

Togetherness in Play and Learning

Special Needs Education in Mainstream Settings



**Change work in
kindergartens and schools**

1.2

1.2



Change work in kindergartens and schools

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

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

Sonja Bjørnbak:

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

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

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

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

Sonja Bjørnbak

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The kindergarten as an inclusive community

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

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

These special needs education services are organised differently by each municipality and some still have special needs education units in their day-care centres (Solli, 2017). The services are sometimes experienced as fragmented and with little connection to the other activities at the kindergarten (Moe & Valseth, 2014). For children to experience a coherent and safe daily routine at the day-care centre, closer collaboration and a comprehensive approach within the community of children is needed in kindergartens (Hillesøy, 2019; Moe & Valseth, 2014; Solli 2017). The collaboration between the educational supervisor, special education teacher and other staff members is key to a successful implementation in practice (Mørland, 2008; Simonsen & Kristoffersen, 2017). We often see little to no collaboration between the educational supervisor and the special needs education teacher in the unit. This may be due in part to lack of resources but is also often the result of traditional organisation models and insufficient knowledge (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019; Moe & Valseth, 2014). The Framework Plan for Kindergartens states that inclusiveness is about facilitating social participation and that the most important arena for this is play (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Play is a lifestyle for children, with its own intrinsic value and of fundamental value (Sundsøl & Øksnes, 2017; Wolf, 2017). It is through play that children experience values that are of increasing saliency in today's society, as well as teamwork, creativity and imagination (Hoven & Mørland, 2014). In kindergarten,

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

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

Background for change in special needs education practices

Traditional organisation

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

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

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

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

Segregation measures

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

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

Desire for change

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

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

"They were missing out"

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

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

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

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

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

Change and a difference of opinion

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

Diversity as a resource for everyone

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

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

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

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

Turning point

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

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

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

Measures implemented

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

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

How is the municipal special needs education system now organised?

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

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

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

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

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

Sense of coherence

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

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

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

Knowledge, support and engagement

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

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

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

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

Inclusive community gives personal meaning

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

One of the educators expressed this as follows:

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



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

Summary

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



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

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

Concluding reflections

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

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



References

- Allan, J. (2017). Å tenke nytt om inkludering. [Rethinking inclusiveness]. I A.-L. Arnesen (red.), Inkludering. Perspektiver i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Antonovsky, A. (2012). Helsens mysterium. Den salutogene modellen. [Unravelling the Mystery of Health. The Salutogenic Model]. Oslo: Gyldendal Academic Publishing.
- Arnesen, A.-L. Kolle, T. & Solli K.A. (2017). De problematiske kategoriene i institusjonelle og faglige sammenhenger. [The problematic categories in institutional and academic contexts]. I A.-L. Arnesen (red.), Inkludering. Perspektiver i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Arnesen, A.-L. (2017). Inkludering. Perspektiver på inkludering i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. I A.-L. Arnesen (red.), Inkludering. Perspektiver i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Bøe, M. & Thoresen, M. (2017). Å skape og studere endring. Aksjonsforskning i barnehagen. [Creating and studying change. Action research at day-care centres]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Franck, K. & Glaser, V. (2014). Rett til medvirkning for barn med særskilte behov. [The right to participation for children with special needs]. In P. Sjøvik (ed.), En barnehage for alle. Spesialpedagogikk i barnehagelærerutdanningen. [A day-care centre for all. Special needs education in preschool teacher education]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Green, J., Tones, K., Cross, R. & Woodall, J. (2019). Health Promotion: Planning and Strategies (4th edition). California: Sage.
- Hillesøy, S. (2019). Små barns lekende fellesskap i barnehagen. [Young children and the play community at day-care centres]. In S.E. Ohna & E. Simonsen (ed.), Barn med nedsatt hørsel. Læring i fellesskap. [Children with a hearing impairment. Learning together]. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Hoven, G. & Mørland, B. (2014). Lek for alle barn? [Play for all children?] In P. Sjøvik (ed.), En barnehage for alle. Spesialpedagogikk i barnehagelærerutdanningen. [A day-care centre for all. Special needs education in preschool teacher education]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Kolle, T. (2017). Styrenes betydning i samarbeid om inkludering. [The importance of management in cooperation in inclusiveness]. I A.-L. Arnesen (red.), Inkludering. Perspektiver i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Lundh, L., Hjelmbrække, H. & Skogdal, S. (ed.) (2014). Inkluderende praksis. Gode erfaringer fra barnehage, skole og fritid. [Inclusive practices. Good experiences from day-care centres, schools and out-of-school-hours care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Ministry of Education and Research. (2017). Rammeplan for barnehager. [Framework Plan for Kindergartens]. Retrieved from <https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/rammeplan-for-barnehagen-bokmal2017.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Research. (2019). Tett på – tidlig innsats og inkluderende fellesskap i barnehage, skole og SFO. [Early intervention and inclusive education in kindergartens, schools and out-of-school-hours care]. (Report to the Storting 6 (2019–2020)). Retrieved from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-6-20192020/id2677025/>
- Moe, M. & Valseth, M.L. (2014). En barnehage for alle – med inkludering som overordnet mål. [A day-care centre for all – with inclusiveness as the overall goal]. In P. Sjøvik (ed.), En barnehage for alle. Spesialpedagogikk i barnehagelærerutdanningen. [A day-care centre for all. Special needs education in preschool teacher education]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Mørland, B. (2008). Temahefte om barn med nedsatt funksjonsevne i barnehagen. [Thematic report on children with a disability at day-care centres]. Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/barnehager/temahefte/om_barn_med_nedsatt_funksjonsevne_i_barnehagen.pdf
- Mørland, B. (2014). Barnehagen – en del av det profesjonelle støtte- og hjelpeapparatet. [Day-care centres – part of the professional support and ancillary services]. In P. Sjøvik (ed.), En barnehage for alle. Spesialpedagogikk i barnehagelærerutdanningen. [A day-care centre for all. Special needs education in preschool teacher education]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Nytrø, S.H. (2014). Vi har et stort mangfold i barnehagen. [We have considerable diversity in early childhood care]. In L. Lundh, H. Hjelmbrække & S. Skogdal (ed.), Inkluderende praksis. Gode erfaringer fra barnehage, skole og fritid. [Inclusive practices. Good experiences from day-care centres, schools and out-of-school-hours care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Sandmel, T. (2014). Fordommer og inkludering. [Prejudices and inclusion]. In L. Lundh, H. Hjelmbrække & S. Skogdal (ed.), Inkluderende praksis. Gode erfaringer fra barnehage, skole og fritid. [Inclusive practices. Good experiences from day-care centres, schools and out-of-school-hours care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Simonsen, E. & Kristoffersen A.E. (2017). Fellesskapets fordeler og forutsetninger – utfordringer for den spesialpedagogiske profesjonen. [The advantages and prerequisites of a community – challenges for the special education profession]. In A.L. Arnesen (red.), Inkludering. Perspektiver i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Sjøvik, P. (2014a). En barnehage for alle med mangfold som ressurs. [A day-care centre for all with diversity as a resource]. In P. Sjøvik (ed.), En barnehage for alle. Spesialpedagogikk i barnehagelærerutdanningen. [A day-care centre for all. Special education in preschool teacher education]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Sjøvik, P. (ed.) (2014b). En barnehage for alle. Spesialpedagogikk i barnehagelærerutdanningen. [A day-care centre for all. Special needs education in preschool teacher education]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Skogdal, S. (2014). Inkludering er deltagelse for alle. [Inclusiveness is participation for all]. In L. Lundh, H. Hjelmbrække & S. Skogdal (ed.), Inkluderende praksis. Gode erfaringer fra barnehage, skole og fritid. [Inclusive practices. Good experiences from day-care centres, schools and out-of-school-hours care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Solli, K.A. (2017). Inkludering i barnehagen i lys av forskning. [Inclusiveness at day-care centres in light of research]. I A.-L. Arnesen (red.), Inkludering. Perspektiver i barnehagefaglige praksiser. [Inclusiveness – perspectives on practices in early childhood education and care]. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Sundsøl, E. & Øksnes, M. (2017). Om å verdsette barns lek. [On appreciating children's play]. In M. Øksnes & T.H. Rasmussen (ed.), Barndom i barnehagen LEK. [Childhood at day-care centres: PLAY]. Oslo: Cappelen Damm.
- WHO. (1986). Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>
- Wolf, K.D. (2017). I møte med barns spontane lek. [Facing children's spontaneous play]. In M. Øksnes & T.H. Rasmussen (ed.), Barndom i barnehagen LEK. [Childhood at day-care centres: PLAY]. Oslo: Cappelen Damm.

Editorial staff: Siv Hillesøy, Eli Marie Killi, Ann-Elise Kristoffersen
Design and illustrations: Miksmaster Creative · www.miksmaster.no
Publisher: © Statped, Oslo 2020
www.statped.no

ISBN 978-82-323-0355-7 (printed version)
ISBN 978-82-323-0356-4 (digital version)



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

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

