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# Learning from Our Neighbours: Inclusive Education in the Making



A School for All – Development of Inclusive Education

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# I. Introduction

The 'A School For All – Development of Inclusive Education' project aims at developing inclusion in schools and teacher education through school-based development work and research, with a particular focus on learners who are vulnerable to exclusion. The development purpose of the project aims at promoting the educational conditions of vulnerable people (such as those with special educational needs, immigrants, juvenile offenders, the Romani population, other groups 'at risk'), improving their access and participation in society in the North Calotte region and North West Russia as well as encouraging their social contacts. The project partners are involved in developing inclusive teacher education in Finland and in Russia, at the University of Lapland in Finland, Murmansk State Humanities University, Murmansk Regional In-service Training Institute for Education and Culture, Northern Arctic Federal University in Arkhangelsk, and the Ministry of Science and Education in the Arkhangelsk Region of Russia.

As a part of developing our understanding of the concept of inclusive education, and for carrying out a situation analysis of inclusive education in the neighbouring countries, the project participants undertook benchmarking visits to Sweden (Luleå), Denmark (Copenhagen), Norway (Troms), Russia (Murmansk and Arkhangelsk), and Finland (Oulu and Rovaniemi) during November 2012 through April 2013. The purpose of these visits was to exchange knowledge and experiences related to inclusive education in research, teacher education, and the everyday practices on the school level.

Six aspects related to inclusive education were particularly observed during the visits: the concept of inclusive education, the legislative basis of inclusive education, teacher education, school practice, learner support, and future development of inclusive education. In some of the countries, certain aspects of inclusive education were focused upon. All participants (Annex I) were asked to write a report on their individual or group findings of the countries and institutions they visited. It should be noted that the group of participants varied in each visit. This report is a compilation of those reports, based on the presentations made in different countries, as well as on the findings and reflections of the benchmarking visits. Additional information is also included in the report so as to ensure that all aspects of the various thematic areas have been adequately covered.

It should be noted that this report does not represent a full picture of the situation of inclusive education in the visited countries. It is a report and reflection of thoughts and ideas that arose as an outcome of these visits. The information

presented in this document should be considered as a merged understanding of the project partners; nonetheless, some of the information has been verified with official country documents and reports. Where information is based on research reports or policy publications, these have been referenced as usual. Some examples and views are based on presentations made by individual researchers and practitioners during the benchmarking visits. In these cases, we have indicated the presenter. Non-referenced ideas and interpretations of our observations are a part of the project process of exploring different aspects of inclusive education. The report has been shared with all the project partner universities as a draft and in its final format to elicit comments.

Many authors suggest that inclusive education cannot be explored out of the context, and that there is no singular definition of inclusive education (e.g., Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006; Alur & Timmons 2009; UNESCO 2009). The context in which inclusive education is being implemented varies in terms of geography, demography, culture, and language. The process of inclusion – exclusion further depends on the complex relationships created through the interplay of individual and contextual factors. Hence, the way in which we perceive diversity in education has impacts on our interpretations of what we observe. The concepts that we use when describing our ideas are based on certain scientific traditions, and these traditions shape our understanding of inclusive education. The groups that are being considered as ‘vulnerable’ or as having ‘special educational needs’ differ on the basis of our understanding of what constitutes the values, principles, and norms related to education. In cross-cultural, cross-border collaboration, the understandings of the nature

of inclusive education and the language we use to describe it is challenging. We acknowledge that certain expressions in Russian or Finnish carry distinct educational meanings that are difficult to understand without a proper knowledge of the context in which they are being used. We also acknowledge that while we use English as the language of communication adopted for the School for All project, some of the deeper meanings may be lost. In this report, we have used concepts that are commonly used by UNESCO – as the leading international organisation for education – and the European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education with a hope that the language of this report will be understood outside the project context.

## 2. Same Concept, Different Understandings

Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006, 14) have divided various definitions of *inclusion* in two main categories: descriptive and prescriptive definitions. The descriptive ones are based on the use of the concept of 'inclusion' in practice, whereas prescriptive definitions refer to our understanding of the concept and how we want others to use it. Descriptive definitions focus mainly on individuals or groups of people, whereas prescriptive definitions relate to wider development issues in our education systems. Further, different stakeholders may see the concept of inclusion in separate ways, thus creating barriers to a coherent change. This is particularly an essential point in international cooperation. With a view of developing joint activities and approaches, we need to look more carefully at the different meanings of inclusive education so as to gain a broader understanding of each partner's thinking. (Ibid.)

The two main categories of the definitions of inclusive education can be further divided into six typologies (ibid, 15–27):

Descriptive definitions:

**1. INCLUSION AS A CONCERN WITH DISABLED LEARNERS AND OTHERS CATEGORISED AS ‘HAVING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS’**

From this point of view, inclusion is seen primarily as education for disabled learners, or for those who ‘have special educational needs’. This approach focuses on a ‘disabled’ or ‘special needs’ part of learners and does not consider the various ways in which participation for any learner may be impeded or enhanced. Following this categorisation-based conceptualisation, the educational support systems are built, thus having an effect on the entire system. Category-based definition also assumes that some learners need to be segregated because of their deficiency or defect, and their education needs to be provided by specially trained, and often additional, staff. This approach often leads to a situation where the learner is an object of educational or remedial interventions rather than a person with his own mind.

**2. INCLUSION AS A RESPONSE TO DISCIPLINARY EXCLUSION**

This refers to learners who have been excluded from the classroom/school because of their inappropriate behaviour. Exclusion is used as a disciplinary measure, and in this conceptualisation inclusion is consequently seen as an act against exclusion. Inclusive pedagogy aims at finding solutions within the school or classroom so that exclusion can be avoided.

### **3. INCLUSION IN RELATION TO ALL GROUPS SEEN AS BEING VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION**

During the recent years, inclusion has been used in terms of overcoming discrimination and disadvantage in relation to any group vulnerable to exclusionary pressures. These pressures emanate from economic, social, cultural, or other such issues in our societies. In governmental documents terms ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social exclusion’ are commonly used. The term ‘social inclusion’ in education relates to groups whose access to or attendance in schools is at risk.

Prescriptive definitions:

### **4. INCLUSION AS DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL FOR ALL**

This view refers to the school development process towards a common school for all and the creation of pedagogical approaches for responding to diverse needs of learners. ‘Schools for All’ nurture a mutually sustaining relationship between schools and communities that recognise diversity, think highly of it, and adhere to inclusive values such as:

- *changing the schools the way that everyone – both learners with special needs and without any needs – can participate and learn there;*
- *all learners can profit from changes when barriers to access and participation are reduced for particular learners;*

- *considering each learner and staff member equally valuable and seeing differences as resources;*
- *schools being responsible for building community, evolving values, and enhancing achievement. (Ibid. 2006, 15–27; Booth & Ainscow 2002, 4.)*

## **5. INCLUSION AS ‘EDUCATION FOR ALL’**

The ‘Education for All’ movement dates back in the 1990s, when major international conferences were held with a view of increasing access to and participation in education. It sets global targets to be applied for specific groups, and inclusive education is seen as a means to reach out to these groups. The global targets have been criticised because exclusion always occurs locally, and inclusive education cannot be implemented in uniform.

## **6. INCLUSION AS A PRINCIPLED APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND SOCIETY**

This viewpoint argues that the values which underlie actions, practices, and policies should be made explicit, and then, that actions which reflect and promote these values should be developed. It is a question of societal reform which is nonnegotiable.

From this point of view, *inclusion* refers to:

- *a process which aims to increase learners’ participation in and reduce exclusion from the curricula, cultures, and communities of neighbourhood schools, by*

*restructuring cultures, policies, and practices in educational institutions to better respond to the diversity of learners;*

- *the fact that everyone has the right to attend, participate, and achieve in education, especially the ones who are vulnerable to exclusion;*
- *understanding that schools are not the only one place for learning, but, rather, the purpose of the school is to support learning in all environments;*
- *seeing parents, carers, staff, and other community members as significant participants in the learning experience;*
- *a continuous process which battles against all kinds of discrimination and exclusion. (Ainscow et. al. 2006, 15–27.)*

Keeping this background in mind, we explored the ways in which inclusive education is conceptualised in different countries through observations and discussions, and to some extent, the perusal of government documents. The findings are summarised in the following subchapters.

## 2.1. The concept of inclusive education in Sweden

| <b>1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled learners/others categorised as having special educational needs.</b>  | <b>3. Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.</b>                        | <b>4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.</b>                              | <b>5. Inclusion as 'Education For All' .</b>  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>There are some special schools (e.g., for deaf learners and learners with intellectual disabilities).</p> <p>Inclusion is seen as a human rights issue.</p> | <p>There is a strong focus on the right to mother tongue (e.g., immigrant learners or Sámi background).</p> | <p>There is a vision to create a school for all – for both learners and staff.</p> | <p>Sweden is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.</p> <p>Sweden has signed and ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</p> |

*Table 1. The concept of inclusion seen by Sweden. Based on Ainscow et al.'s (2006) typology of the concept of inclusion.*

When we look at the concept of inclusion in Sweden through Ainscow et al.'s (2006) typology it seems to be understood there as a concern with disabled learners and others categorised as 'having special educational needs' as much as it is seen in relation to all groups vulnerable to exclusion. In addition there are a few indications that the concept also refers to inclusion as developing a school for all.

According to the benchmarking visit in Luleå, inclusion is conceived from the basis of special educational needs, although it is recognised that these needs can emanate from a range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Special schools are a part of the educational support system. The vision in municipality's schools is to create an environment where all learners and staff are provided great conditions to succeed. This is in line with the inclusive education principles of presence and achievement. Children are also entitled to go to a municipal school close to their home, although it is not stated whether this priority would apply to those who have disabilities or special needs. Based on our observations, there is an emphasis on early intervention. Another aim is to ensure that learners have the necessary language skills so that they can succeed.

Schools for the deaf are justified as a human rights issue, a language issue, and the right to one's own language. Language is also seen as a means to ensure participation in the community; therefore, learning one's own language is considered as an important aspect of inclusive education.

The special schools in Luleå cater to learners who have hearing or sight disabilities, multiple disabilities, or severe language difficulties. These special schools aim to educate learners with special needs on equal terms with others (Ministry of Education and Research 2004). This seems to suggest that special schools are 'equal' to ordinary schools, but one might raise questions as to whether equality can be truly justified by grouping learners together based on their disability.

## 2.2. The concept of inclusive education in Denmark

| <b>1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled learners/others categorised as having special educational needs.</b> | <b>4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.</b>   | <b>5. Inclusion as 'Education For All'.</b>  | <b>6. Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.</b>   |
|---|---|--|--|
| There are some special schools, but their number is decreasing.   | Learners are seen as diverse individuals, and everyone can get support in their own studying group.<br><br>Classrooms are very diverse. | Denmark is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.<br><br>Denmark has signed and ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. | There is a national strategy to inclusion; all learners with special educational needs will be moved to comprehensive schools.<br><br>Inclusion is not only an ideology but a matter of expectations and policy. |

*Table 2. The concept of inclusion seen by Denmark.  
Based on Ainscow et al.'s (2006) typology of the concept of inclusion*

Denmark has the most articulate view about inclusion as a principled approach to education and society in general, as compared to other benchmarked countries in this project. There are also many features of understanding inclusion as developing a school for all. The benchmarking participants concluded that in Denmark inclusion is not just talk – it is actually implemented in the schools. Teacher education has also been redesigned to support the implementation. (Tetler 2013.)

The recent national strategy for the implementation of inclusive education guides the development work in Denmark to reduce the number of learners in segregated special education. This arises from the results in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), which alerted the teachers and policy makers about the need to improve the Danish learners' achievements in the future; diversity is seen as a resource for development, and inclusive education as a means to address the challenges. There is thinking that far too many learners have been in special education and, consequently, have underachieved. Many stakeholders are involved in participating and sharing the responsibility of inclusion; in addition to teachers and schools, national and local politicians, school administrators and head teachers, learners and parents, researchers, interest organisations, and trade unions are also involved. (Ibid.)

All visited institutions in Denmark defined *inclusive education as developing a school for all*. On the school level, each learner's needs are addressed individually, and there is the common purpose to offer the necessary multiprofessional support in learners' ordinary groups. The new practice promoted by the changes in the law and strategy abandons the idea that learners are taken away from the class to another class to get the necessary support – and then brought back to their own class.

New thinking is also emerging in terms of critically exploring whether naming and labelling diversity is necessary. Diversity, disadvantages, and disability are shown in classrooms because they consist of learners from these categories. Learners are in the same groups all the time – only the teachers can be changed every now and then. It is emphasised that it is the environment

that needs to change, not the learner. Both inclusion and diversity encompass social, cultural, and ability diversity.

Inclusion in Denmark is a matter of expectation, and a matter of implementation at scale. Bluntly put, the discussions on whether to have inclusion are finished, and now the question is how to achieve inclusion. It is important to continue discussions about why inclusion is desirable. This change forces municipalities and schools to work systematically to build the necessary capacity to implement the national strategy. Despite the efforts made in the creation of strategies and practical approaches to inclusive education, there are indications that the existing knowledge-base about and experiences of the development of inclusive practices have limited impact and sustainability, hence calling for further concerted efforts so as to ensure inclusion of all learners.(Ibid.)

Despite the inclusion rhetoric, we were reminded that there is a 'flexible limit', even when talking about inclusion. A flexible limit gives an opportunity to arrange the education of certain learners in a flexible manner and in special classes, schools, and at home.

### 2.3. The concept of inclusive education in Norway

| <b>1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled learners/others categorised as having special educational needs.</b> | <b>3. Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.</b>  | <b>4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.</b>  | <b>5. Inclusion as 'Education For All'.</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|
| The system of special schools is largely shut down, but a few of them still exists.                             | All children are entitled to education, including children with different backgrounds (e.g., religious, ethnic, diverse social backgrounds).<br><br>Teachers must adapt their teaching for learners with different abilities and backgrounds. | Most of the time, learners are not divided into groups by their abilities.<br><br>The aim is not to segregate learners with special educational needs.<br><br>Emphasis on changing the environment instead of the learner. | Norway is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.<br><br>Norway has signed and ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. |

*Table 3. The concept of inclusion seen by Norway. Based on Ainscow et al.'s (2006) typology of the concept of inclusion.*

In Norway, inclusion is understood mostly as inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion. However, there are some features (especially in official documents) which indicate the idea of developing a school for all.

In terms of equality in education, it is acknowledged that learners are different, with diverse needs, and that there are

equal possibilities to all learners. From the school's point of view, including all learners in education necessitates processes that ensure that everyone can participate and that attention is given to every learner, no matter what his/her background and abilities are. The inclusive kindergarten and school are based on values. These values are deeply embedded in Norwegian society and expressed in the purpose clause of Norwegian school and kindergarten legislation. This provides the statutory basis for ensuring that schools and kindergartens are inclusive.

According to the Norwegian legislation, inclusion is set as a goal of the educational policy, which means that all learners have access to kindergartens and common schools of high quality regardless of their background or abilities. All learners are met with high expectations. For the educational institutions, inclusion means active consideration and accommodating of individual abilities and capacities. (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2010–2011.)

According to the Education Act, learners in the primary and secondary school have the right to go in their local school. The Act also provides a set of guidelines ensuring that learners have the right to receive adapted education and assisting school staff to decide what educational provision has to be made. It was brought forward during the benchmarking that all learners belong to a mainstream group or classes, but some of their education may be provided in different kinds of groups if necessary.

The overall aim in Norway is to change the environment, not the learner, and it is a way of promoting inclusive thinking and

developing a school for all. Adapted education requires that the teachers have skills to adapt teaching for different kinds of learners. In addition, diverse working methods as well as making the goals clear are important cornerstones to keep learners motivated and to help them succeed. (Ministry of Education and Research 2010-2011.) There is an idea that there must be different solutions for different learners. It was also observed during the visit that because learners with special needs are studying amongst other learners, classmates will learn to approve of all learners the way they are.

## 2.4. The concept of inclusive education in Russia

| <p><b>1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled learners/others categorised as having special educational needs.</b></p>   | <p><b>3. Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.</b></p>   | <p><b>4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.</b></p>              | <p><b>5. Inclusion as 'Education For All'.</b></p>  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Arkhangelsk:</b><br/>There are many special schools and special classes for disabled learners and other learners with special educational needs.</p> <p>Learners are divided by their disabilities; however, there is an aim to maximize their contacts with 'normal people'.</p> <p><b>Murmansk:</b><br/>Learners with special educational needs are placed in different schools, according to the choices of parents. In mainstream schools, groups and classes for children with special educational needs are established.</p> | <p><b>Murmansk:</b><br/>Inclusion is seen as an answer to include, for example, children from unfavourable conditions, families of indigenous people of the North and migrant children.</p> | <p><b>Murmansk:</b><br/>There is a vision to create a school for all.</p> | <p>Russia is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.</p> <p>Russia has signed and ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</p> |

Table 4. The concept of inclusion as seen by Russia. Based on Ainscow et al.'s (2006) typology of the concept of inclusion.

The understanding of the concept of inclusive education in Russia varies between the regions of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, and the conceptualisation is different even between the schools within the regions.

In Arkhangelsk Region, inclusive education seems to be conceived mainly as dealing with learners with disabilities which are related to sensory, mobility, intellectual and speech impairments. Inclusive education in its general sense (as co-education of typically developing children and those with disabilities and special educational needs) is implemented in a number of schools of Arkhangelsk, Severodvinsk, and Mirny. Diversity is addressed by providing environmental adjustments and assistive devices. Learning styles or information acquisition differences did not come out in presentations. In Russian correctional pedagogy (special needs education) the terms 'children with health challenges' and 'children with special educational needs' are used as synonyms.

Educational support system is characterised in the Russian conceptualisation by special schools, and there are special classes in all visited schools of Arkhangelsk. It was also noticed that special teachers are trained according to narrow disability specific specialization. There is a line of thinking that teachers without special education training (defectology) cannot provide qualified support for learners with special educational needs. This might maintain a thinking that support means 'intervention', 'rehabilitation' and looking at difficulties in learning from a psycho-medical point of view. This may further reinforce a perception that 'ordinary teachers' cannot provide pedagogically sound support for learners.

Taking into account the long history of negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities, advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities is a part of all educational activities for inclusion. In one of the visited schools parents of children with special needs want their children to study in the neighbouring school, rather than in a special school. Generally, one of the tasks of the pedagogical staff of schools with inclusive education is to create tolerant attitude towards children with special educational needs among typically developing learners and their parents.

In Murmansk, inclusive education is seen differently in different schools. Whereas, inclusion is seen as early intervention to prevent special school placement, it is also seen as social action to compensate for 'unfavourable conditions' at home (e.g., 'incomplete families', foster families, low-income families, or socially disadvantaged families). In all discussions, it was emphasised that the objective of inclusive education is to socialise and to ensure the full adaptation of the child into the society. There is more emphasis on changing the school system and/or the environment to the needs of the learner.

## 2.5. The concept of inclusive education in Finland

| <b>1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled learners/others categorised as having special educational needs.</b>   | <b>3. Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.</b>  | <b>4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.</b>  | <b>5. Inclusion as 'Education For All'.</b>   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Learners with special educational needs can receive special support in their neighbourhood school.</p> <p>Legislation allows for segregated settings for learners who need support based on 'impairment, illness, developmental delays, emotional disorders, or other such reasons'.</p> | <p>A growing concern is shown in vulnerable groups: learner populations from Romani and immigrant backgrounds, and 'learners at risk of exclusion'.</p> | <p>Recent changes in the National Core Curriculum make reference to the need for school-based development with a view of responding to diverse needs in ordinary settings.</p> | <p>Finland is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.</p> <p>Finland has signed but not ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</p> |

Table 5. The concept of inclusion seen by Finland.  
Based on Ainscow et al.'s (2006) typology of the concept of inclusion.

The school visits in Finland revealed that the idea of inclusion is related to an understanding as a right to receive support in mainstream classes. In some of the classes, a special class and a mainstream class have been merged, and a special teacher and a class teacher co-teach this classroom. Sometimes merged classes can be taught by two class teachers, with regular or occasional support from a special teacher. Special support

includes part-time special needs education in a small group or in conjunction with mainstream instruction.

Segregated special needs education is provided in special classes (often called small-group instruction) in the visited schools. These classes are a part of mainstream schools, but they operate on their own. They are organised as multigrade classes, and the learners have more complex needs. There are also some special schools for learners with high-intensity needs. One example is the visited Tervaväylä School. The learners need special support mainly because of their severe speech and language difficulties, deafness or severe hearing impairment, physical disability and related difficulties, neurological conditions, or challenges related to the various aspects of spectrum disorder.

The observed schools were not particularly multicultural, although there were learners from immigrant backgrounds. Cultural diversity – even in relation to different cultural practices in Finland – seems not to be understood as a factor creating barriers or opportunities for learning.

The development of a ‘school for all’ is realised in different ways. As schools and teachers in Finland are very independent, there can be different approaches to inclusive education even within the same school. While some teachers are developing their practice towards inclusive pedagogy; also very traditional teaching approaches can exist in the same school. The principal of the school has a strong role to play in facilitating or impeding inclusion. For example, if teachers want to co-teach, it is important that they are allocated joint planning time in their schedules.

## 2.6. Conclusion

All of the visited countries attached, at least to some extent, the concept of inclusive education to the concern of learners with disabilities and others categorised as having special educational needs. This observation is not surprising as inclusive education has arisen as a response to the segregation and discrimination of children with disabilities in the 1960s. This view was most represented in Arkhangelsk, Russia. Denmark and Norway, especially, were attempting to remove or reduce segregation of learners with special needs into separate schools and classrooms. In Denmark there are even efforts to get rid of the thought that any kind of diversity has to be named in the first place. This, however, raises some questions. Many researchers suggest that inclusive education is a process of inclusion and exclusion where the barriers to learners' presence, participation, and achievement are being identified and removed. If diversity is not recognised nor acknowledged, how can exclusion or discrimination related to certain phenomena be identified and removed?

The viewpoint of inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion was not found in the benchmarking reports at all. However, it is noteworthy that exclusion might be used as a disciplinary measure. For example, it is worth asking whether all youth who have been incarcerated are at the end allowed and entitled to education. What is the connection between the formal education system and those who are at risk of dropping out? For example, in Finland, despite the inclusion rhetoric, there is an Education Act revision currently being debated; the proposed revision would allow the school principals to decide on temporary disciplinary exclusion.

The concept of inclusion was also attached to groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion, such as disabled learners or learners from diverse ethnic backgrounds, from foster families, and so on. This view is related to the broadening understanding of inclusive education that has gained ground since the 1990s. The broader concept of inclusive education aims at raising awareness of the existing systematic discrimination in education systems of learners with certain ethnic origins (e.g., Romani), language, behaviour, sexual orientation, religion, and certain types of disabilities. Whether this broader conceptualisation of inclusive education is connected with a principled approach to addressing equity and justice in society is a question that has not been raised. In Denmark and in the Arkhangelsk region in Russia, inclusion was not explicitly attached to vulnerable groups.

In most, if not in all of the visited countries, there was a vision to create a 'common school for all' that takes into account every learner's needs. This view was mostly presented in formal documents and discourse and not to that extent in practice. It seems that there is always a gap between policy intentions and implementation in the schools. Nonetheless, there were some examples of good practice, like in Denmark, where there were also some features of understanding inclusion as a principled approach to education and society in general.

Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society can be detected in many of the discussions we had with teachers, administration, and researchers. However, education systems are characterised by complexities and dilemmas. Therefore, rhetoric does not necessarily turn into actions.

### 3. Legislative Basis of Inclusive Education

International conventions and declarations set guidelines for the education systems to ensure the right to education for all children. Important legal frameworks impacting inclusive education are outlined within the UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009) beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and moving to the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity in Cultural Expressions (2005).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and specifically Article 24, is crucial, as it advocates inclusive education. It is argued that these and other international documents: ‘. . . set out the central elements that need to be addressed in order to ensure the right to access to education, the right to quality education, and the right to respect in the learning environment’. Most European countries have signed

this convention, and the majority of these have also signed the optional protocol or are in the process of ratifying both the convention and protocol. All our benchmarked countries have signed the convention, but, unlike the other benchmarked countries, Finland has not ratified it yet.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994) is a collective statement for the development of inclusive education. Although the statement dates back to almost twenty years, it is still a key element in the conceptual framework of many countries' policies. There is a general agreement that the principles encompassed in the Salamanca Statement should inform all education policies – not just those specifically dealing with special needs education. These principles relate to equal opportunities in terms of genuine access to learning experiences, respect for individual differences, and quality education for all, and are focused upon personal strengths rather than weaknesses.

One purpose of our benchmarking visits was to gather information about how the countries translate their ideas based on the international legislation and frameworks in their local contexts. In the following sections, we present the legislative basis of inclusive education in the visited countries in summary tables, followed by discussions based on the benchmarking visits. The tables look at inclusive education legislation through four main aspects: the right to education, the right to inclusive education, the school placement principles, and the entitlement to support. Other characteristics describe special issues or discussions relevant to each country.

### 3.1. Legislative basis in Sweden

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Right to Education</b>           | <p>The right to personal development and learning experiences for everyone.</p> <p>The right to attend preschool class.</p> <p>Compulsory education for everyone aged 7–16.</p>   |
| <b>Right to Inclusive Education</b> | <p>Aim to provide access to equal education for all.</p> <p>The principle of inclusion of every learner in the same school system, regardless of abilities.</p> <p>Schools must create an environment for appropriate conditions to succeed; learners with special educational needs should be treated in the same way as their peers are.</p> <p>If schools cannot provide appropriate support for learners in mainstream settings, they are required to justify why other educational options should be considered.</p> |
| <b>School Placement</b>             | <p>Parents have the right to choose a school for their child, provided that the school meets the learners' educational needs.</p> <p>All municipality schools have a catchment area, and they must give priority to learners living within this area.</p>   |
| <b>Entitlement to Support</b>       | <p>If the learner struggles to complete education successfully and there is a need for special support, the learner is entitled to specialist provision. An action plan is made by the teacher, who consults the learners themselves, parents, and special support teachers for it.</p> <p>Schools must answer to everyone's needs.</p> <p>Each municipality and county authority must provide an educational and psychological counselling service.</p>  |
| <b>Other Characteristics</b>        | <p>The national curriculum outlines the values, tasks and goals, but it does not deal with the implementation. These directives come first, but individual learning needs have to be taken into account.</p> <p>Education is free.</p> <p>Education of the deaf is mainly provided in schools for the deaf, as a means to emphasise the right to one's own culture and language.</p>  |

*Table 6. Legislative basis of inclusion in Sweden*

References:

*Complete national overview – Sweden 2013.*

*Legal System – Sweden 2013.*

## **Commentary**

The Swedish compulsory education system consists of ordinary primary and lower secondary schools, Sámi schools, special schools, and schools for learners with severe learning disabilities (intellectual disability). The last mentioned are meant for learners who are deemed to be unsuccessful in ordinary schools due to their learning disabilities (Ministry of Education and Research 2004). This formulation seems to suggest that there are predetermined limits for certain learners' ability to learn and the municipality schools ability to provide education for all.

All municipality schools have a catchment area, and they must give priority to learners living within this area. However, whether this priority would apply to learners who have disabilities or special needs is not stated.

## 3.2. Legislative basis in Denmark

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Right to Education</b>           | Education is compulsory.<br><br>Children can go to Folkeskolen (comprehensive school), private schools or free schools.   |
| <b>Right to Inclusive Education</b> | Learners study mostly in mainstream schools and receive special education there if needed.<br><br>Schools are expected to provide education that ensures good learning outcomes for all learners while fostering social and educational inclusion.<br><br>Teaching should be accessible for everyone, and different learners' needs and prerequisites should take into account.<br><br>Supplementary education promotes inclusive thinking. |
| <b>School Placement</b>             | Municipalities have to make it possible for every child in the area to go to school.  |
| <b>Entitlement to Support</b>       | If the supplementary education does not respond to the learner's needs then special needs education comes in.<br><br>Schools are obligated to provide special needs education, if needed.<br><br>Schools must differentiate education so that they can offer relevant and efficient education, taking into account learners' development, background, and needs.  |
| <b>Other Characteristics</b>        | Education is free in Folkeskolen (except in private or free schools, where parents must participate with a small payment to the costs).   |

*Table 7. Legislative basis of inclusion in Denmark*

References:

*Legal system – Denmark 2013.*

*Complete national overview – Denmark 2012.*

## **Commentary**

Denmark, as well as all the other benchmarked countries, has signed the Salamanca Declaration, which means that the government is committed to promoting inclusive education. In Denmark, the idea of inclusive education is articulated at the state level and regulated in the relevant laws.

Education is free in Denmark, except in 'free schools'. According to the law, municipalities fund the education system – schools receive social and financial support. The government allocates special funding to schools for teaching learners from recently immigrated families. The Ministry of Education and Research (2004) states that there should not be incurring costs for parents/guardians for teaching materials, school meals, health care, and school transport. These principles support the idea of inclusive education.

The learners considered as having special educational needs are mostly attending mainstream schools where they receive special education, if necessary. However, there are still special classes, special schools, and various combinations between them. As municipalities are required to adhere to the national strategy on inclusive education, they are responsible for ensuring that Danish Folkeschools provide education which ensures good learning outcomes for all learners while fostering social and educational inclusion.

### 3.3. Legislative basis in Norway

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Right to Education</b>           | All children are entitled to attend kindergartens and educational institutions.   |
| <b>Right to Inclusive Education</b> | <p>Learners attend year grades to ensure that their social needs are being met. Some of the instruction may be provided in different groups; usually the learners are not divided into groups based on ability.</p> <p>The system of inclusive education is supervised by municipalities, and the schools receive social and financial support.</p>   |
| <b>School Placement</b>             | <p>All children are entitled to go to their local school.</p> <p>When due consideration for the other learners so indicates, a learner may be moved to a school other than the one that the learner has the right to attend, under special circumstances. Before a decision is made to move a learner, other measures shall have been tried out.</p> <p>Children are not moved if it results in staying in a hostel or if transport between home and school becomes unreasonably long.</p>  |
| <b>Entitlement to Support</b>       | <p>All learners have the right to receive special educational assistance and special needs education when they are unable to benefit satisfactorily from usual instruction.</p> <p>Before the entitlement to special education, there is an expert assessment of the needs. The decision is made by the municipality or county authority.</p> <p>The focus of learner assessment is on the learner's developmental prospects.</p> <p>Learners are entitled to an individual education plan including goals and contents of the special needs education.</p> |
| <b>Other Characteristics</b>        | –   |

Table 8. Legislative basis of inclusion in Norway

References:

SNE Country Data 2012. European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education.

Stensen (2013).

Act of 17 July 1998 no. 61 relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (the Education Act)

## **Commentary**

The Education Act outlines the learner's right to receive adapted education. It is also meant to assist the school staff to determine what educational provision has to be made. The concept of adapted education is ambiguous, as education should always be adapted to respond to the diversity of needs.

The important principles of the Education Act are that primary and lower secondary school learners have the right to attend the school that is closest to where they live. When due consideration for the other learners so indicates, a learner may under special circumstances, be moved to a school other than the one that the learner has the right to attend. Before a decision of a transfer to another school, the school must prove that other measures have not been successful. When necessary, the learner may be moved to a school outside the municipality, but not if this requires the learner to leave home or if transport between home and school thereby becomes excessively long.

Although the aim is towards inclusive settings, the legislation leaves the door open for exclusionary practices. A learner can be placed in a special setting if the mainstream school cannot respond to his or her needs. This might create a situation where learners in the different regions of the country are treated differently. One has to ask also if it is possible that some schools would just resist inclusion and, therefore, be 'unable' to provide adequate support.

### 3.4. Legislative basis in Russia

The Law on Education 1992 and The Federal Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education 1996 set the legislative basis of inclusion in Russia. These laws are frequently updated and refined. The subordinate legislation completes the legal provisions; therefore, different regions, federal cities, and republics have their own way of organising education and this 'subsystem'. (Russian Educational Legislation n.d.) It is stated that education is free of charge to every learner, including the ones with special educational needs. General education for learners with disabilities is organised in especially equipped public schools and in special schools. Orphans, learners with special needs, and other such groups are entitled to state welfare during their education. In addition, gifted and talented learners can get special support. They can, for instance, be placed in advanced classes and schools, take part in academic competitions, and get scholarships. (Basic Principles and Approaches of Education in Russia n.d.)

|                                     | <b>Arkhangelsk</b>  | <b>Murmansk</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Right to Education</b>           | Based on the federal law on education (into effect on 01.09.2013), the regional law on education was approved in the Arkhangelsk Region. This law includes articles on inclusive education and training of people with disabilities. The law stipulates the conditions that should be provided by the municipalities to support education of children with special educational needs. | Each child has the right to available and quality education.<br><br>A new law on education defines two categories of learners in need of support: 'learners with disabilities' (physical disabilities) and learners with limited health abilities (other needs based on neurological or psychological conditions/special educational needs).<br><br>All children have the unlimited right to free education. The law enshrines the concept of co-education and stipulates the possible forms of education for all learners. |
| <b>Right to Inclusive Education</b> | Inclusive education provides equal access to education of all special educational needs which take into account both a variety of and individual opportunities.   | Schools are responsible for creating conducive environment for the realisation of the potential of learners.<br><br>Learners are taught on individual learning paths on a single national standard.<br><br>Learners with disabilities have specially developed programmes (adapted general education programmes).<br><br>In 2012 the Regulation on Inclusive (integrated) Education for Children with Special Educational needs was adopted at the regional level.  |
| <b>School Placement</b>             | Legislation provides the right of parents to choose in which educational institution their child with disabilities will be trained (special or mainstream school).  | All learners have the right to education in their neighbourhood.<br><br>The local school must provide all educational services (including special needs education and rehabilitation).  |

|                               | <b>Arkhangelsk</b>   | <b>Murmansk</b>   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Entitlement to Support</b> | <p>According the new federal law on education, all schools should provide necessary support to all learners, including the learners with special educational needs.</p> <p>Necessary support to learners with special educational needs who study in mainstream schools is provided by methodical centres that exist in special schools.</p>         | <p>The emphasis is on early intervention for learners with disabilities.</p> <p>According to the new Law on Education, the local psychological, medical and pedagogical board makes a decision inclusive education and supports the child and the family during all the stages of education.</p> <p>Resource support to children is carried out by experts of municipal Resource Centres.</p> <p>Special support is provided at the school.</p> <p>Each school has a panel responsible for implementing the individual educational plan of the learner in a class, including interacting with and involving the family.</p> |
| <b>Other Characteristics</b>  | <p>The Russian Federation's new law on education (into effect on 01.09.2013) defines <i>inclusive education</i> and the requirements for its implementation.</p> <p>In the regional budget, there is the article No. 21 'Additional measures for the implementation of the rights of citizens on inclusive education in the Arkhangelsk region'.</p> | <p>Takes into account the regional characteristics of people with special educational needs (including indigenous people of the North, migrant children, etc.).</p>   |

*Table 9. Legislative basis of inclusion in Russia  
Table based on contributions made by the researchers from Murmansk State Humanities University and Northern Arctic Federal University.*

## **Commentary: Arkhangelsk**

According to the Education Law of the Russian Federation, each citizen of Russia has the right to quality education. The concept of 'quality education' means that high-level educational services are provided and all standards set for achievement are met. This applies to everyone who is being educated. However, learners who are categorised as having disabilities or special educational needs follow different standards.

The local legislation provides the framework for inclusive training at comprehensive schools. In terms of equity and inclusion, it is noteworthy that the legislation attaches the right to education for citizens. This may leave out children from families that reside in Russia but have not been guaranteed or do not intend to acquire citizenship.

Based on the observations, some legislation for inclusive education is in place, but the education system is still characterised by special schools and other segregated settings. In this respect, it might be more accurate to talk about physical integration. However, there were some mainstream classes in the schools where learners with special needs are studying. It seems that there are two education systems in parallel for learners with special needs; segregated (special classes and special schools) and integrated/inclusive education.

The medico-psychological committee carries out the assessment for the determination of placement for a learner with special educational need. The committee defines an individual educational route which includes also definition of conditions,

types of support, and assistance of such learner. The parents (or foster parents) of a child with special educational needs have the right to choose the educational institution (special or mainstream) for their child. The decision of the psychological/medical/pedagogical commission is of recommendation nature only.

### **Commentary: Murmansk**

At the regional level, there is a provision for implementation of inclusive (integrated) education in the Murmansk region. Schools can request support from the Resource Centre, as there might not be available specialised staff, such as special teachers or psychologists, to provide remedial teaching and support. The Resource Centre will send the consulting expert to the school to help the teachers in the organisation of support for the learner with special educational needs.

In order to address social disadvantage, the state and the municipality make different provisions, for example by providing meals for learners who come from low-income families and for learners with the special educational need statement. In addition, in boarding schools daily necessities (linens, etc.) are provided for free. Schools can also receive grants from the municipality for specific purposes, for example, on health promoting school to create an integrated approach so that after special class, learners can continue in ordinary classes and other schools.

In Murmansk, the issue of cultural diversity and language tuition has emerged as an important aspect of inclusive education.

### 3.5. Legislative basis in Finland

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Right to Education</b>           | <p>Everyone living in Finland is entitled to free education, but it is also compulsory to all children permanently residing in Finland.</p> <p>Children must be treated equally and as individuals and they must have a possibility of influencing issues that affect themselves – to a measure corresponding to their level of development.</p>  |
| <b>Right to Inclusive Education</b> | <p>All children are entitled to attend their neighbourhood school.</p>  |
| <b>School Placement</b>             | <p>If schools cannot provide adequate and appropriate educational support to a learner in the neighbourhood school, the learner may be provided with special support in a special class in other schools or in a special school.</p> <p>Compulsory basic education may be organised also outside schools. Parents are responsible for ensuring that education provided outside the comprehensive school system meets the learning outcomes set for basic education. Municipalities follow learners' progress to ensure that the adequacy in these arrangements.</p> |
| <b>Entitlement to Support</b>       | <p>The educational support is divided to three categories: general support (entitled to everyone), intensified support, and special support.</p> <p>In the support, the emphasis is on early intervention and the development of school cultures and practices in the form of general support.</p> <p>In order to secure the welfare and personal development of children, the society has a role in supporting caregivers to make it happen.</p>   |
| <b>Other Characteristics</b>        | <p>The National Core Curriculum describes the organisation of educational support and learner well-being services. Local curricula are made by local education providers, and schools develop their school-based curricula.</p> <p>'Learner Welfare Services' provide additional support for learning, physical, mental, and social well-being' at all levels of support.</p>   |

*Table 10. Legislative basis of inclusion in Finland*

References:

*Complete national overview – Finland 2012.*

*Legal System – Finland 2012.*

## Commentary

According to the constitutional law, everyone is equal, and there should not be any difference in treatment on the grounds of gender, age, origin, health, disability, or any other reason, such as sexual orientation, without a valid reason. Children are to be treated on the same terms and as individuals, and, in addition, they must have a chance to contribute to matters related to them. (Complete national overview – Finland 2012.) No systematic differences should be found based on gender, region, or population groups (Finnish National Board of Education 2011). Despite the principles, there are preferred discrepancies in achievement on the basis of gender and geography. Moreover, the availability of services depends on the municipality.

The National Core Curriculum sets the framework for basic education. Education providers (municipalities) design the local curricula. The revision of the national curriculum has been made in relation to support for growth, learning, and school attendance after the changes in education legislation in 2010. (Complete national overview – Finland 2012.)

The philosophy of inclusion is said to be the basis of the basic education system. However, neither the legislation nor any other guiding documents for education mention ‘inclusive education’ as the principle. The legislation still allows for segregated settings as a means to provide support. The stated principle is to support individually the learners so that they can complete their basic education successfully. The new educational support system aims at ensuring that all learners receive the support they need, in a systematic way. The aim is to prevent difficulties

to accentuate by early intervention. The support draws on the RTI-approach with three tiers: general support, intensified support, and special support, including special education and other means of support. A thorough assessment and long-lasting planning with multiprofessional teams are required for the two last mentioned supports. In addition, individual learning plans need to be designed in collaboration with the learner and his/her parents and the multiprofessional team. (Ibid.).

### 3.6. General observations from the legislation

All countries intend to promote inclusive education through legislation by declaring general principles and policies. It is noteworthy though that all countries also make a clear leeway for practices that do not comply with the principles of inclusive education: that is, the possibility to organise education for certain groups or individuals in segregated settings provided that some conditions apply. This kind of legislation is open to local interpretations, even on the school level, about the conditions and possibilities for inclusion. While legislation should have some flexibility to allow for the consideration of local conditions, the articulation for inclusion should be more pronounced.

## 4. Teacher Education

### 4.1. Teacher education in Luleå, Sweden

#### **Structure and the contents of teacher education studies at the Luleå University of Technology**

Teacher education is located within the Department of Arts, Communication and Education, Division of Language and Education. They state in the university that their strengths are leading-edge research, multidisciplinary studies, and close cooperation with companies and society. Teacher education is offered for early year's education, grades 1–3, 4–6, and 7–9; upper secondary school; and supplementary study programme.

The core values of teacher education are integration, participation, power, and empowerment. Actually, it is interesting that the relation of power and empowerment is mentioned as a core value. This aspect seems to suggest a critical analysis of power relationships in the society and cultures; therefore, the core values of integration, participation, power, and empowerment are included across the course content.

## **Special needs education and inclusive education as a part of teacher education at the Luleå University of Technology**

A new form of teacher education was introduced a couple of years ago, including modules of special needs education. The ways in which universities organise special needs education, differ. Every teacher training programme includes compulsory special education courses, minimum of 15 credits. In addition there are several courses which are 30 credits each. More optional courses are available in bachelor degree. Practicing teachers can also enrol to university courses for in-service training. (Gardelli & Alerby 2013.)

Special courses on special needs education are also offered in relation to subject areas such as mathematical difficulties, geography and special needs education, specific learning difficulties and psycho-social support. Issues related to marginalisation and society are discussed: people who have own experiences of marginalisation, disability and such, are invited to give speeches to the student teachers, following the disability advocacy principle 'nothing about us without us'. (Ibid.)

Research focuses on indigenous education and to 'more traditional' special needs education. For example there is ongoing collaboration with Monash University (Australia) on indigenous education. Research methods have been developed, particularly for working with learners on identifying significant learning. On disability, current research focuses on topics of information and communication technologies, communication, and continuing education of learners with acquired brain injuries. (Ibid.)

## 4.2. Teacher education in Copenhagen, Denmark

### **Structure and the contents of teacher education studies at the University College Zealand**

Teacher education in Denmark is organised at university colleges. The objective of the Bachelor of Education programme for primary school teachers is to prepare for the teaching profession and to provide a basis for further training.

Schools are changing to be more inclusive, so teachers must have the capacity to respond to it. Keeping that in mind, the teacher education programme is framed such that inclusion has a role in every subject. Teacher education offer opportunities for student teachers to try inclusive methods in real work during their studies. Further, those experiences must be dealt with along with other student teachers and teacher educators. The student teachers have teaching practicum three times in the four years of the teacher studies in all the selected main (core) subjects, for a total duration of 24 weeks. The schools where student teachers are doing their teaching practicum and the teachers who are supervising them should have positive attitudes towards inclusion. The major part of the teaching practicum hours are organised in programs running over entire weeks. (Emtoft et al. 2013.)

The student teachers' own critical and analytical thinking and the ability to communicate with others are important elements of education in Denmark. This is also reflected in the way in which the students are evaluated through written and oral examinations. (Ibid.)

## **Special needs education and inclusive education as a part of teacher education at the University College Zealand**

How to prepare teachers to teach all learners is a topical question in Denmark because the current teachers feel that they are not ready to meet expectations and demands. The continuing education in inclusive education has been organised slowly as the focus has been in the initial teacher education and the renewal of it. After the recent major teacher education renewal, every Danish teaching student is said to achieve the skills to teach learners with special needs. (Tetler 2013.) We understood that teachers would have qualifications to teach learners with special needs in mainstream schools and classes but not in special schools where some learners with special needs still study.

In the near future, special needs education will be included as 10 credits in teacher studies, for all student teachers. It is possible to choose an additional 10–30 ECTS in the field of special needs education. Many student teachers take special needs education as one of the main subjects. The most important development task for future teacher education is to include inclusive thinking in all courses not only in courses dealing with special needs education. In this way, teachers get knowledge about how to translate theory into practice. Pedagogical skills related to context situated professionalism are important, because it means teachers have competence to change plans and learning situations when needed. (Emtoft et al. 2013.)

### 4.3. Teacher education in Troms, Norway

#### **Structure and the contents of teacher education studies at the University of Troms**

The Department of Education at the University of Troms offers bachelor's and master's degrees in education, inclusive education, and speech therapy. According to the presentation given during the benchmarking visit, teacher education is divided into years 1–7 (primary education) and 5–10 (secondary education). Teachers in years 1–7 complete a Master of Education degree, whereas teachers in years 5–10 complete a Master of Arts degree. The coherent, research-based teacher education with high quality embraces the values of integration and differentiation. Teacher education seeks cohesiveness between subjects, professional education, didactics, and practicum. (Olsen 2013.)

It is essential to prepare student teachers to be able to work in future circumstances ('horizontal expertise'). Further, the focus should be on inclusive, participatory, and multicultural education. Theory and practice are essential to bind up with the help of research and experimenting with knowledge practices. University of Oslo and University of Troms have launched 'Pro-Ted', a project with the main purpose of developing a research-based, comprehensive teacher education. They work in collaboration with partner schools. Pro-Ted carries out systematic experiments in partner schools and for teacher education programs. In addition it acts as a base for research-based, intensive collaboration. (Jakhelln 2013).

## **Special needs education and inclusive education as a part of teacher education at the University of Troms**

In teacher education programs, inclusion is an integrated element. A school curriculum reform was introduced in autumn 2006. Consequently, teachers need to be able to implement inclusion in their daily practice. Education for all, to teach all learners together in Norwegian compulsory schools, is one of the basic aspects of schools in Norway. This is realised by providing equal opportunities through taking diversity into consideration by adapted education. (Jakhelln 2013.)

Training of teachers for the implementation of inclusive education is carried out at the Institute of Education. University students have an opportunity to study a course in special needs education, which includes a module on inclusive education. The 'adapted teaching' module in study year 2 consists of managing diversity, adapted teaching, and learning in primary school (1–7) and the professional teacher and diversity in schools (5–10). Student teachers acquire knowledge about learning difficulties (or differences); learn to understand how the schools can work with diversity and the relationship between adapted education and special education. The aim is to educate teachers who are able to adapt teaching to the learners' different abilities and talents, interests, and sociocultural backgrounds, and to motivate them by clarifying learning objectives and using varied working methods so that the learners are able to achieve the set outcomes. (Ibid.)

## 4.4. Teacher education in Russia

In this subchapter, the structure and the content of teacher education is first outlined as applied to all universities. This is followed by descriptions of the local arrangements in Arkhangelsk and Murmansk.

### **Structure and the contents of teacher education studies**

According to the new Law on Education all teachers acquire a higher education degree. The majority of primary school teachers continue professional learning and get further qualification through distance education.

Each university develops the teacher education curricula based on the state standards. In the curricula, there is both a federal component and a component that can be designed by the university. Despite the differences, pedagogical practical periods, course work, and a dissertation are included master's degrees across Russia.

Teaching practicum plays an important role in teacher education. Student teachers undertake different types of practice throughout the training, supervised by university teacher educators and teachers of schools. The teaching practicum starts in the second study year. At first, student teachers observe the classes taught by the teacher and help in various activities. Later, they plan and carry out lessons and other educational activities – participate in collaboration with parents, that is – and carry out all functions of the teacher.

## **Special needs education and inclusive education as a part of teacher education in Murmansk**

Murmansk State Humanities University, Institute of Psychology and Pedagogy is responsible for teacher education in Murmansk. The Institute was established in 2010, and it consists of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology and the Faculty of Special Pedagogy and Psychology. The Institute aims at creating a regional system of training staff for pedagogy and psychology, and developing and introducing modern technologies. In-service training for education, health care, and social sector staff is provided in pedagogy and psychology. The course Basics of Special Pedagogy and Psychology is obligatory for all students in pedagogical programmes.

At the Institute, the department of special psychology accommodates a Resource Centre for inclusive education. The Resource Centre provides methodological support for inclusive education through tutors who support teachers in schools. Important tasks also include the collecting and sharing of experience, raising awareness of inclusive education, and facilitating interaction between educational institutions.

Bachelor, master, and doctoral programs can be studied at the Institute.

Special education teachers (BEd and MEd level) are trained at the Institute of Psychology and Education in the following areas:

- intellectual impairment
- speech therapy

- special psychology
- special preschool pedagogy and psychology
- psychology and pedagogy of inclusive education.

The degree programme includes general humanities and social-economic studies, general professional studies as well as studies related to subject areas, and elective studies. The subject areas include psychology of persons with disabilities, teaching methodologies, and psychological and pedagogical assessment of persons with disabilities. Elective courses include the regional component of development of innovative educational activities in the Murmansk region (integration, inclusion), courses such as different forms of education for learners with disabilities, socio-pedagogical support, behaviour management, early identification and early intervention, and work with families of children and adolescents with disabilities.

Bachelors of special education have annual (from 1 to 4 courses) teaching practicum at innovative educational institutions in the city and the region.

Students majoring in subject teaching professions can study the course 'Fundamentals of Special Education and Psychology.' The course consists of theories and methods of special psychology and special pedagogy, development categories of learners with disabilities and their psychological and pedagogical impacts; for example, in behaviour, communication, study activities, creativity, etc. It also includes teaching methods of learners with disabilities in integrative, inclusive education settings.

Further, the university also provides an opportunity to undertake studies that prepare teachers to work with migrant and immigrant learners in primary schools and in subject teaching. General theoretical training focuses on pedagogy (for example, multicultural and cross-cultural, individual approach, differentiated approach), ethnopedagogy, psychology, developmental psychology, and basics of special psychology and pedagogy, especially the development of bilingual learners. In elective courses, student teachers can choose courses such as Russian as a foreign language, language didactics of teaching the language in multicultural environment, and social work with migrants and immigrants.

The Institute of In-service and Advanced Training of Teachers also provides courses on special needs education.

### **Special needs education and inclusive education as a part of teacher education in Arkhangelsk**

At the Northern Arctic Federal University, an in-service training programme on inclusive education is available for practicing teachers with a view of enhancing their skills in inclusive education. The focus of the training is on disability-based pedagogy for groups such as learners with intellectual disability or sight or hearing difficulties, and how to teach in an inclusive context. Further, they are also trained to meet the requirements of the new standards and legislation at the university in-service training centre. Participation in various projects also allows teachers to reinforce their teaching skills.

As special schools and special classes in ordinary schools are still in a prominent role in the education system, it is important to ensure that there are specialists available. Special teachers are trained according to specialisation: speech therapy, special preschool pedagogy and psychology, special needs pedagogy, special psychology, and preschool special needs education. Master programmes offer topics such as psychological development of persons with developmental delays, psychology, and pedagogy of inclusive education. Practicing teachers can participate in distance education to improve their professional skills and to acquire qualifications to teach in secondary schools.

Two compulsory courses Bases of Special Needs Education and Psychology and Psychology and Pedagogy of Inclusive Education are included in the curricula of all educational studies.

#### 4.5. Teacher education in Rovaniemi, Finland

In Finland, teacher qualifications and the breadth of teacher education are defined in legislation. All teacher education includes studies in educational sciences, subject studies, general studies (such as languages and philosophy of science), and teaching practicum. In Finland, teachers are trained in the universities, and 13 teacher training schools are affiliated with the Faculties of Education. The teacher training schools are expected to provide teaching for comprehensive and upper secondary levels, supervising for student teachers, teaching experiments, educational research, development and experimentations, and in-service training. All universities design their own teacher education curriculum based on legislation and research.

Reflective thinking is being encouraged, as well as connecting teaching practicum periods and reflection of one's experience. (Lakkala 2013.)

There is also a possibility to study teachers' pedagogical studies in a nondegree continuing education programme. These studies are meant for those who already have vocational qualifications or a master's degree in certain disciplines. The teachers' pedagogical studies lead to teacher qualifications in vocational education and training, polytechnic education, universities, adult education, and general education.

### **Structure and the contents of teacher education studies at the University of Lapland**

The class teacher education curriculum at the Faculty of Education, at the University of Lapland states: 'The aim of the teacher education at the University of Lapland is to educate strong experts of pedagogy and didactic who can work with creativity and flexibility under dynamic circumstances. The student teachers get readiness to cooperate with colleagues and also with interprofessional experts. They are supported to build their own teacher identity and pedagogical theory as well as to develop towards an extensive, exploratory, and dynamic teacherhood' (Autti & Mella 2012 cited in Kyrö-Ämmälä 2013).

Teaching practicum is included in each year of the studies at the University of Lapland. The teaching practicum sessions at the teacher training school are held for three to five weeks. One teaching practicum session is carried out in ordinary schools. (Lakkala 2013.)

Teachers' pedagogical studies in the continuing education programme include theories in adult education, didactics (facilitating learning), guided teaching practicum, and personal learning reflections. At the University of Lapland, the principles of 'blended learning and cumulative learning are being applied in order to increase flexibility, develop multidisciplinary know-how, to use ICT in learning and teaching, to use continuing assessment and evaluation in collaborative processes, to gain learning at work and to work collaboratively in guidance and counselling'. (Koskinen 2013.)

### **Special needs education and inclusive education as a part of teacher education at the University of Lapland**

At the University of Lapland, all students, regardless of their discipline, can study special needs education as minor studies. The 25 credits of core courses focus on topics such as foundations of special education, communication challenges, challenging behaviour, barriers to learning, and school community and lifelong learning. The 35 credits of specialisation courses deepen the knowledge acquired in the core courses, and also include elements of special education research and research projects. These studies aim at providing the student with 'an understanding of the interaction of the range factors that impact learning' in addition to adopting 'a positive attitude towards addressing and responding to diversity in educational situations'. Approximately half of the students in these courses are student teachers. (Väyrynen 2013a.)

In class teacher education (primary education), inclusive education is seen as a cross-cutting theme. Further, there is a

5 credits course on inclusive education. Inclusive pedagogy is tried out in the teaching practicum. In the future, the special needs curriculum should be updated; focus should be on the specific conditions in the North, and education should focus on the interactions of the learner in the environment rather than on 'deficits'. Moreover, the values and practices of inclusive education should be made visible and a reality in the teaching at the faculty. (Ibid.)

## 5. Observations of Inclusive School Arrangements in the Neighbouring Countries

In this chapter, the focus is on the organisational and pedagogical aspects of inclusive education, based on the observations from the visited schools (Annex 2). It is common that benchmarking visits point out ‘best practices’. However, we recognise that ‘best practice’ in one context might not be appropriate in another context (Ainscow et al. 2006, 148–171). We can learn from observations of practice by critically relating the observations to the principles, values, and objectives of inclusive education, bearing in mind contextual differences and the challenges inclusive education is set to address. Therefore, this chapter makes an attempt to highlight such organisational and pedagogical aspects of inclusive education that seem to make sense within the context; it also points out issues that may limit inclusion in education.

## 5.1. Contextual arrangements

### **School organisation**

A key issue in inclusive education is the extent to which schools can respond to the diversity of needs. Notwithstanding various national guidelines, school communities make their own interpretations of what inclusion looks like. In many countries, inclusive education is a stated principle of education, but the legislation or curriculum allow for segregated provision in the form of special needs education, as our examples show.

In Danish education, the basic principle is differentiated teaching. By that, it is ensured 'to give all learners in the Folkeskole the best possibilities for all-round development and learning as much as possible'. The teaching should build on the individual learners' interests, abilities, and needs through common experiences and collaboration. In Denmark, like in Finland, the comprehensive schools are not examination-oriented (Undervisnings Ministeriet n.d.). The provisions of the Folkeskole Act (regarding aims, curricula, evaluations, tests, school leaving exams, etc.) apply to all learners. Accordingly, learners with special needs are, in principle, met with the same expectations as any other learner. Special education provision includes differentiated teaching, counselling, assistive devices, and personal assistance. In most cases, the learner remains in a mainstream school class and receives special education in one or more subjects as a supplement to the general education. However, not all learners are seen as benefitting from remaining in the mainstream class. Therefore, a learner may receive special education that substitutes for learning in the usual education setting in one or

more subjects. A learner may also be taught in a special class, either within a mainstream school or within a special school. In addition, the learner may be a member of either a mainstream school class or a special class but receives education in both types of classes. (Tetler 2013.) The latter examples are more related to integration than to inclusion.

In Norway, the inclusive school and diversity of learners is considered the optimal environment for learning. In order to achieve social inclusion and equal opportunities, early intervention, highly skilled teachers and school administration, ongoing evaluation, and a range of teaching and learning approaches are to be developed in schools. In principle, all special educational assistance and special education should be provided in a form that does not entail segregation of learners. In practice, this means that the school's ability to make environmental and instructional adaptations plays a part in determining the requirements for special education. If the school is not able to meet the needs of the learner, segregated special education is offered. (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2010–2011.)

The Finnish education system makes a similar leeway for segregation by stating that 'special education can be arranged within the usual instruction or partly or fully in a special class or in other appropriate place' (Opetushallitus 2010). Such clauses may promote strategic behaviour in schools in that if the school administration is not committed to inclusion, and, if the necessary resources are not directed towards ensuring that support can be provided within usual teaching and learning environment, schools may continue old practice of segregated

special needs education as an 'easier' option. On the contrary, many schools, especially in the remote, Northern regions, organise special needs education within the usual instruction, as there are no other opportunities available (Väyrynen 2013b).

There are examples of school organisations that aim at inclusive education as well. For example, one of the visited schools, Metsokangas School in Oulu, aims at organising special education within the mainstream education. In addition, learners with special educational needs have some small groups, but the small groups pair together with mainstream classes. In line with inclusive thinking, the school is a multipurpose education centre which accommodates day care, preschool, and basic education service. Local inhabitants are allowed to use school facilities for various cultural activities. Some of the strategies used at Metsokangas School are:

- Co-teaching – teachers sharing responsibility for teaching of the learners assigned to a classroom
- Cooperation and interaction in horizontal and vertical direction – same-age group or mixed-age groups studying together
- Inclusion and integration between special and other groups
- Learners with special needs studying together with other learners in general classroom settings
- Shared leadership and teamwork. (Metsokangas Comprehensive School n.d.)

In Russia the process of inclusive education has just begun, and, in the most cases, it is about integration of learners with disabilities or special educational needs in mainstream education. From the point of view of the process of inclusion, there is thinking that when learners with special needs or difficult family situation study in special classes, they have a lower risk to end up in special schools. Placement in a special class in an ordinary school also allows for partial participation in general education classes. Special classes are also seen as a means to prepare learners to study in mainstream education and to live in the society.

### **Cooperation for learner support**

The importance of cooperation came out in many, if not all, visited schools. Common responsibility is acknowledged, and, for instance, in Denmark it was emphasised that every problem in the school is a common problem, and that the school staff has a common responsibility to solve it.

As societies are changing to become more multicultural, there is a need to identify new ways of intercultural encounters and understanding. Sometimes the challenges in daily encounters can initiate new ways of working, as an example from Denmark shows: A school for immigrants was closed, and the learners were placed in ordinary schools in the neighbourhood. At the beginning, there were quite a number of difficulties regarding the learners' integration into the new schools. The principal in one of the visited schools emphasised that teachers were encouraged and supported to find pedagogical solutions in

the situation. This started an intensive collaboration between teachers, social workers, and parents.

In inclusive schools, it is the environment around the learner that needs to change, not the learner. Although teachers are the key players in developing inclusion, they also need to collaborate with other professionals to ensure that learners get the support they need. One of the visited schools in Denmark had many kinds of solutions to make school more inclusive. In Danish schools, there is a school psychologist and a social worker in school, in addition to specialists of different fields like mathematics and behavioural disorders. They also recruit inclusion counsellors with educational backgrounds, and other counsellors. Their job is to observe teaching and learning in the classroom and to help and guide teachers. They also give a hand if a learner has a bad day. The counsellor can go to a smaller room with the learner to engage in various tasks. In Finland, learning support assistants are often allocated in classes where there are learners who need intensive support in their learning. While the teacher is responsible for the pedagogical aspects of teaching, the learning support assistant often has an important role in helping the learner to succeed in her tasks or in interaction with the peers.

Professional collaboration is encouraged through mechanisms that allow teachers and other staff to discuss problems related to inclusive education practice. In Denmark, teachers are actively involved in such work, but the system is still being formed. In Sweden, at Luleå, a school committee (staff council) investigates the situation and decides on interventions if a learner with special needs faces any kind of problems at school. If needed,

they can seek advice and treatment at a hospital. In Norway, the special teacher, class teacher, and assistant have meetings every week to plan, evaluate, and assess the whole process of learning and the progression of individual learners. They also have occasional meetings with a school nurse. In the case of a more serious situation with a learner with special needs, the school staff committee has a meeting to come out with new approaches in the situation. Norwegian schools also have wide-ranging cooperation between infant school, maternity clinic, child welfare clinic, and child guidance clinic.

In Finland, the Basic Education Act (1998 & 2010) makes provision for the organisation of 'Learner Welfare Services'. These services mean different forms of support to learning, mental and physical health, and social well-being (MoEC 2012). The Learner Welfare Service includes school-based health care and a free, daily school meal. It is also legislated that wide health examinations are carried out on school entrants at grade I, and also on learners in 3rd and 5th grades. In other grades, there is a brief health examination each school year. The services also include free dental care and vaccinations for children under 18 year's age. School psychologist services and school social worker services should also be available in the municipality. However, many municipalities have great troubles in arranging these facilities. Schools may differ slightly in the organisation and functioning of the services, but the goals and tasks are stipulated in the law. In one of the visited schools in Finland, the Learner Welfare Team consists of the headmaster, a special needs teacher, a class teacher, a special class teacher, a school nurse, and a school psychologist. The team gets together every week. In alternate weeks, they only discuss issues related to individual learners

or they go through current common learner welfare matters. When they address personal matters of an individual learner, only those people who are involved directly with the learner are present in the meeting. This is based on the law stipulations (see Personal Data Act 523/1999; Opetushallitus 2010). The Learner Welfare Team emphasises also the cooperation between the school and the families; they organise joint meetings for parents and caregivers, individual encounters, and evaluation discussions with parents and caregivers.

Learner support can also be organised as continuous staff training activity. For example, in Murmansk, in one of the visited schools, a 'pedagogical board' was used to discuss challenges in teaching and daily life at school.

### **Language support**

There is strong evidence that language is the basis of all learning. Adequate language acquisition for learning takes about 5 to 8 years. This equals with typical development of mother tongue acquisition. Further, there is evidence that if the mother tongue is not used, it might be lost in 2 years as a means of thinking (e.g. Cummins 2001). Therefore, language support is seen as crucial in order to ensure learners' participation in all aspects of education.

In Sweden, there is a parallel emphasis on developing language acquisition in Swedish, and maintaining the mother tongue. Sweden, like Finland, addresses the need of developing the language of instruction by providing preparatory education

for newly arrived immigrants in separate settings. This practice ensures that it is possible to respond to learners' and their families' needs in a holistic manner.

Language support for newly arrived learners in Sweden is based on the same regulations and curriculum as in any other Swedish school. However, there is an emphasis on Swedish language, culture, and society embedded in the curriculum, so as to facilitate the integration of learners into Swedish society. In Luleå, about 20% of learners have immigrant backgrounds, but not all of them have studied in the language programme in the Välkomsten School that we visited. The time learners spend in Välkomsten depends on their ability to acquire a certain level of language. It can be something between 3 months to 24 months, but most learners stay about 10 months. The school is multicultural by nature because learners come from different countries, and they have different languages. (Åström 2013.) However, it is interesting that all the instruction seemed to be targeted for the immigrant learners only, and we could not observe any interaction in instruction between the immigrant learners and native learners. From the point of view of inclusion, some questions arise: To what extent do segregated settings promote or inhibit learners' participation in learners' own world? Is language acquisition seen as a means to learners' world as well? However, there is a concern about participation and inclusion. As said, the learners in Välkomsten School come from different suburbs. They do not have many friends, and the only friends might be in that school. When they will eventually go to their neighbourhood school, they might not have established any friendships.

In Sweden, as in Finland, learners are entitled to study their own mother tongue in addition to support in the language of instruction. For example, in Luleå, as the school career proceeds in ordinary schools, parents have to apply for the mother tongue instruction, which is one hour per week. Mother tongue instruction is given in 11 languages. Major languages are taught by university-trained teachers, whereas, for minority languages, it might be difficult to find teachers.

Murmansk has faced an influx of immigration during the past years. This has posed challenges to the education system, as learners might not have adequate skills in the language of instruction for effective learning. The Russian language support is provided by joint work of the speech therapist and the Russian language teacher, psychological support for sociocultural adaptation of immigrant children (the dialogue of cultures) and interaction with migration services and the Centre for testing Russian as a foreign language at Murmansk State Humanities University.

In Luleå, Sweden, Sámi learners can receive Sámi-oriented education in Sámi schools. This education corresponds to the first 6 years of compulsory school. But we were left to ponder does this mean that Sámi-oriented education is not available after the 6th grade? Separate schools for the Sámi population can be argued for from the point of view of protecting indigenous cultures. However, such arguments could be used for other aspects of cultural, religious, or linguistic diversity as well. From the perspective of inclusive education, the challenge is to ensure that learning can happen in the same schools while encouraging and enriching unique characteristics of different cultures.

In Finland, mainstream schools accommodate classes of grades 0–9, where Sámi is used as a medium of instruction. Learners share the same facilities, and they might be taught partly together in certain subjects with Finnish-speaking peers. In some schools, Sámi learners may have practically one-to-one teaching, whereas, in other schools, Sámi groups will allow for peer learning as well. In the Sámi region in Finland, many Finnish learners study the Sámi language as an additional language.

In Russia, the Lovozero School accommodated learners from different ethnic groups, but the medium of instruction was only Russian. Sámi language instruction is provided by the Sámi cultural centre, and it is voluntary for learners and their parents. As many Sámi and Komi families have lost their indigenous language, Sámi language instruction is not seen as necessary. As one of the teachers in the school explained when she was asked about Sámi families' interest in their language: 'Families don't need Sámi as they can all communicate in Russian'.

### **External support**

There are many kinds of collaboration needed to ensure that learners' needs are being addressed. Counselling is given, and specialists are working together in order to help learners, parents, and teachers – basically everyone included in the process of inclusion.

In Norway, specialist support is available when needed. The educational and psychological counselling service (PPT) is called in for a meeting when advice is needed in the matters of speech

and language disorders, specific difficulties with subjects (e.g., reading, mathematics), hearing impairment, visual impairment, intellectual disability, behaviour disorder, multiple disabilities, and learning environment. PPT can make a referral to special education resource centres to help municipalities and schools. Intensive social or psychological support can be also obtained from the Child Welfare Agency or Psychological Health System. (Stensen 2013.) In the process of educational support, a dialogue with parents is important; parents meet with the teacher and the special teacher two times in a year. Parents can also express the concerns of their child and have contact with school personnel and/or PPT.

In Denmark, the National Resource Centre and organised counselling services support municipalities and school staff to increase inclusion in everyday practices. They provide knowledge based on many research programs and projects concerning inclusion. The staff in schools, head teachers, local supervisors in municipalities, and teacher teams benefit from the Resource Centre.

In Murmansk, the Federal Centre of Distance Education for Learners with Disabilities provides educational opportunities for learners with special educational needs through distance education. Some learners study in distance at home according to their individual plans, but they still belong to a municipality school. The Resource Centre also provides support to the school in terms of adaptations, specific skills practice, the use of assistive devices, etc. Murmansk State Humanities University arranges further education courses for teachers working in the Distance Education Centre.

The Resource Centre in Arkhangelsk provides support through versatile activities. The school provides advice on curriculum implementation, and it publishes resource books, such as how to work with learners who have severe intellectual impairments. There is also cooperation with school administration, school nurse, speech therapist, and social teacher. Besides pedagogical counselling and support for parents and teachers, the Arkhangelsk Resource Centre carries out medical and psychological assessment. Based on the assessment, various interventions may be carried out within the Centre. The psychologist of the Centre works with parents in close cooperation, mostly counselling and providing information. The social teachers in Arkhangelsk help the pedagogical staff to create an appropriate learning environment for every learner, especially for learners with physical impairments. Social teachers also make observations of behavioural difficulties and learning skills.

It seems that special schools are slowly becoming a resource for ordinary schools, especially in the creation of a network of support in special classes. Special schools are the resource centres for the organisation of inclusive training at mainstream schools, and they actively cooperate with teachers of educational institutions. In those schools where there are special classes, there are some joint activities by learners in special and mainstream classes. If a learner with special educational needs educational support in class, not every school in the Arkhangelsk region can provide necessary support appropriately yet. However, the school can call in the Resource Centre which can support to the learner.

In Russia, educational support is largely built on the expertise of the specialists. There are specialists from different fields, and

they cooperate and work with parents and learners who have difficulties or a need of special support. The impression is that most support is provided by the specialised staff, and teachers' engage mainly with academic aspects of learning.

In Finland, most of the specialist support to schools is provided by the municipality special needs education services. Municipalities may organise the support services independently, ensuring that the provisions stipulated in the Education Act are available. Some municipalities recruit only itinerant special teachers and purchase other services outside. This is the case in the small municipalities in Lapland. In larger towns, many special schools have been converted into resource centres while they have also maintained their previous role as special schools for learners with severe impairments and needs. We visited the Tervaväylä School in Oulu, which is one of these schools. The school focuses on supportive rehabilitation, care, and support services so as to enhance the opportunities of learners with intensive needs to study in their neighbourhood schools. The Resource Centre carries out development work and research, and produces new learning materials and literature. The school caters to all of Finland, although most of the learner-based services are directed to learners from Northern Finland. (Tervaväylä oppimis- ja ohjauskeskus n.d.)

## 5.2. Practices for inclusion

### **Teaching methods and changing school culture**

Countries and different education systems vary inasmuch as the curriculum directs the use of different teaching methods. In Finland, for example, the curriculum outlines only the principles of teaching, and teachers can choose their own methods based on these principles. Teaching methods have a significant role in the implementation of inclusive education, and they should be in line with the principles of inclusive education.

The teaching profession is traditionally solitary work in all the visited countries, and the tradition can be still observed. There are many teachers in schools who are used to working alone, just doing their job and getting home. Independence does not apply only to teaching but also in the ways in which teachers relate to each other. In Denmark, we reflected on the fact that it has not been common to try to find solutions to difficult situation through discussions between teachers, special teachers, and principals. If there has been a problem, for example a learner who is faced with some kind of a problem, the solution has been to take the problem, that is, the learner, out of the class.

In inclusive schools, the focus is on differentiating teaching and learning. In Norway, adapted education refers to a range of measures introduced by the school to ensure their learners profit as much as possible from education. These may relate to the organisation of teaching, educational methods, and progression. As the school's primary function is to provide an arena for learning together, adapted education is about finding a balance between each learner's abilities and the entire classroom/school

community. (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2010–2011.) In Finland, ‘differentiation’ is considered as the most important aspect of ensuring learning of all learners in their own age-group class. Differentiation can be targeted to content, methods, outcomes, time to be dedicated for certain aspects of learning, classroom organisation, etc. (National Core Curriculum 2010.) In international literature, this approach is often referred to as ‘curriculum differentiation’, or ‘Universal Design for Learning’ (UDL).

### **Co-teaching**

Despite the strong solitary tradition, it was encouraging to observe that co-teaching is increasingly taking place. It is a form of teachers’ cooperation in which usually a teacher and a special teacher are teaching a heterogeneous class together at the same time. Co-teaching consists of four factors. First, it is a teaching form for two or more teachers. Second, both teachers must participate actively. The third condition is that the group is heterogeneous. Lastly, teaching must occur in the same physical facility even though the group can sometimes be differentiated to smaller groups. (Cook and Friend 1995, cited in Ahtiainen, Beirad, Hautamäki, Hilasvuori, and Thuneberg 2011, 17–18.)

Co-teaching can be formed in many ways. Ahtiainen et al. (2011, 21–24) have divided the action of co-teaching into six forms:

- *Alternate leading and supporting*  
One teacher takes charge and the other one observes and helps. These roles are changed once

in a while, either during a lesson or where one teacher is the leading teacher in some subjects and the other teacher leads in some other subjects. The main point is that the leading roles are divided equally.

- *Parallel teaching*  
Learners are divided into two heterogeneous same-sized groups in the classroom, and both teachers teach the same content to the learners. Moreover, the teachers have planned together what they are going to teach.
- *Station teaching*  
Learners move from one working station to another, where the teachers teach their own parts.
- *Alternative teaching form*  
One teacher teaches a big group, and the other one teaches a small group. Usually the smaller group focuses on revising and enriching the contents taught earlier or anticipates the contents to come. It is important to vary which learners are in the smaller group so that no one becomes labelled by it.
- *Flexible grouping*  
Learners are divided to groups by their skills and need of support, but the grouping must be kept flexible; the group compositions and teachers' roles should alternate from time to time.

- *Team teaching*  
Both teachers actively participate during the lesson, for example, while one speaks, the other one demonstrates, adds information, asks questions, presents a problem, enlivens the topic, and so forth. The teachers take turns flexibly, depending on the situation. This co-teaching form is the most challenging, and it requires a lot of experience to work properly. (Ibid. 2011, 21–24.)

In the Teacher Training School of the University of Lapland in Finland, the co-teachers explained how they organise their work. They told that they agree on what will be taught jointly and that they decide the schedule of joint lessons at the beginning of the school year. They also ensure that they have scheduled time for joint planning. The co-teachers have agreed to have some routines and activities for the class. They emphasise that routines are essential for learners to feel secure. Examples of these kinds of routines are morning greetings and sharing of thoughts – every day they take the time to ask in the class: ‘Do you have something on your mind?’. (Ala and Sivula-Chávez 2013.)

There are many good sides of co-teaching for both teachers and learners. Teachers can get support from their colleagues, learn from each other, and combine their strengths together. In addition, planning the lessons in company with a colleague makes the teaching more efficient. Moreover, co-teaching can make the teachers feel more enthusiastic about their work and raise their motivation. Learners can receive more personal attention, support, and feedback, and the learners in the need

of support can be noticed earlier and helped faster. Further, learners' individual skill level can be taken into account more easily. Co-teaching also makes it possible to take care of problem situations faster. (Ahtiainen et. al. 2011, 36–38.) Co-teaching boosts learners' motivation to study. This teaching form makes it possible for teachers to share material and mental resources with another teacher, and it is a good way to take into account different learning capacities. It embraces diversity and, in that way, it enriches everyday life in schools. In addition, it is a more positive and natural way to study. (Ala and Sivula-Chávez 2013.)

### **Peer learning and cooperation between learners**

Collaborative learning and peer support are important aspect of inclusive education. A skilful teacher can use collaborative work for both to improve learning experience and to ensure that she can be 'liberated' from the blackboard to provide individual and group support.

A co-teacher pair in Finland uses group or paired work as a part of their inclusive practice. The groups are changed depending on situations and goals; for example, on the basis of social and interaction skills, special needs, learning styles, and learner's skill level. In this way, learners' social and interaction skills improve, and they learn to respect each other. (Ala and Sivula-Chávez 2013.) It is noteworthy that changing groups and pairs also help learners to gain the experience of working with different kinds of peers, and in different ways.

In Russian schools, we observed that learners work in pairs in such a way that a learner with special needs works with a learner without special needs. This is a practical way of providing support to learners who experience barriers to learning. A similar approach was used in Norway, where learners with special needs were studying amongst other learners. In this way, the classmates learn to approve of everyone as they are. Other learners help those who need support and these kinds of approaches can help in creating an inclusive social atmosphere. However, it should be ensured that learners with special needs also gain experience of being an equal participant in learning activities, rather than always being the ones who receive support.

In an Arkhangelsk special school for learners with severe intellectual impairments, inclusion is approached by inviting learners from general school to mingle with the learners with disabilities in extracurricular activities, holidays, events, and everyday interaction. By engaging in joint activities, all learners will improve their interaction and communication skills. The aim is to create such an environment where all learners can be approved of by the society in all aspects of social life. Also in Murmansk a lot of attention is paid on cooperation skills in inclusive classes among 'normally developing children' and those with special educational needs.

In Denmark, there are some school practices that aim at promoting a sense of safety and collaborative problem-solving. The class has a meeting once a week – or when needed – where the teacher is one of the participants with the learners. The inclusive education counsellor leads the session. At the beginning of the meeting, all participants give a grade to the past

week, talk about their feelings, and share their thoughts. After this the learners can reflect on what has happened after the last meeting and whether the class has problems. Usually, they assess their feelings about the last few days, and then negotiate about the problem to be solved or a new topic. Next, they listen and discuss about the ideas (dialogue) and, finally, make a conclusion based on dialogue. Each learner's contribution is highly valued as a part of collaborative responsibility.

### **Resourcing**

According to Booth and Ainscow (2002, 5), resources should be seen more broadly than as mere money, devices, or staff. By adopting a broad understanding of resources, school communities learn to identify resources that are available in any school but not used yet. They can be found, like Booth and Ainscow say: 'in any aspect of a school; in learners, parents/carers, communities, and teachers; in changes in cultures, policies and practices.' (Ibid.) In inclusive schools, we should make efforts to identify resources in learners by trusting in their capacity to direct their own learning and the capacity to support one another. The same applies to the school staff. They might have ideas, skills, initiative, or knowledge of what creates barriers to learning and participation, and these resources deserve to be better identified so as to ensure that inclusive school development is not dependent on resources that come from outside the school community.

Inclusive education is often considered as resource intensive. In Norway, it was claimed that inclusion does not work without

sufficient human resources and financial resources such as special teachers, social workers, advisers, and so on. In addition, planning time is considered important – if there is not enough planning, it will not work at all. In Sweden, there is a special salary fund for teachers who do extra work with learners with special needs, and, also, university students are paid some money for the help and support of their fellow students with special needs. Special teachers in Finland are better paid than their teacher partners who work in an ‘ordinary setting’. These organisational practices – although they might be justified as remuneration for a higher level education – may reinforce thinking that support and education of learners who need more regular and more intensive support is the task of specialised staff only.

### **Other practices**

In the Vällkomsten School in Sweden, collaboration with parents is seen as a key aspect of learners’ support, as parents are the most important support providers for their children. The preschool education aims at supporting families in their adaptation to the Swedish society. There are conferences for parents, and child raising issues are discussed. Families are also highly appreciated in Murmansk; in order to support the work carried out at school, they have organised a family club where families have a chance to discuss with others.

In order to support the learning of those learners who need support in doing their homework, there is a ‘homework parking’ in a Finnish school in Rovaniemi. Learners can come to the ‘parking place’ after school hours, and there are staff members

to help them with the homework. In Norway, learners' free playing is seen as meaningful and important. It relates to the learning-by-doing-method. There is also an afternoon club in context with the school in Norway.

In one of the visited schools in Murmansk, Russia, a class teacher makes a social portrait of a class with other teachers. It helps to develop the individual support of learners. They also make, in the beginning of the school year, a 'social passport' of the school. It is a mix of passports of learners and teachers. During the school year, they can make corrections to the passport and the social teacher and social and pedagogical staff can make changes to their work towards needed support.

It was said in Murmansk that it is important to also meet gifted learners and their special needs. Gifted learners may have difficulties in choosing what to do in the future, and they have to meet the expectations of parents, teachers, and school administration. They may also have difficulties in socialisation and peer relationships. The school solved these problems by offering a wide range of courses, compression of educational material, individual educational routes, and inclusion in researching activity.

A system of early intervention is well established in the Arkhangelsk region. This is commendable, as it aims at preventing difficulties to grow and promote the development of learners with special needs. This may decrease the number of learners being affected by impairments. At this stage, it seems that the interventions are only targeted on learners. In future development, the focus of interventions should shift towards

classroom practices, diversifying pedagogical approaches, and reinforcing ordinary teachers' skills in addressing the learning needs in their usual teaching.

## 6. Common Destination, Different Ways to Go

At this point of the benchmarking exercise, a few conclusions need to be made.

In all visited countries, inclusive education is not yet conceptualised nor is it built as an alternative, principled way of providing education that combats all forms of discrimination. Traditional special education structures – special schools and special classes and disability-specific qualifications – seem to still be the basis of developments in inclusive education. There is plenty of evidence in international research that special education structures seem to maintain the status quo – a parallel system of specialised education and more general education – and reinforce thinking that the responsibility of addressing the needs of those learners who need more support is mainly the task of specifically trained professionals. Inclusive education requires a common understanding of shared responsibility for all learners, and a conviction that all teachers can address the diverse needs they encounter in their daily work. Recent research shows that

teachers who work in environments where specialised services are not available have a more positive attitude towards diversity in general, and they are more confident about their professional competence in identifying, addressing, and responding to a range of learners needs (Lakkala & Thuneberg, 2012, 21; Väyrynen 2013b). The key issue for inclusion is, therefore, how to make a paradigm shift in research, thinking, and practice happen.

### **Teacher education**

Teacher education can make a contribution towards the development of inclusive education systems. It was considered as a key lever for inclusion in all visited countries. Some countries have undertaken major reforms in teacher education in order to develop new competencies that are required in inclusive educational institutions. Teacher education necessitates thinking that is based on core values related to inclusive education: (1) valuing student diversity, (2) supporting all students, (3) working with others, and (4) personal professional development. On the basis of these core values, a framework for teacher competences for inclusion has been developed through a large European research project. (European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education [EADSNE] 2012.) It is worth introducing this framework so as to make efforts to break away from the idea that inclusive education necessitates disability-specific specialisations.

The framework is founded on four core values related to inclusive education, and each core value is linked with two key areas of competence, as shown in the table below.

| Core Value   | Area of Competence  |
|--|---|
| Valuing student diversity: student difference is considered as a resource  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptions of inclusive education</li> <li>• The teacher's view of student diversity</li> </ul>   |
| Supporting all students: teachers have high expectations for all students' achievement                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the academic, social, and emotional learning of all students</li> <li>• Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous groups</li> </ul> |
| Working with others: collaboration and teamwork are essential approaches for all teachers                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with families</li> <li>• Working with a range of educational professionals</li> </ul>  |
| Personal professional development: teaching is about learning and teachers take responsibility for their lifelong learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers as reflective practitioners</li> <li>• Initial teacher education as a foundation for ongoing professional learning</li> </ul>             |

*Table 11. Teacher competencies for inclusion.  
Table based on EADSNE's (2012) profile of inclusive teachers.*

In addition to the values and areas of competence, the framework describes the attitudes and beliefs underpinning each area of competence, the essential knowledge and understanding as well as the skills and abilities to be developed within each area of competence. The description of these competencies points out the crucial areas where teacher education should be focused. It is also recognised that knowledge and understanding as well as skills and abilities are closely linked with values; and if values are not constantly kept as the foundation of teacher education, the link between actual skills development and the goals of inclusive education may be lost.

The core values of inclusive teachers should also be present in the ways in which teacher education is designed in universities. This will bring challenges also to university pedagogy as student diversity and collaboration should form the basis of all teaching.

### **School development**

Taking the core values of inclusive education on the school level, collaboration and diversification of teaching and learning approaches seem to be important in creating more inclusive educational settings.

Collaboration in schools takes different forms: co-teaching, teachers' joint problem-solving, working with a range of professionals. Some schools open up to communities by making their premises available for the community members, involving youth workers, social workers, and other professionals in the locality in the creation of school communities that respect and nurture diversity. The work with families is recognised everywhere as an important task of schools, although it was not clear from the benchmarking visit, to what extent families are enabled to participate in the school community as equal partners in matters that concern their children. The eco-cultural theory of childhood and adolescence development might prove to be a useful framework for reflecting the role of the family in inclusive education.

All visited schools emphasised learner collaboration as an important aspect of learning. Although collaboration is emphasised, the education system may endorse competition

by insisting on formal examinations and promotion on the basis of examinations, or by designing curricula that focus on content knowledge rather than skills in learning, problem solving, or interaction. However, teachers' roles in promoting learner collaboration should not be ignored, as they may favour collaborative activities as a means to respond to diversity of learners. This was observed in the ways in which teachers grouped the learners by changing the criteria of grouping, which promoted structures that increased learners' interaction ('If you don't know, ask your classmate first. If she/he can't help you, then ask the teacher.').

The development of shared responsibility was supported by different staff activities where teachers – and possibly other professionals – engaged in planning, problem-solving, and community-building. In inclusive settings, problem-solving should be based on dialogue: listening to and hearing all involved. Learners should be involved as a part of the solutions; the Danish example of class meetings led by the inclusion counsellor was a fine example of this approach.

Mainstream school teachers also need support to address and respond to more complicated needs of learners. Special schools and resource centres are important resources in this respect. While there might be expertise in specific areas of pedagogy, special teachers may lack understanding of dynamics of mainstream education. In an optimal situation, the expertise of the special school or resource centre can be targeted to address specific needs and integrated as a part of daily work in schools. In this way, the expertise will support the development of inclusive education rather than bringing special education

service within mainstream education. Collaboration, in its true sense, is beneficial to all partners. In this respect, it might be useful to reflect on what is it that special schools and resource centres can get from the mainstream schools. The flow of 'knowledge' and 'skills' from experts to not specialised staff – and not being a mutual learning experience – may maintain the thinking that inclusive education cannot be achieved without specialised services.

### **Change process**

There are also some concerns and challenges when developing inclusive education. All countries included in the benchmarking exercise have faced resistance to change, which is very characteristic for people everywhere. There are many kinds of teachers in the schools; some of them want to develop their work, and some of them want to stick in the traditional way of teaching. Teachers' salary systems also may hinder teachers' enthusiasm about inclusive education, as some teachers (e.g., special teachers in Finland) get a better salary than others receive for the same work they do in inclusive settings.

If inclusive education is seen as a process, it is essential that all education professionals conceive of their work as ongoing development. This is, after all, one of the core values of inclusive teachers presented above. Ongoing development is connected with change processes that require individual commitment, shared understandings, and support from the leaders. In this process, there are disputes, varying intensity of commitment, and resistance. It seems that inclusive education moves forwards

in schools where skilful school leaders can push for the change and support the staff in 'turbulence in the staff room'. They also manage to give a lot of thought for the equitable use and allocation of resources for inclusion.

In the end, we came to the conclusion that the objectives of inclusive education are the same to some extent in all countries, but the ways towards the goals take different routes. There is no one model for inclusion; it is an ongoing development process, taking its shape within a context of society, local structures, school cultures, and classroom interaction.

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# Appendices

## Annex I

### **List of the benchmarking participants**

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## Annex 2.

**List of the visited schools**

## Luleå, Sweden:

Välkomsten School (includes a pre-school, a primary school, secondary and upper secondary school and recreation centre)

## Copenhagen, Denmark:

Brønshøj School

## Troms, Norway:

Breivika Kindergarten

Solneset School

## Oulu, Finland:

Tervaväylä School

Metsokangas Comprehensive School

## Rovaniemi, Finland:

Rantavitikka Comprehensive School

Nivavaara School

Teacher Training School of the University of Lapland

## Murmansk, Russia:

School Number 56

Special school Number 3 (boarding school)

Lovozero Boarding School

International Lyceum

Resource Centre/Special school (Min'kino)

## Arkhangelsk, Russia

Secondary School Number 5

Special School Number 31

Secondary School Number 8

Experimental Rehabilitation Centre

## Annex 3.

### **Glossary**

#### **Differentiation**

The process of modifying or adapting the curriculum according to the different ability levels of the students in one class by changing the content, methods for teaching, and learning content (the process), and the methods of assessment. (UNESCO 2004). In Norway, 'adaptive education/teaching' is used in the same meaning.

#### **Exclusion**

Exclusion, in the context of inclusive education, refers to all those factors that may limit or hinder all learners' participation in and access to presence, participation and achievement. Exclusionary pressures may arise from special classes in mainstream schools, practices that are used to categorise learners into groups of high-achievers and others, negative attitudes, lack of voice of learners and their families, not recognising the right to one's own language and culture, etc. Exclusion is a process that is often based on segregation. Segregation means deliberate action of grouping people into categories that are usually defined by others than those who are being categorised.

#### **Folkeschool – comprehensive school**

School system that provides education for all learners belonging to the basic education age group. It is free of charge. 'Folkeschool' is the term used in Denmark.

**Inclusion**

A process of identifying and removing barriers to presence, participation and achievement for all students, across all levels of education. It builds on diversity of students and teachers, and involves changes in attitudes, curricula, pedagogy, and teacher education. It is therefore more than just placing students with disabilities or learning difficulties in mainstream settings. In this thinking, all education arrangements should be inclusive even if there are no learners categorised as having any particular educational needs.

**Integration**

Refers to practice where learners with disabilities are integrated to mainstream education partially in certain subjects or activities. Education in special classes in mainstream schools is sometimes considered as integration in Russia; in this report, 'integration' is not used in that meaning.

**Intellectual impairment**

The use of the concept does not imply a certain range of IQ. It refers to difficulties in learning and participation emanating from brain-based factors. In Finland, the concept used is 'developmental disability'. In Russia, the science related to intellectual impairment is oligophrenology. The concept relates also to term 'cognitive disability'. In some contexts, also 'mental retardation' is still used.

**Learner with disability**

Refers generally to any learner who experiences barriers to learning and participation due to impairments. It is understood that impairment is a characteristics of a learner and does not automatically lead to limitations in learning or participation.

‘Learner with disability’ expresses our understanding that it is educational, emotional, social, cultural and physical environment that disables learners. Russian expression “learner with limited health ability” is translated as ‘learner with disability’ in this report.

**Mainstream education**

Refers to general education that is open and accessible for the majority of learners.

**Special education**

Specialised services provided in schools (mainstream or special schools) for learners to support learning and participation. In Russia, these services are also referred to as ‘correctional education’.

**Special educational needs**

We use this concept to refer to learners’ specific educational needs, often emanating from disabilities or learning difficulties. Educational needs may also arise as a consequence of environmental factors, such as rigid teaching methods or negative attitudes towards diversity.

**Special Needs Education**

In the university context, special needs education refers educational science focusing on issues related learning difficulty, education related to impairments, behaviour management, etc. In Russia, this field of educational science is called ‘defectology’.

**Student teacher**

A student studying to become a teacher.

What is the state of inclusive education in the neighbouring countries of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Russia and Finland? As a part of 'A school for All – Development of Inclusive Education' project, several benchmarking visits to schools and universities in these countries were carried out with the purpose of building up knowledge about school practices, teacher education, legislative basis and conceptualisations pertaining to inclusive education. This report reflects the project participants' efforts to learn from and reflect on each other's practices on our different ways of developing a common school for all learners.



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