools are traditionally characterised by a *performance-driven learning culture*.

Planning and initiating change

When a kindergarten or school expresses the desire to work towards a greater degree of inclusiveness, management at kindergartens or school should establish a working group to assist with planning and implementation. The staff members selected for the group can make or break the success of the change efforts. The administrator or headmaster and head of the department or grade level should always be included in the group. Our experience has been that it can be useful to have a good combination of group members who are resistant to the change and who positively support and are loyal to the change efforts, in addition to the PPT if possible. The working group should always represent management and the educational and assistance group in the workplace.

To illustrate how exactly change is facilitated and how the working model can prove helpful in achieving systematic change, we present a case here².

¹ SW-PBIS, The Incredible Years by C.W. Stratton, the LP-model, Pedagogisk analyse [Pedagogical analysis] by Nordahl and Overland, ICDP and systematic family therapy

² This case description was written from the viewpoint of the staff on how they experienced the situation and the actual results of various mapping methods.

Of the entire student body, 30 percent are enrolled in the PPT and 37 percent of pupils score at Level 1 in reading, i.e., have critically low reading skills. In general, there is considerable unrest in all classroom. The fifth-grade class is particularly restless as a result of two pupils with an ADHD diagnosis who are constantly in conflict with others and many of the other pupils 'jumping on the bandwagon'. Several of the pupils are so anxious that they no longer want to go to school. The school has provided resources in the form of more adults, but without achieving a change. Several teachers are on sick leave due to the situation, others state that the two 'ADHD pupils' should be removed from the school and institutionalised. The point-of-view analysis shows little faith in school management and little shared pedagogical practices.

The head of the kindergarten/school is highly familiar with the organisation when the development/change efforts are to be initiated. The point-of-view analysis provides background information on how the staff experience the organisational culture, management, and various aspects of the pedagogical practice. Together with management's desire for a change, this is a good starting point for creating a joint understanding and laying the foundation for change activities in the working group and throughout the entire staff. In our case, management's desire for a change was based on the poor academic results in reading over time and repeated reports of unrest and challenges in the psychosocial learning environment. Management provides the group with the information gathered in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation. This overview is then used to prepare a work plan for the change process.

What is important for management and advisers in a change process?

The approach taken to process guidance and change activities is important. The type of working model used is less important, as long as it is appropriate for systemising the work and contributes to identifying the factors in the organisation that inhibit and promote the desired development.

The reflections that emerge during meetings with the relevant parties are a

decisive element in changing practice. When we reflect together, we also share knowledge. Asking questions that create joint knowledge contributes to development, knowledge building and a change in practice. It is rarely a shortage of knowledge about the current problems that prevents the organisation from achieving the change it desires. An important aspect of our work is to activate the staff, so that they have the opportunity to share the knowledge they already possess and, consequently, become more aware of the knowledge available throughout the organisation.

There is also rarely a shortage of commitment or visions. The PPT, kindergarten and school management are very familiar with Mitchell, Nordahl, etc.³ But it is often difficult to see this knowledge expressed in practice. There appears to be a gap between the theoretic knowledge possessed by the organisation and the expertise expressed in the actual practice at the organisation. Many years of experience with change and development processes in kindergartens and schools has taught us that the reason for this is first and foremost that the organisation has not set aside time to use or develop good working models that enable them to work systematically with their theory-based knowledge. It is not enough to learn theory about how things are connected; they also need to learn how the theory can be 'translated' into practice within the

organisation. This requires knowledge about methods, forms of communication and testing in practice.

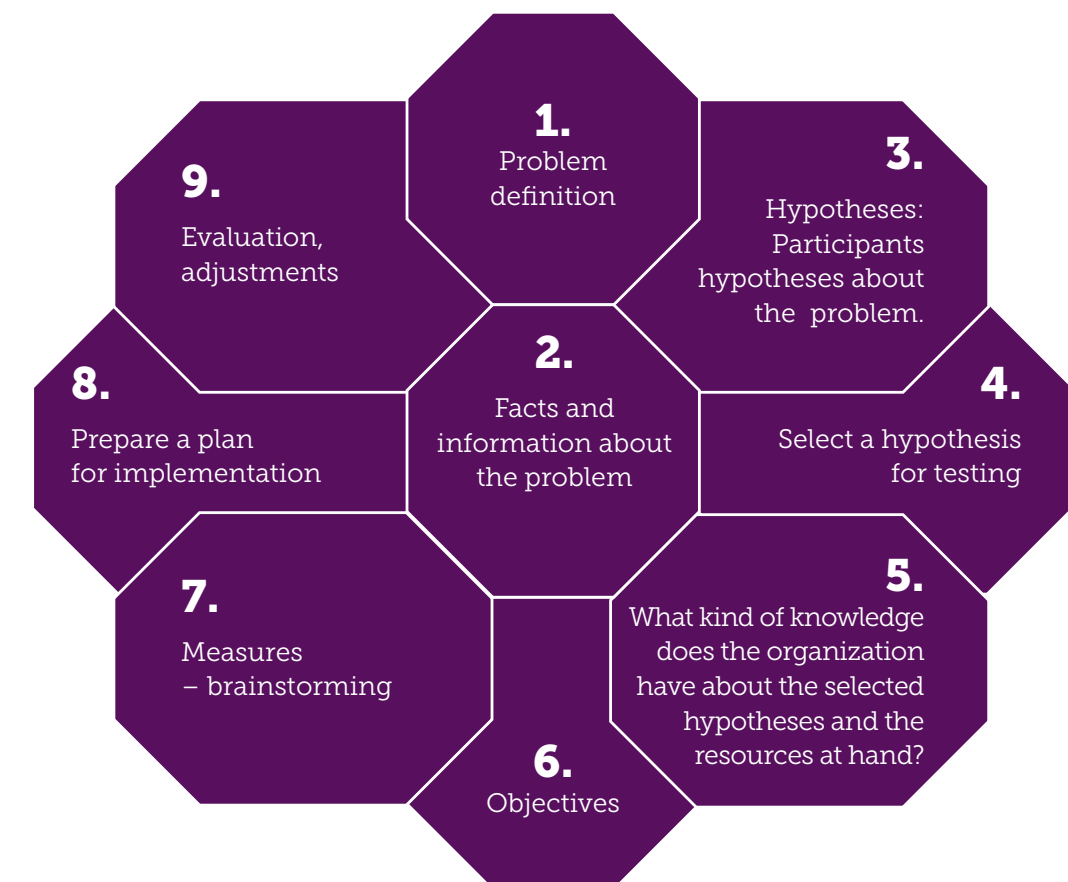
There is also a need for knowledge about how to use the organisation's own data. By data here we mean that organisation's own basic material, such as a point-of-view analysis, assessment tests, pupil survey, national tests, parent survey, the number of day-care centre/school children/pupils enrolled in the PPT, the circumstances of each individual child that must be considered during planning and so on. What does the fact-based information tell us? How can we understand the kindergarten/school based on these facts? This data is necessary to be able to analyse and determine whether the organisation has developed a knowledge-based practice and the kinds of measures that may be needed to change the current practice. By knowledge-based practice, we mean practice based on user participation,

professional knowledge and research knowledge.

When meetings are held to analyse and reflect on this information, the dialogue must have a structure. Many meetings are insufficiently action-oriented because they do not have a clear structure. Those participating in the meeting do not have a shared perception of how to work together during the meeting. It is this shared perception of teamwork that is our focus. Our experience is that a working model in which all meeting participants are aware of the current stage of the process at all times strengthens the opportunity to find effective measures or solutions in each individual case, for a larger group or an internal matter for that aspect.

We will now present the working model in its entirety. We will then examine each of the steps in the model and explain how they can be used during process guidance to promote inclusiveness in a day-care centre or school.

Presentation of our working model



³ See examples of literature in References.

Our objective in developing this working model has been to help view pupils/the group within context and reveal important attitudes and practices that should be considered and incorporated into the efforts. Another objective has been to help our partners experience insight into each other's competencies to a greater degree and, last but not least, to demonstrate the importance of a systematic approach.

A considerable challenge in our work is to get the organisation to translate the theory and discussions into practical actions that will contribute to changing practice. One way of doing this is to link the activities to one or more concrete situations or cases, such as one individual case that is used as an example or a larger situation or case that involves all staff. What is most important is to continuously reveal and work on the actual attitudes and knowledge possessed by staff members involved in the case or situation. This is often the key to achieving change, as the attitude and knowledge of each individual regarding children and learning affects their ability or willingness to follow up on measures as intended. According to Nordahl and Overland (2015), the learning outcome of pupils depends on what the teacher actually does and does not do. This is why it is extremely important to assess the adults' understanding of the problem. To this end, it is helpful to choose a working model that enables reflection on various hypotheses/understandings – precisely in order to reveal the individual's level of understanding.

The entire working group should be trained in the working model selected and be responsible for using it in their own teams and meetings outside the working group. This makes it possible to disperse the work that is done and practiced in the working group to the rest of the staff. This means that the working group serves as both a planning group and group for practicing

and modelling how the organisation is to approach and discuss matters during other meetings. This enables the process supervisor to provide staff with sufficient practice opportunities in using the working model in order to help systemise the efforts, while revealing attitudes, knowledge and measures.

Initial meeting – clarification of roles and expectations

During the first meeting with the working group, the head of the group, referred to here as the process supervisor, clarifies the expectations of the group's work and the participants' expectations of each other. Our experience has been that it is necessary to have fixed and stable groups and meetings. To establish the necessary frameworks, it is essential to ensure that the participants have a joint understanding of the mandate and limitations of the working group: This means determining how much time is to be devoted to the meetings, who is to participate in them, the responsibilities of each participant in the work and during the meetings, and so on. Any uncertainties can quickly cause the change process to derail before it has even begun.

Inner and outer structure

Both inner and outer structures must be in place before the work can commence. The outer structure indicates the meeting participants, where and when the meetings are to be held, a theme plan for the meetings, and the equipment required at the location (computer, flip chart, smartboard, markers, etc.). This creates a sense of assurance and predictability for both the group participants and other staff. A fixed interval between each meeting is recommended, as this provides predictability and enough time to follow up on tasks between meetings.

The inner structure pertains to the relationships between the participants and current processes in the meetings. A sense of trust within the group is important. It is also important to talk about how trust is demonstrated and established within the group.

The inner structure also involves clarifying how and which forms of communication contribute to thinking in terms of solutions. The group participants represent different cultures, have different experiences in life and different attitudes and values. By using a working model like the one shown here, communication in the group can be managed, while at the same time teaching the group participants to listen to one another. The model also helps the participants establish their progress in the various phases of the discussion. In our case, some participants were concerned about finding the cause of the problem, while others began working on measures in response. The model structure and prompts help the process supervisor to visualise this and unite the entire group during the same phase of the discussion. The different phases also provide ample opportunity to explore the various statements and understandings that emerge. We will return to this when discussing the various steps of the model.

As the process supervisor, you collect data (through the point-of-view analysis, assessment tests, national tests, etc.). You rely on theory and refer to research results. You gather knowledge, making it possible to provide staff with a sense of security. You must personally believe that the job you are to perform will help promote a good learning culture and a good learning environment. Together with the working group, you reflect on why staff is to devote time and energy to this. You discuss the role you are to perform and the working models available. Other working models may be preferable. What is important here is that

the process supervisor has a plan for systemising all of the available facts and all of the information that emerges in a case. What is the best way to arrive at a systematic approach?

By reflecting on these themes, you gain a sense of security, which in turn helps you to straighten out your inner structure. In this way, you can avoid being upset by resistance. It is important that we show respect to those who oppose change. However, we cannot accept practices that prevent children from experiencing a sense of mastery or rob them of the possibility of participation and co-determination.

Explanation of model steps using the case presented

1. Problem definition

Based on the data collected and analysed, as well as professional knowledge and research findings, it became clear to management in our case that the school needed to make changes on the individual level (learner level), group level (class level) and system level (entire school as an organisation).

In this case, the staff had a wide range of ideas about the cause of the poor learning environment at the school. Consequently, opinions varied on the joint problem definition. Some wanted to talk about a lack of resources, poor cooperation between the school and home, frequent changes to which staff members were to be present in the different contexts and other causes. Some wanted to start determining measures, while others wanted to talk about how things were done at the school ten years ago, and still others wanted to be done with the meeting and continue in 'their' classroom without having to worry about what was happening in 'other' classrooms.

It is challenging to define a problem that everyone considers worth exploring. It is important to use different techniques during the dialogue in order to activate the group, such as IGP (individual, group and plenary reflections), keywords on sticky notes and circular questions. Circular questions are based on the notion that information is found in differences, such as between experiences or understandings, and that our understanding of such things as behaviour or incidents is based on the context in which they exist (Gjems, 1995). Using circular questions enables the group to focus less on who is to blame and instead on attempting to understand the interaction between various elements in a situation or incident.

Every group will have members that are more active than others. To capture the thoughts of all participants about current problems, dynamic dialogue is essential. Circular questions can help achieve this.

Encouraging staff to tie their thoughts and perceptions to theory helps to 'elevate' the understanding of everyday issues. Regardless of whether the school prefers the theories of example Fullan or Nordahl, the process supervisor should link the school's problems to either Fullan or Nordahl's theory. What does Fullan/Nordahl say about class management, about inspection/supervision, about a school with a focus on mastery and one that is focused on performance? How is this knowledge expressed in practice?

In the case described above, two problems were defined:

- Problem 1: Too much unrest creates insecure and unmotivated learners.
- Problem 2: In general, the school has poor academic results and too many learners struggle with reading.

It takes time for all meeting participants to arrive at agreement on a problem. This requires that they debate, share knowledge and acknowledge each other's views. Setting aside time for such 'sessions', which provide the possibility to reflect as a group on how the problem manifests itself, will enable those present to become aware of the values and attitudes of every individual. Agreeing on the problem is an important prerequisite for succeeding in achieving the objectives set. The Core Curriculum emphasises the development of a professional community (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). To start with a focus on arriving at agreement on a problem based on staff knowledge has proven to be a good first step towards creating a professional community.

2. Facts

The fact box is used to visualise the facts that are important and relevant for the problem/case. These facts may be the number of children in a group, the number of adult educators/assistants, the number of children/classes with an individual plan outside/inside the group, special diagnoses or circumstances in the group that must be considered in various activities and other special information that we believe may affect the situation. The important thing here is that the information is fact-based, not assumptions or 'opinions'. Nor do we consider facts that are not currently relevant for the problem.

Here is an example of facts described by the staff in the above-mentioned case:

- 37% of pupils score at Level 1 in reading.
- 30% of the school's pupils are enrolled in the PPT – primarily due to a suspicion of dyslexia, a learning disability or behavioural disorder.
- 21% of pupils have an individual plan for special education.
- ADHD, reading/writing disability, general learning disability, behavioural disorders
- The classes are characterised in general by noisiness, unrest, ugly exchanges of words and little work being done in class.
- The fifth-grade class in particular has major challenges.
- Several staff members are on sick leave due to the working conditions.
- Several of the pupils do not want to go to school or are fearful of other pupils, refuse to go to school or do not want to be with others during recess.

We use the fact box during all of the subsequent steps. We review this box continuously to check the facts, remind ourselves about what needs to be considered, what we know about these things, what we believe is the reason that '37% of pupils demonstrate critically weak reading skills', and so on. This information is used to correct and challenge the group's hypotheses and knowledge about the problem.

3. Hypotheses

We would now like to highlight participant hypotheses about the problem. Why do they believe this problem arose? In the case presented, the process supervisor asked, "Why do you believe that as many as 40% of your pupils scored at Level 1 in reading?" Some responded that they had many pupils with dyslexia, while others pointed out that they had many 'weak learners' or "It's always been like that". Several said that the school had not been effective enough at teaching reading to first and second graders. Others responded that the parents did not help the learners practice their reading skills. The hypotheses discussed reveal a great deal about the attitudes of staff, including management. It is precisely because hypotheses develop from individual preconceptions that, based on our experience,

is an important way to reveal the actual attitudes that management must address. This is an important foundation on which the subsequent work is to be based, as the achievement of the goals established depends entirely on arriving at a mutual understanding of what is needed to achieve change. If a meeting participant believes that a pupil has poor reading skills because both the learner's siblings and parents also struggled with reading, this offers an insufficient basis to inspire the teacher to change the teaching strategies for this child. This is one of the aspects that must be addressed thoroughly in process guidance. Revealing the hypotheses of individuals and their understanding is essential to this. When a teacher in the case presented claims that pupils disrupt the class and break the rules due to poor parenting, it is difficult to get this teacher to consider his or her own classroom management. The teacher is of the belief that the problem is due to external factors over which he or she has little to no influence. When working with hypotheses, it is therefore extremely important to uncover different hypotheses and to dare to reflect in order to establish what these represent. In cases where the only hypotheses established are those that explain the problem based on conditions outside the

'reach' of the day-care centre or school, it is important that the process supervisor establish alternative hypotheses. What is most important is to uncover at least one hypothesis that the kindergarten/school can actually develop further. In cases in which all hypotheses deal with poor/difficult home situations or biological conditions relating to the child, the process supervisor must be extremely concrete and challenge participants to determine how they can contribute to overcoming the challenges faced. In the case presented here, the PPT presented a hypothesis that weak reading skills led to restless pupils. The PPT challenged the group to determine what staff can do personally to change the conditions that affect the child in order to enable the child to succeed both academically and socially.

Hypotheses presented by the group in our case:

- Poor parenting
- Culture of poor language use in the local environment
- Weak reading skills lead to restless pupils
- Unclear class management
- Many pupils with dyslexia

4. Select a hypothesis for testing

Once the group has submitted a few hypotheses, they (primarily the one(s) who presented the problem/case) select one hypothesis to test. The fifth-grade contact teacher chose the hypothesis about unclear class management. Her initial hypothesis was that the most restless pupils had free rein at home and were never required to receive and follow instructions, formulated here as absent/poor parenting. After the group reflected on the various hypotheses, she wanted to test the hypothesis on unclear class management because she considered this an opportunity to develop and make changes that could affect the class climate.

It is important to choose a hypothesis that the staff feel is worth testing, but this in itself can be challenging. The process supervisor must therefore be able to handle resistance. We must dare to challenge both the group and individuals during the reflections and guide the process towards hypotheses that justify working to change the existing practice. According to Fasting (2018), change must originate from a desire to improve practice and provide the opportunity to try new approaches and solutions. It is important that there is respect for the views expressed during the discussions. This means that we cannot rush things, while at the same time ensuring progress in the discussions. This may sometimes mean that we do not progress beyond the hypotheses of the first meeting. In this case, the process supervisor must be willing to pick up where they left off the next time they meet. As a rule, the participants will also have had time to give some thought to the views of others and will be more willing to consider alternative approaches to the problem. It is also helpful to give the participants assignments in the form of literature or films to read/watch before the next meeting in order to prepare them for the discussion topics to be addressed.

Once a hypothesis is chosen, it is written clearly on a flip chart sheet, smartboard or other display. The other hypotheses are set aside, though it may be relevant to return to them later on.

In our case, the group chose the hypothesis of unclear class management. This hypothesis is to be tested and form the basis for the other activities in the model.

5. What kind of knowledge does the organisation have about the hypothesis selected in light of the problem and fact box?

The fact box and problem definition are easily visible by everyone and attention is directed towards them. A relevant question at this point might be:

"What are your thoughts on this problem in relation to the information in the fact box and in light of your knowledge about the hypothesis chosen?"

In our case, the focus was on class management and the staff members' understanding of class management. Thoughts about performance-driven versus mastery-oriented learning culture were once again a theme. Through reflection, the participants arrived at the conclusion that the school was primarily characterised by a performance-driven learning culture and, consequently, many good ideas were expressed for measures that the individual teachers could implement to promote a mastery-oriented learning culture and class management. The group also pointed out aspects that management should address in order to promote this, such as a shared culture throughout the entire school.

In the case presented, various important elements for good class management emerged:

- Build relationships
- Establish clear expectations for and model the desired behaviour and communication in the classroom
- Be on time and be prepared for class
- Never start the class by turning your back to the class to write on the board
- Give assignments that promote mastery
- Be clear in communication and instructions
- Provide positive recognition of work efforts rather than performance

When the group works on this step in the model, the most important role of the process supervisor is to identify the knowledge already found within the organisation. The more knowledge and competencies that can be identified, the easier it will be to determine effective measures once we arrive at this stage of the process. When the staff starts discussing questions such as "What causes unrest in a classroom?" or "How can we prevent unrest in a classroom?", participants provide good feedback that can also be translated into actions. All important information and actions expressed are written down as keywords. This gradually leads to a long list of possible measures that can be used later on during step 7.

6. Goal

It is now time to formulate a goal for the work to be done. The problem definition, facts and choice of hypothesis are now in place. We have also identified knowledge about the problem within the organisation. This gives us a basis for determining a concrete goal for the work to be carried out. We work towards defining a common goal in the same way as we worked towards a common problem definition. Once suggestions have been provided, it can be helpful to ask the working group a number of questions:

- How likely do you think it is that we will achieve our goal?
- How interested are you in achieving this goal?
- Do you believe we can achieve the goal?

To ensure effective reflection, the questions we ask play an important role. When defining objectives, it is therefore important that we involve several levels: the individual level, the group/class level and the system level. We have experienced that certain types of questions can help activate staff:

- How will you benefit from achieving the goal?
- How will everyone else here benefit from achieving this goal?
- To what degree have we already achieved the goal?
- What kinds of similar goals have we achieved in the past?
- What kinds of experiences, abilities and qualities can help us achieve the goal?
- What has already been done towards achieving the goal?
- Who can we thank for achieving so much progress in this case?

By encouraging dialogue, we demonstrate faith in each other and asking these questions can make it more desirable to work towards the goal and strengthen us in our confidence that we can in fact achieve it. We also want to engage in dialogue that creates a greater sense of commitment. In the discussion that arises when the group takes a position on the questions, the participants will have to ask themselves whether they can trust each other. In kindergartens and schools where children/pupils are referred to as 'mine and yours' instead of 'our' children/pupils, this will be a factor that can make it more difficult to achieve the goal set. Management often discovers that it needs to address attitudes that are prevalent among staff and these efforts will reveal which attitudes inhibit or promote progress towards the goal.

In the case presented, the goal was formulated as follows: *All of our pupils should experience a learning environment that promotes a sense of security, classroom order and the pupils' sense of achievement.*

Through its discussions, the working group managed to establish a common goal that encompassed both of the problems described above.

After a goal is formulated, the next step is often to have staff determine the attributes of the goal being pursued. In the case presented here, it was appropriate for the organisation to establish the attributes of a sense of security, classroom order, and a sense of achievement. How will pupils, parents, and staff experience or recognise these? An overview of attributes of important concepts is essential for later determining the extent to which the established goal has been achieved.

7a. Measures

During this step, the goal is to determine and systemise measures. The staff at kindergartens and schools are good at determining measures. The challenge is to determine measures that are realistic and feasible within the organisation's available frameworks. During the step, measures will often be proposed that require additional financial resources or external support in the form of desired competencies or the desire to relocate a pupil to an external facility. In most cases, the measures are not feasible or are neither effective nor inclusive for the child/pupil concerned. It sometimes becomes clear when working on this aspect that there is much work to be done with a few of the adults' actual attitudes towards the children/pupils with whom they work. This is often reflected in that the measures they consider effective entail involving other adults to deal with the child/pupil, so that they can deal with the rest of the class or relocating the child/pupil outside of the

regular group, either internally or externally. In these cases, we need to return to the hypothesis and knowledge we have focused on in order to more clearly define the kinds of measures that are relevant for the teacher/assistant/management based on the hypothesis selected and knowledge identified and that promote inclusive practices.

An important role for the process supervisor is to challenge the group to consider what is needed to be able to implement the measure, who can do this, how and where this can be done, and so on:

- What kind of support does the pupil need to master the skills the adults expect him or her to master?
- What does the class need in terms of assistance in order to develop a good learning environment?
- What kinds of measures are feasible for the educator to implement?
- What kind of support does the educator need from management to implement the measures chosen?

In our case, after having discussed and examined past practice in similar cases, the staff decided that they wanted to test out the following measures:⁴

- The teacher is in the classroom when the bell rings.
- The teacher is well prepared for the class.
- The teacher establishes and presents clear expectations for the pupils' behaviour and communication in the classroom.
- The teacher prepares new class rules together with the pupils.
- Two 'ADHD pupils' are moved out of the class and offered an alternative education at a farm.
- All adults recognise the desired behaviour in pupils.

It is important that each individual recognise his or her own words and formulations. It is only in this way that we can explore what, for example, it means for pupils to be educated at a farm or that the pupils are referred to as 'ADHD pupils' or how the organisation wishes to visually demonstrate a culture of recognition.

7a. Select a few measures

When the time comes to select measures, the process supervisor must keep in mind that, once again, it is important to emphasise feeling a sense of achievement.

Consequently, it is important to challenge the group to express what measures they believe have the greatest chance of success and can be implemented quickly. In our work, we have started asking the following: *Which of these measures can be implemented this week?*

It is important that only a few measures are implemented at a time. If too many are implemented simultaneously, it will be difficult to evaluate which measures are effective and which ones do not have the desired effect. It will also be difficult to follow up on several measures daily in a systematic way and over time. Our experience has been that up to three measures at a time is feasible. This gives those who are implementing the measures time to follow up on, incorporate and 'automate' these measures, and to evaluate their effect before new measures are tried out. Write down the measures selected in a 'measure bubble'.

⁴ It is important to write down all measures proposed in the staff member's own words, including measures we do not desire. Measures are discussed during this process and, in the next step, measures that enable progress towards the goal and inclusiveness are selected.

The measures that were chosen in the case presented here:

- The teacher is in the classroom when the bell rings.
- The teacher establishes and presents clear expectations regarding the pupils' behaviour and communication in the classroom.
- All adults recognise the desired behaviour in pupils.

8. Prepare a plan for trying out the measure

This is a practical aspect, during which we provide a summary of

- when various measures are to be initiated
- where (in which situations) measures are to be tested out
- how measures are to be implemented and followed up on
- who is to implement them
- how long they are to be tested out

In our case, the plan was as follows:

- Start on Wednesday 23.02.2020.
- Implement measures in Norwegian and English lessons.
- The contact teacher and English teacher are responsible for the measures in the class.
- The headmaster is responsible for providing other staff members with information.
- Evaluate at the end of April 2020.

9. Evaluate

It is important for both formative assessments and final assessment to have grounds for saying whether something should be adjusted along the way and to document what works and what does not in terms of the intention.

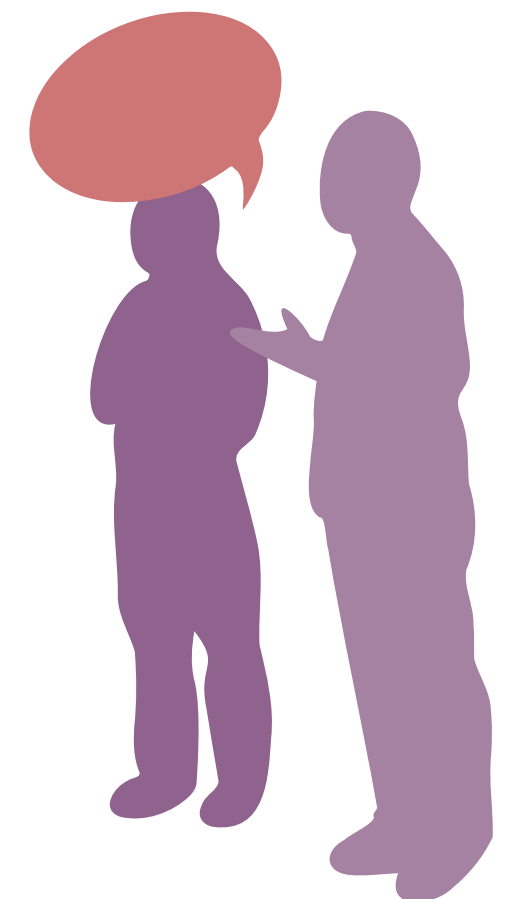
Measures are often terminated too quickly. Based on experience, measures should always be carried out systematically for at least three weeks before determining whether they have the desired effect. Some measures must be tried out over a much longer period of time, but three weeks is the minimum.

A date must be set in the action plan for evaluation.

Conclusion

To achieve a systematic change in kindergarten or school, those who are to drive the efforts forward should have access to working models that promote systematic practices. Having everyone involved in the change efforts be familiar with the same working model instils confidence in each of them. A sense of security and confidence are decisive for the success of an organisation in development and change efforts. In the same way as many educational researchers emphasise a mastery-oriented learning culture, we must dare to assert that this type of culture is also beneficial when adults are to work together to create effective measures for children and pupils. We have attempted to present a method for working together with the kindergarten or school that involves the entire organisation. We wish to conclude by stating that the type of model or method used is not decisive, but that those in charge of development efforts are comfortable with the model or method used and that the process supervisor believes in the approach and works to develop a professional community that determine whether an inclusive culture can be successfully created.

If we are to succeed in fostering an inclusive learning environment for all children and pupils, we need the entire organisation to both desire this and to actually work systematically over time towards implementing attitudes and competences in staff that promote such a learning environment. It is not enough to only work to include children one by one in a larger community. This will improve the situation for a few children but will mean that many other children will continue to be excluded from the community. It is only when the organisation succeeds in promoting a culture that values joint learning and a sense of achievement in which both the organisation and staff goals, values and attitudes are in harmony and reflected in practice that the organisation will succeed in inclusiveness for all. This presumes a learning community in which reflection and dialogue form the basis for creating new patterns of behaviour and changing the work approach (Fasting, 2018).

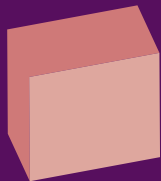


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From a sociocultural perspective, children's learning and development occurs through participation in social communities – where community with peers is of particular importance. Children's participation in learning communities with other children, or facilitation of such participation, is a recurring theme in this anthology. The contributors to this anthology are advisers at Statped with experience from a variety of fields. They account for various approaches founded on experienced-based and research-based knowledge. What they all have in common is that they, through their adviser roles, have worked closely with the field of practice. This anthology shares the experiences from collaborations with kindergartens and schools in the efforts to develop a knowledge-based practice.

The anthology is primarily directed at students and professionals who work in kindergartens and schools but may also be of interest to others.

