

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Danish case study report 2 Holistic Strategies in Education: Integrating special needs

This report was written by the Swedish team:
Margareta Cederberg and Svante Lingärde



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Health and Society, School of Teacher Education
Malmö University, Sweden

January 2008

The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

The project has been funded with support from the European Commission. Each report within the overall project is the responsibility of the named authors.

The EPASI project was conducted by the following institutions:

- The Institute for Policy Studies in Education, London
- Metropolitan University (UK) (Coordinator)
- Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid-West-Vlaanderen (Belgium)
- Univerzita Hradec Králové (Czech Republic)
- Montpellier III - Université Paul Valéry (France)
- Panepistimio Patron ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ (Greece)
- Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona (Spain)
- Malmö högskola (Sweden)



Holistic Strategies in Education: Integrating special needs

Summary

The school organisation makes a difference for the cooperation between educators and teachers in school. Hence this case study focuses on the social context of children with special needs and their learning.

Danish title: *Ett god boerneliv – ett faelles ansvar*

Theme: Disabilities

Background

In spite of the fact that Ballerup municipality has aimed to include children and young people with disability in ordinary schools and leisure centres, the number of children and young people who are sent to special schools or get special education has increased.

Ballerup municipality has in 2005 formed an overall intersectional action programme called “A good child life – a mutual liability”. The aim was to include children and youth with special needs in ordinary life. The overall project is formed out of an interdisciplinary cooperation between the School-Culture-Leisure and the Social and Health departments and politicians. The overall aim is that children and youth shall be able to stay in their homes as long as possible and stay within ordinary school and leisure centres. The Project “A good life – a mutual liability” is an “umbrella” project. Beneath the umbrella and within its frames, different projects, formed as well on central as on decentralised level, shall be carried out. During the project period 2005-2009 the National Research Centre for Inclusion and Exclusion (Nationalt Videncenter for Inklusion og Eksklusion, NVIE) is evaluating the projects. NVIE is one part in a dialogue that consists of action projects and action research.

The first project within this overall project was “Paedagoger in i skolen” (“Educators (pedagogues) into school”, our translation). This project focused on the cooperation between two professional staff groups the children meet during the day. If children with special needs in 1-3 school years should be able to stay within ordinary school and leisure-time centre, educators and teachers must elaborate inclusive learning and improving strategies and contexts.

In the first project year, 2005/2006, a status evaluation¹ was made (NVIE, Schroeder, Jacobsen and Nauerby) that pointed out possibilities of conflicts between the professional staff groups, regardless the written pedagogic programme saying they should have a mutual understanding. As was pointed out by NVIE, if conflicts could be a potential for development, then they should be handled, either on a central or decentralised level. What assignment the educators should have in school was another point. Should their focus be to care for the children within the school day or could their competence, also, contribute to didactic thinking was another question to discuss according to the status evaluation. The educators and teachers directly involved in the project were enthusiastic and considered that there were enough resources to fulfil the project. Staff group members, not directly involved, felt pressed. They experienced lack of information and that the project, a central project, was formed above the staff.

¹ The status evaluation was based on observations interviews.

This status evaluation also showed that the traditional form of organisation in schools set the frames for cooperation between teachers and educators. The teacher rules in the classroom, stands in front of the pupils, but the educator moves in the back among the children. The teacher talks to the whole class but the educator talks to an individual pupil.

Aims

The overall aim in the project “Paedagoger in i skolen” is that professional grown-ups develop and improve inclusive learning strategies and contexts in school year 1-3 in school and leisure-time centre. In this process the following aspects and aims should be stressed and developed:

- Help the child to create a sense of coherence in the period of setting-in, in school and leisure-centre.
- Ensure that professional grown-ups, who are well-known to the children and who have great knowledge about the child, cooperate to strengthen the child’s improvement.
- Take a perspective focusing the child’s possibilities and strengths.
- Have a holistic focus on the child and its personal and social / cultural competences.
- Strengthen the child’s social involvement in the setting-in period.

Funding

The umbrella project was funded by Ballerup Municipality with 400,000 Euro (3 million DKK) per year for 5 years. This project (Paedagoger ind i skolen) was financed within the umbrella budget.

Description

This is a project where educators and teachers shall cooperate and develop inclusive pedagogics and didactics. No concrete description exists in the project on how this cooperation shall be done. On the contrary they shall develop it during the project. According to the description cooperation between educators and teachers demands cooperation about activities and content in school but it also demands discussions about values and frames regarding attitudes and behaviour towards individual children and a group of children. Therefore, the cooperation shall be looked upon as a process that will and must be continuously changed, depending on the relations between children, between children and grown-ups and between grown-ups. When educators and teachers are working together, different professional categories meet. To achieve mutual understanding about their professional competences and to decide about lines of responsibilities they should learn about each others’ values, terminology and attitudes.

The description of the project states that resources to enable meetings, dialogues and education are important. This may also include continuing education courses.

Evaluation

The second evaluation² showed organisation barriers that made it difficult to create a sense of coherence in the period of setting-in, in school and leisure-centre, for the child. If the educators should be a link between home, leisure-centre, and school, they must be based in a leisure-centre in the same quarter as the child. If so, the educator could contribute to continuity in the child's life. This was not the case for some of the children. The evaluation showed that organisation changes and resources that facilitate cooperation must be made by the head of the school. The work schedules of teachers and educators/pedagogues must be changed. The evaluation showed that educators worked when teachers had a break and vice versa. No joint staff meetings were organised by the head of school although both educators and teachers asked for this possibility.

In a few schools the head of school had implemented some experiments on the basis of what happened in the first year and had changed the organisation into more functional frames. However a pattern was shown that in most institutions this was not the case. The frames did not put the child at the centre. Instead timetabling and the different working conditions of staff represented hindered the cooperation. The organisation made concrete cooperation difficult within school and also made it difficult to fulfil the project aims.

Some differences among institutions and among individual educators were noticed in the evaluation. Some educators had at their own initiative created possibilities to joint staff meetings with the teachers. This was made possible because the educators come to work earlier in the day, before the children arrived in the leisure centre.

In one school, some educators had moved into the teachers' reception room, but since the room was very small there wasn't enough space for both the educators and the teachers. To make this possible the reception room was moved into a much larger room.

In some of the schools the educators wanted to be involved in the planning of teaching activities, but were not. In some cases, the school's annual plan had been changed, to make it possible for the educators to take part.

No change in teaching was identified. According to the project aims, the educators and teachers should work together and cooperation should be formed. Some educators wanted to help the children in the classroom. But if the educators helped within the ordinary lesson, then it would be teaching and that was not an obligation for an educator.

The educators saw their work as working with the children in small groups in a social context, to establish social relations, and to support what the teacher had taught. A discussion about teaching took place. Some argues that teaching takes place when the teacher stands in front of the blackboard, others that it started when the teacher enters the classroom. Teachers also meant that teaching takes place when they are present in the classroom and when the activities are planned from the teacher's perspective. The educators described themselves as passive or assisting the teacher. In some schools the teacher had planned activities when the educator was present in school, like going to the library, group work activities and so on.

² A mid-way evaluation was made, as planned, by National Videncenter for Inklusion og Eksklusion, (NVIE), in 2005/2006. It was carried out through focus group interviews with teachers and educators in 7 of the 10 schools in the project. Before the focus interview took place the collaborators were given four overall themes to consider; cooperation, organisation, the influence the project had on the social and learning context so far, experiences made from the concrete project.

Two categories of educators were identified. The first category is those of the socially orientated educators working with small groups, solving conflicts among the children within a social context. The second category is the creatively orientated educators. They work with creative methods like painting or music that can support a teacher and the teaching if she/he is not capable to do this. The teachers are very fond of this competence among the educators. They sometimes count upon this capacity. According to the evaluation, both the social and creative competences, together with the teacher's competence, could create a new form of cooperation if linking the competences together – if they are not looked upon as parallel competences.

This midway evaluation however is a process evaluation and as such a tool that shall be used in further work in the project to include children and young people with special needs in ordinary school and leisure centre, as far as possible.

References

Ballerup Kommune (2005) En statusevaluering af udviklingsprogrammet "Et godt boerneliv – et fælles ansvar". Nationalt Videncenter for Inklusion og Eksklusion (NVIE).

Central Projektaftale for "Paedagoger ind i skolen", 19 marts 2006.

Colding, Hummelgaard og Kaergard (2005) *Skolefaerdighetder blandt unge udlændinge*

Jacobsen Jens & Schroeder Vebeke (2006) "At træde i hinandens sko" Del 1 Paedagoger ind i skolen. Nationalt Videncenter for Inklusion og Eksklusion, CVU Storkøbenhavn. (www.nvie.dk)

Lau, Maale & Hansen (2005) *Ett godt boerneliv – et falles ansvar*. Programaftale, Oktober 2005

Principper for samarbejdet mellem laerere og paedagoger, Programledelsen 15 april 2007
<http://www.edu.mah.se/1506SA/>

Schröder, V. Jacobsen, J Ch. & Nauerby T., Ma jeg låne en finger? Samspel omkring inklusion i
<http://www.ballerup.dk/get/21016.html> 2008-01-29

http://www.djoef.dk/online/print_tekst?ID=763&type=artikel&navn=Skolef%6rdig 2007-11-11

<http://www.fm.dk/> 2008-01-25

<http://tilgaengelighed.emu.dk/English/> 2008-01-25

<http://www.european-agency.org/site/nationalpages/denmark/> 2008-01-25

http://www.globalisering.dk/multimedia/55686_kap2.pdf 2008-01-26

http://sonderborg.sonderborg.dk/ekstern_UUS.asp?id=752&menu=83 2008-01-28