INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING FACILITATORS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN A SCHOOL IN SWEDEN

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This study examines the concept of inclusion and the degree to which it is being practiced in Swedish municipality schools and tries to draw some conclusions about the nature of pedagogy practiced in Sweden. This is a qualitative case study where primary data are collected from only five facilitators of children of special needs in one school in Sweden. Data were collected with an open-ended questionnaire, the variations in their responses are considered valuable in order to get a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. Perceptions of the respondents indicate that they were participating in both organizational and pedagogic differentiation. The administrators were more vocal about the value of the segregated education. Integration was perceived as being the ideal because it made it possible to both compensate the child as well as facilitate their involvement in the general class room. Inclusion was seen as a higher form of integration and was associated with capital intensive specialized equipment and materials. Respondents feared that children with special needs would not be able to cope with the general curriculum in an inclusive educational situation. I conclude in this study that every fifth student in the middle school in Sweden is probably in need of differentiated activities, and there is a need for another form of teaching than what is being currently practiced in Sweden.

Introduction

The Salamanca declaration in 1994 with a commitment to *Education for all* brought the idea of *Inclusive education* to the forefront of the International scenario. According to the declaration, inclusive education means the inclusion of all children in all class-room and out-of-class room activities, which implies that all children should have equal opportunities to reach their maximum potential and achievement, regardless of their origin and abilities or disabilities, and regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or linguistic differences. The declaration also states that those with special educational needs should have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs. Schools with inclusive orientation are expected to fight discriminatory attitudes and contribute to the development of positive communities and inclusive societies (UNESCO, 1994: viii - ix). This declaration calls for innovative education and a *new thinking in special needs education*, which include training educational personnel for enhancing competence. Hence inclusion is to be understood as a process of decreasing exclusion and increasing participation. Thus inclusion becomes a general approach and philosophy in education, where teaching practice responds to individual differences of all students.

Theoretically, inclusion is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of bringing together diverse students, families, educators and community members, in order to create schools and other social institutions that are based on respect, acceptance and belonging. Inclusive education recognizes that all students are learners who benefit from a challenging, meaningful, appropriate curriculum. This implies differentiated instruction techniques that address student´s unique strengths and needs. *Inclusion seeks to establish collaborative, supportive, and nurturing communities of learners that are based on giving all learners the services and accommodations they need to succeed, as well as respecting and learning from each other´s individual differences* (Salend, 2005:6).

Although this study on inclusion is focused on individuals with disabilities, in a wider socio-cultural sense, it is hoped that the educational system would expand to accommodate and respond to the diverse needs, abilities, strengths and experiences of all students, irrespective of class, culture, ethnicity, and

gender. In the context of students with special needs, the inclusive model is one where all students irrespective of their abilities and disabilities spend most of their time together.

Fully inclusive schools are rare. In practice the implementation of inclusive education in schools has mostly resulted in including selected students with mild special needs. In certain small schools run on Maria Montessori´ s educational philosophies, students with differing physical, intellectual and emotional needs are included in the general class room, in the spirit in which inclusive education was coined. It is my experience during my teaching career in Sweden, that when children with special needs (viz. ADHD, ADD, Asperger's syndrome, and children closer to 70 IQ) are included within the general classrooms of ordinary municipality and private schools in Sweden, the law requires that they are evaluated through the same criteria laid out to children without handicaps. School administrators (mostly traditional and conservative) do not allow perceptive and creative teachers to use compensatory mechanisms to teach and evaluate included students. This leads to repeated failures, distress and low self-esteem on the part of these children.

The concept *inclusive-education* differs from previously held notions of 'integration' and 'mainstreaming', which implies a concern mainly with disability and 'special educational needs' and getting the students to become ready for, and being accommodated by the mainstream education. In contrast to this, inclusion is about the rights of children to participate fully in the general curricular activities of the school, and a respect for their social, civil, and educational rights (Salend, 2005:6).

Significance of the Study
This study addresses issues related to education for students with special needs, and the practice of inclusion in Swedish schools. Inclusive education is an avant-garde and a progressive concept, much debated and examined in Anglo-American and Continental countries. The psychological and social advantage of an inclusive classroom where students of differing abilities and disabilities come together in what is called En skola för alla (One School for all) coined in 1980 in Sweden (Lgr, 1980), is clear and laudable. It has become a politico-ideological concept in Sweden, for developing a school that has a high degree of participation, inclusion and integration (Gustavsson, 2002). Field researches show that there is a gap between ideology and practice.

There are both literature to support the advantages of inclusive education as well as ideological and political imperatives to impel exploration of the actual situation of inclusion and inclusive education in the Swedish context. If Sweden is to work towards inclusive education, one needs to document what the nature of the practice of inclusive education in Sweden is. It is vitally important for pedagogues, and for us as a society, to understand the concept of *inclusion* in order to practice it. Cooperation of teachers is critical to the successful execution of inclusive education. Teachers and school administrators' perception and understanding of how to manage children with special needs in a school situation to maximize educational and personality development is important because this influences the quality of the educational process and creation of an inclusive society.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is partly to undertake a literature study of the concept of inclusive education, and partly to explore how some teachers and school administrators related to one school in Sweden, understand concepts such as segregation, integration and inclusion of children with special needs and their impact.

Research Questions
The questions posed for investigating in this study are:
a) How do educationists conceptualize the terms *segregation*, *integration* and *inclusion*, in the context of schooling?
b) What is the perception, attitudes and understanding of segregated, integrated and inclusive education among some teachers and school administrators (the respondents) in a particular municipality in Sweden?
c) What is the perceived impact of inclusive education as opposed to segregated schooling and integrated schooling according to the respondents?

These research questions were addressed through an open-ended questionnaire appendix (I). The following themes emerged:

i)   Supportive structures for children with special needs.
ii)   Differentiation and special pedagogy
iii)   Understanding of terms *segregation*, *integration* and *inclusion*.
iv)   Need for special programs for children with special needs
v)   The role of special schools and resource-classrooms
vi)   Advantages and disadvantages of segregated, integrated and inclusive education and their impact.

Review of Literature
In order to ground the results of this study in theory and research evolved so far, related concepts that inform the notion of inclusive education, are extracted from researches and literature that support the idea of inclusion for children with special needs as well as those that help the author to locate the concept of inclusion in an historical perspective and develop a frame work into which this research on inclusion of children with special needs, can be located.

Mitchell (2004) in an edited book notes that there is a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of education for children of special needs. Inclusive education is a postmodern trend and a progressive evolution in the philosophy of educating children with special needs. Thomas and Loxley (2001) deconstruct special education and constructs inclusion. They note that inclusive education is more than simply integration and that it was about extending comprehensive ideals in education. Concepts such as IQ, intelligence and disability are problematic and essentialist. According to them, disability is a socially contrived construct enforcing social marginalization. Nilholm (2006) problematizes the notion of inclusive education and sees inclusion, integration and segregation as aspects of one process. The concept of inclusion developed within the US as a political-philosophical-democratic perspective, where participation and community are central values. Inclusion was meant to replace prior concepts, such as mainstreaming, that have become watered-down, and implies that pupils should adapt to school settings which really ares not adapted to them.

Topping and Maloney (2005) documented that in the previous century, concern about students with serious learning difficulties led to the development of whole industries providing special education in special schools. Segregation in the form of special schools continued without any evidence as to whether students learned more effectively in such settings. They also noted that the later movement of integrating and reintegrating students with learning difficulties into mainstream was based more on ethical considerations rather than functional rationale. Thomas and Vaughan (2004) discussed the political and social context that lie behind the promotion of inclusive education. Inclusion represents the confluence of several streams of thought – social, political as well as educational. Moves to inclusion came from not only research but also from an imperative to greater social justice; from calls for civil rights; from legislation that prohibits discrimination; and from initiatives of imaginative educators. From positions of univocal modernist theories in special education have arisen a multiplicity of positions ranging from advocacy of new approaches to difference based on commitment to principles of equity and inclusion, to deconstructions of special education.

Persson (1998a, 1998b) suggestedhat special education operates more as a mechanism of differentiation and less as a resource directed to pupils experiencing severe difficulties, and should work inclusively and therefore not be regarded as a system apart from regular education but part of normal educational practice. Andersson and Thorsson (2007) advocated inclusive education for democratic reasons. Their observation of inclusive classrooms shows that there are different ways to implement *En skola för alla* (one school for all). An inclusive education requires changes in attitudes on the part of teachers and administrators and teacher training programs.

Salend (2005) documented research done to examine the impact of inclusion on students with disability, students without disability, educators and families. They concluded that there was a varied impact on students´ academic and social performance, and their reaction and attitudes towards inclusion. In general the studies suggest ed that the academic performance of students with disabilities can be increased if they are given appropriate curricular and instructional accommodations within the general educational setting. Studies that examined social, behavioral and self-concept outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusive settings show that, they were better than for those of students educated in non-inclusive settings, although these outcomes lagged behind that of their classmates without disabilities.

Methodology
This study is based on the investigation of a phenomenon called inclusive education. In the process, segregation and integration have also surfaced, and were investigated. It uses investigatory methods such as reading of texts from literature, secondary data and primary data, to bring to surface theoretical understandings of the phenomena inclusive education.

It uses a case study approach. An open-ended questionnaire was constructed to elicit responses from five professionals facilitating educational program for children of special needs. The researcher´s ambitions to do ethnography of a Swedish school in order to sift out grounded theory in relation to inclusion of children of special needs was hindered by a cautious but friendly leadership who firmly allowed access the special education program, in a limited way.

Adjusting to the field contingency, the researcher finally settled for administering a questionnaire to a few teachers and school administrative staff in the special school and those involved in conceptualizing programs for children with special needs. A questionnaire as a tool for collecting data was used because, it allowed the respondents to reflect on the issues involved without pressure, and also allowed to collect the views of the respondents in the language of the respondents, namely Swedish, thus making the data more authentic. It did away with the need to carry complicated equipment such as tape recorders, microphones, etc.

This study is therefore based on readings of texts from literature - secondary data and theoretical conceptualizations, and the texts from primary data. A clear understanding of the grounded reality is expected to emerge from the information collected from the respondents in this case study. A new concept called Gestalt Research was experimented with. It consists of a process where practice leads to theory and research, which in turn leads back to practicing-theorizer or a theorizer-practioner. An outcome of gestalt research developed two posters and one power point were created by the researcher. In order to make this study feasible (due to the limitations of time) the universe was limited to one municipality in Sweden and to one school (unnamed), that contained within its educational program a special school and resource classrooms. This school also had what they perceived as an inclusive program for children with certain type of special needs such as ADHD, ADD, and Autism.

Ethical Issues
During the resercher´s contact with the respondents while collecting data for this essay, the ethical requirements of the ethical council of the Swedish Scientific Council, were observed. Permission from the municipality to do this research in one of their schools was taken, and both the school administrators and the respondents were informed of the aim of this research (requirement for right to information). Participation and cooperation of the respondents was sought on a voluntary basis without any coercion. Several teachers working under pressure refused to spend their time in answering the questionnaire (requirement for assent of respondents). All information regarding the involved persons was treated with the highest possible confidentiality, and care taken to protect the identity of the respondents and students concerned from the public (requirement for confidentiality). The information collected in this research has been used only in this essay and its publication and no other purpose (requirement for the use of information). Since parental assent was required to involve students less than 15 years old, observation and interviews of students were left out of this research.

Research Design
Since this was an exploratory qualitative research, which assumes that the social world is not predictable the research design was highly flexible with regard to experimental, and was made up of individual case studies, where an open-ended questionnaire was used to get a fairly in-depth understanding of the respondents' attitudes towards the concept of inclusive education.

Research Techniques
Several qualitative techniques / tools involving different rationalities were used to collect data:
a) Case Study - one localized universe was accessed to access in depth the phenomena of inclusion of children of special needs.
b) Auto ethnography – Information was gathered through the researcher´s experiences, impressions and interaction with the school universe.
c) Questionnaire (open-ended) - was administered to the school administrators and teachers to access their understanding and attitudes towards the concept of inclusion.

d) Documentary research – was done to fill silent spaces within field data, through use of previously published documents and literature.

e) Interpretative analysis of the data collected by questionnaires was done.

f) Gestalt research – feedback was given to the school through circulation of this essay. This is seen as an educative and interactive process of this study. In addition to this two posters (one poster attached, see appendix V) and power point presentations have resulted as an outcome of this study.

Qualitative methodology was implemented in the study, using case study approach (one school in one municipality, as a case) for collecting data, because of the suitability of studying interpretative and subjective aspects of the phenomena *inclusive education*. In the preparation phase of desk documentary research, numbers of relevant documents related to the legislation of education were read documented and analyzed that will help to fill up silent spaces in the data and results. The author´s interaction with the research environment was documented through auto-ethnography, which is a highly personalized text written in active voice. The data were collected by open-ended questionnaires answered in the presence of the researcher to deal with any ambiguities. The qualitative data content (the text) was collected by questionnaires is subjected to interpretative analysis, which is in a constant state of discovery and revision.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were: a) The research population consisted of responses only five adult respondents. Children's voices could not be heard due to the refusal of authorities to allow me to come in contact with them; b) Being a case study it is not possible to make generalizations about the larger social context. These findings can only be used as an exploratory research that can lead to more in-depth and larger studies that could lead to generalizations; c) Although the teachers involved in segregated teaching of children with special needs showed interest and reflection, the teachers of the general curriculum did not identify enough with the educational program for children of special needs and did not want to participate in the study.

Validity and Reliability

Regardless of the nature of research, type, or scale of measurement, one needs to answer two basic questions pertaining to collected data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998: 79). The first question relates to measurement validity and asks whether one is truly measuring what one intended to measure/record rather than something else. The second question relates to measurement reliability and asks whether the intended measurement/recording is without error. If a measurement instrument is reliable, it should provide the same result consistently over time, across a range of items and /or across different raters / observers (inter-observer / inter-rater reliability). Hence reliability and validity are ways of demonstrating and communicating the rigor of research processes and the trustworthiness of research findings.

Within qualitative research environments, the established validity criteria have tended to be neglected or rejected, without developing other criteria for the truth-value of qualitative findings (Kvale 1989: 7). It lacks a foundation from which one can assess the difference between objective facts and the subjective conjectures of the researcher. It relies too heavily on the interpersonal involvement of the researcher and on what appears to be arbitrary interpretative judgments. Since the idea of reliability and validity comes from the quantitative methodology it is therefore problematic to transfer them to qualitative studies.

The methodological goal of pure observation, free from theoretical, social, historical or cultural bias has been proven unrealistic. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the concepts validity and reliability must proceed from the epistemological assumptions that underlie qualitative or quantitative domains of inquiry. Within quantitative research there is a traditional dichotomization between object and subject - a belief that there is an observational space between the researcher and the object of study.

According to qualitative research, the belief that the observing researcher through use of uncontaminated human perception can apprehend the object of study is untenable. The observer and the observed are both, part of an interctional system in which, neither the subject nor the object can be defined without reference to the other (Cohen and Manion, 1984: 24-25). There is a matrix of inter-subjective social meaning that human science research operates in. Since the object of study - the other human being - is not inert but a volitional being, *object* become *subject*. Although human experiences are subjective and humans have subjective experiences, they achieve inter-subjective agreements (by communicating) through which they sustain self-knowledge, knowledge about others, and interpersonal cooperation

(Kvale, 1989: 148-152). When we succeed in observing the measurement object of our aims, then the observation and measurement is valid. Kvale (1989) defines validation in qualitative research as investigation, continually checking, questioning and theorizing on the nature of phenomena investigated. The questioning encompasses the criteria for judging the truth-value of the research findings. The question of validity in qualitative interpretative analysis involves the precision or exactness with which expressed views of the respondents are described by the evolved categories representing the understandings and views that were expressed in the interview. Reliability can then be the precision with which the categories succeed in capturing meanings of the data collected. The categories are acceptable if co-judges can understand the can see the connection between data collected and the categories (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998: 82-84).

In this qualitative inquiry where primary data are collected from only five respondents, the variations in their responses are considered valuable in order to get a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. Validity and reliability is maintained by citing the original text in the Swedish language, procured as primary data from the respondents in order not to lose precision or exactness of the utterances. Attempt is made when summarizing the responses made in the Swedish language, to keep to the spirit of their utterances. However the intention of the researcher is not to find the deep psychological structures that emerge from the ground (as is the practice in phenomeno-graphical researches) but to locate the perceptions of the respondents within the paradigm *traditional-progressive* with regard to inclusion and democratic ideals. The contradictions found within the **Special Education** discourses are expected to emerge during analysis and discussion, making the understanding of the phenomena under study a discursive one.

Results and Analysis
Results and analysis are divided into two parts. The first part consists of the secondary data collected from documentations of the structures constructed in the municipality´s program for children of special needs acquired through desk research. The second part analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents to the concept of inclusive education. The actual data collected through the questionnaire were left out in this article because it was in the Swedish language.

Sample
Once allowed to interview adults managing education for children with special needs, the following actors were interviewed: two interviews from special school teachers, one each from a counsellor for autistic students and principal (who was a special educator before) of the middle school (classes 5-9) where integration took place, and the head of the school resource center of the municipality. Responses from teachers of the general stream could not be implemented. They either did not know enough about the concepts under study or they contended the conceptualizations of special schools as being segregated education, and therefore refused to participate in this inquiry. Hence this essay is a case study of one school in one municipality and perceptions, understanding and attitudes of five pedagogues involved directly in the educational activities of children with special needs. They were all educated as teachers of general program with two of them further trained as special education teachers.

Supportive structures for children of special needs at this municipality
This is a documentation of secondary data collected from documentary sources of the municipality where this study was conducted. In 1999 a decision was taken to establish a resource center in this municipality and in 2002 the special needs program incorporated within it, also the program for hearing disability. Today the organization (appendix II) consists of a central resource center with one principal and two assistant principals who share supervisory responsibilities (with local school principals of schools for children with special needs) for the integrated programs, the support center for children with hearing disabilities, hospital schools, psychiatric-help schools and the program to support newly registered children in the community, and its neighboring satellite municipalities. The center has preparatory and pedagogic services, which coordinated and gave professional and consultative services to institutions associated with it. In addition, it also does continuing and follow-up services on long-term basis.

This center also takes care of the new international entrees into the school program and severe to mildly challenged children with the help of both the existing school structures and special segregated institutions (organizational differentiation). The different teams work to bring together their competences in order to support the personnel in the municipality schools who work with students with learning difficulties through consultation, instruction and supervision, in-service training and net-working. Conceptually in Sweden, special needs programs are staggered into eight levels in terms of the severity

of their conditions. The resource center supervises and organizes educational activities for levels 7 and 8. An inverted pyramid (see appendix III) delineates the continuum from least restrictive (mild) to most restrictive (severe) placements depending on the degree of disabilities. The center´s documentation shows that in the year 2011, approximately 199 students were being taken care of by the municipality resource centers. These students were differentiated into the following categories: neuropsychiatric challenges, speech disorders; language, reading, writing, reading and mathematical challenges; as well as those having intellectual, social and emotional challenges (see appendix IV for details). From the above facts it is inferred that, this municipality as well as others in Sweden practice both organizational and pedagogical differentiation of children with special needs. These differentiations have undoubtedly been made to provide maximum opportunities for children of special needs, even though it appears to be located within the traditional model where organizational differentiation is seen as the only way to administer special needs programs. The following paragraph analyzes these differentiations and places them within pedagogical theory.

Differentiation and Special Pedagogy
Educational policies in Sweden have on the one hand favored the intellectual elites and their well-being, and on the other hand stressed equality and social democracy through the concept *one school for all* (Isling, 1984). Person (1998a) categorizes the phenomenon of differentiation into two kinds: a) Organizational differentiation and b) Pedagogic differentiation. According to Dahlöf (1967), differentiation per se need not be seen as a politically incorrect concept. Organizational differentiation implies differentiation between schools such as public and private schools, and accelerated and remedial teaching groups. He advocates that organizational differentiation ought to be replaced by pedagogic differentiation where the pedagogic content and method are adjusted to suit each student´s individuality in order to promote inclusion, quality in educational processes and to pupil diversity and heterogeneity.

Studies show on the one hand, that *ability grouping* (organizational differentiation) has some positive effect on the students´ school performances and on the other that students with learning difficulties in a high ability group experienced that the gap between them was too large to bridge (Goldberg, Passow and Justman, 1966). In USA one the one hand, students in positively differentiated high track program showed more positive self-perception than the students in negatively differentiated low track program (Oaks, 1985). On the other hand there was a danger that teachers lower the level of ambition in *low ability groups*, and underestimate the capabilities of students in lower track classes.

In countries like Finland and Italy there are laws prohibiting streaming by ability grouping. According to OECD (1995), in Italy the term *Exceptional children* is used to describe children of special needs. In countries like Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland where organizational differentiation is practiced, terms such as learning disabilities, language and communication disabilities, psychosocial disabilities, deviant behavior, and emotional-disturbance are used.

The concepts heterogeneity and homogeneity are motivating factors in the differentiating aims of special pedagogy. Peter Haug (1998) the author of *en skola för alla* (one school for all) notes that special pedagogy can be viewed from a compensatory perspective and from a democratic participatory perspective. The former is connected to performance of students with special needs and provide assistance in order to help the student maximize his or her potential according to his or her abilities. This has led to organizational differentiation in order to provide help to special needs student. In the democratic participatory perspective, the institutional arrangements are de-normalized in a way to accommodate children with special needs, heterogeneity and pluralism.

Respondents understanding of the terms segregation, integration *and* inclusion.
The following paragraphs document the primary data collected by the researcher. Segregation was perceived by these respondents as both a negative and a positive concept. Segregation was perceived to mean exclusion from ordinary schooling where children with special are put aside so that that students who are in the ordinary school may have no contact with them, as well as a secluded place where challenged children are trained outside the ordinary school system in order to help them maximize their individual potential and make them as independent as possible. The aim was to strengthen them in order to help them come back and cope with the ordinary school curriculum. The concept integration was consistently understood as a system in which all children had possibility to be part of some sort of school system, which helped them access contact with each other. Inclusion was perceived as a wider concept that meant a more perfect variation of integration. Here all students came to a school, which was adapted

to suit the needs of children with different challenges, thus creating an equal school environment that could be accessed by all children.

It is inferred from the data that the respondents of this study were participating in both organizational and pedagogic differentiation and saw both advantages and disadvantages of segregated *Special-schools*. The administrators were more vocal about the value of the segregated special schools. Integration was perceived as being the ideal because it made it possible to both compensate the child with specialized, individualized and small group learning, as well as be involved in the general class room in certain aesthetic subjects. Inclusion was seen as a higher form of integration and was associated with specialized equipment and materials to suit individual needs.

Need for special programs for children with special needs
Respondents actively involved in the programs for children with special needs at middle school, were seriously concerned about the issues involved. Inclusion was to be aimed, and exclusion from the ordinary school milieu was to be avoided, however a few students with special handicaps and challenges needed to be addressed in the most pedagogically and emotionally effective manner, which may include part-time individual instruction, segregated class rooms and even segregated schools. The respondents felt that the school system had a responsibility to help all children to reach the pedagogic goals set for them. It was important to address individual challenges with individual solutions for optimal development without being excluded from the ordinary environment. Respondents felt that one could not generalize and say that all challenged students should be instructed in an inclusive class. Respondents felt that in fact all children should have the possibility to function at their own tempo and not pressurized to fit into a common program. It is inferred from the above data that according to the respondents, inclusion was the idealized approach to educating children with special needs. Special education was seen as a concept different from inclusive classrooms. It was felt that in certain cases of severe challenges, inclusion was not the appropriate remedy. This view is supported the ongoing debate on Swedish education system, where one group feels that homogenous and protected teaching situations contribute positively to optimize development in severely challenged children (see Andersson & Thorsson, 2007).

The role of special schools and resource-classrooms
Special schools that are defined as segregated educational form were seen as structures that could actually provide children with special needs a protected form of inclusion into the Swedish educational program. It catered to their intellectual needs and capabilities. It functioned as an alternative home for children from homes with disjuncture. Segregated special schools and resource rooms were considered especially by the three administrators, as an effective and excellent way of providing educational support. Children felt at home in their special class room, because they could progress at their own pace without any pressure.

Advantages and disadvantages of segregated, integrated and inclusive education and their impact
Segregated education - The advantages of segregated education were perceived by the respondents as providing a secure stress free learning environment with professional trained to understand their needs better. In addition the special schools were equipped for the needs of children with special needs. There was small group teaching, and social skills and adjustment, self-esteem and sense of emotional security could be achieved in a protected segregated structure. Disadvantages of segregated education for children of special needs were children with special needs could feel excluded and feel that they cannot cope with children of normal abilities in the general classroom. An artificial environment was being created and their normal peers could not influence the segregated students. The enthusiasm shown in favor of segregation, places the group of respondents firmly in the conservative category with regard to the issue of inclusion and segregation. They have opted for the compensating children with special needs in segregated settings rather than a more democratic inclusive setting in the general classroom. However, there was an encouraging understanding in this group that segregation was creating an artificial space where children were being excluded from the mainstream school society.

Impact of segregation was perceived as improvement in achievement, social adjustment and social skills, improvement in self-esteem and improvements in terms of emotional security. It was felt that one needed a school, which was suited to individual needs. Different children needed to be challenged to differing levels. In this school a conjoined special school functioned extremely well in terms of meeting individualized needs of children with special needs. It was found to improve their learning abilities (academic achievement). Small group learning situation was found to be more secure and accepting of

challenged children. Socially it was good that special schools were attached to ordinary school and were integrated into some of their routine facilities such as playground, lunchroom, art and craft, music, sports and home economics school spaces. There was a danger of overprotecting challenged children who could then develop behavior that would not function in the larger society (social adjustment). The issue of improvement in self-esteem was perceived as being totally individual. Most challenged students improved their self –esteem in a segregated protected and an attentive environment (self-esteem). It was felt that most challenged children felt emotionally secure in a segregated and protected environment. Such an environment that encouraged smaller groups helped challenged children to develop an emotionally secure identity (emotional security). It is inferred from the above data that the respondents enthusiastically acclaim the impact of segregated special education. This can be viewed as evidence to support that the traditional form of schooling children of special needs is seen as being very effective, despite ideologically being retrogressive from a democratic perspective.

Integrated educational programs – Integration was seen to facilitate interaction between children of special needs and children with normal abilities. Integration would improve their self - esteem by making them to not feel different in any way. It could possibly speed up their learning pace and broad their exposure to information. Only students with mild forms of intellectual challenges are integrated. Since they have their own curriculum they feel secure while working to actualize their full potential. However there could be a risk that these children may not actualize their full potential and feel excluded. Integration is seen as being appropriate only for children with mild challenges. This can be seen as a conservative worldview among caretakers of these children or a perceptive position that is concerned with compensating the student's challenges.

Impact of Integration – A couple of respondents felt that integration was perceived as undoubtedly positive. Challenged children were allowed to grow at their own pace while having a feeling of being part of the ordinary school. While a couple of respondents felt that children in school learned less in a larger environment (academic achievement). Integration was perceived as being absolutely helpful towards challenged children to learn behavior pattern that could help them fit into in the larger society. There was a more open contact between challenged children, normal children and the adults (social adjustment). If integration is successful then there could be improvement in challenged children's self-esteem. They learn to solve problems by themselves. On the other hand integration can backfire if not handled properly (self-esteem). It was difficult to know if challenged students felt emotionally secure in an integrated environment. If Integration was successfully handled, student could feel more emotionally secure on the other hand it could be disastrous (emotional security). Integration was unanimously felt as a positive thing because it provided the students with the best of both worlds: protected learning situations in resource rooms and a happy meeting between the two worlds. The emotional and psychological impact was not perceived as positive as one would want it to be.

Inclusive education – Ideally, individualized education for all children was the correct model for education so that all children learn at their own pace and this model would lead to inclusion. However it is very difficult to blend normal, mildly and severely challenged students in the same class and the latter could experience a sense of failure if they are expected to follow the curriculum for normal children because they are unable to cope.

Respondents show extremely positive attitude towards inclusive education. They idealize a situation where children with special needs feel a part of, and participate in the larger mainstream classroom. There seems to be confusion about the scope of inclusion because the respondents express fear that these children may not be able to cope with the general curriculum. They perceive inclusive education as one where all children in the inclusive classroom follow the same curriculum and not one where each child follows the curriculum at his own pace according to their intellectual capacity.

Impact of inclusion – Two respondents left out the section about impacts of inclusion, possibly because this school does not practice inclusion except in the case of autistic children. Those who addressed the issue of impact due to inclusion felt that improvement in all four areas viz. academic achievement, social adjustment, self-esteem and emotional-security could occur if conditions of inclusion were favorable and optimal, especially for children who are not severely challenged. On the other hand it could backfire in all four areas in inclusive education was not adjusted to the challenges experienced by children.

It is telling that two respondents working with special education found it difficult to answer impact issues for inclusive education, possibly because they have never experienced inclusive education or its impact.

The remaining three respondents made guesses about the possible impact. They felt that they could not categorically state its impact. It is surprising (and shocking) to hear that none of the respondents had heard of the Salamanca declaration. The latest debates at the international level were not percolating down to the personnel handling children with special needs. None of the general teaching staff agreed to answer this questionnaire, because they view segregated schooling as the more effective one, where the children with normal abilities could continue to access the general curriculum without hindrances to the teacher, who would have been hard pressed if they had to divert their attention to the children with special needs. A couple of these teachers expressed that they do not agree with the text book definitions of terms segregation, integration and inclusion. It would not be far from truth if one were to be concluded that the teachers in the general class rooms follow the traditional teaching patterns and have not been oriented by the teachers college to internalize the concept or practice inclusive teaching methods.

In addition to this, school practices such as streaming of children according to their performance (organizationally administered pedagogic differentiation) and the remedial program has a slightly different book than that followed by the students of general stream. Traditionally streaming students according to ability and performance was justified as effective because some sort of accelerated learning and remedial learning could be administrated within the school system. This could be viewed as supporting intellectual elitism with schools. Administrators and teachers of special education program were also located in the same traditional paradigm, where children of special needs were segregated into homogenous groups and taught in resource rooms by resource personnel or in an adjacent training school connected to the mainstream school, where they shared the lunchroom, sports field, and the teachers of aesthetic subjects. Some form of integration was going on in this segregated system for children of special needs. Only the mildly autistic children were truly included in the general classroom curriculum because they were considered not intellectually challenged. The authors view resonate the ongoing debate in the Swedish school system (see Andersson and Thorsson, 2007) that it is ideally correct and possible to have inclusive classrooms with more individualized teaching for all children including the severely challenged students. It is necessary to change the present teaching model of teaching homogenous groups of students and attempt to incorporate one where diverse and heterogeneous groups of students are accommodated within the general class room, and the use of teaching methods suited to the individualized needs of the students is practice. It would mean a reorganization of resources to support the general classrooms with student assistants, teachers with sign language, Braille, special materials like audio bands, computer soft wares specially geared to the learning needs of the students.

Discussion

Notions about social justice and human rights have provided to shape contemporary thinking about environments in which education is framed. The kind of society we create emerges from the kind of education we provide. The quest for comprehensive and inclusive education is part of that tradition that sees benefit to all emerging from practices adopted in education (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004). Considering the conditions in which children with various challenges were located before the 18th century, the idea of addressing the students´ individual differences in a planned, systematically monitored arrangements of teaching procedures, with adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings and interventions designed to help learners with special needs to achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community than would be available if the students were only given access to a typical classroom education, was a radical concept (Nilholm, 2006).

The situation for children of special needs differ in different countries. In many countries severe intellectually and physically challenged children do not attend formal schools. In the developed countries, Europe, Japan, USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, special schools take care of children with severe challenges, which are considered as not being inclusive arrangement. Today there is a perceived stigma attached to the idea of segregated learning. Positivism's value-free ideas were challenged by the subjectivity-oriented paradigm of the 70s and postmodern worldview. Today we understand and legitimate value loaded ideas and knowledge (especially if they are considered politically correct). Coupled with that, the growth of identity politics has brought about a demand for equal rights of traditionally marginalized groups like women, people of colour, non-heterosexual. This is a post-Marxist development and to these post-Marxian categories have been added the groups that are functionally challenged.

Concern for children with special needs has led both to the creation of different forms of special classes, special courses, special schools, clinics, as well as a vision of schools where children of differing abilities and challenges study together in an inclusive way. *En skola för alla* (one school for all) coined by Peter

Haug (2000) is an expression of a school with explicit basic values that differ from those of the traditional schools. It is a school where all children irrespective of their challenges attend and where teaching is adapted to the individual child or groups of children. It's a school where all children can meet and access each other, and can develop self-confidence, self- respect, self - esteem, intellectual and social competence as well as be part of the social network. It is from such a vision of schooling that the concept inclusive schools and integrated schools have immerged (Nilholm, 2004).

In practice *One school for all* has been domesticated and tamed by the Swedish school system with cosmetic adjustment in the tradition school. The history of special education in general has shown that inclusion and integration that are variations within the *One school for all* concept are difficult to attain because the values of the practitioner and the policy-makers are in conflict with each other. This had led to a compromised solution, which tends towards the traditionally established segregated schooling rather than inclusive education (Andersson and Thorsson, 2007). Researches in Swedish Schools have shown that it is possible to implement *One school for all* model with different kinds of supportive solutions. The findings of the inquiry done in this essay show that segregated variations in schooling (coupled with integration within the general school, in a small way) for children of special needs has been experienced by serious care takers as being beneficial intellectually, socially, emotionally and in terms of self-esteem. The protected and secure environment offered by such arrangements is insidiously persuasive. While inclusion of children with mild autism is experienced as being successful in terms of these criteria, attempt has not been made in schools like this one, to tailor an inclusive school where all children with different challenges can be accommodated into the general classroom. One can safely say that the school policies in this municipality, and school personal for educating children of special needs in this school, are firmly located in the traditional paradigm where children were segregated into homogenous groups depending on their respective diagnosis. Since the findings of this study were documented and commented upon here by me, I have had the opportunity to work in a municipality school in Lapland where inclusive education is being practiced. Such efforts can lead to successful inclusion if teacher-training colleges in turn train teachers to internalize inclusive pedagogies and teaching methodologies.

There have been debates about whether the stress caused due to inclusion of children with challenges, are pedagogically correct? Are we being swayed towards the ideology of inclusion without considering the needs of the children and the resources required to implement such learning environments? Ideologically, social justice, human rights and politically correct locations demand a more inclusive education, while ground realities of a more segregated forms of schooling persist because, teacher training pedagogies in Swedish teachers colleges conform to the needs of the existing organizational differentiation rather than fork out and train teachers for new inclusive schooling. Salamanca declaration that advocates inclusive education for all children and pedagogic differentiation, has not yet percolated to the municipalities and schools, and are only just being introduced into the teacher education programs.

It appears then that inclusive education scholars need to explicate the discourses of Inclusion.   Slee and Allan (2001) point out that the distinction between inclusion/exclusion (not to mention abled / disabled) is discursive. If inclusive education has to become a reality in Swedish schools, more grounded theoretical discourses have to emerge in Sweden towards more democratic and progressive ways of catering to needs of children with special needs. It would require collaboration and cooperation at all levels of policy makers and implementers which would also mean political will on the part of the elected politicians in the parliament, the bureaucrats and administrators in the Ministry of Education and the municipalities, teachers colleges and school leadership, to allocate resources and give direction to a more progressive form of schooling where *One school for all* does not get watered down to sophisticated segregated class rooms that cater to accelerated education, remedial education, and a segregated special education.

Conclusion
To conclude, the multi-disciplinary special education can be placed into a socio-political paradigm, which reflects structural differences within society. Persson (1998a) asserts that if one deconstructs special education, its inconsistencies, silences and contradictions can be uncovered. Skritic (1991) argues that special education depends on naïve pragmatism. If one were to question the assumptions of special education, one will be forced to confront the failures of general educational practices. It is therefore necessary to replace traditional bureaucratic organization of the school by new flexible and more appropriate solutions. In doing so one needs to synthesize an approach where both the democratic and compensatory perspective is kept in sight. Persson (1998a) observes that if every fifth student in the

middle school in Sweden is in need of differentiated activities, then another form of teaching than what is going on in Sweden is needed.

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Appendix – 1

Openended Questionnaire for Teachers and Administrators

Please answer in detail. Write as much as you like in the Swedish language. Give all your opinions. Your experience is invaluable.

Name of teacher:
Professional Qualifications:
Professional history:
Nationality:
Subjects taught:

Q1. Why is there a need for special programs for children with special needs? Give both positive and negative opinions.
Q2. What function does the special school play in the life of children with special needs? Can you suggest an alternative to special school?
Q3. What is your role in the program for children with special needs?
Q4. Can you give details about the program this school offers to children of special needs?
Q5: Can you describe what you understand by the terms (when applied to children of special needs?:
    a) Segregation
    b) Integration
    c) Inclusion
Q6. Can you give advantages and disadvantages of:
  A i) Segregating (särskola utbildning) children of special needs:
    ii) Which category of children with special needs are segregated (educated in special schools)?
    iii) What personnel, equipment and materials are needed for segregated (special schools) teaching of children with special needs?
    iv) What impact has segregation (special schools and resource class room) made in terms of:
- Improvement of academic achievement
- Improvement of social adjustment and social skills
- Improvement in self esteem
- Improvements in terms of emotional security.

  B. i) Integrating of children with special needs (advantages and disadvantages of):
    ii) Which category of children with special needs are Integrated?
    iii) What personnel, equipment and materials are needed for integrated teaching of children with special needs?
    iv) What impact has Integration made in terms of :
- Improvement of academic achievement
- Improvement of social adjustment and social skills
- Improvement in self esteem
- Improvements in terms of emotional security.

  C. Total Inclusion of children with special needs (advantages and disadvantages of):
    i) Which category of children with special needs are included?
    ii) How many children are in the inclusive program? What are their disabilities? What individualized teaching is given to them?
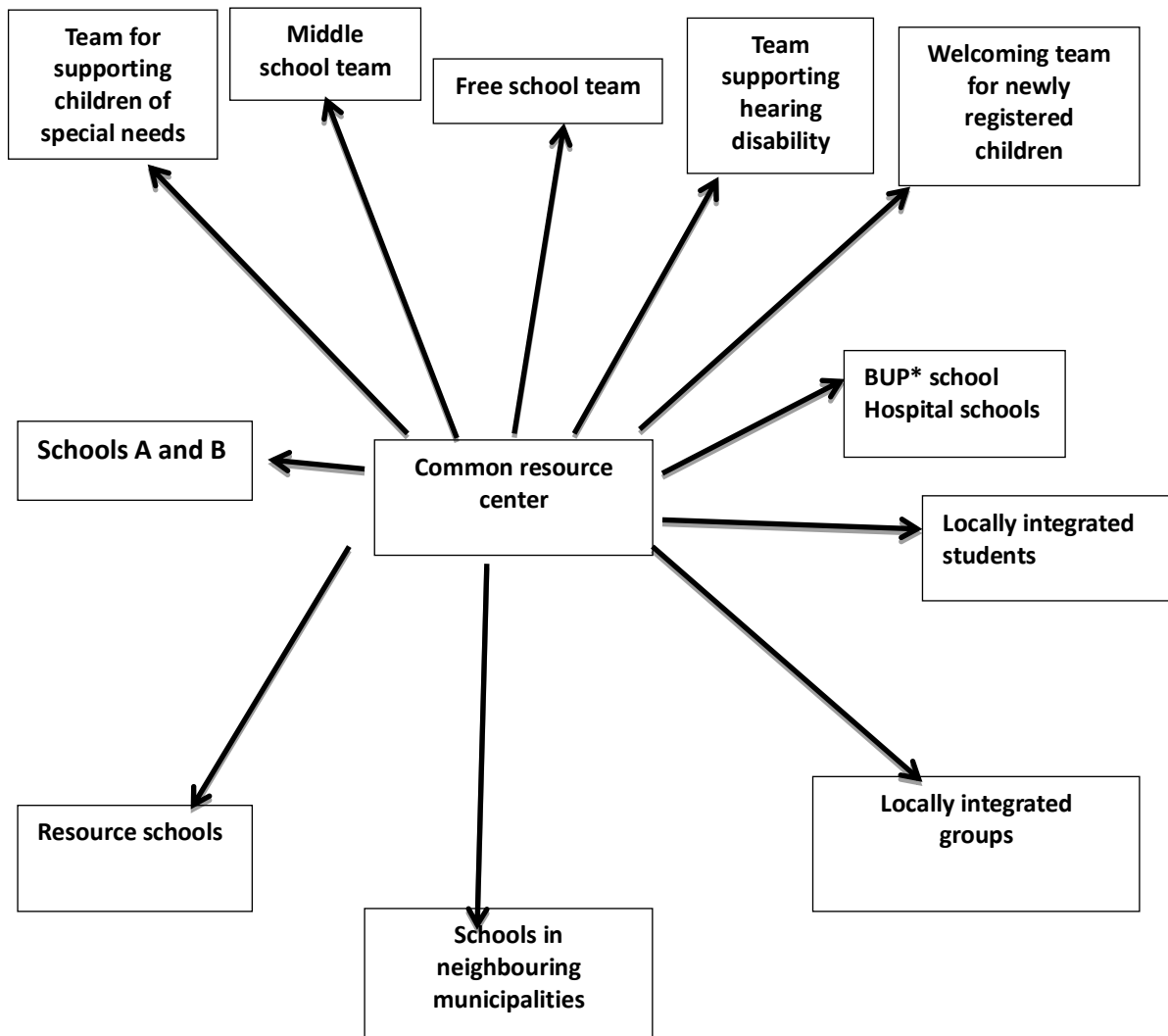   iii) What personnel, equipment and materials are needed for inclusive teaching of children with special needs?
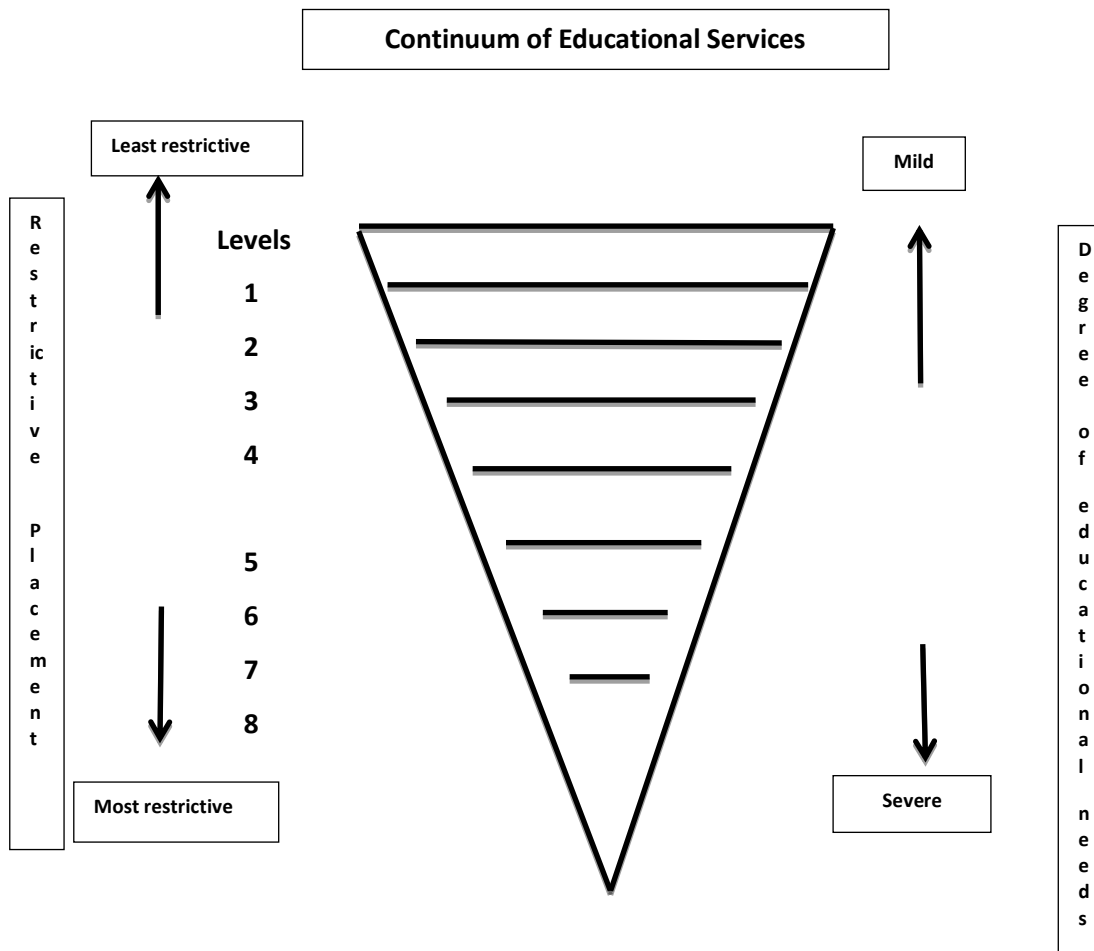   iv) What impact has inclusion made in terms of:
- Improvement of academic achievement
- Improvement of social adjustment and social skills
- Improvement in self esteem
- Improvements in terms of emotional security

Q7. Is there any category or important area left out in this questionnaire? Feel free to add any other comment.

Appendix II
Organization of the Municipality Resource Center 2011[1]

Team for supporting children of special needs

Middle school team

Free school team

Team supporting hearing disability

Welcoming team for newly registered children

Schools A and B

Common resource center

BUP* school
Hospital schools

Locally integrated students

Resource schools

Schools in neighbouring municipalities

Locally integrated groups

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[1] From a power point program prepared by of the municipality.

Appendix III[2]

| Continuum of Educational Services |

Least restrictive

Mild

Restrictive Placement

Levels

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Degree of educational needs

Most restrictive

Severe

Key

1. Limited support in the classroom

2. Comprehensive support in the classroom

3. Limited extra input

4. Extensive extra input

5. Part-time special/individual instruction

6. Whole-time special/individual instruction

7. Resource/special school

8. Special boarding school

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[2] From a power point program prepared by of the municipality.

Appendix IV
Categorization of Challenges[3]

Neuro-psychiatric challenges

ADHD

Autism

Aspergers syndrome

Tourettes syndrome

Other

Social and emotion disturbances

Aggression

Inner- directed

Psychic illness, e.g. depression

Other

Specific-reading- writing- and mathematical difficulties

Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

Other

Illegal behavior

Drugs

Criminality

Other

Serious speech Impairment

Dyslexia

Physical challenges

Chronic illness

Hearing disability

Visual Impairment

Movement impairment

Other

Serious intellectual challenges

In middle school

Individualized/integrated Special School

student with rights to special schools and

special middle schools

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[3] From a Municipality Power Point.

Appendix V

A Peaceful World is an Inclusive World

Inclusion Matters