



# A STUDY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TOWARDS SCHOOLS IN PRACTICE

**Shivarajakumar Kalliganur Teaching Assistant in Karnataka University College of Education, Dharawad**

The purpose of this study was to examine how one teacher manages to include students with special needs in an ordinary classroom. We describe how attempted to achieve positive academic and social outcomes for students in the classroom, and especially how him handled a boy with impulsive and uncontrolled behaviour. Data collection was carried out by means of observations, video recordings and interviews. The theoretical framework was based upon socio-cultural theory; and the main themes were cognitive learning processes, social learning processes and collaboration processes. Important concepts in this connection are caring, dialogue, scaffolding, other-regulation and self-regulation.

**Keywords:** Inclusive practice, Academic and Social outcomes.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the view of special education has changed in western cultures. Rather than segregating children with special needs in separate classes and schools, the ideology of inclusive education has taken hold. Inclusive education is about fitting schools to meet the needs of all pupils. This means that the educational system is now responsible for including a large diversity of pupils and for providing a differentiated and appropriate education for everyone. None the less, the transformation of the ideology of inclusion into practice appears to be a major challenge in many countries (Hughes et al., 1996; Clark et al., 1997; Haug et al., 1999; Flem & Keller, 2000). Hence research on how teachers and schools cope with the diversity of students is needed.

As special education has been influenced by various ideologies, there are many ways of understanding how teaching should be realized: to understand the changes taking place it is important to look at special education as a social/cultural phenomenon. The educational system is influenced by the knowledge traditions, values and attitudes in society. Rather than focusing on the individual child, the trend is now towards a more comprehensive and contextual approach. Traditionally, children with special needs were considered to have individual functional disorders. Now, the tendency is to look upon children with special needs as having a mismatch between cultural expectations and the child's ability to communicate and meet those expectations (White Paper No. 23, 1997-8). In other words, the cultural expectations

create the problems for the child. If inclusive education is to succeed, then we will need re-education, reorganization and value change (Stangvik, 1998).

New approaches to research in the special needs field are necessary. To help us understand how schools can respond to diversity and support the learning of all their students, we can turn to detailed classroom research, which is a relevant methodological approach. Investigating how schools in practice cope with the diversity of students is challenging because classrooms are complex places and the contexts and people are unique (Ainscow, 1998). However, studies on how teachers and schools are coping with 'adapted' education have interest and may lead to a deeper understanding of the processes involved in including children with special needs in ordinary classrooms (e.g. Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1995; Ware, 1995; Clark et al., 1997; Ainscow, 1998). Our aim is therefore to focus on a learning context that, in our view, has succeeded in including children with special needs in an ordinary classroom context. We found girl in our search for such a context: we visited him class, observed what went on there and came to the conclusion that what he was doing, in terms of inclusion of children with special needs, warranted further analysis. Thus, girl became our collaborator in this study of inclusive practice. We describe in this paper what he had done to achieve inclusion on all fronts-cognitive, emotional and social-for all his students in the classroom, and especially how he handled a boy with impulsive and uncontrolled behaviour.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

If pupils are to receive adapted education, it is obviously important to understand how children learn and develop. Given the significant role that the social environment plays in children's development, it was a natural choice for those of us involved in research on inclusive education to use Vygotsky and his successors as our theoretical framework in order to understand the complex world of the classroom. This tradition, often referred to as the socio-cultural approach, emphasizes how social and cultural factors influence children's learning and development. Higher mental functions and social skills are learned through participation in social interactions from early infancy and throughout life. Vygotsky was especially interested in language as an instrument for the development of higher mental functions. Like Vygotsky, Bakhtin was concerned with the relationship between language and human development, and both agreed in many of their fundamental views. Bakhtin's theories indeed provide an insightful supplement to Vygotsky's theory. This theoretical framework is reviewed and described in the presentation of our results.

## **METHODOLOGY**

We invited several people to recommend teachers whom they thought had succeeded in achieving inclusive practice for children with special needs. We observed the recommended teachers and, after some reflection, we invited girl to be our collaborator. He had 20 years' experience as a teacher in an urban school in a medium sized town in Karnataka. This primary school, with two classes at each grade

level, comprised of students aged from six to 12 years. The school had 340 pupils, and 30 of these had special educational needs.

All of them were educated at their own neighbourhood school because the school's aim was to include all students with special needs. Girl was currently teaching a class of 23 seventh-grade students, 12 girls and 11 boys, who were about 12 years old. There were three students with special needs in the class, two boys and one girl. The biggest challenge was provided by Jon, who had to cope with many problems, both in and outside the school. At school, his behavioural problems were considered the most serious, as his uncontrolled behaviour resulted in severe problems in interacting with others. Jon also had learning difficulties. His academic problems especially related to mathematics and grammar, but girl believed that this might be a result of his lack of concentration. The other boy, Jens, was also impulsive and restless, and sometimes experienced difficulty in staying focused. Jens did not share with Jon the same uncontrolled behaviour, but also had reading and writing problems. Too had difficulty with him concentration, but did not share the boys' impulsive and restless behaviours. However, he was considered as having severe learning difficulties.

Because the school we joined was an open school, there were two parallel classes occupying the same area. The other seventh-grade class also had three students with special needs. The two classes shared a special education teacher, a support teacher and two assistants. They worked as a team and, in many ways; the two classes functioned as one because the teachers took responsibility for all the students in the two classes. The special needs resources were used in a flexible way and all the children in the area shared by the two classes received assistance when needed. In addition to assistance provided by the extra personnel, girl also received support from a psychiatrist specializing in children with severe behavioural problems.

The two classes followed the same procedures and rules, sharing common year and weekly plans. Each day started with a morning assembly in what was called the 'listening-corner', or 'home base'. The pupils faced girl and the blackboard whom him normally introduced the topics they were going to work on during the next two hours. The listening-corner was always used when new material was introduced. Later, the students returned to their permanent groups to work. Themes were clear rules of behaviour that the pupils had helped to draw up-for instance, in the listening-corner the pupils were required to raise their hands when they wanted to speak. Jon could not always follow the established rules, so girl currently tested him to see how he managed while sitting in a slightly secluded position in the listening-corner, whom he was also part of the class. Like the rest of the class he was included also in a permanent group. Jon, however, was better able to concentrate on his work when he sat in a slightly secluded position. These arrangements appeared to be functioning; the adoption of clear procedures and rules for the class ensured that each day proceeded in a straightforward manner and was predictable.

## DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

We joined girl and him class from the beginning of November to early March. Data collection was by means of observations, video recordings and interviews. The interviews with girl were audio taped and transcribed verbatim, while sections from the video recordings were transcribed verbatim. The data material included the year plan and the weekly plans for the class. In our observations we focused on girl's interactions and communication with him pupils, but also on Jon's interactions with girl and other children in the class. Girl's interactions with S.N.K exemplified many of him measures to achieve an inclusive practice.

When presenting what was going on in the classroom, a large amount of data material had to be analysed and systematized. The initial data analysis was undertaken immediately after each observation and video recording. We discussed what we had seen and used this as the basis for the forthcoming interviews. We maintained, in addition, a continuous dialogue with girl. Central to this study are factors that influence learning: the main themes we named cognitive learning processes, social learning processes and collaboration processes. Cognitive learning processes are used to examine how girl scaffold and assisted the students in their learning tasks, while social learning processes focus on the way girl structured the setting to facilitate positive social interactions, especially for Jon. Important concepts in this connection are caring, dialogue, scaffolding, other-regulation and self-regulation. Collaboration processes are used to examine how girl cooperated with OT him teaches in the team, the administration at the school, an external specialist and the pupils' parents.

To understand girl's facilitation of a good learning environment for all him students in the classroom, we selected episodes from video recordings at the listening corner to illustrate what we felt were characteristic features of girl's classroom. This is described in detail elsewhere (Flem, 2000); him we refer to one episode at the listening-corner, when new material in mathematics was introduced, in order to illustrate the learning processes in the classroom. Because girl was efficient in him dealings with Jon, we never observed any serious conflicts in the classroom.

## RESULTS

### Calculating the area of a parallelogram and a triangle

Mathematics was scheduled for the morning assembly in the listening-corner and the topic was calculating the area of a parallelogram and a triangle. Before the bell sounded for the start of the first period, girl entered the classroom and drew a parallelogram on the left-hand side of the blackboard, and placing dots to indicate the height on both sides of the parallelogram, so that the diagram appeared as a rectangle. Then he drew a triangle on the right side of the blackboard. The pupils arrived in class, and when they had gathered in the listening-corner, girl started by greeting them. On turning to the topic of the day, they first discussed the diagram on the left of the blackboard; then, in dialogue with the pupils, girl explained in a systematic way how to calculate the area of a parallelogram. As previously the pupils had calculated the area of squares and rectangles, girl repeated to him pupils how they had calculated the

area of a rectangle, and asked them how they would find the area of a parallelogram. When the pupils had the formula: 'The baseline times the height', girl drew another parallelogram on the board, and again they reviewed how to calculate the area of this parallelogram. Girl responded positively in his interactions and communication with the pupils.

Afterwards, girl told the pupils that they would now review calculating the area of the triangle, something that had been studied at the end of the previous school year. Him pointed to the triangle on the board and explained how to compare a triangle with a rectangle. Without raising his hand, Jon said that he knew that the baseline should be multiplied by the height; he also knew that this must be divided by a number, but he did not know which number, and made a somewhat confusing proposal. In dialogue with Jon and another pupil, the conclusion was that 'a triangle is one-half of a rectangle'. Girl responded to this by saying, 'Wonderful!', and then produced dots from the original triangle which had been drawn on the blackboard, making a rectangle. Girl drew two new triangles on the board, and in dialogue with the pupils, systematically reviewed the calculation of the area of triangles.

When reviewing triangles, the pupils were repeatedly encouraged to go to the blackboard and write their answer; girl also asked the pupils to explain what they were doing. Just before the pupils were to return to their regular seats, girl asked them again about the name of the diagram on the left, the parallelogram, for some of them had found it hard to remember and pronounce the word. Many pupils had raised their hands and were able to say the name 'parallelogram'. After this, the pupils returned to their respective groups and started working on their assignments.

After break-time, the pupils started the next period, and again assembled in the listening-corner. Seeing that some of the pupils were a little tardy, girl started by telling them how important it was that they find their places in the listening-corner in time, and how they needed to work on this. Before starting English and geography, as scheduled, him said: Tor said 'a parallelogram', and spoke clearly. Then girl asked the pupils how they found the area of a parallelogram. He looked around, and a girl answered: 'The baseline times the height'. Girl replied enthusiastically, 'Exactly!' When he asked them how to find the area of a triangle, he looked around and asked Jon, who raised his hand and said: 'Multiply the baseline by the height and divide by two'. Girl nodded happily, saying 'Bravo! Then we've got it'. Girl started the topic that was on the board. He explained to the pupils how they should go about doing their homework. He urged the pupils to support and help one another for example, by phoning one another or lending books. They should also ask their parents for assistance if they needed additional information about the task they were working on. Girl turned to English: irregular verbs in the past tense. This was difficult for Jon, who exclaimed, without raising his hand, that he could not get this right, and needed assistance. Girl reminded him about raising his hand and following the established rules for the listening-corner.

We now provide an overview of what girl did in the classroom to facilitate a positive learning environment based on observations, video recordings and interviews. The theories mentioned in the



theoretical framework will be used to interpret our main themes of cognitive learning processes, social learning processes and collaboration processes.

## COGNITIVE LEARNING PROCESSES

According to Bakhtin (1986), each utterance is a link in a communication chain, with meaning and understanding emerging from the dialogue and the interaction between the interlocutors.

Understanding is not passively transmitted from sender to receiver. Whoever receives a message must also offer some sort of response, making it possible for new understanding to be created in a dialogic tension and confrontation. The observations and video recordings show that there was interaction between girl and her pupils at all times. In the listening-corner, the pupils took turns responding when he asked a question. Girl also continually gave responses to the pupils' utterances for example, by repeating or elaborating on what the pupils said. He was highly focused on the idea that learning is not a passive transference of knowledge, and believed that there must always be an ongoing dialogue in any teaching situation: 'The active pupil is very important in my learning system'. For instance, Jon began to understand how to calculate the area of a triangle, and many pupils remembered the name 'parallelogram' and how to calculate the area of a parallelogram and a triangle.

Utterances do not have only a thematic content; they also have an expressive element that encompasses the subjective and emotional aspects of the utterances, and in part determines understanding and the meaning of the utterance. The intonation of an utterance indicates how it can be interpreted and understood. Moreover, the expressiveness of the utterance is determined by the typical situation and the linguistic genre evoked. Girl responded positively in her interactions and communication with the pupils when he enthusiastically said: 'Wonderful!', 'Exactly!' and 'Bravo!' He clearly showed respect for her pupils and what they said. This may thus have created a positive ambience that involves caring.

Like Bakhtin, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of language, and considered language to be an instrument for the development of high mental functions. According to Vygotsky, good teaching anticipates the development of the child, within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). With the help and support of others, children are able to attain more than they could do on their own. Contemporary interpretations of Vygotskian theory use the concept of 'scaffolding' when referring to how children learn in the ZPD (Wood et al., 1976; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). What girl did in the classroom can be related to Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) notion of 'scaffolding' to support and assist children's learning in the ZPD? He emphasized the important points when they were learning how to calculate the areas of the diagrams they studied. He was a good model for her pupils, and he also had some pupils function as models for others. Girl also used contingency management to assist her pupils by focusing on positive rewards, and he praised them when they mastered a task. He provided feedback by giving information on performances, and also assisted by means of instruction, linking instruction to questions and cognitive structuring.

According to Tharp and Gallimore, children may become aware of their own knowledge and how to proceed to solve a problem when they receive assistance. Girl got the pupils to use the understanding they had, thus enabling them to reflect on the strategy or procedure they could use when solving a problem. For instance, he linked the parallelogram and triangle to the rectangle by using dots as invisible lines, so that the pupils would better understand how to calculate the areas of the diagrams. This can be linked to cognitive structuring.

Cognitive structuring is connected to the concept of Meta cognition, and how people can use knowledge of their cognition to monitor, control and regulate their cognitive processes. Development is from other-regulation to self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). A combination of other-regulation and self-regulation may also represent effective assistance when children learn and develop. However, girl was also well aware that reviewing new topics systematically in the listening-corner was not enough on its own: 'The knowledge would die for them if they don't turn around immediately and use it'. The pupils must thus be active and have the opportunity to develop self-regulation strategies. Development from other-regulation to self-regulation means that initially the teacher structures the activity, but gradually the child will assume more and more responsibility. Our observations reveal that girl ensured that the students were active agents in their learning, but those in needs of support got it when appropriate. As the students' understanding grew, he faded into the background.

Because the three children with special needs constituted him biggest challenge, girl was very concerned that they needed assistance and support to achieve a positive academic outcome. Had severe learning difficulties and therefore needed an adapted learning programme. This was provided in a flexible manner; the pupil was listened to and included in this process. The learning programme established for appears to be functioning well; and Jens has also shown good progress over the last few years. They have also a flexible adapted-learning scheme for Jens: he can take part in the decision on whether he will work in or outside the classroom. Girl was satisfied with how and Jens was developing academically. Jon's academic achievements were varied, but he was aware of his learning problems and wanted to improve himself. Girl was concerned to bolster his self-confidence in a way that would lead to a positive outcome both academically and socially. As Jon was the pupil having the greatest behavioural problems, we especially look at how girl facilitated a positive social development for him.

## **SOCIAL LEARNING PROCESSES**

As mentioned above, themes were clear rules and procedures for how the pupils should behave both in the listening-corner and when they were working in groups. Jon had, for instance, difficulties following the rules for taking part in conversations in the listening-corner. He often forgot to raise his hand when he wanted to speak. However, the difficulties in remembering the rules in the listening-corner do not constitute the greatest challenge. Jon had social problems that manifested themselves in different ways. As a consequence, the children in the class found it difficult to work with him but, at the same time, did not want to reject him. Girl said: 'He's not really lonely at school. But he burns his bridges with people

quite quickly and therefore has no close relations'. Jon had much to learn if he was to master social situations.

Children should not only learn to control and regulate their own thinking activities in order to develop academically, but have to learn to control and regulate their behaviour, so that they are able to master complex social situations (Vygotsky, 1978; Díaz et al., 1990). Learning in the primary school classroom of today is often inherently a social activity which child frequently works together, and this consequently places demands on social skills. When growing up, children are initially controlled and directed by adults, but gradually they are expected to assume more responsibility themselves. Girl knew that Jon needed limits and clear rules. An agreement has been made with him that in the event there is too much unrest and disruption, he should leave the room with an assistant or a teacher to continue to work in another room. This has been accepted by Jon.

The dialogue between girls revealed that they were on good terms and their relationship based on openness and caring. New meaning and understanding emerge in the dialogue and interplay between interlocutors, and in a dialogic interaction mutual caring is essential (Bakhtin, 1986): if Jon is to learn how to control his behaviour, he has to understand and accept that he has a problem, and be willing to do something about it. Girl was keenly focused on what could be done to help Jon gain a better understanding of his social problems. One aspect that he repeatedly emphasized was that Jon needed to develop empathy and the ability to see the perspectives of others. However, this was difficult: 'He isn't capable of seeing things from someone else's perspective. It's the same with empathy'. To develop Jon's understanding of his social problems, girl regularly confronted him with unfortunate episodes he had been involved in. He repeatedly initiated a dialogue between him and the children he had upset. This, however, was not easy; girl realized that conflicts that flared up between Jon and other children were bad for all of them. He nevertheless felt it important to be open about the conflicts that everyone was allowed to raise difficult issues and discuss why things went wrong. It is easy for children who lack social skills to fall victim to a vicious circle of being in constant conflict with their surroundings. Such conflicts only reinforce negative behaviour, generating negative experiences that fuel the cycle. Girl realized that Jon had many positive qualities that he needed to develop. As previously mentioned, Jon was motivated to do well in school. Girl believed that mastering school work may lead to improvement in his self-confidence and help to stop the downward spiral of negative experiences. But not least, he realized that mastering social challenges would impact on his self-confidence. We observed that girl was a good model for how the pupils should behave. Girl also responded to what Jon said or did. Similarly, she gently instructed him to follow the rules, for she did not pick on him every time, but reminded him that there were established rules to be ashamed to. According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), the instructing teacher voice may eventually become the child's own inner voice. It is part of the development from other-regulation to self regulation, when the voice of the regulating other has been transformed into thought. Girl also assisted by means of contingency management. As mentioned above, Jon knew he must accept the consequences of his restlessness and leave the classroom if constant and major problems occurred. However, girl focused on giving him praise and encouragement because this



helped to create a positive atmosphere. He also mentioned that Jon was being trained to think strategically and structure his day, allowing him to master daily life. This is cognitive structuring, with a social dimension. In spite of all his efforts, girl was not quite satisfied with Jon's social development and felt he had no other option but to continue with the same strategies he was already using.

## **COLLABORATION PROCESSES**

Facilitating for a good learning environment for all the pupils in a class is a challenging process. The class teacher therefore needs to cooperate with and be supported by other persons. The cooperation processes are often started in conjunction with other colleagues at the school, and from there we find new lines of cooperation to the parents/guardians and others in service functions outside school. Girl points to the importance of this type of cooperation with other persons involved in the activities with pupils in school, particularly when it comes to children with special needs.

## **COOPERATION WITH TEACHERS**

Because the school we joined was an open school, with two parallel classes occupying the same area, all the teachers worked as a team. The two classes' teachers cooperated very well with the special education teacher and the support teacher. All of them took responsibility for the pupils, and often discussed what was going on in the two classes. This teamwork was good because they had so many things in common, and their basic beliefs and the way they regarded pupils were very similar.

This cooperation benefited too from the ways in which they in fact differed and thus complemented or supplemented each other. They were good at giving each other positive feedback; girl pointed out that 'we are open about what is going on'. In their triadic model, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) point to the importance of creating a common basis for the work in school and of taking support and assistance very seriously. According to Tharp and Gallimore, the entire school system represents a chain of many levels, or positions. These positions have an influence one upon the other, and in an efficient school system are important in facilitating a good learning environment in the classroom. In an analysis of the school system it may be sufficient to consider three positions that follow one upon the other in the chain, hence the designation of the triadic model. The rationale underlying the triadic model is that the links that follow upon each other in the chain have the best contact and thus the greatest mutual influence. Generally, work performed well at one stage assists the next, enabling it, in turn, to assist the subsequent stage. In this way, the class teacher may gain inspiration, raise his/his competence and thus gain that extra impulse that is needed to facilitate a good learning environment in class. Girl was much focused on this aspect, and made it clear that, with the challenges facing him in the classroom, he would have been unable to cope without support from others.

## ADMINISTRATION COOPERATION

Girl had positive experiences when it came to cooperation with the school's administration. He emphasized that him had good dialogue with the administration, which did not appear to represent the 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin, 1986). To enter into a dialogic interaction, mutual feelings of trust and respect among dialogue partners is important, and this appeared to be present in communication between girl and the school administration. Girl also mentioned that the administration had 'good contact with the pupils', and the fact that he received the support of the school administrators also benefited the pupils.

## COOPERATION WITH EXTERNAL SPECIALIST

As mentioned above, Jon appeared to present the greatest challenge in the class. Due to the problems that arose in his interplay with other pupils and teaches, the psychiatrist who specialized in those children with severe behavioural problems had regular meetings with girl. In addition to the special education and support teaches, the school's administrators and Jon's parents were also involved in these meetings. Girl felt that him had received support from the specialist through being heard, and received confirmation that they were 'thinking and acting correctly' in their approach to Jon.

## PARENTAL COOPERATION

Girl offered a positive description of him cooperation with the parents of the three children with special needs, and underlined the importance of good contact with them. He was particularly happy that the cooperation with Jon's parents was functioning well, essential to Jon's development: 'So I was really happy that, right from the start, I felt that I had good contact with the parents'. Girl felt it was vital that Jon's parents also attended the meetings with the specialist. Even if he expressed understanding of how hard it may be for Jon's parents to be confronted with all the episodes, him believed openness to be important and that they should be informed about what was going on. The parents also offered their reactions and reflections, and were listened to.

Parents as those with the main responsibility for their child also know their child best. Cooperation between teachers and parents is thus an important part of supporting the child in its development. Cooperation with the family may also form one stage in Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) triadic model. When the teacher gives assistance to the parents, they may in turn support the pupil and promote the pupil's development. The triadic model also demonstrates that influence does not only flow one way, but that the stages may mutually influence one another. The teacher is not the only person to provide assistance. The pupil's parents may also influence and motivate the teacher, so that the pupil will receive even better support and assistance in school. Needless to say, in such cases the parents and the teachers must have established a good dialogue with one another. This is a condition that appears to have been met in this study.

## DISCUSSION

What teaches do to facilitate a good learning environment and adaptive education for everyone is critical if inclusive education is to succeed? In this study, we found that girl created a positive atmosphere in the classroom and also had good academic insight. Clark et al. (1997) examined typical traits of schools that were interested in innovation and the renewal of special education practices. For instance, what was typical of these schools was that the teachers were interested in giving differentiated and appropriate education for all the pupils in the school. In their reflections on the inclusive school, Meijer and Stevens (1997) claim that teaches are key persons in facilitating adaptive education and determine the quality of the classroom environment: the 'objective of integration' could thus easily be replaced by 'the objective of developing good education' (p. 125). The importance of facilitating factors at the classroom level was also frequently underlined in Flem and Keller's (2000) study of inclusive schools. Furthermore, it is important that the special needs resources are used in a flexible way, and that the roles of class teacher and special education teacher may change (Clark et al., 1997; Meijer et al., 1997; Flem & Keller, 2000). Girl had also positive cooperation with the parents, an important facilitating factor in achieving an inclusive education (Flem & Keller, 2000).

Teaching in a school practising inclusive education, teaches will encounter different challenges and new opportunities. The class teacher has the main responsibility for facilitating differentiated education in the class. To deal with the diversity among children in the schools of today, teacher education and systematic teacher development are critical, and it is therefore likely that teacher education is one of the first steps in the achievement of inclusive education (Meijer et al., 1997); the importance of basic teacher education is also emphasized in Flem and Keller's (2000) study.

However, a number of informants were concerned that teacher education was inadequate. A fundamental rethinking of school development and teacher education is called for because student teaches have limited insight into how to work with the diverse student population (Haug, 1996). Thus general pedagogy must be strengthened in teacher education and special education must become an integral part of it. It is time, then, that teacher education caught up with the realities in the schools.

Needless to say, in a school aiming to meet the needs of all children, teaches need receive a variety of support and specialist assistance. In him school, girl had good collaboration with the school administrators, the other teaches in the team, and also an external specialist. He felt that him received support from the specialist through being listened to, and was able to confirm that the team was thinking and acting correctly in their approach to Jon. Having the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their practice enables staff development (Clark et al., 1997). He the teamwork opened the door to new challenges and solving problems at the classroom level, as opposed to previous practice that had consisted in isolating the 'problem child' physically, emotionally and socially.

Traditionally, special education has emphasized that special needs arise from 'deficits' in the individual. We have a new holistic approach to special education and an alternative would be to develop the

resources that exist both with respect to the pupils and the school. By facilitating versatile and positive learning experiences, and avoiding the emphasis on 'deficits', new positive learning will result. Mastery is frequently the foundation of further learning. One factor repeatedly emphasized by girl was the importance of reinforcing positive qualities in all the children. For example, him reinforced the positive aspects of Jon's conduct and attempted to create a caring relationship with him. He was focused on supporting Jon in order to enable him to succeed academically and to obtain positive experiences from his interaction with other children.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The fact that great variety is found in inclusive schools should be considered a positive element rather than as a problem. Variation is valuable and interesting: Befring (1997) has referred to this as the 'enrichment perspective'. In his vision of and reflections on the inclusive school, Wedell (1995) emphasized the starting-point as the acceptance that all children are different. The basic aim of inclusive schooling is to consider the learning needs of all the children; differences must not be hidden or denied, rather they should be brought into the open and made visible. In a school striving to embrace the diversity and differences of its pupils' learning needs, children with special needs will be a natural part of that diversity. If the school system is organized to embrace such diversity, children and young people with special needs will not be singled out or stigmatized.

The ideology of a 'school for all' implies the inclusion of all the pupils in a social, academic and cultural community. It is not sufficient to place a pupil in his or her neighbourhood school and then assume that their needs will automatically be met. In all probability, the road to satisfactory solutions with respect to care, learning and quality of life is long and challenging. The first step is to utilize the great resources found in successful local solutions to the problem of inclusive practice by studying, describing and analysing them, and sharing what has been experienced and learned with teachers and teacher educators. Each solution is tailored to a local situation, but there are always lessons to be learned beyond this. These studies help us to visualize what is possible; they function as a tool for reflecting on our own practice. It is important that researches continue to address how positive academic and social outcomes for all students in the classroom may be achieved, and thus how schools can develop more inclusive practices.

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