



Constructing support as inclusive practice

A self-study

Edda Óskarsdóttir

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of an Ed.D.-degree



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Constructing support as inclusive practice
A self-study

Edda Óskarsdóttir

Supervisor

Dr Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir

Doctoral committee

Dr Deborah Tidwell

Dr Patricia Thomson

Opponents

Dr Clare Kosnik

Dr Kristine Black-Hawkins

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of an Ed.D.-degree

Faculty of Teacher Education
School of Education, University of Iceland
August 2017

Constructing support as inclusive practice: a self-study

A thesis for an EdD in Education

© 2017 Edda Óskarsdóttir

All rights reserved

Printed at: Háskólaprent

Reykjavík, 2017

Abstract

Constructing support as inclusive practice: a self-study

The compulsory school act in Iceland states that schools should be inclusive. This entails that schools need to provide every pupil with quality education according to their needs and ability, and to remove barriers to participation in learning and social situations to enable pupils and their parents to belong in the school community. Given the fact that the policy calls for significant restructuring of school organisation, it is important to consider how and whether the organisation of special needs education and support operates according to the ideology of inclusive education.

The research focuses on how I, a coordinator for support services in a compulsory school in Iceland, worked on developing the organisation of support towards inclusive practice. Inclusive practice is grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights and full participation of all. In using the term inclusive practice, I seek to demonstrate that there are many factors that have an impact on the process of inclusion in a school setting and to emphasise the fact that inclusion is a process that can never be completed. The research is framed by the concepts of collaboration between classroom teachers and support services, leadership for inclusion and reflective practice, as these concepts have been considered crucial for re-conceptualising education practice to become inclusive.

Self-study methodology was employed in the research to allow for understanding of my role in transforming practice and how that transpired. The purpose has been to transform the support service in Waterfront School so that it reinforces inclusive practice and to understand my role in improving leadership and collaboration for inclusion.

This is a study in and of my practice that was divided into three distinct phases: reconnaissance phase, enactment phase and reflective phase. In the reconnaissance phase I interviewed administrators, teachers and support staff working at the school in order to achieve insight into how the people I work with understand inclusion and into their views on the support system and collaboration. Analysis of this phase illustrates the voices of staff working with pupils in the school by highlighting their perception of inclusion and their ideas about how the support system could be improved.

Based on this analysis I created an action plan that I implemented in the next cycle of the research, the enactment phase.

In the enactment phase the organisation of the support service was transformed according to analysis of the data from the reconnaissance phase and the process was recorded in a self-reflective research journal. Furthermore, the viewpoints of parents, pupils and learning support assistants were gathered on inclusive practices in the school and how that could be improved from their standpoint. The analysis of this phase gives an insight into how the coordination of the support system was developed, what the main challenges were, and how collaboration between general educators and the support staff in the school was transformed.

In the reflective phase, I reflected on my learning of the practitioner research, alone and with others, as I analysed the data and gained understanding of my development in thinking and practice. Through reflection and with the assistance of critical friends I transformed the findings into a story that others might relate to and perhaps learn from.

Findings from this study cast a light on the factors constraining or facilitating the restructuring of the support service as inclusive practice in a school. The findings show that even though I was committed to improving the practices of support, there were influences and barriers to those improvements that made the whole process complex. Breaking away from the discourses of disability, charity and pathology that dictate the practice of support, thereby changing my own and others mind set, proved to be the greatest challenge.

My contribution to knowledge is the provision of a first-hand account of a middle manager endeavouring to change practice towards inclusion. Furthermore, I used the understanding gained from the research to form a model of an inclusive education system, which can be employed to inform school change across system levels, to explore inclusive practices, and to support teacher education and professional development.

Through the research process I have gained an understanding that creating an inclusive support system is a complex venture. It is bigger than improving collaboration and leadership of the coordinator for support. I have learned that the position of a coordinator for support needs to be reconceptualised. While the teachers are responsible for meeting the daily needs of their pupils, the coordinator for support services has a role to provide the support and advice required to assist each teacher in fulfilling their statutory duties.

Ágrip

Skipulag stuðnings í skóla án aðgreiningar: fagleg starfsrýni

Í lögum um grunnskóla á Íslandi er kveðið á um að skólar eigi að vera án aðgreiningar. Það þýðir að skólum ber að veita öllum nemendum góða menntun í samræmi við þarfir þeirra og hæfni auk þess að fjarlægja hindranir fyrir þátttöku í námi og félagslegum aðstæðum til að gera nemendum og foreldrum kleift að tilheyra skólasamfélaginu. Í ljósi þess að stefnan kallar umtalsverðar breytingar á skipulagi skólastarfs er brýnt að huga að hvernig og hvort fyrirkomulag sérkennslu og stuðnings fellur að hugmyndafræði skóla án aðgreiningar.

Rannsóknarverkefnið fjallar um hvernig ég, í hlutverki deildarstjóra stoðþjónustu í grunnskóla á Íslandi, leitaðist við að þróa skipulag stuðnings og sérkennslu í átt til þess að vera án aðgreiningar. Starf í skóla án aðgreiningar byggist á félagslegu réttlæti, lýðræði, mannréttindum og þátttöku allra sem þýðir að það eru margir þættir sem hafa áhrif á ferilinn í átt til þess að skólar séu án aðgreiningar. Áhersla er lögð á að þessi ferill sé án enda, verði ætíð verk í vinnslu eða eitthvað til að stefna að. Rannsóknin byggir á hugmyndum fræðimanna um þætti sem taldir eru mikilvægir fyrir þróun skóla án aðgreiningar: samstarf kennara og stoðþjónustu, forystu fyrir skóla án aðgreiningar og ígrundun í starfi.

Tilgangur rannsóknarinnar var að umbreyta skipulagi stoðþjónustu í einum grunnskóla, Vatnaskóla, þannig að stuðningur yrði án aðgreiningar auk þess að öðlast dýpri skilning á hlutverki mínu sem deildarstjóra við að efla forystu og samstarf. Ég nýtti aðferðir starfstengdrar sjálfsrýni, á ensku self-study, við rannsóknina til að öðlast skilning á breytingarferlinu og hlutverki forystu í starfi. Hér er um að ræða rannsókn á og rannsókn í starfi mínu sem deildarstjóri stoðþjónustu og var henni skipt upp í þrjú skeið: undirbúningsskeið, framkvæmdaskeið og ígrundunarskeið.

Á undirbúningsskeiðinu tók ég viðtöl við stjórnendur, kennara, starfsfólk stoðþjónustu og námsráðgjafa. Flest viðtalanna voru rýnihópaviðtöl en tvö voru einstaklingsviðtöl. Tilgangur viðtalanna var að öðlast innsýn inn í skilning samstarfsfólks míns á skóla án aðgreiningar og hverjar hugmyndir þeirra væru um stoðþjónustuna og samstarf. Greining gagna frá þessu skeiði varpar ljósi á hvernig starfsfólk og stjórnendur skilja skóla án aðgreiningar og á hugmyndir þeirra um hvernig hægt er að þróa stoðþjónustuna og samstarf innan skólans. Á þeirri greiningu byggði ég síðan áætlun sem var framkvæmd á næsta stigi rannsóknarinnar: framkvæmdaskeiðinu.

Á framkvæmdaskeiðinu vann ég að breytingum á skipulagi stoðþjónustunnar samkvæmt því sem fram kom í niðurstöðum greininga gagna af undirbúnings skeiðinu og var breytingarferillinn skráður í rannsóknardagbók. Á þessu stigi tók ég einnig viðtal við mæður nokkurra barna í skólanum, gerði verkefni með nemendum í 4., 6. og 9.-10. bekk og tók viðtöl við nokkra þeirra, og tók viðtal við hóp af stuðningsfulltrúum. Tilgangurinn með þessari gagnaöflun var að fá fram sýn þessa hópa á starf í skóla án aðgreiningar og hvernig bæta mætti starfsemi stoðþjónustunnar. Greining á gögnum af þessu skeiði gaf innsýn inn í hvernig til tókst með að breyta skipulagi stoðþjónustunnar, hverjar voru helstu áskoranirnar og hvernig samstarf kennara og starfsfólks stoðþjónustu breyttist á tímabilinu.

Á ígrundunarskeiðinu rýndi ég í það sem ég hafði lært á rannsókninni, ein og með aðstoð annarra, í þeim tilgangi að greina gögnin og skilja hvernig ég þróaðist í starfi og hugsun. Með ígrundun gagna og samvinnu við rýnivini náði ég að setja fram í niðurstöðum sögu sem aðrir geta samsamað sig við og jafnvel lært af.

Niðurstöðurnar sýna að það reyndist ekki auðvelt að ná markmiðum verkefnisins varðandi umbreytingu á stoðþjónustunni. Það voru ýmis ljón í veginum sem gerðu ferlið flókið. Stærsta áskorunin reyndist vera að breyta orðræðu fötlunar, meðaumkunar og læknisfræði sem stýrði hugarfari mínu og annarra og setti mark sitt á hvernig stoðþjónustunni var háttað.

Framlag mitt til þekkingar er frásögn millistjórnanda af því hvernig hægt er að breyta stoðþjónustunni í átt til þess að vera án aðgreiningar. Til að ná yfirsýn yfir flækjurnar og hvernig aðilar, stofnanir, lög og reglugerðir í lagskiptingu skólakerfisins tengjast og vinna saman útbjó ég kerfisbundið yfirlit yfir stefnu skóla án aðgreiningar og hvað hún felur í sér. Þetta yfirlit getur nýst kennurum, stjórnendum, skólum eða skólakerfum sem vilja gera breytingar á stuðningi og sérkennslu eða gera athugun á skólastarfi. Auk þess getur þetta yfirlit verið upplýsandi í kennaramenntun og endurmenntun kennara og stjórnenda í starfi.

Ég hef öðlast skilning á því í gegnum rannsóknina að það að breyta stoðþjónustu skóla í átt til þess að vera án aðgreiningar er flókið framtak, mun flóknara en að bæta samstarf eða forystu deildarstjóra stoðþjónustu. Kennarar eru ábyrgir fyrir því að mæta daglegum þörfum nemenda sinna, en deildarstjóri stoðþjónustu hefur það hlutverk að styðja kennara og veita þeim þá ráðgjöf sem dugar til þess að þeir geti uppfyllt lögbundnar starfsskyldur sínar.

Acknowledgements

When I decided to apply for admission into the doctoral programme at the School of Education in University of Iceland, I had no idea of what I was committing myself to. Looking back, these past years have been a time of intense learning and growth for me as an academic and as a person. This learning and growth is marked by hard work and resilience, and has been made possible by all the great people who have studied and worked alongside me, who have influenced my thinking and writing during this time, and who have been willing to listen and give feedback. These people, my supervisors, colleagues, critical friends, fellow graduate students and my family, are the ones who I thank for being successful in completing my thesis.

Hafðís Guðjónsdóttir, my main supervisor and friend, has encouraged me and supported all this time, always in a constructive and positive manner, and brought me over many difficult hurdles. Her advice, academic knowledge and wisdom helped me throughout writing my chapters, especially in explaining the research methodology and structuring the findings. During my study, Hafðís has given me the opportunity to participate in various research projects which has helped me grow as a researcher and academic writer, as well as expanded my network of colleagues and circle of friends.

My second supervisor Deborah Tidwell at University of Northern Iowa was very helpful in her revisions and edits of the thesis. Her eye for detail and structure is amazing and I state that working with her has improved my written English immensely. The third person on my committee was Patricia Thomson at University of Nottingham and I sincerely thank her for her advice on academic writing as well as her constructive remarks and feedback, particularly regarding the findings and discussion chapters.

I am especially grateful to the research participants who made this all possible by having faith in this research. Because of their participation, trust and belief in me, I can now submit my research to the field of education. I also owe a lot of gratitude to all the people who have shared different learning spaces with me in Bolholt, Stakkahlíð and in Siltavuorenpenger for their influence, support and encouragement through the years.

To my dad, my extended family and friends, I would like to say thanks for your support; getting here would have been so much harder without you. Finally, I thank Andri, my husband, for his encouragement through all these years and without his and my daughters' Lilja, Kaðlín and Ragnheiður patience and endurance I would never have finished this thesis. They were always there when I needed a laughter or a hug.

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Ágrip	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of figures	x
List of tables	x
1 Introduction	1
1.1 The coordinator for support services.....	2
1.2 The support system	7
1.3 The school context	8
1.3.1 The local context	11
1.3.2 The context in time.....	12
1.4 The policy of inclusion.....	12
1.4.1 Defining inclusion	12
1.4.2 Looking back	14
1.4.3 The influence of Salamanca.....	15
1.4.4 The current state	17
1.4.5 Policy of funding support services.....	19
1.5 Statement of problem	20
1.6 Research questions	21
1.7 Summary	21
2 Conceptual framework	22
2.1 Leadership for inclusion	22
2.2 Collaboration	25
2.3 Practitioner research and reflective practice.....	30
2.4 Summary	34
3 Methodology.....	35
3.1 The self-study methodology	35
3.1.1 Recapping the research question.....	37
3.2 Participants.....	38
3.3 Data collection procedures	40

3.4	Reconnaissance phase: discussing with co-workers.....	42
3.4.1	Ethical issues in the reconnaissance phase.....	46
3.5	Enactment phase: Pupils as participants	47
3.5.1	Ethical issues in researching with children	51
3.5.2	Reflecting on the participation of pupils.....	52
3.6	Enactment phase: Getting input from parents.....	53
3.7	Enactment phase: a meeting of learning support assistants.....	54
3.8	Enactment phase: Research journal	55
3.9	Reconnaissance and Enactment phase: The critical friend	55
3.10	Data analysis	56
3.10.1	Analysing data from the reconnaissance phase.....	56
3.10.2	Analysing data in the enactment phase.....	58
3.11	Validity of the study	60
3.12	Presentation of findings.....	60
4	“Is this inclusion?” Findings from the reconnaissance phase	61
4.1	The perception of inclusion	61
4.1.1	Defining inclusion	62
4.1.2	My reflections on defining inclusion	63
4.1.3	Explaining inclusive practice.....	64
4.1.4	My reflections on how inclusive practice is explained.....	65
4.1.5	“This [inclusion] really is the most challenging thing in teaching”	66
4.1.6	My reflections on the challenges	69
4.2	The support system.....	70
4.2.1	Coordination of support.....	70
4.2.2	Deployment of people within the support system	73
4.2.3	Collaboration	77
4.2.4	Reflections on the support system	79
4.3	Proposed actions to improvement	81
4.3.1	Actions to improve the support system.....	81
4.3.2	Actions to improve collaboration.....	81
4.3.3	Actions to improve my role in leadership	82
5	Improving practice: Findings from the enactment phase	83
5.1	Coordinating the support system	84

5.1.1	Changing the structure	84
5.1.2	The chaos	88
5.1.3	Creating a balance	88
5.1.4	Sharing responsibilities	90
5.2	Challenges to inclusive practice	91
5.2.1	The barriers	91
5.2.2	The discourse of diagnosis	94
5.2.3	Pupils' voices: Effects of support	96
5.3	Improving collaboration	99
5.3.1	Structuring collaboration around problem solving	99
5.3.2	Challenges to collaborating	103
5.4	Reflections on the coordination of support	104
6	Discussions: Constructing an inclusive system	107
6.1	An inclusive education system model	107
6.1.1	Inclusive education	109
6.1.2	Inclusive practice	112
6.1.3	Inclusive pedagogy	119
6.1.4	The learner	127
6.1.5	A summary of the model	128
6.2	The role of the Coordinator for Support Services in improving practice	128
6.3	Conclusion	130
7	Conclusions	131
7.1	Learning from doing self-study	131
7.2	Contribution to knowledge	133
7.3	Final thoughts	134
8	References	137
	Appendix A The role of social educators	153
	Appendix B Informed consent reconnaissance phase	155
	Appendix C Interview protocol reconnaissance phase	157
	Appendix D Informed consent for pupils' participation	159
	Appendix E Data Protection Authority announcement	161
	Appendix F Question protocol for students	163

Appendix G Informed consent and questions for participating mothers.....	165
Appendix H Informed consent and questions for learning support assistants	167

List of figures

Figure 1 The organisational chart of Waterfront school	5
Figure 2 The link between the concepts in the conceptual framework.....	22
Figure 3 Layers of collaboration	27
Figure 4 Kristin's drawing of how she sees support in the school.....	97
Figure 5 Helga's drawing of how pupils are labelled (ADHD, Dyslexic, Nerd, Normal)	98
Figure 6 The inclusive education system	108

List of tables

Table 1 Timeline of my employment at Pondsides School	3
Table 2 Number of pupils with diagnosis	10
Table 3 List of participants	39
Table 4 The timeline of data gathering	41
Table 5 Overview of data gathering in the Reconnaissance phase	44
Table 6 The interview protocol	45
Table 7 An example of preparation for writing stories.....	59
Table 8 Types of thinking about disabled people and forms of education.	114
Table 9 The framework of inclusive pedagogy	121

1 Introduction

This study considers the problematic and complex issue of developing inclusive practice within a particular school in Iceland, the Waterfront School¹. The focus is on how I, as a coordinator for support services, worked on developing the support system to improve inclusive practice. Inclusive practice here relates to a broad conceptualization of inclusion as an education system that enables all pupils to participate, access, make progress and enjoy learning (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). In using the term inclusive practice, I seek to demonstrate that there are many factors that have an impact on the process of inclusion in a school setting and to emphasise the fact that inclusion is a process that can never be completed.

My own understanding of inclusion has been constantly developing. Initially I believed that the focus was on placement and service for pupils with special needs. Through the years, however, I have come to understand inclusion in a broader sense as is reflected in UNESCO's Education for All initiative (UNESCO, 2000) where it is stated that school practitioners need to be aware of and remove barriers to learning, participation and access for *all* learners. I have come to recognise that inclusion cannot be achieved by transferring special education thinking and practice onto the mainstream setting; rather the school system must be transformed so that everyone has a place in it. Hence, the ideas of Universal Design for Learning appeal to me, emphasising flexible learning environments through designing and developing a curriculum that accommodates diverse learners with individual differences (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012).

Slee and Allan (2001) have argued that attending to the organisation of schooling and school practices are crucial aspects for the development of inclusive education. Others (Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robson, 1999), have identified the need to focus on organisational features of schooling to promote inclusive practice, rather than on compensatory measures for the individual learners. Furthermore, the need to empower schools through educating school staff and developing collaborative contexts to "avoid the creation of barriers and difficulties in the first instance" is stressed (Deppeler, Loreman, & Sharma, 2005, p. 120).

¹ The name of the school and community are pseudonyms to preserve their identity

This is a study in and of my practice that took place over one and a half years, from January 2012 to June 2013. It is divided into three distinct phases: reconnaissance phase, enactment phase and reflective phase. In the reconnaissance phase I acquired information from administrators, teachers and support staff working at the school on their understanding of inclusion, on the support system, and on collaboration. In the enactment phase the organization of the support service was transformed according to analysis of the information from the reconnaissance phase and the process was recorded in a self-reflective research journal. Furthermore, because of the complexity of the topic and to increase the validity of the study, I felt that I needed to include more stakeholders in my data collection. Thus, the viewpoints of parents, pupils and learning support assistants were gathered on inclusive practices in the school and how the practice of support could be improved from their standpoint. In the reflective phase, I reflected on my learning of the practitioner research, alone and with others, and these reflections and learnings are gathered here in the findings and discussion sections of this thesis.

The practitioner research took place in the school where I worked for 19 years. Conducting practitioner research in a school makes it inevitable that many of those who worked with me, to some extent, became participants and collaborators in the research, as the reality of my practice was the space of my research. Hence, my research partners were the teachers, administrators and support staff, as well as pupils and parents. I shared the same working environment as the participants and we were “immersed, embedded and strongly connected” (Smyth & Holian, 2008, p. 34) in our interwoven practices on a daily basis.

1.1 The coordinator for support services

I came to work at Waterfront school in 1995 as a special education needs teacher and from 2004 to 2014 I was a coordinator of support services. My work title in Icelandic is *deildarstjóri stoðþjónustu* and I have translated that to English as *coordinator of support services* instead of *special education needs coordinator (SENCo)*, which would be found in English speaking countries, as well as in Sweden. The former term, however, better captures the definition of my work and emphasizes the variety of services required in a school of diverse pupils. Furthermore, it symbolizes a different view on the role of those assisting pupils and teachers in learning and social situations in schools, focusing on support or scaffolding *for learning* instead of the special needs *of the learner*.

The position of coordinators of support services was introduced into the Icelandic school system in the beginning of the 21st century when the municipalities granted compulsory schools permission to use extra funds to increase middle management (Guðjónsdóttir, Björnsdóttir, & Jóhannsson, 2007). Laws or regulations have not officially defined the role within the system and each school that has a coordinator for support services has the freedom to develop the practice according to its needs.

A timeline showing my employment at Pondside², later Waterfront school, is provided in Table 1:

Table 1 Timeline of my employment at Pondside School

Year	Employment
1995	Hired as a special education needs teacher 80% position for 1 st – 6 th grade at Pondside school
1996	Took on the role of a subject leader for special needs education 50% and SEN teacher 50% =full position
2004	Became coordinator for support services 60% and SEN teacher 40%. Pondside and Hillside schools merge into Waterfront school
2006	Became coordinator for support services 100%, at both lower and secondary levels
2009	Had begun my doctoral studies, worked part time 75%
2011-2012	Took a year off to begin the research, reconnaissance phase
2012-2013	Came to work 65%, mainly at the lower level and acted as an advisor to the secondary level. Enactment phase in research
2013-2014	Took a year off – consequently resigned my position at Waterfront in May 2014. Reflection phase in research.

Reflecting on my practice as a coordinator for support services, I think it is safe to say that it has undergone considerable changes in the past decade. Since I began working there I have served under the command of three different principals. Each of them has had different styles of leadership and expectations from their staff, so my practice has developed

² Pondside is an pseudonym

accordingly. The most significant changes in my practice were that I moved away from teaching pupils and working directly with their teachers, to being a part of the administrative team. Furthermore, I coordinated support from 1st – 10th grade instead of working solely at the primary and middle level. The role gradually shifted from meeting individual pupils' special needs to the direction of management.

In my practice, I have a status as the leader of the support system responsible for supporting pupils with special needs. In addition, I work closely with the school's administration as can be seen in the organisational chart for the school (Figure 1). The organisational chart shows both the hierarchy of the school organisation and how the areas of teaching, services and support service are connected. The support service is positioned in the grey area of the chart, literally, and somewhat as a separate entity in the school's organisation, with no connection to the area of teaching.

The guiding light in my work is to coordinate the daily provision of education and support for pupils with diverse education needs in a way that promotes inclusion, in accordance with the needs of each individual pupil, his parents, teachers and the overall situation in his classroom. My work description states numerous obligations that I must fulfil, based on local and state policy. Below is a description of my practice according to my job description:

- Keeping a register of pupils with special education needs as well as of pupils with a different mother tongue than Icelandic. This register is necessary to enable the identification and tracking of pupils who need additional support, to ensure that they receive appropriate support, and for the purposes of funding of support services.
- Liaising with services out of school, medical and social services such as child protective services, Children and Youth Psychiatric ward and State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre. This entails keeping records of paperwork as well as documenting meetings with those services.
- Being a member of the management team of the school with the principal, assistant principals, and level coordinators. In weekly meetings, we discuss financial and managerial matters and make decisions regarding the general direction of the school. This includes discussing the need for professional development for the staff.
- Writing policy for the support services and designing forms for documentation, such as individual education plans, and developing other monitoring systems.

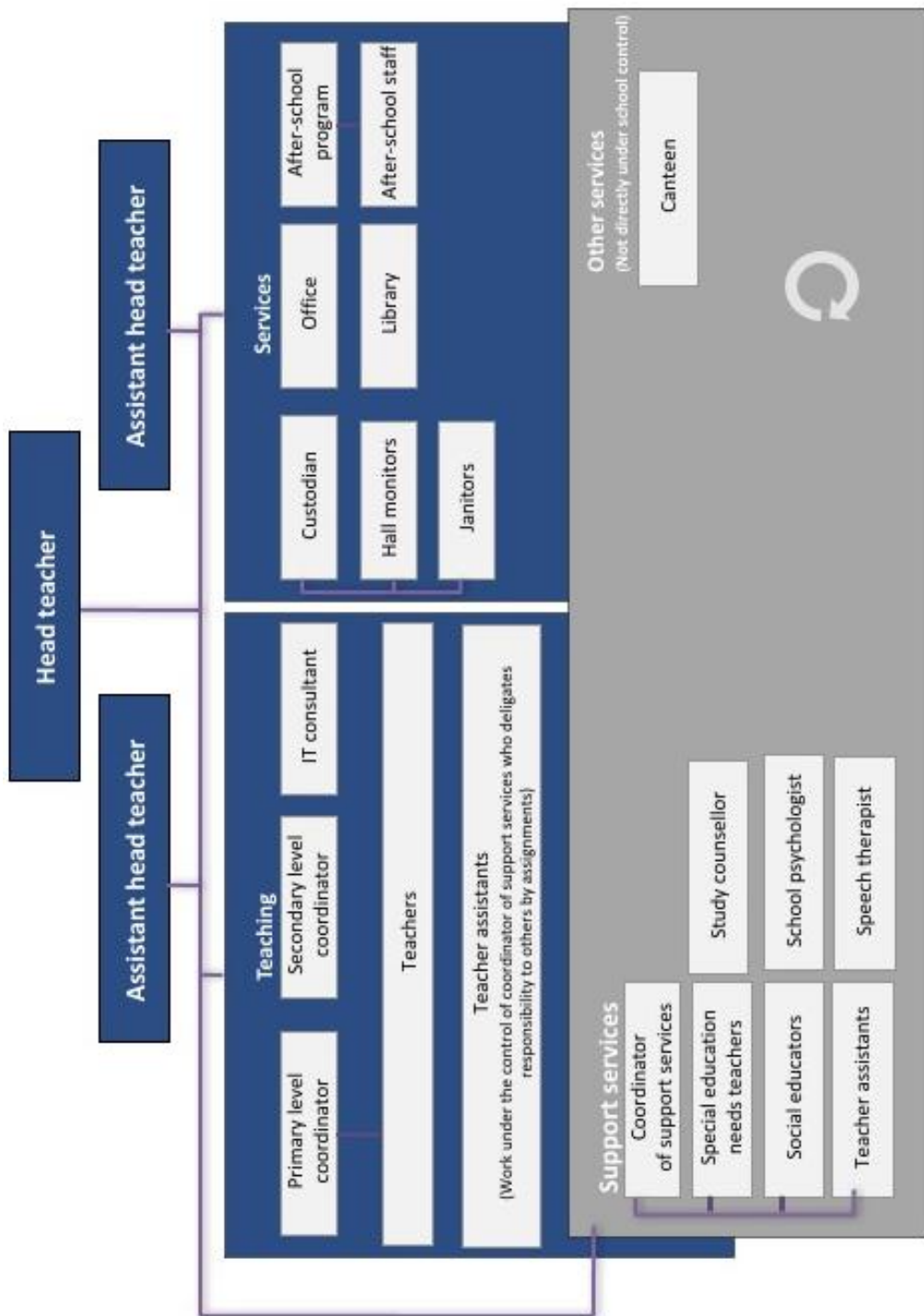


Figure 1 The organisational chart of Waterfront school

- Leading a team of specialists working at the school and meeting with them biweekly in the pupil protection council (Nemendaverndarráð). The specialists are the school psychologist, nurse, study counsellor and social worker (works for the municipality). In the meetings, we discuss individual pupil cases that have been referred to the team for several reasons, such as behaviour/emotional difficulties, social difficulties, requests for evaluation by the school psychologist, or suspicions of neglect or abuse. Sometimes the team meets with the teachers involved, but not as a rule.
- Coordinating screening of pupils in reading and writing as well as performing individual assessments in reading and mathematics to decide on what kind of support is needed.
- Budgeting for the support service. This is an important but time consuming factor in spring when the budget for support services is being decided and in fall when it is re-evaluated. The budget is both calculated as hours (0,1925) per pupil as well as a quota (a price tag) per each pupil who gets tailor made support. These calculations are explained better in chapter 1.5.5 on the policy of funding.
- Managing people and resources. In my team of support there are five special education needs (SEN) teachers, five social educators, and four learning support assistants. This involves deployment of learning support assistants, planning for substitutes when support staff is ill or away, liaising with and advising learning support assistants on how they support pupils, and managing the day to day organizing of resources for the support services.
- Managing meetings with parents and support services. Meetings with parents serve two functions: to deliver and discuss the outcome of an assessment, and as monthly meetings with parents of disabled pupils. Support teams include the teacher, support staff and others and we discuss how the pupil is doing, whether there are any issues and where we are going next. I have meetings with the support service's staff regularly to go over how everyone is progressing. Also, I meet with the speech therapist 3 times a year to discuss her clients and how we are going to organise speech therapy according to funding.

Looking at the description for my practice, it can be said to focus on managerial and operational functions, covering management and paperwork, communications and liaison, and generally overseeing and distributing resources for support. My role towards supporting pupils is through identification and assessment, and removing barriers to access

learning and social situations. Towards teachers, my role is focused on monitoring teaching and assisting in finding solutions to problems that arise in the day-to-day operations of their classrooms.

1.2 The support system

The principle behind special needs education at the Waterfront school is that it is a service but not a place. The support system is a synonym for the diverse kinds of educational and social support that is needed in a school with diverse pupils, it is not seen as separate from other teaching but as one way of teaching pupils that can be placed on a continuum. In Regulation 525/2010 about pupils with special needs in compulsory schools the pupils included in the special education designation are those who are experiencing difficulties in their studies because of specific learning difficulties, emotional or social difficulties and/or disabilities. Specifically, this includes pupils with reading difficulties, pupils with long term illnesses, pupils who are developmentally impaired, who have mental disorders and/or who have other health related special needs (Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir 585/2010).

To meet these diverse needs the support system at the Waterfront school has two levels:

Universal support for pupils that have temporary or long-term difficulties in their studies, e.g. with reading, spelling, mathematics or learning to swim. Pupils who experience difficulties with behaviour, language or motor skills are supported at this level. Pupils are identified for support by screening processes for reading and writing, through teacher assessments and by requests made by concerned parents. Pupils themselves can also ask for support.

Tailor made support is for pupils who are developmentally delayed in a way that has considerable effect on their ability to study or learn. These pupils are disabled, have serious communication, behaviour or mental disorders, and have been diagnosed by an acknowledged party.

The universal support takes place in pupil's classroom or in a separate room two to three times a week over a short or long period of time depending on the need of the pupil. The support is provided by special education needs teachers who focus on adapting learning situations and material for pupils, or provide additional practice/lessons, to give them access to participation in their classroom learning. If there are many pupils

in one class in need of support, a learning support assistant will be assigned to that class for some hours per week, under the command of the classroom teacher.

The tailor made support is organised for pupils that have a special funding based on their diagnosis and an assessment of their need for support. Social educators³, special education needs teachers, and learning support assistants work as a team with these pupils according to an individual education plan. The social educators are usually assigned to individual pupils, whom they are responsible for working with according to the individualised education plan. The pupils are taught in both their class and in a support room, depending on their need and accessibility. The team working with each pupil meets with parents and the class teacher on a regular basis and is responsible for writing the individual education plan.

The school policy states, in accordance with the Regulation on pupils with special needs that pupils should be taught within their classrooms as much as possible (Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir 585/2010). Furthermore, it states that SEN teachers are responsible for writing their individual education plans as well as scaffolding pupils' learning where needed in cooperation with the teacher.

1.3 The school context

There were two schools in the municipality when I began working there in the fall of 1995; Pondside primary school and Hillside⁴ lower secondary school. Pondside is one of the oldest compulsory schools in Iceland. It was established late in the 19th century and even though the school has a history of being conservative and traditional, the school authorities and the teachers have been accepting of pupils with diverse needs as long as they (both pupils and teachers) get support. There is a strong tradition of special education teaching as the school was one of the first in Iceland to establish a remedial room (*Lesver*) in the early seventies. The school has been at the forefront in other areas through its history, such as being the first school to make 1st grade compulsory and the first to change the structure of the school day so that it had one set school day instead of having two sets with the older pupils in the morning and the younger in the afternoon.

³ The role of social educators is explained further in Appendix A

⁴ Hillside is an pseudonym

Hillside school, a lower secondary school, was established in 1974 when Pondside school was getting too crowded. Instead of adding to the school building, the education authorities decided to build a new school for 7th-9th grades (later 7th through 10th grades). In 2004, the two schools merged into one school with one principal, and it was named Waterfront school. The school is run in the two original buildings that are about 600 meters apart, 1st-6th grades are taught in cohort classes in Pondside and 7th-10th grades are taught in subject-based classes at Hillside.

At the time of the first phase of the research, in the school year 2011-12, the school had 502 pupils aged six to sixteen years. There were around 50 teachers working in the school, and altogether teachers and other staff were around 96 people. The school management team included a principal, two deputy principals (one in each building) and two level coordinators (one for each building). In the support services, there were five SEN teachers, six Social Educators and six Learning Support Assistants (LSA). Since I was on leave that school year, my work responsibilities were divided between the deputy principals and a SEN teacher at each school level.

In the second phase of the research, in the school year 2012-13, there were 499 pupils in the school. The school had the same number of teachers and staff as the year before and the school management team was also unchanged. In the support system, there were now six SEN teachers (four fulltime), five Social Educators (four fulltime) and twelve LSA (all part time).

The number of pupils who need and receive support is varied during the school year. The support allocation is reviewed at the end of each term or as often as needed and therefore the number of pupils receiving support is not constant. Furthermore, as the school policy states that the universal support is to take place in the classrooms as much as possible, it is difficult to put a finger on the exact number of pupils receiving support. To get a feel for the scope of support, Table 2 is provided below that shows the number and percentage of pupils with some kind of diagnosis in each grade.

Table 2 Number of pupils with diagnosis

Grade	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	Total
Number of pupils in each grade	42	48	46	51	47	45	52	60	50	58	499
SENCo ⁵		1	2	6	3	9	8	6	7	9	51
Speech and language therapist			5	5	9	3	5	3	1		31
Psychologist ⁶	5	4	2	3	5	3	10	9	6	8	55
The State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre	1	1		1	3	3	1	1	2	1	14
Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Department					1	1			2	1	4
Other ⁷			1	1	1	1	1				5
Number of pupils w. diagnoses	6	6	10	16	21	20	17	15	15	20	146
Ratio ⁸	14%	13%	22%	31%	45%	44%	35%	25%	28%	34%	29%

The row 'Number of pupils w. diagnoses' in the table, provides the actual number of pupils behind the number of diagnoses, as in a few instances one pupil can have more than one diagnoses, such as for reading difficulties and for speech and language difficulties. The table shows who or what agency is responsible for performing the diagnosis. It can be seen here that the proportion of pupils with some kind of diagnosis is highest in fifth and sixth grade. In these two grades, there is also the highest number (three) of pupils with diagnosis from The State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre, which means that their diagnoses involve severe developmental disabilities, such as autism. Assessment of reading or mathematics

⁵ Diagnosis for math or reading difficulties. Pupils are first formally diagnosed for reading difficulties in fourth grade.

⁶ These are both psychologist who work for the school and outside school.

⁷ These are from occupational therapists or other health practitioners

⁸ Represents number of pupils with diagnosis/number of pupils in a grade

difficulties is usually not performed in first grade but the aim is to assess pupils by fourth grade. The reason is that pupils have differing developmental patterns in reading and assessing them for dyslexia in first or second grade would not be fair to them. However, pupils who have a slower reading development are monitored and they receive support from the SEN teacher from first grade.

1.3.1 The local context

The school is situated in Hill View, an affluent town near the metropolitan area with around 4.300 inhabitants. The town is financially strong and the local authorities have an ambition for running the school. The town's school policy is the product of an assembly where the town inhabitants, the school personnel and local authorities cooperated on shaping the vision for the school. This vision emphasizes

... the operation of good schools offering ambitious and progressive schooling based on a good working environment. Emphasis is placed on meeting the needs of pupils and enhancing their abilities. Good communication and collaboration between staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders is a prerequisite for the success of building a just and humane community (Hill View, 2011).

There is a positive relationship and trust dominant in the relationship between the local education authority and the school that has been growing in the past years. Over 90% of the children attending first grade come from the same playschool in Hill View. This entails that following up on early intervention is efficient and the flow of information, or the bridge, between the school levels is strong. Nearly all of the children living in the town attend the school, as the rule is that everyone is welcome to the school (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008). In the school years that the research took place no pupils were in special schools but a few were attending schools in Reykjavik, usually because they had recently moved to Hill View and did not want to change schools, or for other unknown reasons.

1.3.2 The context in time

At the time of the initial group discussions with the teachers and staff in spring 2012, Iceland was still recovering from the financial crisis that began in October 2008. This meant that there had been cutbacks everywhere in official organisations, including schools. Among the actions taken to meet the recession were to have considerably larger classes in schools, which meant fewer teaching positions, to downsize middle management, and to cut down on other costs like school trips and paper use, to name a few (Samband íslenskra sveitafélaga, 2010). However, while many local authorities cut back on their service levels for pupils with special needs, this was not the case in Hill View. The local education authority stood guard around the funding for support in the school to ensure the service level was constant. This information is relevant to give the context for some of the things the teachers discussed in the interviews.

1.4 The policy of inclusion

My practice is governed by policies and the ones that affect practice most are inclusion, the policy for support services and policies for funding support services (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008; Reglugerð um nemendum með sérþarfir 585/2010). These policies emanate from global, state, and local initiatives. In this review of the policies, I will begin by focusing on defining inclusion and its origins, as well as state my understanding of the ideology. Furthermore, I will peruse the Icelandic laws and regulation of the past decades leading to the ones we have today. Finally, I will go on to discuss the implications of policies of funding.

1.4.1 Defining inclusion

The official policy that has the most effect on my practice is inclusion. Inclusion has been defined in various ways through the years and the definition is constantly developing. Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson (2006) have distinguished between a *narrow* and *broad* definition of inclusion. A narrow view of inclusion emphasises participation and education of disabled pupils and special needs pupils in mainstream or general education. This view focuses on special needs as the prerequisite for inclusion, that inclusion is a part of special needs education. It is based on the worldview that the difficulties pupils experience in school are a consequence of their impairments or shortages “rather than arising from failings in relationships, curricula, approaches to teaching and learning unresponsive to diversity or

the social pressures that are brought into schools from homes and communities” (Booth, 2010, p. 2).

A broad definition of inclusion focuses on diversity and how schools respond to and value a diverse group of pupils as well as other members of the school community. Inclusion is seen as an ongoing process focusing on increased participation in education for everyone involved, to work against inequality and increase people’s sense of belonging in school and society (Booth, 2010). Inclusive schools are intended to find ways to educate all their pupils successfully, thus working against discrimination and leading to a socially just society where everyone is a valid participant (Slee, 2011; UNESCO, 1994). Diversity is a natural feature of a school community and it can be explained as the range of characteristics that may result in a perception of difference between people. This perception can elicit responses in others that may advantage or disadvantage the individual in person (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Inclusion is aimed at diverting attention towards inequalities presented in exclusion and discrimination against diversities such as social and ethnic circumstances, religion, gender, and abilities of pupils and their families (ibid, 2007).

Inclusive practice is fundamentally grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights and full participation of all (Ainscow, 2005; Florian, 2008; H. Guðjónsdóttir & Karlsdóttir, 2009; Jónsson, 2011). These ideologies are connected and dependent on each other in various ways. A socially just education system is premised on the idea that quality education is the democratic right of all rather than a prize to be competitively fought for (Reay, 2012). This idea is integral to inclusive education systems as those advocating for critical social justice seek a world that is fair and equitable for everyone, not a world where everyone gets the same to reach the same goals. Inclusion furthermore implies a shift from emphasising the source of learning difficulties or difficulties in school as coming from within the pupil or stemming from his/her social circumstances to viewing the problem as the influence of the system of education or the environment (UNESCO, 2009).

My understanding of inclusion is in tune with the broad definition: that it is first and foremost about removing barriers to participation in learning and social situations, to enable all pupils and their families to belong in the school community without prejudice. In other words, it entails being active in identifying the hindrances some groups encounter in attempting to access educational opportunities and using available resources to remove those hindrances (UNESCO, 2001). According to this understanding,

inclusion refers to a broader group of pupils than those who are disabled or have learning disabilities. It involves marginalised groups and focuses on responding to diversity (UNESCO, 2009), by changing school structures and cultures which often construct barriers to pupil participation, belonging and achievement.

My vision for an inclusive school is in tune with Armstrong's (2005) argument about inclusion, that the school should provide all pupils with quality education according to their needs and ability, and that the responsibility for pupils with special needs is shared between those who teach and support them. I see this shared responsibility being the basis for collaboration between regular education and special education personnel where each has a role to play in the interest of pupils. I would like pupil diversity in the school to be understood as an "asset, an enduring source of uncertainty, and thus the driving force behind innovation, growth of knowledge, and progress" (Skrtic, 2005). Furthermore, I envision the school as a community that invests in the presence, participation, and achievement of everyone in the school, both staff and pupils, where everyone's presence is valued and noted, their participation is meaningful and that they get the opportunity to achieve and show their strengths (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

1.4.2 Looking back

The idea of inclusion has been implied in the Icelandic laws since 1995, although declaring that pupils should be educated in an inclusive school was first explicit in the Icelandic act for compulsory schools in 2008 (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008). Earlier laws had, in the spirit of integration, indicated that schools should welcome all pupils living in their neighbourhoods, teaching them according to their needs as equals, but not specifying that it should be under the notion of inclusion and without segregation. Integration suggested that pupils with special needs were supposed to adjust to the school, not vice versa; they were educated in the same building as non-disabled pupils, sharing the same space but not having access to equal education opportunities (Jóhannesson, 2006; Marínósson, 2011).

Looking back, the development towards inclusion in the Icelandic school system has been ongoing for the past two decades. The foundation for it was laid in 1974 when a new act for compulsory schools was set, confirming some fundamental developments that had been happening in the school system for the past decade (Jónasson, 1996). This act made imperative

changes in the basic assumption of schooling by securing equal access to education with regard to residence (urban vs. rural), gender, and disability. There was a transformation in the understanding of the role and obligations of schools, from emphasis on teaching subjects which the pupils were obliged to learn, to meeting pupils' needs and organising teaching according to their development and understanding (Jónasson, 1996). This act also stated explicitly for the first time in Icelandic school history that the school was for all children and that most children should be educated in the regular school, categorising special needs into five groups and stating that two of those should be educated in institutions (Jónasson, 2008b). The 1974 act was later supplemented with the first regulation on special needs education in 1977 that further emphasised the categorisation of pupils and promoted special schools and special classes through securing financial support for them (Jónasson, 1996; Jónasson, 2008b).

In 1990 a new regulation for special needs education, based also on the 1974 act, was set in response to criticism of the categorisation of special needs which was behind the support system and endlessly called for different specialised placements (Jónasson, 1996). This regulation stated explicitly the right of *all* children to access their neighbourhood schools (Reglugerð um sérkennslu 98/1990) although parents could still choose a special school placement for their children. Here the shift was towards assessing pupils' needs in the school environment, rejecting the medical model of categorizing children according to their handicap and basing the funding for special needs education on a rule that 20% of the school population needed special education (Jónasson, 1996; Jónasson, 2008b; Oskarsdottir, 1993).

1.4.3 The influence of Salamanca

In 1994, a conference was held in Salamanca, Spain, to discuss the development of special needs education. The main conclusion and concern of the conference was that special needs education could not develop in isolation, that it had to become a part of the overall educational policy (UNESCO, 1994). The conference called for a major reform of the school system, a new approach to education policy where difference was viewed as normal and where education systems could respond effectively to diversity. The participating nations, including Iceland, signed a statement where the principle of inclusion was emphasised, recognising "the need to work towards 'school for all' – institutions which include everybody,

celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs” (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii).

A framework for action was published alongside the statement that was meant to be a guideline for action in special needs education. The guidelines affirmed that learning should be adapted to the needs of the children rather than fitting the child to a predetermined learning process. Furthermore, the fundamental principle of the inclusive school stated that all children should learn together regardless of their difficulties or differences and that the school is responsible for recognizing the different needs of pupils and working with them accordingly (UNESCO, 1994).

Inclusive education, in the Salamanca statement, is grounded in the concept of social equity and is consistent with the social understanding of disability. According to Peters (2007), there are four assumptions inherent in this conception of inclusive education:

1. All pupils come to school with diverse needs and abilities, so no pupil is fundamentally different.
2. It is the responsibility of the general education system to be responsive to all pupils.
3. A responsive general education system provides high expectations and standards, quality academic curriculum and instruction that are flexible and relevant, an accessible environment, and teachers who are well prepared to address the educational needs of all pupils.
4. Progress in general education is a process evidenced by schools and communities working together to create citizens for an inclusive society who are educated to enjoy the full benefits, rights, and experiences of societal life. (p. 99)

The Salamanca statement, along with the Education For All initiative (UNESCO, 2000), has influenced education law and regulation all over the world, emphasising the concept of inclusion where children and youth are to be educated without segregation or exclusion (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003).

The concept of inclusion has been difficult to translate to Icelandic (Johannesson, Geirsdottir, & Finnbogason, 2002). At first, the term “school for all” (skóli fyrir alla) was used and people would talk of integration (blöndun). “Whole-school approach” (heiltæk skólastefna) (Aðalsteinsdóttir, 1992) came up as well. Later the term “school without segregation” (skóli án aðgreiningar) was coined and is still used today.

Recently the term “the diverse school” (skóli margbreytileikans) was introduced but it has not caught on as a common terminology yet.

In the 1995 Act for compulsory schools, the control of and responsibility for schools, including special schools, was moved from the state to the municipalities. To respond to concerns regarding how to finance the growing call for special needs education, the municipalities established the Equalising fund to even out their different financial situations (Jónasson, 2008a). A contribution from the fund for pupils is based on the diagnosis of a medical specialist at specific qualified institutions, which means that the medical model is again the prerequisite for financing special needs education (Jónasson, 2008b). In the 1995 act, the phrase *special needs education* is never mentioned, although a new regulation for special needs education was presented the following year. This 1996 regulation, broadly speaking, was not so different from the 1990 regulation; however, the 27th article contends that the calculation of funding for special needs education is 0,25 teaching hours per the first 1700 pupils in the municipality and 0,23 for each pupil over 1700 (Reglugerð um sérkennslu 389/1996). The regulation also stipulated that schools with over 200 pupils should appoint a teacher to oversee the provision of special needs education.

1.4.4 The current state

According to the latest act for compulsory schools from 2008, second article, school practice should be in accordance with pupils’ needs and attainment, supporting their development, well-being, and education. The 17th article of the act, which is about pupils with special needs, states that “pupils are entitled to be treated equally, their educational needs are to be met in a common compulsory school without exclusion, without regard to their physical or mental abilities” (p.3).

Furthermore, this article states that

Pupils who experience difficulties with learning because of specific learning difficulties, emotional or social difficulties and/or disability, pupils with dyslexia, with long term illness and pupils with other physical needs have the right to a special support in their education according to their assessed needs. (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008).

There are several innovations present in this new act, e.g., using the phrase *support system* and *support service* instead of special needs

education, building education on pupil competences instead of subject areas, and requiring schools to make an active plan of screening pupils from first grade upwards to ensure that they are taught and supported according to their needs (Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008). However, the wording is still mainly focused on looking inside pupils for the source of their difficulties in learning, no attempt is taken at suggesting ways of pedagogy or practices that are inclusive in nature and consider a universal design of curriculum and teaching. An implicit reference to that kind of practice can be seen in the 25th article where it is stated that pupils should have the opportunity to reach the goals of the school subjects and education in different ways, but that could still refer to special provisions and exclusive practices (ibid.).

Two regulations follow the new act for compulsory schools that were taken into effect in 2010. One is the regulation about pupils with special needs in compulsory schools, and the other a regulation on specialist services in municipalities for preschools and compulsory schools and pupil support council in compulsory schools. For the purposes of my review, I will focus on the former (special needs in compulsory schools).

Fundamental transformations can be detected between the new regulation about pupils with special needs and the regulation for special needs education from 1996. The main difference is that the focus has shifted from centring on special needs and working with pupil's failings to centring on pupil's strengths, abilities and circumstances and addressing how the school responds to diversity, to equal opportunity, and participation in learning. It is interesting to note, that the regulation goes further than the 2008 act in the direction of inclusion. The 2010 regulation declares that schools, and the way support is organised, are to be inclusive. The definition for the inclusive school is presented in the regulation and not in the act, which implicates that inclusion is still framed within the realm of special needs. Inclusion is there defined as a compulsory school in a pupil's neighbourhood, guided by human values, democracy, and social justice that meets the educational and social needs of pupils (Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir 585/2010). Furthermore, it is clearly stated that the head teacher is responsible for implementing the requirements of the regulation, with no mention of appointing a teacher to oversee the matters of support services.

1.4.5 Policy of funding support services

One of the key factors that affects progress towards inclusion in schools is the strategy for funding support services in schools (Ainscow, Farrell, & Tweddle, 2000; OECD, 2012). The systems of funding education play a crucial role in ensuring all learners, including those who are marginalised because of gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, social status or ethnicity, have access to an inclusive education system at all levels (UNESCO, 2009). The funding also plays a critical role in the provision of adequate support to reduce school drop-out rates and increase educational outcomes for all learners. Funding can be aimed at compensatory approaches that address the difficulties pupils may encounter in school, or at more universal approaches that focus on making the curricula more accessible to all learners, or a mixture of both.

As discussed earlier, the funding for support services in the municipality is based on two policies. On the one hand, there is a quota per pupil attending the school. At Waterfront school this quota is 0,1925. This means that for 500 pupils there are 96,25 hours per week for support. On the other hand, we have allocation per pupil according to his/her disability and need for support. The local authorities receive funds from the state controlled pool of money, the Equalisation fund, based on the number of pupils with disabilities residing in the municipality. The municipality is then required to place an equal contribution of their own funds. Payments from the Equalisation fund are based on a categorising system, where each category of disability has three levels of severity. To be able to get funds for pupils from this pool, the pupil's disability has to be considered severe or of multiple origins, for example, if a pupil has severe language impairments that would not be enough to make the list, but if he was also diagnosed as having ADHD or Tourette, the school would get funding for support (Innanríkisráðuneytið, 2010).

This latter policy approach to funding takes a medical or pathological view on pupil differences (Isaksson, Lindqvist, & Bergström, 2010). That view is in contrast with the intentions of inclusive education in that it emphasises the disability and seeks to categorise pupils, thus limiting the possibilities for inclusion (Aðalsteinsdóttir, 1992; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2010; Isaksson et al., 2010). The pathological view implies that disability is the opposite of what is normal and healthy, and there is an emphasis on diagnosis, training, and care. Within the disability movement, this view has been criticised, pointing out that disability should be regarded in the context of social factors, viewing the disability of an individual as a

construct of social circumstances (Armstrong, 2005; Traustadóttir, 2003). Accordingly, disability is not seen as residing within the individual, but rather is made in the context of the environment. Social theory emphasises that the hindrances in the environment play a big role in shaping the disability of the individual (Armstrong, 2005; Marinósson & Bjarnason, 2007; Skrtic, 2005).

According to information from the annual spring reports that I write for the local education authorities in Hill View, the demand for diagnosis and assessment, made by both teachers and parents in order to secure support provision for pupils, increased in the years before I began my research⁹. The school responded by implementing screening processes for reading and writing aimed at the primary level to ensure that the pupils will be identified early for support and, in some cases, for further assessment, as the regulation stipulates. Many of the teachers are conscious of their role in identifying pupils' difficulties and subsequently call for diagnosis or psychological evaluation in order to press for support for pupils in or out of the classroom.

1.5 Statement of problem

There have been considerable developments towards inclusive practices at my school in the past, but still there is more to be accomplished. Using Evans' (2008) work on professionalism, professionality, and development to view how we have developed professionally in understanding inclusive practices, my experience tells me that the staff at my school has for a long time been stuck on "attitudinal" development on our way to "functional" development. Evans (2008) defines attitudinal development as "the process whereby people's attitudes to their work are modified, and functional development as the process whereby people's performance is considered to have improved" (Evans, 2008, p. 16).

Even though it can be stated that the teachers' attitude towards inclusion has been overall positive, there were indications that the functionality of inclusive practices at the school were still somewhat lacking, when I was planning my research in the fall of 2011. This could be seen for example in the "overreliance on paraprofessionals" (Giangreco, Broer, & Suter, 2011, p. 23), the call for pull-out programs, in the lack of innovative solutions for pupils with behaviour or social/emotional

⁹ This information is based on yearly reports I wrote for the municipality, treated here as data

problems, which is really a world-wide problem (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003), and in the daily discourse of labelling pupils according to their assessed deficit stemming from the policies for funding of support services (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003). However, my main reason for concern was that teachers often regarded pupils with special needs as guests in their classrooms, as these pupils have allocated support and the support system “owns” them.

1.6 Research questions

The purpose of this practitioner research is twofold: a) to develop the support service in Waterfront School so that it reinforces inclusive practice, and, b) to understand my role in improving leadership and collaboration for inclusion. Through this I will theorise what processes need to be in place in the school and in policy so that supporting pupils in an inclusive way will become sustainable. The main research question and sub questions are as follows:

- How can I as a coordinator for support services improve the practice of support services in an inclusive school?
 - What can I do to make the organisation of support more inclusive?
 - What actions can I put in place to improve collaboration between regular education and the support service?
 - How can I develop my leadership practice in order to support inclusion?

1.7 Summary

In this first chapter, I have given the context for the practitioner research, situating it in practice in time and place, as well as in the policy context, with a historical overview of the policy of inclusion. I have explained why I felt the need to study my practice and put forward the questions that the study aims to answer.

In chapter two, the conceptual framework that informs and supports the study is introduced and discussed. Chapter three explains the methodology, the methods used, and the research design, describes the participants and ethical issues, as well as the data analysis. Chapters four and five present the main findings of the reconnaissance and enactment phase respectively. In chapter six a discussion of these findings is presented through an introduction to a system view of inclusive education. Chapter seven concludes with presenting the implications of the study for practice, policy, and further research.

2 Conceptual framework

In this chapter I will explain the key concepts that frame the study. The focus is on issues that are considered crucial for re-conceptualising the support system in order for it to work within an inclusive school and on issues I can directly relate to my practice. I have, in the previous chapter, given a definition of inclusion as an overarching concept in which the research is grounded. The conceptual framework exists within the concept of inclusion and explains the main issues that have shaped my research.

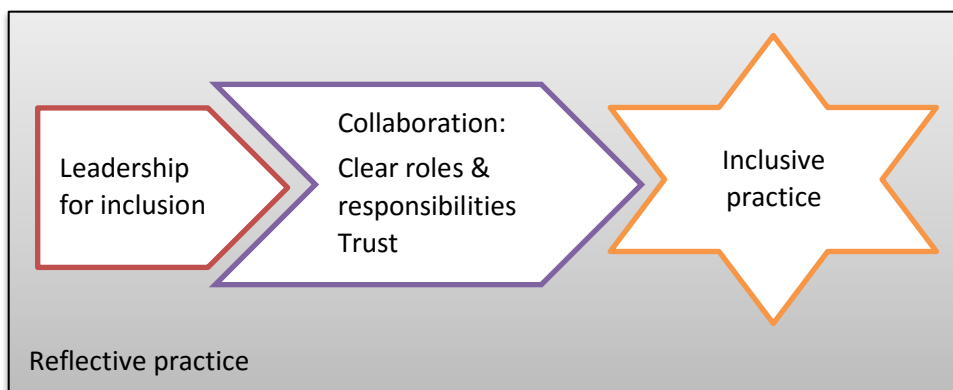


Figure 2 The link between the concepts in the conceptual framework

Figure 2 explains the connections between the concepts in the framework. Leadership for inclusion is an important factor for influencing collaboration between professionals working with children in the school. Roles and responsibilities need to be well defined for this collaboration to be effective and lead to inclusive practice. For this process to be sustainable, the stakeholders need to engage in reflection on practice, constantly questioning their actions and seeking to improve their work for the benefit of a diverse group of pupils and parents.

2.1 Leadership for inclusion

According to a report on inclusive education and classroom practice, produced by the European Agency for Special Needs Education, “leadership is of the utmost importance” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003, p. 18) in securing effective inclusion practices. The

literature emphasises leadership in the role of special education needs coordinators (SENCo) as important to promote whole-school approach to the inclusion of diverse pupils (Crowther, Dyson, & Millward, 2001; O'Gorman & Drudy, 2011; Oldham & Radford, 2011; Szwed, 2007).

Findings from a questionnaire on SENCos' work and context in the UK (Szwed, 2007) indicate that SENCo leadership in developing and involving other staff is considered important for creating a school that is totally supportive of an inclusive agenda. This is in accordance with Cole (2005) who regards the leadership of SENCos as being central to the inclusion of pupils and realising policies of inclusion, not only as a function, but as a vision, ideal, involvement, and pedagogy.

Before going further with discussions about leadership for inclusion it is important to define the concept of leadership. Leadership has been interpreted in different ways, but at the core it can be found in social relationships with social goals; it is defined as a process of providing direction and applying influence (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). It has to do with managing "emotions, thoughts and actions" (Lumby & Coleman, 2007, p. 2) decisively in order to influence others towards a preferred direction. As a function, leadership involves purpose and focus, it is always contextual and contingent on circumstances and the environment and can be performed in different ways (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In this description, it is inherent that leadership is "not merely a property of or activity of leaders" (Burns, 1978, p. 30) but resides in the relationship between leaders and those who follow. The relationship is built on relating the motivation and commitment of both parties (*ibid.*), moving people to action by influencing and challenging their thinking and have them reflect on the values and understandings that constitute the base of their practice.

Leadership can be connected to ideas, theories or policy, such as inclusion. Research on leadership for inclusion (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2010) has placed emphasis on a strong leadership in the inclusive school where the principal is seen as "the leader of leaders" (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p. 28), who shares leadership and delegates responsibility among middle managers and school staff. Delegating leadership is simply the formal division of labour in a school between middle managers and other staff. However, theories of distributed leadership in the research and literature place emphasis on collaborative efforts based on a network of relationships between people (Hansen, 2013; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Harris, 2011; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Leadership is in that sense not the property of individuals but is

inherent in actions and practices across the school context. Types of distributed leadership in the literature include shared leadership, participative leadership and democratic leadership (Hansen, 2013). These particular approaches to leadership reflect inclusive values, as they are essentially democratic, supporting participation and shared accountability between school staff members. The main challenges to practicing distributed leadership is presented in the unequal distribution of social and professional capital between people, which may position some as less able to participate and exercise influence in organisations (Woods, 2016).

Research in Britain on the inclusive school, undertaken to consider the nature of the inclusive school culture, has emphasised the need for leadership approaches that “challenge existing beliefs and assumptions within a school” (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006a). This entails that leadership is important for giving direction and a focus on the values underscoring inclusive practice and on the discourse that supports inclusive practice. Furthermore, it is essential for exploring and sharing meanings about inclusion, aiming to promote the best interests of pupils academically and socially, through fairness, justice and equity (Stone-Johnson, 2014). Leading for inclusion is centred on equity and justice within the school and must involve both having the desire to engage in critique and being willing to take constructive responsible action (Ryan, 2006). Hence, the school community needs to foster and encourage critical consciousness in its members, who then reflect on ideas and practices – both their own and others (*ibid.*). Similarly, Riehl (2000) in her framework on leadership for diversity, defines fostering new meanings about diversity as important in the role of principals and other leaders leading for inclusion, using a variety of dialogic and rhetorical approaches in sharing new meanings and problematizing accepted practice. In that sense, leadership for inclusion should aim at changing taken-for-granted ways of organising practice and employing pedagogy that possibly exclude groups of pupils, staff or parents. Furthermore, fostering new meanings should involve changing established assumptions related to ability and behaviours of pupils (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). They claim that this must begin with the teachers, in extending their competences to envision what can be achieved and by raising their sense of responsibility for bringing about change (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

Riehl’s (2000) framework states that promoting inclusive practices within schools involves two main assignments: endorsing methods of teaching and learning that facilitate success for diverse pupils and developing school cultures that “embrace and support diversity” (p. 62). This needs to be grounded in reflection between stakeholders about what

constitutes inclusive practice, as well as discussions about the values contributing to that practice (Ekins, 2013). According to Ainscow and Sandill (2010), leaders committed to inclusive values and, who through their leadership style encourage broad participation in leadership functions, are likely to create an inclusive culture in their schools.

Inclusive culture is defined as “the norms, values and accepted ways of doing things that are reflected in observed practices” (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004, p. 140) and is characterised by respect for difference and an unyielding obligation to inclusive principles. Research evidence from three case studies of schools in three different countries, performed by Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004), suggests that an inclusive culture is developed when the staff shares commitment to processes that will enhance participation of those involved in education, both pupils and staff. Furthermore, their research indicates that collaboration is significant for the development of inclusive culture where the “willingness and ability of staff with different specialisation to work together” (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004, p. 140) is regarded important for ensuring pupil participation. Hence, collaboration epitomises inclusive values in a school where all individuals should feel valued and recognised and the role of leadership is to promote mutual trust and a sense of community.

2.2 Collaboration

Collaboration between classroom teachers and support services is considered to be a crucial foundation for enhancing inclusive practices (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003; O’Gorman & Drudy, 2010; Skrtic, 2005). The challenge here is for teachers and others with different skills and expertise to work together and problem solve in order to respond more effectively to pupil needs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003; Ferguson, 2008). Research on effective inclusive schools has shown that the disposition and aptitude of staff towards working together was seen as critical for accommodating diverse pupils’ needs (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004). The relationships between adults in schools are one of the issues that are important to the school but are seldom openly discussed. This entails that

Relationships among educators within a school range from vigorously healthy to dangerously competitive. Strengthen the relationships and you improve professional practice (Barth, 2006, p. 9).

Collaboration is, therefore, an essential ingredient and condition of inclusive practice. Research suggests that it is most likely to be beneficial when collaborators each have something to contribute, share mutual goals, work together voluntarily, contribute equally, and share responsibility for making decisions and achieving pupil outcomes (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010; Guðjónsdóttir, 2003).

Findings from a study of the collaboration between teachers and learning support assistants show that the benefits of collaborating can be placed into two dimensions, functional and personal (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). The functional aspect is linked to practical issues of teaching and learning while the personal aspect is connected to mutual care, respect and trust between the collaborators. The researchers state that being

collaborative and supportive built spaces for reflecting on their [teachers' and learning support assistants'] needs and enabled them to consider other people's viewpoints, to think about their practice, solve problems together and to find ways in which they could make a difference and re-imagine what they could do to be inclusive (ibid., p. 98).

Their research findings furthermore show that collaboration between those two parties is beneficial to both the pupils they support and the adults themselves (ibid.).

For the purpose of this conceptual framework, collaboration as inclusive practice is viewed as occurring in three layers as can be seen in Figure 3.

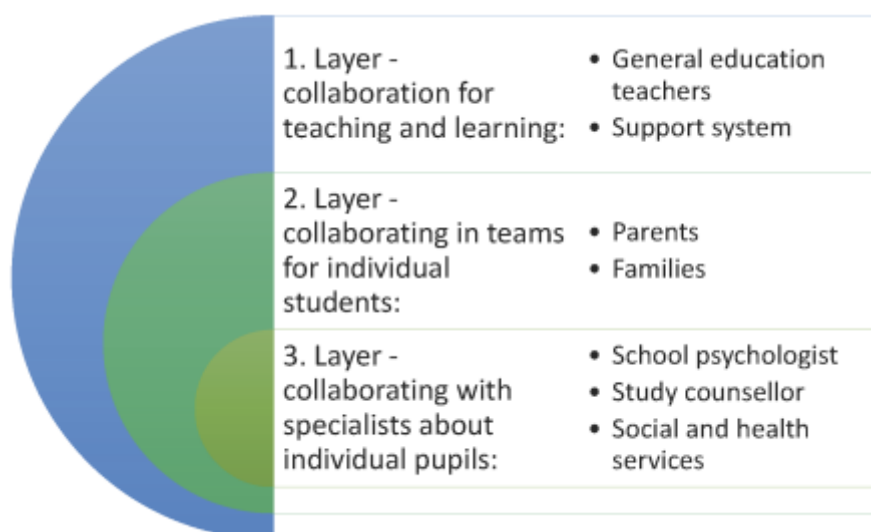


Figure 3 Layers of collaboration

In the first layer, there is collaboration between general education teachers (classroom and subject teachers), and support staff (special education teachers, social educators and learning support assistants) about learning and teaching. This collaboration is practice based and the focus can be on individual as well as groups of pupils. The second layer shows collaboration between those in the first level and parents to discuss, debate and plan the education, learning and well-being of their children. In the third layer, there is collaboration between the people in the first two layers and agents inside or outside the school that are not immediately involved in the pupil's learning, such as the study counsellor, school psychologist, and social and health services. The aim is to obtain and provide information about individual pupils, seek consultation and support in developing interventions. In the figure the size of the circles symbolises the proportion of pupils that are behind each layer of collaboration, meaning that a few of them can be presented in all layers.

Collaborating with external agencies to adopt a holistic approach in the service of pupils is emphasised as important in the children's rights context ("Barnasáttmáli Sameinuðu þjóðanna," 1992). The advantages of working jointly with the health and social sector for the benefit of pupils include a more efficient use of resources, the facilitation of a coherent approach to services, and reducing unnecessary duplication of provisions or procedures (Byrne, Maguire, & Lundy, 2015). Among the challenges reported in inter-agency work are that different agencies and professionals have different

professional beliefs and practices, there might be hierarchy or status issues where one profession places itself above others, and there might be even competing agendas involved (Soan, 2012).

The term collaboration in the layers, refers to how practitioners and others interact and work cooperatively to accomplish a task or series of tasks in and for various situations, such as in meetings, in teams, for pupil learning and for their overall well-being (Friend et al., 2010). Through collaboration the parties should be able to reach mutual understanding about how to solve problems and settle complex practical and ethical dilemmas (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010). Soan (2012) explains this view on working collaboratively as

... when each worker, whatever their profession or involvement in the partnership, is enabled to keep the child's needs central to all discussions, where the people involved trust each other, have a common understanding of the purpose of the work and have the time needed to make well considered plans. (p. 97)

This extract states some essential prerequisites to effective collaboration, such as partnership, keeping the child's needs central, trust, common understanding and time. If not tended to, however, these conditions can be presented as barriers to the effectiveness of collaboration. These will be further discussed here to throw a light on the implications and opportunities they bring to practice.

Partnership, which suggests equity and equal status in the working relationship between collaborators (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003), exists when collaboration partners value the other's expertise, input and ideas without considering their status or qualifications. An atmosphere of support and mutual respect is pivotal as well as using language in a clear and precise manner. This brings to attention firstly the matter of common understanding and dialogue and secondly mutual respect. Those working together in collaboration may have extremely different understandings of concepts and beliefs, regarding for example inclusion, disability and special needs. These issues need to be explored, unpacked and discussed to establish a discourse and conversation based on shared understandings (Fauske, 2011). The dialogue in practice functions to create a community where participants share an "understanding about common purposes and processes and an opportunity to explore the translation of these into the practice of the school and classroom" (ibid., p. 15) Adding to that, parents,

as participants in collaboration, need to be a part of creating and sharing the language and dialogue, as their experiences of inclusion and exclusion can be a source of information and insights that will assist in shaping practice (Allan, 2010; Guðjónsdóttir, 2003; Ryan, 2006). A common understanding leads to developing the common inclusive values that discussions need to be grounded in.

The matter of mutual respect is grounded in trusting the *Other*. The other can be anyone “who is perceived as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way” (Dervin, 2012). Usually this alludes to inferiority or someone who is not a part of the norm or majority group. An ethnographic research by Valle (2011), who observed and interviewed mothers of children with learning disabilities concerning their collaboration with schools, reveals that the mothers’ race, class, culture and gender influenced interactions with school practitioners. That is, practitioners often treated mothers as the other and hence the collaborative efforts lacked partnership and trust. Of course, parents and practitioners inhabit different roles towards children and their perspectives can be quite different. However, there is a need to “balance the unequal power relations” (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008, p. 645) that are based on unequal access to social or personal capital, to involve parents as experts in their children’s lives and place trust in them as collaborators.

Trust can be seen as open mutually respectful relationships. To trust someone requires implied as well as explicit agreement to rely on another, and to place oneself in a vulnerable position (Macmillan, 2010). Active trust, on the other hand, “is not blind faith in other people but is a contingent and negotiated feature of professional or social engagement with others” (Sachs, 2002, p. 140). Collaboration among various groups is central to active trust; it requires joint decision-making and new ways of working together. According to Sachs (2002) important features of active trust are that it must be public and transparent and it applies to a group rather than the individual and is incorporated into the school culture as a whole. Trust in collaboration furthermore is grounded in ways of communicating and managing conflict; “whether they [teachers] suppress or embrace their differences – that is the greatest impact on the group and its potential for learning and change” (Wade, Fauske, & Thompson, 2008).

Time, in the literature, is accounted for as being one of the main barriers to collaboration (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003). There never seems to be enough time in schools and time is very precious to teachers. Here, the

school leadership plays an important role in creating available time for collaboration where relevant stakeholders can participate, and in sustaining the culture of collaboration in the school (Carter et al., 2009; Hunt et al., 2003). This can however be a two edged sword, on one hand “contrived collegiality” as coined by Hargreaves (1994, p. 195) can be created when collaboration is not instinctive or voluntary but regulated by the school leadership, taking place at designed times in specific places. On the other hand, if creating a culture of collaboration is successful, teachers, in a flexible and responsible manner, tend to work together spontaneously, voluntarily and without concern for time and space (Datnow, 2011).

Flexibility and joint responsibility are factors that are important for effective collaboration in more ways than already mentioned (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2008; Hunt et al., 2003). Flexibility is needed in moving away from ineffective support solutions and being prepared to start over in brainstorming new ideas. The collaborating team then collectively shoulders the responsibility of working in the interest of pupils’ success and creates clearly defined roles between themselves in the pursuit of that work (Hunt et al., 2003; Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004).

Working collaboratively within schools can facilitate professional learning by affecting people’s thinking and beliefs of teaching and learning (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006b; Guðjónsdóttir, 2000; Ryan, 2006). Collaboration between teachers, support staff and parents creates the potential to build sustainable inclusive practice where participants interact on equal footing, reflect on practice and search for ways of improvement in an atmosphere of critical inquiry and trust.

2.3 Practitioner research and reflective practice

Practitioner research involves systematic, intentional and self-inquiry about work in an educational setting. The term places the researcher or practitioner at the centre of research that evolves around identifying local practical issues with the intent of identifying actions towards improvement in a systematic fashion (Feldman, Paugh, & Mills, 2004; Hinchey, 2008; Middlewood, Coleman, & Lumby, 1999). Thereby the effort is on local interventions for continuous improvement, development, and planned change. The issues practitioners focus on are centred on various directions such as challenging common school practices and working for social change, but always looking at it from the perspective of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Guðjónsson, 2011), which accentuates the role of teachers as key actors in creating democratic and more just society

(Carr & Kemmis, 2009). The challenge is to critically evaluate the assumptions and practices that have been taken for granted in schools and education, be critical about established truths, and to promote critical dialogue between stakeholders in education (Ainscow et al., 2006a; Ferguson, 2008; Guðjónsdóttir, 2003; Ryan, 2006; Sachs, 2002; Skrtic, 2005).

Practitioner research is important for evaluating the political and ideological constructs of inclusive practice and how that is lived in the real world of classrooms and schools (O'Hanlon, 2003). Furthermore, it is a project that has the capacity to challenge systems, values and practices of exclusion. According to Armstrong and Moore (2004) this is a research approach that transfers the power of knowledge from official researchers that traditionally have carried out research to "those who have historically been on the receiving end of change planned and imposed by outside agencies" (p. 2).

The literature (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Samaras & Freese, 2009) indicates that the concept of teachers as researchers involves teachers at any level of the education system who are conducting educational research to improve their pedagogical practices and thereby improve quality in learning for pupils. Although practitioner research is not always performed in the fullest sense, with explicit, systematic data collection and analysis and public presentation of findings, there are many elements of the research approach to knowledge, practice and the relationship between teacher and pupil that can be employed in order to develop teaching practices (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Reflecting on how to do better for the pupils for whom teachers are responsible is central to their professional learning. Thus, the commitment teachers display for their professional practice can be understood by conceptualising the links between care, reflection and improved practice (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005).

Viewing the teacher as a researcher places emphasis on the role of teachers as learners who reflect critically on their practice and, according to Kincheloe (2003)

are seen as knowledge workers who reflect on their professional needs and current understandings. They are aware of the complexity of the educational process and how schooling cannot be understood outside of the social,

historical, philosophical, cultural, economic, political, and psychological contexts that shape it (p. 18).

Practitioner research has the potential for democratic involvement “as an element of reforming work ... [it] advances agency and creativity as necessary driving forces of professionalism” (Blake & Monahan, 2006, p. 21). It is central for professional development to enquire into practice with the aim of improvement and learning.

Practitioner research is personal and will lead to “*self-transformation* [italics original] of participants through their developing understandings achieved through enquiry investigation or research” (Carr & Kemmis, 2009, p. 80). The attention is centred on the practitioner self and his professional practice, with the aim of gaining insight and developing practice (Guðjónsson, 2011; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Wilcox, Watson, & Paterson, 2004).

Some regard this familiarity to the setting as problematic, as the closeness prevents researchers from holding the distance and objectivity considered necessary for validity (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Furthermore, there is a danger of assuming too much or not probing as much during interviews as if an outsider was doing the research, looking at the setting with ‘fresh eyes’ (Coghlan, 2007). However, practitioner researchers, as insiders, deal with these challenges through employing reflection and reflexivity in their research. Practitioner researchers are thus in a position of articulating and explicating tacit knowledge through reflexivity. Reflection is important to bring issues out into the open and to attend “to the demands that both roles – organisational roles and the researcher role” (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 69) make on researchers, in order for them to reframe their understanding of those known situations.

In the literature the concepts of reflection and reflexivity have been used interchangeably (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2002). Finlay (2002) however, explains that these two concepts can be viewed as representing a spectrum where both are important elements of the research process. On one hand, reflection is described as retrospective as the practitioner thinks about or makes sense of his or her practice and is the critical foundation of learning and growth. On the other hand, reflexivity is a process of subjective self-awareness that is continuous and dynamic, and it is characterised by being introspective in reflecting and correcting one’s thoughts, values and actions

(Steen-Olsen & Eikseth, 2009). It can be also critical, as it provides the tools for problematizing own assumptions and practices.

Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) explain reflexivity as “the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share” (p. 222). Thus, reflexivity is employed by turning the researcher lens back onto oneself in order to recognise and take responsibility for one’s actions and subjectivity in the context of the research (Berger, 2015) or as Bass, Anderson-Patton, and Allender (2002) explain it “reflexivity can push reflection past defensiveness into transformative learning” (p. 67).

Practitioner research is essentially self-reflexive, as any inquiry into practice must include inquiry into the practitioner (Cain, 2011). Being self-reflexive then involves researchers taking a self-critical stance to their own contributions to the situation under study, interrogating what they say and do (Cain, 2011) and engaging in explicit analysis of their own role (Finlay, 2002), in order to study the influence of their position, perspective or presence in research. Walshaw (2008) suggests that acknowledging the “intrusion of the self” (p. 335) in research will enhance the practice of reflexivity. Hence, there is a need for understanding the role of self in knowledge creation, and to monitor the impact of biases, beliefs and personal experiences on the research (Berger, 2015).

By reflecting on self in practice, the teacher is able to associate her beliefs with how she expresses those beliefs through actions (Tidwell & Heston, 1998). Thus, reflection offers to make sense of the dynamics within practice, revealing the fundamental assumptions represented within and “inspires coming to know not only *what* I do, but *why* [*italics original*] I may act in particular ways” (Wilcox et al., 2004, p. 280).

The researcher’s knowledge of the culture, history and actors involved in organisations presents a unique perspective in exploring their practice as insiders (Smyth & Holian, 2008). The resources a self-study practitioner researcher brings to research are based on the knowledge source of teachers but also on personal attributes, such as empathy, patience, sensitivity to the feelings of others and the ability to listen attentively. Furthermore, the self-study researcher’s experience is the resource of the research and employing reflection and inquiry will serve to facilitate reframing of the researcher’s beliefs, knowledge and practice (Feldman et al., 2004).

2.4 Summary

In this review, I have presented essential concepts that guide my journey to improve the support service at the Waterfront school. The concepts of inclusive leadership, collaboration and reflective practice constitute the grounding of my research and furthermore provide a framework for the analysis of the research data. I'm aware of other concepts that are important for the development of inclusive education, such as culture and teachers' beliefs and attitudes, and although these are not the focus of my research I hope to influence those factors through the improvements of practice.

3 Methodology

In this chapter I will explain the methodology of self-study that is the basis for my dissertation. I present details of the research methods applied in each of the phases, the various data sources and design of my study. Furthermore, I outline how I have analysed and interpreted the data. Throughout I explain the ethical challenges presented and how I dealt with them, as well as discussing the role of the critical friend. The chapter concludes with an overview of the findings chapters.

3.1 The self-study methodology

This research is grounded in the self-study methodology, which is one of many relatives of practitioner research rooted in everyday practice and concerns the “development of living, situational knowledge” (Reason, 2006, p. 197). The self-study methodology is of a qualitative origin, which is suitable here for its main purpose is to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups give a social or human issue, rather than to judge, evaluate or create universal principles (Creswell, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). More than an approach to doing research or a way of knowing, the self-study methodology is a “stance that a researcher takes towards understanding or explaining the physical or social world” (LaBoskey, 2004b, p. 1173).

Traditionally self-study has been connected mostly with teacher education practices at higher education level (LaBoskey, 2004b; Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009) and therefore reports of self-study emanate from contexts of teacher preparation. However, I found that elements of this research methodology suited my purpose well in working on my thesis based on the first focus of self-study methodology as explained by Samaras (2010, p. 72): “self-study is a personal situated inquiry”. Elements such as focusing on my experience in practice and not aiming for placing judgment on others through the research process are significant factors for my study and characterise the self-study tradition. The personal in self-study means that my voice is an important valued source of knowledge in my professional setting as the goal is to increase understanding of practice and my role as a practitioner and bring about essential improvements or even transformation of practice (Guðjónsdóttir, 2011a; Guðjónsson, 2011).

The second focus of the self-study methodology is that it is a “critical collaborative inquiry” (Samaras, 2010, p. 72). This means that the research findings are validated through collaborating with a critical friend¹⁰ to address potential preconceptions and biases. Hence, self-study is both personal and interpersonal and through communication and dialogue with a critical friend, with colleagues and the literature I can confirm or challenge the understandings that have developed in my study, extend my conception of practice and how it affects pupils, teachers, parents and others (Guðjónsson, 2011; LaBoskey, 2004a). There is an inherent paradox in this statement and it is essential to note that although self-study is characterised by the emphasis of the self in the research, as well as by the urgency of being critical of oneself and one’s roles as a researcher and practitioner, it is not an exercise in navel gazing but rather a study of the relations between the researcher and the researched (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feldman et al., 2004).

In the spirit of the third focus of the self-study methodology: Improved learning (Samaras, 2010, p. 72), I am questioning my practice and the politics behind it in order to seek improvement. Through improving practice, I use what I learn in attempting to understand and improve also myself as a practitioner in a “self-reflexive” way (Feldman et al., 2004, p. 971). Furthermore, I expect that improvement of my practice will influence the practice of others in the school, impact school policies and reform education.

The fourth focus of the self-study methodology states that self-study requires a “transparent and systematic research process” (Samaras, 2010, p. 72). As this research methodology is closely related to action research it is often oriented towards some kind of action or cycle of actions to address particular issues for improvement (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). The cycles can be constructed as spirals where each cycle in the spiral consists of actions intended to increase the knowledge of the researcher by questioning, discovering, creating a plan, an action to implement the plan, an observation of the effects of action and a reflection on these effects as the basis for further planning and subsequent action (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). My research is based on the spiral and it is “emergent” (Reason, 2006, p. 197), in the sense that it has been constantly developing during the study period. From the outset, by keeping a critical stance towards my practices and the study with the assistance of a critical friend, I have

¹⁰ See chapter 3.9 for a more detailed discussion about critical friends

adapted, changed and negotiated the questions, purpose and importance (Tidwell et al., 2009). Thus, my practice as a coordinator for support services has evolved along with the study, sometimes without me being consciously aware of it. Through discussions with my critical friend and through reflecting on practice as it is presented in my data I have been able to recognise these transformations (Tidwell et al., 2009, p. xiv). Which leads to other important characteristics of self-study: the critical reflection, self-evaluation and reflective action (Guðjónsdóttir, 2011a; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Samaras & Freese, 2009). Reflections on my own experiences in practice as well as on my relationships and collaborations in that practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) are important to develop and grow as practitioner, to better understand my practice with the aim of achieving reform (LaBoskey, 2004b).

The fifth and last focus of the self-study methodology has to do with “knowledge generation and presentation” (Samaras, 2010, p. 73) which is the purpose of this dissertation: to create new knowledge and make it public. I understand knowledge in research to be created by an active process of inquiry generated by going back-and-forth between beliefs and actions (Morgan, 2014). My research will add to my personal and professional knowledge but also contribute to knowledge of the school, inclusive practice and school development. By writing and submitting this dissertation, I make it available for critique and examination in the hope that it will extend the knowledge of support systems and schools and serve as a source for others who want to improve their practice.

3.1.1 Recapping the research question

This research has been conducted from a critical perspective, that is, I understand that critical research goes beyond interpreting peoples’ understanding of phenomena towards transforming and changing the world by challenging and criticising the status quo (Merriam, 2009). Criticality in this research is aimed at ‘addressing important problems’ (Kemmis, 2007, p. 21) in thoughts and action, in theory and practice. It is a matter of addressing worthy problems in our schools, for the good of pupils and our societies.

Furthermore, the research is grounded in the methodological rationale of pragmatism that places emphasis on the importance of practice and the “use-value of the ideas and theories produced by researchers” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 51). The pragmatic stance requires the researcher to exercise reflection and focus on the practical aspects of the research efforts

and the inventiveness of actions (Hammond, 2013). Drawing on the principles of pragmatism, this means that the research is based on a collaborative, iterative approach to addressing problems of practice. The research is focused towards the agency of the practitioner and the research participants, which is in accordance with the critical perspective discussed earlier (Hammond, 2013; Morgan, 2014).

Essential research strategies consist of participatory, collaborative, interpretive, reflective and critical methods, and the cyclical process of the action research design. The methods of inquiry were refined and developed throughout the study, appropriate to its aims.

The purpose of this research is twofold: a) to develop the support service in Waterfront School so that it reinforces inclusive practice, and b) to understand my role in improving leadership and collaboration for inclusion. Through this I will theorise what processes need to be in place in the school and in policy so that supporting pupils in an inclusive way will become sustainable. The main research question and sub questions are as follows:

- How can I as a coordinator for support services improve the practice of support services in an inclusive school?
 - What can I do to make the organisation of support more inclusive?
 - What actions can I put in place to improve collaboration between regular education and the support service?
 - How can I develop my leadership practice in order to support inclusion?

3.2 Participants

Participants in the study were the staff and administrators at Waterfront school at the time of the research, a select group of pupils and a group of mothers. Table 3 gives an overview of the participants at each phase.

Table 3 List of participants

Phase	Participants	Participation
Reconnaissance	Two administrators	Focus group interview
	31 classroom and subject teachers in grades 1 to 10 in	Focus group interviews
	Four special education teachers	Focus group interviews
	Four social educators	Focus group interviews
	One learning support assistant	Individual interview
	One study counsellor	Individual interview
Enactment phase	31 pupils from grades 4, 6, 9 and 10	Made a drawing
	Of the 31 pupils: Four pupils from grades 9 and 10 th grade Eight pupils from grades 6 and 4	Individual interviews
		Focus group interviews
	Four mothers of disabled pupils	Focus group interview
	Eight learning support assistants	Focus group interview

In the reconnaissance phase the participants were administrators, classroom and subject teachers, special education teachers, social educators, a learning support assistant and a study counsellor. All in all, there were twelve focus group interviews with two to six participants in each. During this phase, I also conducted two individual interviews with a learning support assistant and a study counsellor. More information is provided on the data collection procedures in the next section and in Table four.

In the enactment phase pupils and parents as important stakeholders in the school were invited to participate, as well as a group of learning support assistants. The pupils were from grades four, six, nine and ten and they were asked to make a drawing of how they saw that the school was

inclusive or not inclusive. Later a select group of pupils from each grade was invited to take part in either individual or focus group interviews. The procedure for the pupil participation is further explained in section 3.5. The parents that participated were four mothers of pupils who were part of the tailored support system in the school and their participation is further explained in section 3.6. Most of the eight learning support assistants that participated in a focus group interview in the enactment phase were completing their first year working in the school and a further discussion about their participation is given in section 3.7.

Pseudonyms are used, and some information altered to ensure anonymity. Since most of the interviews are focus group or group interviews, I did not feel comfortable having participants reading through them to validate the analysis. Everyone got a chance to participate in discussions and in that way, analyse their practice.

3.3 Data collection procedures

The aim of this study is to develop the practice of support for special needs and to understand how my role in leadership affects the development; therefore, a flexible, open and reflective research design is needed.

Within the research design there is room for innovation in research methods as is fitting to the setting and the participants within that setting. Self-study research is “a methodology that embraces multiple methods of research” (Tidwell et al., 2009, p. xiii) using qualitative and quantitative methods in a variety of ways. My research procedures are thus intentionally designed to be both structured and open-ended, and informed by diverse research approaches and methods appropriate to my research questions. Table 4 explains the timeline of the data gathering, describing when and how data were gathered and who the participants were.

In the following chapters I will explain the data collection, why certain data were gathered, when and how it was gathered. I have given the research a structure and divided the process into three distinct phases:

- Reconnaissance phase which took place from January till August 2012
- Enactment phase which took place from August 2012 to June 2013
- Reflective phase which took place from July 2013

Table 4 The timeline of data gathering

Time	Data	Description	
January-May 2012	Focus group interviews with classroom and subject teachers, SEN teachers, social educators, administrators Individual interviews with a learning support assistant and a school counsellor	Twelve focus group interviews with 2-6 people at once lasting 60 minutes each. The aim was to get an insight into how the staff at the school understands inclusion and how the school is inclusive, in order to develop practice. Two individual interviews lasting 40 minutes each.	Reconnaissance phase
August 2012-June 2013	Research diary	Reflections on practice, my ideas and thoughts about incidents and activities that I wondered about in my practice. Written at the end of every week.	Enactment phase
	Four, 2 hour long, meetings with a critical friend – recorded.	To discuss the progress of the research and to validate my claims of knowledge	
Jan-Feb 2013	Art project with pupils - 31 pupils in three art groups from grades 4, 6 and 9/10. Individual and group interviews with twelve pupils – four from each of the above grades.	Pupils drew pictures of how they see/experience inclusion in the school following group discussions on the matter. Each art lesson was 80 minutes. Four pupils from each grade level chosen for interviews where their pictures were used as the basis for discussions – lasting from 30-40 minutes.	
March 2013	Recorded a focus group interview between four mothers of disabled pupils who attend the school.	Mothers of four disabled pupils met at the school for a focus group interview. They discussed for 90 minutes how they saw inclusive practice in the school and what could be improved.	
April 2013	Recorded a focus group interview between eight learning support assistants.	The LSA met and discussed their work, positive and negative sides and how it could be improved, lasted about an hour.	Reflective
May 2014	Recorded a meeting I was invited to with the administration and support team at Waterfront school (one hour)	Discussed how the school year had evolved, how the development I had started was sustainable	

3.4 Reconnaissance phase: discussing with co-workers

At the outset of the research the general idea was to improve inclusive practice at Waterfront school, the focus being on my professional practice as a coordinator for support services. I had some preconceptions as to what I would be improving, such as my leadership and the way I worked with or collaborated with others. However, through the input and critical reflections of the people who are directly involved in the practice as indirect beneficiaries (teachers) or providers of the support service (SEN teachers, social educators, learning support assistants) I gained a deeper understanding of what needed improvement and how I could improve the support service (Guðjónsdóttir, 2011b).

In honouring the democratic validity of practitioner research, I aimed for hearing the voices of all those working with pupils in the school during the reconnaissance phase: the classroom and subject teachers, administrators, special education teachers, social educators, learning support assistants, and school counsellors (Anderson et al., 2007). By inviting multiple groups to the interviews, a range of people's opinions on the matter at hand can be gained. Focus group interviews are useful for encouraging a variety of viewpoints on a topic and the aim is not to reach an agreement or find solutions but rather to bring to the surface multiple perspectives, trends or patterns regarding an issue (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). In this research project, the aim of the focus group interviews is to bring forward different viewpoints to the issue of inclusion and support services and to generate data from the interaction between participants (Guðjónsdóttir, 2011a; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The role of the researcher in conducting focus group interviews is to act more as a facilitator of group discussions than as a questioner, showing flexibility and being able to stand back from discussions so that group dynamics can emerge (Silverman, 2011).

The focus group interview method has proved to be beneficial in researching topics concerning organisations, such as gaining insights into different dimensions of staff perspectives and understandings, and to purposely listen to staff or stakeholders in order to be responsive in planning and goal setting (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The main weaknesses of the method are that groups can be unfocused and difficult for the researcher to manage. Also, the dynamics in the groups can be intimidating for some participants, meaning that they might feel under pressure to

agree with the dominating view that is expressed during the interview (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

I conducted focus group interviews as well as individual interviews to get an insight into how teachers, SEN teachers, administrators, study counsellors and social educators perceived inclusive practices in the school. In the focus group interviews I acted as a facilitator of discussions. I wanted the participants to discuss the matter at hand naturally and creatively, to reflect on their experiences and theories of practice. The participants are familiar with being in meetings and discussing their practice, so getting them together in their teams to discuss with those they know and those they have interacted with previously, was a way of setting a natural environment where participants are influencing and are influenced by others – just as they are in real life (O'Reilly, 2008).

I invited all of the teaching and supporting staff to the focus group and individual interviews through an email that I sent out to them after receiving consent from the principal (see Appendix B). The email stated that participation was voluntary and that people were free to withdraw at any time. Together with participants a time was found for each focus group meeting and they were conducted in either the school's meeting room or in available classrooms.

All together there were twelve focus group interviews with 43 people. Most of the participants were female with a mean age of around 45 years. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. A focus group interview with teachers of arts and crafts in Pondside was unfortunately interrupted which stopped the recording. However, immediately after the interview I was able to record a summary of the main points in their discussions which I could add to my data. Table 5 provides a detailed overview of the data collection in the reconnaissance phase.

Table 5 Overview of data gathering in the Reconnaissance phase

Reconn. phase	Data gathered
January 2012	Focus group discussions with groups began on January 17 th - Year teams for 1.–3. Grade - Group of social educators - Group of special education needs teachers -Group of subject teachers Pondsider (interrupted) Transcribing and writing analytic memos
February 2012	Focus group discussion with administrators Transcribing and writing analytic memos continued
March 2012	Focus group discussions with year groups in 4.–6. Grade Individual discussions with school counsellor and learning support assistant Transcribing and writing analytic memos continued
April 2012	Focus group discussions continued with year teams in 7. – 8. Grade. Meetings with social educators to discuss next year's organisation of support Transcribing and writing analytic memos continued
May 2012	Focus group interviews with year teams in 9.–10. Grade - with school counsellor and immigrant teacher - with subject teachers Transcribing interviews and writing analytic memos

I interviewed two persons individually using a similar frame of questions as I did in the focus groups; these were a study counsellor and a learning support assistant who has worked at the school for several years. In the reconnaissance period, other learning support assistants had only been working at the school for a very short period, so I decided at this time to focus on the one with the most experience. The school counsellor has been working for several years at the school and holds a unique position as her practice involves advising the teachers, pupils, and parents; I therefore chose to talk to her individually.

I developed the interview protocol, listed in Table 6, from the literature on inclusion. At the beginning of the reconnaissance phase the research questions guiding the research were still developing, but as they evolved around finding ways of improving inclusive practice I needed to find out how the participants understand inclusion and how inclusion is enacted

within the school. The protocol was the same for the focus group interviews as for the two individual interviews. The questions focused on how people understand inclusion, how they collaborate in the school, where they seek support or information, their view on the support system, and how pupils are assessed. However, the frame developed as a new idea became important to discuss and another idea was left out because I, or the participants, found it not to be significant or appropriate. The Icelandic version of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix C.

Table 6 The interview protocol

#	Original protocol	Amended protocol
1	How do you understand the term inclusion?	Opening questions: how long have you been working here, what age group are you teaching this year, how long have you been a teacher
2	Could you give me an example of how you work in the spirit of inclusion?	How do you understand the term inclusion? Could you give me an example of how you work in the spirit of inclusion?
3	Where and how is it visible that Waterfront (our school) is inclusive? Are there examples of the opposite?	Where and how is it visible that Waterfront (our school) is inclusive? Are there examples of the opposite?
4	How would you react to a new pupil coming to your classroom, e.g. with Down's syndrome? Where do you look for information?	How do you respond to the phrase: assessment and then what?
5	Where do you look for advice regarding pupils or how to teach?	Where do you look for advice regarding pupils or how to teach?
6	How is the cooperation between teachers? With the support service? With administrators?	How is the cooperation between teachers? With the support service? With administrators?
7	Who are responsible for pupils being educated in the spirit of inclusion in our school?	Who are responsible for pupils being educated in the spirit of inclusion in our school?

The question protocol was edited after the first group discussion. Some opening questions were added, as it was rather abrupt to open the

interview with question number one on how people understand the term inclusion. These opening questions included how long have you been working here, what age group are you teaching this year, how long have you been a teacher and so on. A question on diagnosing pupil's difficulties, *"How do you respond to the phrase: assessment and then what?"* was also added since that came up as a hot topic in the first interview. After interview three, question number four about reactions to new pupils in class was taken out, as it did not seem to generate much response or discussion.

In all of the groups my role was to ask the initial question in order to start the discussions between the participants, thereby setting up a frame of what to discuss, observe the participants in expressing their views and participate in the dialogue with the group, prompting them to keep the discussions running (Guðjónsdóttir, 2011a). In some groups my role was more as a questioner than facilitator as the participants seemed to expect me to take the lead to keep the discussions going. In other groups, I was able to be the facilitator, to stand back and let the group dynamics emerge (Silverman, 2011). In these groups the participants led the course of discussions and were so engaged that I decided not to interrupt or influence them with preconceived questions, rather let the flow of interaction take control. Only when the participants moved far away from the intended discussion did I interrupt with a question from the protocol leading discussions back to the focus of the interview.

3.4.1 Ethical issues in the reconnaissance phase

In the interviews with participants, I tried to be conscious of the issue of pre-understanding as I am studying my own practice and am immersed in the same world of "knowledge, insights and experience" (Gummerson, 2000, as cited in Coghlan, 2007, p. 296) as the participants. This has, as most things, both a positive and negative side to it. On the positive side my knowledge, insights, and experiences meant that I as the researcher could approach research with a deep and rich understanding of the organisation, the people working within, and the issue under consideration (Smyth & Holian, 2008). It enabled me to explore with insight the tacit knowledge of practices and protocols in my school, which would be difficult for an outsider. However, the negative or risky sides of pre-understanding that I needed to be aware of involved making too many assumptions or not probing as much during interviews as if I was an outsider. This was difficult and sometimes I assumed I understood what people were telling me and

did “not expose their current thinking to alternate re-framing” (Coghlan, 2007, p. 297). In being conscious of this risk, I kept a reflective journal and had a critical friend (see chapter 3.2.6) provide a sounding board for my reflections as means to avoid the pitfalls and minimize the risk of pre-understanding. Furthermore, being close to the people and practice made it easy for me to go back and check for understanding with my participants.

There were further ethical dilemmas that I needed to be aware in the research process. These were issues concerning power and authority, that co-workers could find it difficult to distinguish between me as a researcher and me as a coordinator, which could affect information, behaviour, and relationships. However, during the reconnaissance phase I was on a leave for a year, not actively working at the school, which might have influenced my co-workers who seemed to discuss matters openly in the group discussions and often critically towards my practice, opening with apologies like “But then we have to be honest, sorry Edda...” (Interview 5, p. 5). Furthermore, it came up in the focus group interviews that people were happy to get the opportunity to discuss matters in a group without being bound by a schedule of what to discuss. Like Drífa, a primary teacher, said when discussing opportunities for teachers to be heard:

Yes, for example this meeting, it would be very nice to have one meeting a year like this with the management team. What do you think? [Asking the other teachers] Just in small groups. Like what we have been rattling on here. I have been rattling on about something that is.. or does not even connect to this [inclusion] because it is easy for your thoughts to grow wings, but that is just the way it goes (Interview 1, p. 23).

To conclude, there is a risk of receiving data in one role that can affect the other role negatively or is privileged information that I have to handle with care (Smyth & Holian, 2008, p. 39). However, being conscious of, working through, and engaging with these tensions results in new learning, insights and creativity and has the potential to strengthen relationships (ibid.).

3.5 Enactment phase: Pupils as participants

Pupils are important stakeholders in the school community, so listening to their perspectives and appreciating their contribution is critical in improving and transforming practice (Einarsdóttir, 2007; Ruth Leitch, 2008). My thoughts on the choice of methods in research with pupils were that a

traditional method like the formal interview can be demanding for younger children, and, like researchers have shown, can pose a possible danger that their answers are aimed at pleasing the interviewer rather than representing their own views (Greene & Hill, 2006; Kellett & Ding, 2012). Furthermore, I was aware of one of the major ethical challenges in researching with children: the need to be conscious of the unequal position of power that is inherent in the relationship of adult researcher and pupil participants (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Mayall, 2000; Todd, 2008).

In the search for ways to counter the issue of power, I reflected on my years of teaching experience and looked for methods that are closer to teaching and learning practices with which pupils are familiar in school. I wanted to use means in a safe environment that give pupils an opportunity to express and represent their everyday life, as well as reflect on their experiences, interests, values, and everyday routines (Christensen, 2004). Hence, I decided to use drawings in the research as an approach that makes it possible to see how “the inner situation can be projected onto the outer world and how the outer world affects the inner world” (Furth, 1988, as cited in Leitch, 2008, p.24).

Drawings are an every-day activity that most pupils like and have had experience completing in their school day for various reasons. Drawings made by pupils can provide valuable documentation on aspects of school and classroom activities as well as serving as an incentive for improvement in school (Haney, Russell, & Bebell, 2004).

In order to get pupils’ views on inclusion and support in the school, I worked on a project together with the art teachers. In collaboration with the art teachers, we chose three age groups with which to work. I did not specifically target pupils or groups, but the aim was to target different age levels and to take care that the pupils were nine years or older because of the complexity of the subject. The participants were eleven pupils from 4th grade, nine pupils from 6th grade, and eleven pupils from 9th and 10th grades. Altogether there were 31 pupils who participated in the project. The pupils that participated were the ones who were taking art class at the time of the research.

Art is one of several subjects in the school that is taught in six week sessions, so-called cycles, offering two lessons per week. The other courses running simultaneously in each cycle are for example home economics, textile work, woodwork, and IT. This means that each class from first through eighth grades is divided into five groups that go into the cycles. However, in ninth and tenth grades, arts and crafts are elective subjects.

Upon obtaining consent from the pupils, permission from their parents and from the school, see Appendix D, the pupils participated in the research in two stages. First, they worked on a project in the art class, and second, a select group of pupils from each grade participated in individual or group interviews. This part of the research was announced to the official Data Protection Authority (see Appendix E), as it involves children, and was accepted without comments.

In January, I went into the art classes and discussed with pupils about inclusion; I asked them what they thought inclusion meant and got some discussions going with them.

From the research journal in January 2013:

The pupils enter the classroom. There are twelve pupils, nine girls and three boys, a mixture of teenagers from 9th and 10th grade. One girl's mother has told me that she does not want her to participate, but the girl wants to stay in the room. I start to discuss what we are going to do; the pupils seem to know because the art teacher has prepared them. I asked them what they know about inclusion. There is silence and then Guðrún asks "yes, isn't that when everyone can go to the same school, and they are not sorted by ability?" I agreed to that and asked if anyone else had something to add. I got no answer so I read to them the official explanation and then explained the difficult words like human value and equality. I then asked if they would draw for me how they see that our school is inclusive or that it is not inclusive. I told them that they should think first and that they could discuss with others if they wanted and then draw. It took a while until they got started, two girls put their headphones in their ears and focused immediately on the task, while others chatted and took a little longer to begin.

Some pupils began right away to draw and were very focused, while others did not know what to do and looked to their neighbour for inspiration or ideas, or asked the teacher and me for help.

In one group four boys were sitting around a table and they were all drawing some kind of recess activity, some of their pictures were an aerial view of a football match. When I asked one boy how that reflected inclusion his answer was that some kids always play football in recess and that is just fine, but

some kids want to play football and they never get the ball, never get the chance to show how good they are. (From researcher's notes in January, 4th grade art class.)

When the pupils turned in their drawings I asked them individually to explain what they had drawn and why, and I wrote it down in my diary.

To get a more holistic picture of how the pupils saw inclusion/exclusion in the school, four pupils from each age group were invited to individual or group interviews to discuss their pictures. Pupils were selected for this next phase based on their drawings and how telling they were of school practice. I aimed to have an equal number of boys and girls in the interviews and that meant in some cases I needed to choose boys by other criteria than by their drawings. This happened, for instance, with the boys in the fourth-grade group who all made very similar drawings of a recess activity, so the selection was based on their stories behind their drawings.

The drawings were used as a platform for discussions in the interviews with pupils. To acquire a more in-depth understanding of their expressions I chose to place an emphasis on pupils' narratives and interpretations of their own drawings, rather than trying to interpret the drawings myself (Einarsdóttir, 2007; R. Leitch, 2008). Using the drawings as a basis for discussion was aimed at giving pupils agency, so that their agenda of the drawings would control the course of the interviews.

Although the pupils had their drawings as an aid or stimulation for the interview, the topic of discussion was inclusion and the interview protocol (see Appendix F) aimed at gaining some insight into their experience of being pupils in an inclusive school. The protocol was based on the literature on inclusive practices and to inform the overall research questions the focus of my questions was on how democratic the classroom work is or how able they are to choose assignments, ways of working or who they work with in their classrooms. Also, the aim was to discuss where they look for support if they had troubles in school or school work, how they liked to be helped or what kind of assistance suited them best. To conclude I asked them if they had ideas about how to make the school better for them. The interviews took place in school a few days after pupils made the drawings, each interview lasted about 30-40 minutes and was recorded and transcribed.

I decided to meet the pupils from the oldest group individually, three girls and one boy, for individual interviews. Here the gender imbalance reflected the boy – girl ratio in the art class, where there were three boys

and nine girls, and also the lack of boys' interest in participating in interviews.

The decision to interview the younger pupils in groups was taken as a precaution against pupils being intimidated by a one on one interview situation, where they might tend to tell the interviewer what they think she wants to hear (Cook-Sather, 2014, 2015). Having other children present is likely to counter that, as there is a different balance of authority, and talking together in a group is a familiar construct in pupils' classroom life (Hennessy & Heary, 2006). Furthermore, when interviewing pupils in groups or pairs, group-think is inspired, pupils prompt each other for things to say, keep the conversation going, and they can help each other out with the what they want to say.

Hence, the 6th grade pupils, two boys and two girls, came together in a group to lessen the adult power in the group and they could get more ideas from each other about what to discuss. However, this group discussion was rather difficult for me the researcher and I needed to employ my whole arsenal of teacher knowledge and even parenting skills, because, as I found out later, one of the boys was keen for the attention of one of the girls and he had a hard time letting anyone else speak during our discussions. Also, because of his eagerness the other pupils turned on him so towards the end anything he said was ridiculed. Learning a lesson from that adventure I decided to change tactics with the 4th grade pupils and I met them in pairs, two girls together and two boys. These interviews went better, especially with the girls, but the boys were rather shy.

3.5.1 Ethical issues in researching with children

There were several further ethical concerns that needed attention in using drawings in research with children. According to Leitch (2008), as well as Christensen (2004), Einarsdóttir (2007), Allison (2007), and Graham, Powell, and Taylor (2015) it is important to create a safe, trusting, and ethically sound research context by seeking informed consent from pupils where they are told about the research in appropriate detail, creating respectful atmosphere for the drawing tasks, and giving pupil's drawings and narratives full constructive attention.

Placing the research within the school, the everyday setting of pupils' lives was a way of creating a safe and trusting research context. I sent out a letter of consent to the pupils' homes, requesting a signature from one parent and the pupil, where the research was explained in detail (see Appendix D). Furthermore, when pupils had made their drawings, I asked

them to mark on the back to indicate their consent for using the drawings. Creating a respectful atmosphere was challenging, as pupils were making their drawings in their regular art classroom along with their peers whose (disrespectful) behaviour was not easily controlled. However, in the subsequent interviews pupils received full attention on their drawings and constructive feedback from the researcher.

3.5.2 Reflecting on the participation of pupils

Reflecting on the methods I employed with the pupils shows how those both helped and hindered in creating a space for them in the research project. The drawing is supposedly a familiar task, easy to administer and a meaningful activity for pupils. However, it was evident that some pupils did not like drawing, or at least not on demand, and some were a bit clueless about what to draw and imitated drawings by others sitting next to them. As inclusion is a complex idea, it is likely that for many of the participants the prompt to draw how they saw inclusion in the school was difficult and not easily performed.

In the individual interviews the drawings supported the conversations, gave the pupils a platform to discuss from and created the possibility of an agency for them to lead the way. In the group interviews this was more complex. Some pupils said that they did not remember why they had chosen to draw what they did, maybe because they felt uncomfortable discussing their drawings in front of their peers, perhaps not trusting their reaction, or did not want them to know what they were thinking, which brings us back to the ethical issues of power and confidentiality. Here, a challenge in using a combination of drawings and group discussions is evident as both are important and valuable methods in researching with children but can be problematic when used together.

The difference between interviewing adults and children was obvious in the group conversations as the children were open towards each other and me, not putting up a civil front of courtesy. They know each other well, have been classmates for a long time, and in all except one group they were not shy towards me in this situation. They discussed freely and I sometimes felt more like a teacher in trying to get them to be polite towards each other and keeping a good conversation going, rather than as a researcher asking open impartial questions. Asking open questions is imperative with children, however when replies are short and participants silent I sometimes felt it was necessary to cross the line by prompting as a teacher

does, which proved to be more productive than being the ‘objective’ researcher.

3.6 Enactment phase: Getting input from parents

Parents, as stakeholders in the education of their children, are an important source of information on how the support service is working from their point of view. In an effort to get the views and perceptions of parents, I purposely chose to interview mothers of disabled children receiving support in the school because they, more than the fathers, are in close contact with the support services through monthly meetings and other means of daily or weekly communication.

I worried about how my status as authority in the organisation of support would influence our discussions and contemplated how I should go about interviewing the mothers. The issues that might arise have to do with power and authority where the parents might find it difficult to distinguish between me as a researcher and as a coordinator, which would affect information, behaviour and relationships. Through consulting the literature and people around me, I came up with a solution that was to ask the mothers to meet and discuss the practice of inclusion and the support service as they see it, without me being present. I would record their meeting and give some guidelines; otherwise, I would not interfere in their discussions. This way of conducting the group interview would contribute to working against the tension of role duality (Coghlan, 2007), which can lead to “role conflict, where the researcher [as practitioner] is caught between loyalty tugs, behavioural claims and identification dilemmas” (pg. 297). Furthermore, this method of recording an interview supports balancing (or eliminating) the unequal power that can exist between parents and researchers in interview settings.

I invited fifteen mothers of sixteen children to come to this meeting, seven of whom accepted my invitation (see Appendix G). Upon receiving their acceptance to participate, I sent out a web calendar asking them to put down the times and dates that they could be free to meet. After going back and forth with the date and time, it was clear that two of the mothers had very busy schedules and in the end, they decided not to attend and then one more was ill on the day of the meeting. So, in the end, four mothers met in the school’s meeting room one Wednesday morning in March. I supplied them with coffee and condiments and asked them to discuss how they experienced inclusion in the school, what was working and what was not working in the support system, and I made every effort to

make sure that everyone got their turn to speak. An hour later I checked on them and they told me they were not finished, that they would bring the recorder to me when they were, which they did half an hour later. The mother that was ill on the day of the meeting later sent me a letter where she answered the questions that the group discussed.

3.7 Enactment phase: a meeting of learning support assistants

Learning support assistants (LSA) are the people working in the school who have the least power or authority over their work. In the initial focus group interviews in the reconnaissance phase, it became clear that the professionals in the school view learning support assistants as problematic for various reasons. The LSA, for example, do not have allocated time to attend meetings or prepare for lessons. Their presence and effort is important for inclusive practices, according to teachers and administrators, but it is unclear whose responsibility it is to instruct them and supervise their work. They are often the ones who spend most hours supporting a pupil with the greatest need for support, but they have the least qualifications and minimum guidance by those who have the training. Their input, experiences and views on the support system are necessary for the improvement of practice.

One of the actions I took in the fall 2012, after analysing the initial group discussions from the reconnaissance phase, was to change the way learning support assistants work in the school, which I will explain in detail in chapter five. So, by spring 2013, I wanted to interview the LSA to hear what they had to say about the work, about what was good, and what needed improvement.

I decided to use the same approach of a group interview with the LSA as I did with the mothers, since the same ethical issues of power and authority apply here with me being their supervisor. I sent the LSA an invitation to participate in the research (see Appendix H) and with the assistance of the principal we found time on a staff day in the spring to meet and discuss their work, and I got their permission to record it. There were eight (out of twelve) LSA present, the majority of who were completing their first year working at the school. There were two men and six women, and the age range in the group was from 19 to 60. Two of the LSA were working at the lower secondary level and the rest worked at primary and middle level. The directions for the group from me were to discuss what they liked about their work and how they thought it could be improved, and I made every effort to make sure everyone got a chance to speak. I left them with the recorder and asked them to bring it back to me when they had finished discussing the questions.

3.8 Enactment phase: Research journal

A major component in data collection in the enactment phase was my documentation of self-reflection on practice. Reflection on practice is an active and “personal process of thinking, refining, reframing and developing actions”(Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Through this self-reflection, I have defined the research and developed the course of the research.

In the journal I wrote about what I noticed and then wondered about in my work setting (Wilcox et al., 2004). I wrote in the journal at the end of each workweek, on Thursday afternoons (I was working on my doctoral studies on Fridays), and the length of entries varied. I summarised the entries at the end of each month.

24. September 2012

I met Hanna [social educator] outside the art and craft rooms. She said that she was having some trouble with the art and craft teachers. They pass pupils over that come into their rooms with support. The woodwork teacher calls all the pupils to his desk except Stella, whom he totally ignores. So, she's been painting and painting instead of making a wooden bed for a teddy bear like the other pupils. I suggested two things: that Hanna would read Stella's IEP with the teacher, would get some ideas from him about what Stella could do in his class. Also, to ask him to act the same towards Stella as the other pupils and ask him to make demands on her as well as the others.

-I need to have a meeting with the art and craft teachers to discuss how they are doing and if/how they are attending to pupils without discrimination. (Journal entry)

The journal is a witness to how I developed as a researcher and professional, of how I used new learning to make sense of situations and how my perceptions changed over time (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). It also bears evidence to how sometimes I did well and at other times failed in my efforts to improve practice.

3.9 Reconnaissance and Enactment phase: The critical friend

Making this research available for the scrutiny of others is important. A critical friend is someone whose opinion I value, who is willing and able to critique my claims in research and assist me in seeing it in a new light

(Guðjónsdóttir, 2011a; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Hence the critical friend can “provide alternative perspectives, support, and protection from bias and self-delusion” (Foulger, 2009, p. 6).

The meaning of friendship in the relationship between the critical friend and the researcher is manifest in the importance of mutual trust, devotion to fully understand the context of the work and willingness to advocate for the success of the research on the behalf of the critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993). The “critical” in the role of the critical friend is essential to evaluate the quality of the research, to assess the validity of my report and claims of knowledge, and offer constructive critical feedback (Costa & Kallick, 1993; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009).

During the research process, I have had several critical friends. I chose my critical friends based on their special knowledge or practice. At the beginning, I had a critical friend who was, at that time, working as a coordinator for support services in a compulsory school. I worked with her while gathering data in the reconnaissance and enactment phases. We met in several meetings from August 2012 to June 2013 to discuss the progress of the research and to validate my claims of knowledge. These meetings were usually around two hours long. We exchanged emails between meetings and before our meetings I sent her questions and excerpts from my data that I wanted to discuss with her. When I had begun analysing and writing my thesis the group of critical friends expanded and included fellow doctoral students, lecturers and professors working in the same office space as me. They had expertise in various areas such as methodology, analysis and fields of research. The sessions of discussing and writing with critical friends became more frequent and more unstructured. These people around me were willing to listen and discuss my thesis individually or as a group, sharing their critical thoughts and feedback so that I could continue my work.

3.10 Data analysis

The trustworthiness of this study is founded in collecting data systematically, reflecting on it with the critical friend, articulating motivation, making visible the process of reframing practice and the ongoing reflection and evaluation of the support system and inclusive practice in the school (Samaras, 2011).

3.10.1 Analysing data from the reconnaissance phase

The analysis of focus group interviews and individual interviews in the reconnaissance phase set the course for action in the enactment phase towards developing inclusive practice. The aim of analysing the data was

twofold; first to understand how inclusive practice was operationalised and comprehended in the school and secondly to achieve an insight into what needed improving in the way support was organised in the school so that it would be considered inclusive practice.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and present the data used in the analysis. The data consist of 240 pages of transcribed interviews and researcher's notes. The data analysis and memo writing were conducted concurrently with the data collection from the first transcribed interview. Through the analytical process, I applied a grounded theory analysis approach in coding the data. The grounded theory approach is a systematic way of going through data in a few phases that falls under a postmodernist tradition in research where the emphasis is on subjectivist ontology and epistemology.

I understand grounded theory analysis to be an approach that enables generating a theory to explain what is central in the data (Punch, 2014). Grounded theory analysis is nonlinear and iterative which resonates well with research of the action research genre. This kind of analysis allows for the study to be recursive, beginning with general topics or unformed questions and then refining the answers and questions as the study progresses (Willis, 2007).

What I found to give me the best insight into the data was to read and reread the transcripts, to divide the transcripts into text fragments of various lengths. Each fragment consisted of a coherent, meaningful message or stance by a participant that could consist of a few words or a short paragraph. Next, I assigned codes or "units of meaning" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, quoted in Samaras, 2010) to different fragments, using both descriptive codes that summarised the content of each fragment, and interpretive codes that reflected on the conceptual framework. All fragments were coded, most with several codes, to certify that the diverse meanings involved were fully captured.

In the second step of the analysis, the main substantive codes were grouped or interconnected into categories such as explaining inclusion, factors influencing inclusion in the school, and coordination of support. In the third step a method of constant comparison was employed to identify themes and patterns in the group conversations and individual interviews to bring core categories explaining and describing propositions about the data. The goal was to identify patterns, themes, or threads in the data that would bring into light what steps I could take to improve the support service so that it would incite inclusive practice.

3.10.2 Analysing data in the enactment phase

In the enactment phase, data analysis and reflection was continuous and ongoing through discussions with the critical friend and informal dialogue with co-workers. The aim of the analysis was to find moments of learning, moments that were significant for the development of practice because they showed changes, resistance to change, or other interesting aspects.

Again for this phase, I read multiple times through the data, consisting of the research journal, interviews with pupils, mothers and learning support assistants, and employed grounded theory analysis (Berg, 2007) similar to the one for the reconnaissance phase. I utilised the different perspectives of parents, pupils and learning support assistants to assign a deeper meaning and insight into moments in the journal by comparing and contrasting various viewpoints.

To prepare for writing the stories I made a table that explained the overall themes, what their meaning was, or how stories could be constructed, which events in the data were an example of these and how each theme connected to other themes. Table 7 provides an example of the theme of coordinating support. The column with overall themes emerged either to answer the research questions or from important issues that were strong in the data. The column named idea provides the instances in the research journal that connect to the theme. The column named data provides information about where the data to support the instance in the research journal comes from and the last column provides the themes that can be connected to make a chain of themes linked together in a logical order.

This preparation enabled me to write stories from the research journal, using the analysed interviews to inform and give valuable insight into the development of practice, thereby giving the stories a more depth. Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews in the reconnaissance phase was important to support the findings from the research journal.

Table 7 An example of preparation for writing stories

Theme	Idea	Data	Connected themes
Coordinating support	Making teams around grades to lessen the gap between regular and special education. To ensure that knowledge of students' strengths and needs is central and planning support is democratic. To support teachers and consult with them on how to include pupils with a tailored provision into the mainstream school day.	Interview with mothers Interviews w. SE and administrators Research Journal (RJ): meeting with teachers August 30 th	Collaboration Coordination of support
	Teams divide responsibility for educating/supporting students so that the knowledge of pupil is shared and not exclusive to one person. Pupils become more independent and participate more in the daily classroom work and routines. Classmates become more involved with the pupil, assist and work with them.	RJ: The story of Nína and Daníel Interview w. LSA and SE	Untapped resources Responsibility
	Teaching is subject or textbook centred – not pupil centred. Furthermore, the discourse of performativity is strong with parents, administrators and teachers	RJ: October RJ: discussions w. teachers	Working w. Parents Pupil centred teaching /learning Diverse views on school and education Changes

3.11 Validity of the study

The validity of this self-study builds on several factors, such as the research design and the use of multiple sources and multiple ways to inform the research questions. I have here provided a detailed description of the data collection and how that was analysed and represented. Validity in the self-study research methodology furthermore calls for presenting the value of the changes that the research effected (Feldman, 2003). Chapter 7 in this thesis will discuss these changes.

To further strengthen the validity, the findings from the research were presented at a staff meeting in the school where most of the school's staff was present at the end of the enactment phase. This presentation raised some discussions, especially regarding the role of learning support assistants and how the support service had developed and could be further developed.

3.12 Presentation of findings

Chapters four and five present findings from the data collected in my self-study of practice. Each chapter, respectively, focuses on the phases of the research. Chapter four reports on findings from focus group and individual interviews in the reconnaissance phase that represent the foundation for the ensuing enactment phase. The chapter concludes with a reflection on findings representing the grounding for actions in the enactment phase. Chapter five presents an analysis of the data from the enactment phase in relation to findings of the reconnaissance phase. Here I address the actions taken towards improving inclusive practice and conclude with a reflection on the phase. In chapter six I present inclusive education as a system reflecting my learning from the research findings. Chapter seven presents the conclusion where I discuss the research project as a whole, reflecting on the research process, my learning and development in the course of the self-study.

4 “Is this inclusion?” Findings from the reconnaissance phase

The reconnaissance phase represents the first cycle in the self-study where I looked for answers through focus group and individual interviews with the staff at Waterfront school in the spring term of 2012. The aim was to find what actions I needed to put in place to develop and improve practice. The research questions I used at the beginning of the reconnaissance phase were:

- How can I improve my practice as a coordinator of support services?
- How can I improve inclusive practice at my school?

In the following sections I have organised the findings around two main categories of a) how participants perceived inclusion and inclusive practice, and, b) how the support system could be improved, based on problems discussed and potential solutions. The categories are then divided into several significant themes that appeared in the data, which constitute the content of the subsections as well as my reflections on those themes. My interpretations of the data are inevitably influenced by my own values and beliefs, as there are many possible ways to interpret these interviews. The data represent the complex reality of a school and in making sense of all these complexities, the challenge was to focus simultaneously on what this meant for me in my practice and to figure out how it contributes to a more inclusive culture of working within the support system.

4.1 The perception of inclusion

An important foundation for inclusive practice is how the concept of inclusion is understood and its consequence for teaching and learning. This section is organised around the three main themes of defining inclusion, explaining inclusive practice, and perceived challenges to inclusion. The first subsection explains the understanding of inclusion that exists in the school, which has clear connections to the next subsection of how inclusive practice is explained. The third subsection addresses the perceived challenges to inclusive practice that are categorised into external challenges and professional challenges. Finally, this section concludes with my reflection on the themes.

4.1.1 Defining inclusion

The theme of explaining inclusion focuses on descriptive concepts like diversity, disability, and needs, and on practical issues such as the organisation of support, placement, and meeting pupils' needs. The data indicated that people overall were positive towards inclusion and diversity and thought it was an important policy.

Drífa leans forward in her chair: "Inclusion is about the teachers showing consideration for the situation of all pupils". She pauses and then continues "That is to say, pupils naturally have diverse needs and we need to take those into consideration in our teaching". I and others around the table nod but then Guðrún speaks in a firm voice "I don't think inclusion is about pupils that are at a different level of ability, but rather precisely this, about those who have disabilities or..." I say: "Yes you think it is about them?" Drífa leans back on her chair, folds her arms and answers defensively: "But I mean disabilities are inherently about diverse needs. That's what I meant. I was talking about that." (Interview 1, p. 4)

This excerpt from the data gives an insight into how the meaning of inclusion is diverse and ranged from being about participation, human rights and equality to centring on disabled pupils and support. The discussion above is between two teachers at the primary level who have been teaching together for some years. It presents an example of the diverse understanding and apparent lack of common language in defining inclusion that is evident in the data. Their ideas seem to be conflicting, and during this interaction I could sense Drífa's insecurity about her definition as she gives in to Guðrún and appears to abandon her wider understanding of the concept for a narrower one.

The theme of presence of disabled pupils in the school came up often as defining inclusion. An administrator said: "the kids that have severe special needs like the autistic children, they are a much bigger part of the school [than before]". A primary teacher said "I always think of disability, of having disabled and not disabled pupils together," when asked about how she would define inclusion. However, while the idea that inclusion is about including disabled pupils into the school is robust, many other important concepts were used to define the policy. One is concerning welcoming all children and young people to the school, which resonated with the feeling

of care and respect for pupils that was strongly present in the data and could be inferred from how the teachers talked about their pupils and their work. Diversity or the diverse pupil group was also often used to explain inclusion and “we have a flora of pupils” was a reoccurring phrase throughout the interviews.

From the data analysis it could be deduced that inclusion was not discussed within the school, it had not been debated, defined or decided on as a school policy; or as one person claimed, “the school is not clear on where it stands” (Interview 2, p.3) in regard to inclusion. When asked about how inclusion is discussed in the school, the administrators complained about not being able to have meetings on professional matters, because meetings are mostly about the day to day running of the school.

One participant gave an answer that diverged from everyone else’s when I asked if she thought the school was inclusive. Yrsa said that it was not evident at all, because “the children have to adjust to the school, the school does not adjust to them” (Interview 6, p. 7). Furthermore, she said:

The reason why inclusion does not work is that the school does not assume that it works. ... Why are the children not allowed to be who they are? They are like this and then we have to adjust to that. I think that the solution is not in [fixing] the children; it lies within us [the adults]. (Interview 6, p. 5.)

In her reply, she implies that the school aims for assimilation; she suggests we are always trying to change the children, focusing on fixing their “problems” of divergence from the norm instead of looking inward searching for that which we need to change in the school, in our teaching or planning, to help pupils succeed.

4.1.2 My reflections on defining inclusion

The lack of discussion and debate of inclusive education, of what it means to be an inclusive school, and what kind of pedagogy and practices this calls for, is clear in the data. This was a bit surprising to me, as we have had several professional development courses in the school on how to work with, teach and plan for a diverse group of pupils in order to strengthen teacher competences. However, through reflecting on the data, it dawned on me that despite these courses we never have actually discussed inclusion as a policy on a whole school basis and it is probable that this lack

of debate has affected the way inclusive practice and the discourse about inclusion was argued among participants.

In the school, we often discuss inclusive practices in support staff meetings, and also in team meetings with parents and teachers, regarding how to organise our time or resources, as dilemmas and situations arise that require value based judgements and decisions. However, it is possible that because I am speaking in my role as a coordinator for support services, people link inclusion even more to special needs, which is something that also might have happened in the focus group and individual interviews in my research. There, I was asking about my practice and the support system, hence the focus tended to be on disability and needs as explaining inclusion. Perhaps if someone outside the support system had a similar conversation with the staff, a different focus might have emerged.

The focus on the presence of disabled pupils in the school as an explanation of inclusion is an indication that the school staff is more focused on diverse needs and abilities. When I began working at the school in 1995, there was low tolerance for difficult behaviour or low ability in pupils and one would often hear the teachers talk about pupils who they thought would be better off at a special school. This has greatly changed and the staff is more positive towards accommodating for diverse pupil groups with diverse needs. However, as Yrsa pointed out, there is a tendency in the school to focus on fixing the pupils, making them “normal”, instead of considering the learning environment as contributing to difficulties that the pupils experience. This tendency is maintained by the interplay between the regular and special needs education.

4.1.3 Explaining inclusive practice

In explaining how inclusive practice is visible in the school, the themes centre mainly around placement: that the pupils are participants in their classrooms, and that education material, learning situations, assessment and requirements are adapted to their needs. The theme of placement is strong in explaining inclusive practice. Placement is about how teachers “have everyone in the classroom and therefore we are working in that way [inclusively]” (Interview 1, p. 4). The same applies to the administrators who would explain inclusion to a new teacher as “all the pupils are in their classrooms and get their support there” (Interview 4, p. 5). For the special education teachers and social educators, placement is about being included, that all the pupils are in their classrooms and get “their needs met there” (Interview 3, p. 3; Interview 2, p. 2), no one is left out.

For example, there is a pupil here with some disability and he belongs to a class, he is in the classroom when he handles that situation. And he also gets the opportunity to leave the classroom when he does not handle it anymore. This is not dependent on the needs of the class but on the pupil, he has the right. And the pupil takes active part in everything in the school. (Dröfn, interview 5, p. 14)

This excerpt from a teacher in the middle grades sheds a different light on the theme of placement. Although placement is a strong theme that is used to explain inclusive practice it also connects to rights and equality in the sense that the pupil is in the classroom because there is an aim or purpose behind it, not only because he or she has the right to be there. Hence, placement is about belonging to a class and in a curriculum, not about staying in the actual classroom no matter what. This furthermore connects to how the values of belonging and participation contribute to explaining how inclusive practice is constructed.

Guðrún: But one wants everyone to be a participant, taking part and that they feel they are taking part even though they are not doing the same as... I want them all to take part in the project.

Anna: And teach the children to be understanding of why some are doing different, or more or less

Guðrún: Right, yes [teach them] that it is natural that not everyone is doing the same. (Interview 1, p. 4)

The teachers place emphasis on pupil participation, as this excerpt above exemplifies, through differentiation and adapting learning materials, assessment and curriculum to the pupils' needs. By emphasising participation, they focus on how pupils learn to appreciate each other and be understanding of diversity.

4.1.4 My reflections on how inclusive practice is explained

The first time I analysed the data, I felt that the participants all focused on the theme of placement as explaining that they were working inclusively. With my critical eye, I saw the theme as a one-dimensional concept that just meant that disabled pupils were inside classrooms and thought that was an oversimplification of inclusive practice. However, through reading and analysing the transcripts over and over and discussing with critical

friends I learned that placement is like a signifier for the diverse classes that teachers are dealing with in their day-to-day work and they use it to explain how their teaching practice has changed in reaction to this diversity. Fleetingly they mention that they are adapting learning, learning environments and assessment, but the main issue for the teachers is the diverse composition of their classes. I believe my subjective preconceptions had coloured my initial analysis and as I developed it further I was relieved to learn that the teachers' professionalism in working inclusively was more substantial than I had originally thought.

4.1.5 “This [inclusion] really is the most challenging thing in teaching”

The staff openly discussed the challenges to inclusive practice that they face. The common features of the challenges to practice are that these are external factors, such as large class sizes, lack of support service or lack of leadership. The challenge that turns towards the teachers themselves as professionals is their lack of self-confidence or knowledge in working with disabled pupils and confusion about roles and responsibilities.

The most heated discussion across the groups was about the challenge of increased class size, which was a consequence of the financial crisis in Iceland (see chapter 1.1.2). The teachers seem to view this challenge as being both a practical problem and a moral issue. It is a practical issue because of lack of space in the classroom and there is no space to “let them [pupils] play on the floor” (Interview 1, p. 16). As a moral issue, it is crystallised in this sentence: “As the class size gets bigger the less time the teacher has to attend to pupil needs” (Interview 1, p. 8). This has implications for inclusive practice, and the teachers do not see how they can reach and teach the diverse group of pupils in their class at the level of their need. Furthermore, adding support, or employing more LSAs cannot solve the problem of increased class size

It is extra work for us teachers to get a lot of people to come in because we need to organise everything anyways. We would rather have smaller class size and be able to handle it ourselves. (Interview 1, p. 14)

The challenge of class size is connected to the funding for the school, which is under the control of the local government.

I think we can all agree that the challenges are mostly money and time. You know, with 25 children in a class, which is a money matter, we can never attend to the needs of everyone no matter if this is an almost homogeneous group or not. That is just the way it is.” (Interview 5, p. 3)

Here, the issue of class size is connected to money and time as contributing to the challenges of inclusive practice, and class size being the main challenge.

The organisation of support as a challenge to inclusive practice has to do with sending children out of the classroom for special support, and the teachers wonder if that “is inclusive practice?” (Interview 1, p. 19). Because while the pupils are away they are missing out on what happens in the classroom and “it is the same kid who always has to go” (Interview 1, p. 18). The challenge of support can also be connected to collaboration between teachers and the support service. The better collaboration, the less the organisation is perceived as a challenge and vice versa.

There is never any collaboration. She [the special needs teacher] never comes in and works with me. Never. Once a week a pupil [with learning difficulties] goes to her. I don’t know why I only have one lesson; she has no time. She only takes them [the reading group] during their snack time, and then they go for twenty minutes and get maybe fifteen minutes [lesson]. And they are eating their snack; this is the only special support we get. In my opinion kids should be left alone during their snack time and get to listen to a story. It is ridiculous that they have to work during their snack time. (Drífa, Interview 1, p. 19)

The lack of collaboration appears to be the basis for the teacher’s discontent with the support service, and their comments suggest that the teacher does not have an input into decisions about when or how support takes place. For others, the challenge of support is in getting too little support for pupils who would “get further on with their studies and be able to figure things out themselves if they got support for some time” (Interview 5, p. 5). Also, a lack of support for some groups of pupils, such as gifted and talented pupils and pupils with a different mother tongue, comes up as a concern in the sense that teachers feel those pupils are not “getting any service in the school” (Interview 5, p. 19).

Lack of leadership as a challenge to inclusive practice relates to calls for the administration to “take care of” (Interview 1, p. 10) certain issues. The responsibility for these issues can be placed either with the general administration of the school or with me as the coordinator for support. The issues that fall under the general administration are connected to the implementation of the policy of inclusion and how the administration needs to initiate and lead the discussion about inclusion. Furthermore, there is a call for securing the flow of information between agents in the school regarding pupils’ needs as “administrators need to make sure that we get all the messages, that everyone is enlightened” (Interview 1, p. 12) in connection to information about pupils. On several occasions the calls for action were directed at me in the role of the coordinator of support. The issues that fall into my jurisdiction were mainly focused on the coordination of support and the deployment of people and I will address these in the section on the support system, chapter 4.2, viewing them as suggestions for improvement.

The challenges that turned towards the participants as professionals were centred on their professed lack of self-esteem and knowledge of working with disabled pupils. “If I feel that the child needs something more, something special, I would wish someone with more education like a Social Educator could work with this child. Because I just can’t do it” (Bryndís, interview 1, p. 7). This theme of needing more knowledge or of low self-esteem towards teaching a diverse group of pupils has more sides to it.

Nína: ...nevertheless this [teaching diverse group of pupils] is my job and I should be prepared to deal with this. I shouldn’t be able to just claim I haven’t got the knowledge, that I don’t know anything about autistic children or something, because it is really my job to teach everyone. No matter if they are dealing with some disability. (Interview 5, p.1).

Nina is here dealing with the feeling of guilt towards teaching disabled pupils, expressing worries that she does not possess the knowledge to work with them like she wants to. The teachers seemed to be grappling with the responsibilities they have teaching a class with a diverse pupil population, feeling that they are “pushing away the tasks that we should really be attending to” (Interview 5, p. 1). This notion was confirmed by Sara, a special education teacher, who said that “the teachers are insecure... they are well qualified, but they think this [teaching disabled pupils] is more complicated than it is” (Interview 9, p 2). The administrators further

explained: “the teachers feel they can handle this if the child has ‘only’ got learning difficulties. But if it has a diagnosis or some disability then this is out of their scope of practice” (Interview 4, p. 2). The challenges here are focused on who is responsible for the education of pupils with special needs, for planning teaching and executing those plans.

This theme is closely connected to the responsibility of each profession in the school system, how far it does reach and where the boundary ends. A clear call was made for the administrators to take more responsibility and initiative in issues regarding defining the roles and responsibilities of all the staff and this will be addressed in the section on the support system.

4.1.6 My reflections on the challenges

The teachers at Waterfront school are used to teaching in rather small classes, with 15 to 20 pupils in each class at the primary level and some increase in numbers at the middle and lower secondary level. When the number of pupils per class increased, as a response to the financial crisis in 2008, the teachers argued strongly against it. The class sizes in the school year 2011-2012 were however not overly large, with an average of 20 pupils per class in first through third grade, and of 24 pupils in fourth through tenth grade. When I asked the teachers what they did to deal with this increase in class size, they came up with several ideas that involved assistance from the support staff in making smaller groups and using the hallways and the rooms that the support service has control over. However, the teachers in the primary grades thought it was important to create a class, to make the pupils in first grade feel that they belong to a class and a teacher, so they were not willing to get assistance from others in making smaller groups and dividing their pupils to other classrooms. An interesting detail that appeared in the data analysis and subsequently in discussions with my critical friend, is that the teachers were more open to discuss the organisational issues in dealing with larger classes than their teaching techniques or pedagogy and how that developed to meet the growing class sizes.

The findings regarding lack of collaboration in the school were not surprising to me. Even though the school administration, including me as a coordinator for the support services, has encouraged collaboration by arranging for set hours in the weekly schedule for teachers and support persons to meet, those hours have not been used in a structured manner. Collaboration is based on personal relations between friends and those who like to work together. The lack of collaboration is very clear in the data

and is crystallised in the fact that there is confusion about the responsibilities and roles people hold in the school, which would be easier to clarify if there was structured collaboration between people (Barth, 2006; Devecchi & Rouse, 2010).

4.2 The support system

Many themes related to the support system can be drawn from the data and many of those can be placed directly within my practice, since coordinating the support system is my responsibility. I focus here on the themes that are informing and useful to me in improving or developing the coordination of the support system as well as my leadership role. The themes linked to the category of the support system centre around coordination, deployment of people, and collaboration within the support system, with teachers, and with parents. Within each theme there are several subthemes supporting the theme.

4.2.1 Coordination of support

This theme addresses the way that the support system is coordinated, what has worked and mainly what can be improved in order for the support to be inclusive practice. The theme is constructed by organising subthemes about how we approach inclusive practice in the school. These subthemes can be said to be about the technicality of the system, how things are done. These ideas ultimately belong in the school's policy to become sustainable practice.

In the interviews, the participants discussed various ways that the support system could be improved and what was working well. The ideas for improvement for the coordination addressed various aspects of management and leadership. There was an important call for a change in the dialogue in the school as Sif argued: "we shouldn't keep labelling pupils by their disability and give the support person an ownership of the pupil – 'your Joe is here'" (interview 3, p. 5). Here she is addressing two issues: the issue of referring to pupils by their disability and of connecting the pupils to the support person and not to the class or classroom teacher that they belong to. This is a matter for everyone in the school to change in their language and to reflect on how they address all pupils and think about them. In the interviews, I could feel the teachers' discomfort with discussing pupils and they would refer to them with labels, but mostly to identify to the others of whom they were speaking. This call has

connections to another theme that came up with a social educator that stated:

“I just think that when I come to do a job interview with you that you don’t just say: ‘You are hired here to work with Jónas and you are staying together for five years’. Rather that you are hired into the school as a social educator, special needs teacher or a teacher and that’s it. One is just supposed to know one’s role...” (Sif, interview 3, p. 10).

Sif is speaking directly to me as she addresses the way that support persons are hired to the school, which could be contributing to the fact that people make an ownership connection between the support person and a pupil who is supported. The comment Sif made is valid because most often social educators are hired to the school to work with specific pupils, which is not the case with special education teachers or learning support assistants because they are hired to work in the school on a broader basis.

A serious issue of inequality and inefficiency came up as a theme regarding the substituting for the staff of the support system, which for me was very difficult to hear. The support staff (the social educators and learning support assistants) feel that they do not have the same access to a substitute as teachers do.

“When a teacher calls in sick in the morning the office takes care of finding a substitute. But we in the support system, we are supposed just do this ourselves. ... We have to organise to find a substitute ourselves so we can get coffee breaks”.
(Marta, interview 3, p. 10)

They continue by stating that the office does not take care of this because the people there maintain that the support staff is more familiar with the pupils’ needs and with who is best suited to take over when the support is sick or away. This issue also came up with the teachers who say that they never know if the LSA is sick or taken to substitute elsewhere, as Anna argues: “I have [made] a plan to give to the LSA who is late or taken somewhere else without letting me know... a lot of energy goes into this and I’ve stopped relying on that someone is coming [for support]” (Interview 1, p. 20). The support staff regards this arrangement as unequal, signifying that their status in the hierarchy of the school is lower than the teachers’. The teachers feel that the system is inefficient, as information

does not reach them about changes in the support and they recognise that some “pupils have priority over others” (Interview 5, p. 5) with support because of their disability, which can also be unjust.

I believe that this situation of substituting was a consequence of me being away for the school year, because as a coordinator for support I spent the first hour each morning finding substitutes when needed and giving information to the relevant parties about who was substituting for whom and when. With me being away, no one seemed to have taken these responsibilities over. However, for improving practice this issue is important and useful and it made me think how the substituting needs to be made sustainable, equal, and efficient.

Another theme that was interesting to me is the diagnosis of pupils’ abilities. This theme has many aspects, such as purpose, futility, process, and support/funding. When asked about their opinion about the statement “diagnosis and then what?” this discussion came up between the teachers:

Emma: Yes, exactly. There is just diagnosis and nothing more. When the diagnosis is done, there should be some response, in my opinion. Just from the administrators, what should be done next? ... I often think about this. Why diagnose? One knows what is wrong. What happens if the pupil gets a diagnosis, does something happen? There is nothing new going to happen. So, I often [wonder] why this diagnosis?

Guðrún: I feel that often this is for the parents and the child to know that this isn’t just some naughtiness or something. I think this is about their feelings, their feelings change and even our attitude toward them and everyone is more understanding. I think this is mainly the point; it is not that much more is done sometimes. It is just about attitudes and good to know.

Bryndís: But isn’t it also.. when a pupil has been diagnosed, it is easier to apply for support? If one has something to.. (Interview 1, p. 13).

In this discussion three different aspects appear regarding diagnosis of pupils. Emma is sceptical about the diagnosis, and critical about the purpose or futility of diagnosing pupils. Guðrún is clarifying that often the purpose of diagnosing is to explain pupil’s difficulties thereby helping the pupil, parents and school staff to reach understanding and that leads to change in attitude. Bryndís provides the third stance on diagnosing: it helps with applying for support; it has to do with funding.

Looking at coordination in relation to diagnosis, there are questions regarding mostly what happens after the outcome from the diagnosis is clear. The SEN teachers and elementary teachers both argue that the follow up after diagnosis is not consistent or that it can be non-existing. Anna, a SEN teacher, is especially frustrated with this and she questions the process:

... Why do we diagnose if there is now follow up? ... What is the diagnosis for? Who is it for? Something needs to be done.. How are we going to work with this? Who is responsible for working with this? (Interview 2, p. 11).

She questions the purpose of diagnosis and she furthermore claims that the report of the diagnosis and the enclosed information from the psychologist, or those in charge of the diagnosis, should be for the benefit of the pupil but often ends up in the filing cabinet where no one reads it. This is a somewhat valid point and is important for the improvement of practice. We have meetings where the diagnosis is explained by the psychologist (or those responsible for performing the diagnosis), with parents, the classroom teacher and representatives from administration (me) and the support system present. However, as the focus of the meeting is to discuss the outcome of the diagnosis, there is less emphasis on what this means for the pupil and the teacher and how learning situations and material might need to be adapted. This point is important for improvement of support and calls for either arranging follow up meetings or changing the organisation of the meeting so that these issues can be addressed.

4.2.2 Deployment of people within the support system

The subtheme of deployment connects to roles and responsibilities and how work is allocated and organised between people in the support system. Deployment is best understood in the context of the organisation of support in the Waterfront school (see chapter 1.2, p. 18) that has two levels of supporting pupils: universal support and tailor made support.

The theme of deployment within the universal support system turned mainly towards the strength of the system. The school policy states that SEN teachers are to co-teach in classrooms as much as possible. In the interviews this policy was regarded as an asset as Iðunn, a SEN teacher, argued: “because we spend a lot of time in the classrooms we are able to spot the pupils who need assistance sooner” (interview 2, p. 14). This

means that the SEN teachers can start intervening earlier by working with the teacher in adapting learning material or classroom arrangements, which might act as prevention for further learning difficulties. Both the teachers and the SEN teachers maintained that this way of support was effective for pupils and for them, and there were suggestions that this arrangement could be improved by having the SEN teacher as a third teacher for math and Icelandic (reading, comprehension, spelling and grammar) in a grade which would be divided into three smaller classes instead of two. The pupils would then be divided equally into groups, not by ability or need for support but by looking at their strengths and how they work with each other, and there would be less need for taking individual pupils out for special needs education.

The theme of deployment within the tailor made support system is about who works with disabled pupils that need support throughout the school day, and how the school day is divided between those support persons. Marta, a social educator, stated: "What is totally lacking is that the special needs teachers are not teaching these children [disabled pupils]... they do not teach them but they are teaching a lot in the classrooms" (interview 3, p. 15). She was expressing concern that the SEN teachers were not actively teaching the pupils with the most need, such as autistic pupils. According to this, while the special education teachers are working in the classrooms with the whole group, as discussed in the paragraph above, they are attending mostly to the pupils within the universal support system, possibly at the cost of those within the tailor made system whose needs are diverse and might call for individual instruction at times.

Another related theme turns towards the social educators who, according to an administrator, "should be able to work with more than one child" (Interview 4, p. 4) and the teachers ask for social educators that are not "stuck with one child the whole day" and can "work with pupils who need assistance with social skills or anger management, like a course or something" (Interview 1, p. 7). There is concern that the knowledge and skills of SE is not utilised in the school because each of them is mostly working with one or two disabled pupils.

These themes link to how the school day is divided between people in supporting disabled pupils. There are concerns that a "support person is tied to the same pupil for multiple years" (Interview 3, p. 9) which can lead to dependency and "ownership" (Interview 3, p. 10) of pupils, strengthening the idea that the pupil belongs to the support person rather than a class. Participants furthermore suggested that the SEN, SE and LSA

should work as a team that would take turns teaching and supporting the pupil for “no more than two to three lessons at a time” (Interview 3, p. 9) each, rather than one person working with a pupil throughout the school day.

Although most of the teachers were positive towards the learning support assistants and saw the benefit of their work in the school, there was an extensive criticism of the deployment of LSAs in the data. The middle grade teachers discussed the usefulness as well as the organisation of the LSA that come into their classrooms.

Dröfn: Yes, I get support into my class, these kids [young LSAs], ok there is just someone who comes in for forty minutes here, fifty minutes here, two periods here and so on. Always running in and out, sometimes it's more than one individual, which means that this is someone who doesn't know the child at all, is never able to get to know him except in a difficult situation, which means that the child gets negative attitude from the support person. ...

Björg: I also think that having many [LSA] coming in to support, causes disruption in the classroom when there is one coming in one period and another in the next. ... There are pupils who can't handle it and become disruptive. (Interview 5, p. 2).

The criticism furthermore addresses the lack of work description for the LSA, suggesting that no one takes responsibility for organising what they do or how they work in the classrooms.

What do I control? Or where are my boundaries? ... Some teachers are just like dududu (snaps fingers), while other teachers pretend that they don't see them [LSAs] when they come in... I mean who is in charge of telling the learning support assistants what to do? (Dröfn, interview 5, p. 9)

The responsibilities of teachers towards the learning support assistants who come into their classroom to assist are here in focus. While transcribing this interview with the teachers in the middle grades, I was annoyed because of the way that the teachers discussed the work of LSA and seemed to avoid shouldering the responsibility of collaborating with the LSA to inform them of how they could be useful. Perhaps my irritation was fuelled by the thought that I had failed in the practice of deploying the

LSA. When discussing this irritation with my critical friend she helped me understand that instead of being irritated towards the teachers I should be thankful, because this discussion was providing important information on how to improve practice.

The role of the LSAs is presented throughout the data as controversial. In the last decade or so the number of LSAs has been growing in the school, which goes hand in hand with the development of inclusive education. The answer to the call for inclusion was added support. LSA were hired both because they are less expensive for the school than SEN teachers and SE. Also, because often we need people to work with pupils in other ways than direct teaching, such as during recess or in the changing rooms for swimming or PE lessons. In the early years in my career I would earmark an LSA for a certain child in need of assistance, but in recent years I have assigned them to classes or year-groups. The deployment of LSA is complicated. It calls for a match between many classroom schedules as well as collaboration between the LSA and the teachers. My role towards the LSA is to write their schedule and inform them of their roles and responsibilities, as well as provide information about the class and the teacher. I make sure that their schedules are in order and my intention is that the teachers take responsibility towards the LSA by collaborating with them so that the LSA know what they are supposed to do in their classrooms. The LSAs are usually supposed to work with the whole class with instructions from the class teacher; they are in most cases not to be glued to one particular pupil.

The dilemma that is presented so strongly in my data is, however, that LSAs have no time to meet with teachers outside lessons because their time in school is with children. They do not have the opportunity to exchange information or receive instructions, except maybe through email or while they are working in a class or during their lunch hour. Most of the teachers are unclear on what their role is in working with the LSA, claiming that someone else must tell the LSAs what their role is in their classrooms because they never meet outside lessons. The teachers wonder if the LSA have time for preparing materials, and generally what they can ask the LSA to do. They have not taken the responsibility of initiating contact or setting up lines of communication with the LSA, and consequently the LSA feel unwanted or overworked. Yrsa, an LSA, agreed with this, stating that because she did not want to be “useless” in the classroom (Interview 6, p. 4), often she will take initiative in removing disruptive or struggling pupils out of the classroom and teach them in the library. Furthermore, she claims that the LSA do not have any influence in the school, that their knowledge

and information about pupils is not used or valued and they have little opportunity to communicate such information.

There seems to be a lack of coherence to the system, which needs to be simplified so that the scope of LSAs work only spans one or two grades and fewer classes. Most teachers are positive towards the LSA and claim that they are indispensable. The teachers at the lower secondary level, however, did not see the value in employing LSAs. Jóna said: “... my wish is to have only teachers providing the support or social educators. We can have social educators because [they] have experience and knowledge and skills in other areas than we do” (Interview 8, p. 2). Their feeling is that the LSA do not have what it takes to provide support, and sometimes they are just like “babysitters” (Interview 8, p. 2), watching out for behaviour and disturbance, not assisting pupils academically because they do not have knowledge of the learning material or the subject in question, which comes back to the lack of collaboration.

4.2.3 Collaboration

Collaboration, as a theme, runs through all the interviews like a golden thread. This theme is clear mainly because of the apparent lack of it and also because people were calling for more collaboration. The theme has several subthemes that centre on who collaborates with whom and on the purpose of collaboration.

When asked about the collaboration with SEN teachers, the teachers answered:

Emma (3rd grade teacher): Yes, we have one hour in our schedule that we use sometimes

Drífa (2nd grade teacher): Not us, we never have any consultations

Bryndís (1st grade teacher): We do, we manage to collaborate (Interview 1, p. 19)

The form and amount of collaboration between teachers and the SEN teachers is very different from grade to grade, and even between classes, even though these teachers are all working with the same SEN teacher. The SEN teachers agreed with this and maintained that collaboration is tied to personal relations, as they work more with some teachers than others. Hence, collaboration is based on individual interest or connections between people; it is not the rule and therefore not a sustainable practice within the

school. Furthermore, the arts and crafts teachers claimed that “no one ever speaks to us” (Researcher notes from interview) when asked about their practice in working with disabled pupils. They argued for the importance of collaboration with the support system in adapting learning and receiving consultation on how best to organise learning environments for all pupils.

Social educators state that they collaborate mostly with the classroom teachers in supporting the disabled pupils who belong to their classes. They complain that there is little or no collaboration with the SEN teachers or with LSAs, “except those [LSAs] that are working in the same [support] room as us” (Interview 2, p. 14).

The biggest theme connected to the lack of collaboration is again focused on the LSA. Yrsa, an LSA, declared: “I would like to meet with people. Not when I’m actually in the classroom with the child, but in a meeting where I get information on what I’m supposed to do. ... I know things, I go to recess with the kids; I have information that could be useful” (interview 6, p. 6). Dröfn, a classroom teacher, supported this as she claimed:

“I think it is weird that I never sit down with someone who is always in my classroom. The whole winter and you never meet with him, except when he comes in [to the classroom] and you try to tell him ‘you do this or that’. You know, we never have a discussion, he doesn’t get the opportunity to tell me his views, although he has a lot to say.” (Interview 5, p. 10).

This theme presents an absence of collaboration, discussion and cooperation and like Yrsa stated: “There is no space made for us [LSA] in the school. ... We are expected to know what to do and nobody tells us.” (Interview 6, p. 4) Hence, it sounds like the LSA need to be self-reliant and create their space in the school. Here, substantial grounds are presented for organised collaboration and teamwork inside the support system and between the staff of the support system and the teachers to learn from one another while keeping the interest of pupils central.

The purpose of collaboration as a theme addresses the organisation of learning and adapting learning for pupils. The administrators discussed a need for SEN teachers and social educators to “counsel and guide teachers in inclusive practice” (Interview 4, p. 9) and a request came from the teachers regarding “needing assistance in adapting learning, tests and projects for pupils with special needs” (Interview 1, p. 8) from the support staff.

There was furthermore a theme about working with parents and how the collaboration between parents and the support service could be

enhanced, as we need to “listen to the parents and treat them with respect” (interview 2, p. 11). However, a concern was expressed regarding support allocation in connection to parents, as stated by Íris:

It is a fact that parents who have children with some disabilities, if those parents are efficient and seek assistance and are demanding they get a lot better service from us than others. That is just the way it is (Interview 9, p. 7).

Íris is implying that parents have unequal access to support. This suggests that parents are discriminated against in collaborating with the support service and in replying to requests for support for their children. Parents who are maybe more educated or have some connections to the school have more influence on the support their children receive than parents who do not possess these attributes or maybe do not have the knowledge or strength to make demands which suggests unequal access and unjust practice.

4.2.4 Reflections on the support system

The data have given me a new perspective on the support system within the school. I have always believed that the school needs a strong support system; not in the way that the education of children with special needs is the sole responsibility of the special needs experts, but rather that the support system and the classroom or subject teachers, who build on each other strengths, share the responsibility. However, it can be argued that the lack of confidence teachers expressed towards working with pupils with special needs is grounded in the fact that we have a strong support system, that “takes care of” pupils’ perceived needs and in doing so assumes also the responsibility for their education.

Pupils in the tailor made system, who are disabled and have some kind of diagnosis, such as autistic or severely developmentally delayed, have an assigned social educator or learning support assistant for most of their lessons who supports them and can, supposedly, also assist their classmates. The school policy states that a team, consisting of classroom teacher, SEN teacher, SE and/or LSA, should work collaboratively on planning and preparing teaching for these pupils. A few years back we in the support service had been working on redesigning our IEP¹¹ form and the process of writing it. In this work a special emphasis, in accordance with the regulation for pupils with special needs from 2008, was placed on the

¹¹ IEP: an individual education plan

cooperation behind the work and that the special education teacher working with the pupil should be responsible for coordinating the aims, goals and learning with the school and classroom curriculum. The SEN teacher needed to coordinate with the classroom teachers, to match the pupil's IEP with the class curriculum, and with the social educator whose role it is then to write in ways of developing life skills, social skills and behaviour management.

In reality, the social educator writes the IEP with some assistance from the special education teacher, and along with an LSA, is overall responsible for the pupil, for communications with parents, adapting learning materials and assessments. The workspace of SEN teachers seems to have developed so that their tasks are in teaching pupils with universal provision, and the pupils with a tailored provision are under the responsibility of social educators. It is clear from the data that these pupils are usually not taught by SEN or classroom teachers. The special qualifications of social educators are in developing social and life skills, and working with behaviour management; those qualifications do not include pedagogy or knowledge of subjects, such as mathematics, Icelandic or science. Hence, if pupils in the tailored system are to receive appropriate quality education and have an equitable access to the curriculum, their education plan must include pedagogical decisions based on pedagogical knowledge and experience of teaching and learning, which further supports the need for teamwork to plan their education. The team-meetings held, are the ones with parents that I sit in on once every four to six weeks and the agenda is mostly to discuss how things are progressing or to read through the IEP with parents, a less emphasis is placed on planning or organising learning.

Pupils who are supported at the universal support level mainly need assistance with reading, writing or mathematics. The SEN teachers take responsibility for those pupils, in cooperation with the classroom teachers, and in many instances, they work inside the pupil's classroom. However, according to the teachers, it is also common that the SEN teachers' schedule has precedence over the pupils' or teachers' schedule, in deciding when the pupils go to the SEN room or the SEN teacher comes to class for lessons, which makes the provision of support somewhat undemocratic and one-sided. Here, organised collaboration between those two professions is a factor, as those teachers and SEN teachers who do collaborate have a more equal relationship, which contributes to the implementation of support practice and makes it more democratic.

4.3 Proposed actions to improvement

This section provides an overview over the actions that I decided to take in order to improve practice. The actions are built on the findings from the focus group- and individual interviews as well as my own evaluations and discussions with my critical friend. The actions were chosen based on the likelihood that they were manageable and achievable in the school environment.

4.3.1 Actions to improve the support system

These proposed actions are based on findings from chapter 4.2 where the lack of collaboration seems to hamper inclusive practice in the school.

Proposed actions:

- Arrange the staff of the support system to work with year teams; e.g. a team of SEN, SE and LSA will work with teachers in first and second grade, another team with third and fourth grade and so on. The composition of the support teams will vary according to the need of the pupils in each grade year, however each team will have one SEN teacher. These teams are to work closely with the classroom teachers in organising the support allocation.
- Invite teachers to Teacher Assistant Teams. Those teams would consist of teachers and support staff from two year-teams together (as explained above in the first bullet) and the coordinator of support. The object of the teams would be to collaborate and problem solve around issues that arise regarding pupils learning or social situations. The intended outcome will be that support will be decided in cooperation between the support staff and the teacher, and the teacher will get ideas of other things to try before support is allocated or school psychologist is involved.
- Revise school policies about the support system in cooperation with the staff of the support system. Introduce revised policy in staff meeting and get ideas from teachers before the final copy is published on the school’s website.

4.3.2 Actions to improve collaboration

These actions are based on findings in sections 4.1 and 4.2, specifically in reaction to discussions about the role of learning support assistants and the roles and responsibilities of teachers and support staff towards pupils and each other.

Proposed actions:

- To revise the IEP form. Make explicit who is responsible for what.
- Revise LSA job description – make a pamphlet for them with information on inclusive practice in schools and ideas of how to work with pupils and teachers.
- Find time for classroom teachers to meet with LSA and make plans of how they can best be utilised in the interest of pupils and inclusive practice.
- Initiate discussion in staff meeting about roles and responsibilities. Lay down some guidelines that better define the official ones.
- Simplify the deployment of LSA – connects to the first bullet point in chapter 1.3.1

4.3.3 Actions to improve my role in leadership

These proposed actions are based on the findings from section 4.1 on lack of discussions about inclusion and are focused at addressing the contradictory understanding of inclusion. Furthermore, these actions are aimed at developing my leadership for support services as well attending to the way pupils and parents are discussed in the school.

Proposed action:

- Organise a staff meeting where staff would get reading material beforehand and in the meeting, discuss various literatures about inclusion and how it has been defined. Work in groups on how inclusion is visible in the school and in what ways it could be developed.
- A new school curriculum will be written based on the National Curriculum that took effect 2012. Important to discuss with the teams that are working on writing the curriculum how inclusion is visible in the document.
- Strengthen, and make transparent, my role and inherent responsibility in decision making within the support system. Take notice of democratic ways of working in my leadership role, promoting inclusion and working in inclusive ways.
- Consciously be aware of how I discuss pupils and their parents in order to influence the dialogue of labelling and connecting disabled pupils to the support persons in the school.

5 Improving practice: Findings from the enactment phase

The enactment phase took place in the school year of 2012-13 in the Waterfront school and it represents the second stage of this self-study. In the first phase I interviewed teachers and staff at the school to find what actions were needed to develop and improve practice. From the analysis of the interviews, and in accordance with my conceptual framework, I decided on which actions to implement. I also found that I needed to add the voices of parents and pupils as important stakeholders to fill in the picture. Further, because of the significant role of learning support assistants in the data in the reconnaissance phase, their voices were necessary to give a deeper insight into the role they play in the school.

The enactment phase is about the implementation, about the understanding of practice I acquired while executing the actions. The findings presented in this chapter derive from analysis of my research journal, a project and interviews with pupils, group interviews with mothers and learning support assistants, and my discussions with a critical friend.

The aim is to study the implementation of changes or improvements to the system of support and focus on the lessons that can be drawn from the enactment. Furthermore, the aim is to understand how I as a practitioner developed in my role as a coordinator for support. Developing a school requires the participation of a whole school community; and although it is not the undertaking of one person, this research project focuses on how one person aspires to influence others towards change. As a coordinator for support I concluded that, rather than aiming for improving inclusive practice in the whole school, it was within my power to develop inclusive practice in the support service. Therefore, the improvements are mainly aimed at the system of support and how working with the pupils in that system was made more inclusive. Consequently, the focus of the research questions developed from the ones I set of within the reconnaissance phase. The research questions leading this phase were:

- How can I as a coordinator for support services improve the practice of support services in an inclusive school?
 - What can I do to make the coordination of support more inclusive?
 - What actions can I put in place to improve collaboration between regular education and the support service?
 - How can I develop my leadership practice in order to support inclusion?

In the following sections I have organised the findings around the three main categories of proposed actions for improvement that were introduced in section 4.3, responding to the findings from the first stage. These categories are: coordinating the support system, improving collaboration and improving leadership. The category of improving leadership, which focuses on myself as a coordinator of support, is intertwined with the two other categories, as I am addressing leadership issues in relation to coordination of the support system and improving collaboration. Hence, it is difficult to separate that category from the actual actions. The categories are then divided into several significant themes around “nodal moments” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) These “nodal moments” are incidents that provide learning of or insights into practice and constitute the content of the subsections.

5.1 Coordinating the support system

This section focuses on the themes that cast a light on how the change in the coordination of support developed, what affected the changes and other lessons learned.

5.1.1 Changing the structure

In my capacity as coordinator, I met with the special education teachers and social educators in Spring 2012 to present ideas, based on my research, and discuss how we could coordinate the support across grades and classrooms. I wanted the support staff to have a role in the decision-making, so that they felt ownership of the idea and would be more likely to stand by it wholeheartedly.

The main idea that I presented in the meeting was to have one special education teacher (SEN) work with two or three grades, and for each pupil with tailored support a team of SEN, social educator (SE) and learning support assistant (LSA) would be established. Each SE and SEN teacher

would then be active on at least two teams at one or two grade levels. The LSA would be working in two to four classrooms and care taken to organise their deployment in a way that they would have time to sit in on meetings with the teams. The rationale behind this change can be found in calls for collaboration and consultation in the data from the reconnaissance phase (see section 4.2.2 and 4.2.3), which require functioning teamwork to be effective. These ideas were discussed and generally accepted with minor changes and in the fall of 2012 the following teams were in action:

- **The primary team (1st-3rd grade):** 2 SEN teachers, SE and three LSA supported two first grade and two second grade pupils with tailored provision. The team had monthly meetings with parents and each week the SE met with the LSA to plan the following week and exchange information.
- **The fourth and fifth grade team:** SEN teacher, two SE and four LSA supported two pupils in fourth grade and four in fifth grade. The team had monthly meetings with the parents. Weekly meetings with the team.
- **The sixth grade team:** SEN teacher, SE and two LSA supported three pupils in sixth grade. Monthly meetings with parents and weekly meetings in the team.

The coordination was introduced in a staff meeting on August 20th. I prepared a few PowerPoint slides and got 15 minutes for my presentation. In the introduction, I discussed the importance of collaboration in the teams and stressed working with the learning support assistants so that they were clear on their roles and responsibilities in classrooms. I placed special emphasis on the common responsibility that we carry for the education of all our pupils and that the subject knowledge of teachers was necessary for planning the education of pupils with a tailored provision.

No one asked questions and there were no discussions. Were people not listening or was I not making myself clear enough? I felt insecure about what would happen next... would the teachers ignore the changes or were they happy about it? I need to take a deep breath and hope this will work. (From research journal, Aug. 20th)

What happened in the following days was that discussions and questions about my presentation in the staff meeting took place in the staffroom and hallways. Some teachers came to my office and asked for explanations and

the teachers in sixth grade asked for a meeting to clarify the roles and responsibilities in their team.

I have a strange feeling about this meeting. I, along with the support team, was invited and the principal is also there. I thought the aim was to discuss roles and responsibilities, but have the feeling that there is something odd going on. (Research journal, August 30th)

I explained the coordination as I had discussed it in the staff meeting. The teachers expressed concern over the lack of planning for the pupils with a tailored provision, but stated that the special education needs teacher needed to take the lead. I agreed but said that this is a joint venture and the teachers also needed to take an active role in the planning. The SEN teacher pointed towards the social educator and stated that usually the SE takes the main responsibility for the planning. The principal said that because of increased workload a decision was taken last school year to relieve the teachers of the responsibility of adapting or planning learning for pupils with a tailored provision. Therefore, she continued, the SEN teacher needed to take the lead, as the SE did not have any experience.

Suddenly I had this “us-against-them” feeling. It sounded like the meeting was set up to clear the teachers of any responsibility towards their pupils with a tailored provision and everyone was pointing a finger at someone else. (Research journal, August 30th)

The meeting made me realise what a challenging task I was taking on in changing the support system in a conventional school. It seemed that the teachers set up the meeting with the support of the principal as they were not ready to accept the changes in the way support is to be coordinated, even though these changes were based on the voices of the staff, on their ideas and thoughts from the interviews a few months earlier. The teachers were used to not having responsibility towards the pupils with tailored support, used to accepting those pupils into their classrooms as guests that came in with personal support, a SE or SEN or LSA, who took care of the pupil's educational and social needs. And they had been officially relieved of this responsibility by the principal.

I was surprised to learn about the decision to excuse teachers from taking part in the planning for pupils with a tailored provision, as this would impact my intended actions to involve teachers more in the education of all their pupils. How can I work around this? (Research journal, August 30th)

As was confirmed in the meeting, pupils who need tailored education provision in the school have been mainly in the care of SE and LSA, which has been the school's way of including them into the mainstream. Now, when trying to change this arrangement, I saw how the procedures for working with pupils in the tailored support system have developed independently from the school policy and from what I had aimed for. The solution that developed in the meeting was to divide the work of writing the IEP between the SEN, the SE, and me.

To my relief, one of the teachers suggested that there should be a weekly plan for the pupils with a tailored provision, like everyone else in their class got on Fridays. I was pleased because this initiative indicated that the teachers were interested and willing to have some role in the education of all their pupils. (Research journal, August 30th)

Together we decided that based on the classroom curriculum the SE and the SEN were to write the weekly plan for Icelandic and math. The teachers would plan for natural and social science and the English teacher for English. The weekly plan was to be sent home on Fridays and included aims, how to work with the pupil, material used, information on homework assignments and a space for comments from parents and the support staff. Furthermore, in our discussions the weekly plan opened up possibilities for serving as a guide for the LSA as well as a medium for communications. The LSA could get a copy of the weekly plan and information about which material and methods to use with the pupils as well as an opportunity to communicate in writing about how the work progressed or other relevant information. The most positive aspect of the weekly plan for all the pupils was that the idea came from the teachers themselves, which created ownership and meant that they would see it through.

The idea developed further and the weekly plan was made visible in the pupil's workbooks and folders to be accessible for the LSA. The weekly plan became a tool complementing the IEP that I introduced to the other support teams in the school who developed their own versions of it.

5.1.2 The chaos

Getting the collaboration for the weekly plan and sharing of responsibilities to the stage of being a functioning routine took almost the whole fall term. One mother of a pupil in sixth grade reflected on this situation in February

The chain is just as strong as its weakest link. The coordination was not good last fall; it was not clear who was to do what. The schoolwork before Christmas was not good; there was not enough time to meet (Interview with mothers, p. 1)

The learning support assistants confirmed this also in February

The plan in 6th grade is good now... but first we were all new in our jobs in the support team. We had to find everything out ourselves. There was no coordination to begin with, no one seemed to know who was responsible for what; we just decided ourselves which books to work with each time (Interview with LSA, p. 2).

In my journal in October I wondered what I was doing wrong, why the collaboration was not working better. I felt I was in a state of constant chaos. I thought we had decided how to organise the work and who was responsible for what task, but nothing was adding up. I felt that people were not using the time they had for planning, the teachers and the support staff were complaining about lack of organisation, and some of the parents were complaining about lack of communication with the school. In my mind, I wanted people to take initiative and be independent in their work. I did not want to take control and force them to do what I wanted, because I wanted them to see how inclusive practice could work if they took the initiative and would plan and meet because they understood it was an effective way of working. In discussions with the critical friend we came to the conclusion that I needed to be patient and endure this state of constant chaos, as changes take time to become integrated into the daily routine.

5.1.3 Creating a balance

The opportunities created with the changing structure also brought with them struggles and uncertainty.

I went to the 6th grade classrooms to talk to Dröfn. I told her that the support for Alex was sick today so he would be without support in her math class today. She said that was okay: "He is much more involved in the classroom work [than last year] and is often here working alone. So that won't be a problem. He can stay with me for the next two lessons in math, he works like a boss in here." She continued: "Alex is being much more independent and his behaviour has improved. Somehow, he is not as difficult as he was last year. For instance, he can now be on his own in home economics with his classmates, which he has never done before."

Alex's mother contacted me. She sounded disappointed and angry on the phone, stating that: "Alex isn't not bringing home any homework, meetings are not held and I haven't got any information about his reading assessment". I said that I was sorry but that I had heard he was doing so well. She said: "he feels good in school and he has much less problems with behaviour than he had last year, but we need to think about the academics too." (Research journal, October 26th)

These two excerpts from my research journal demonstrate diverse meanings and understandings of school and education. While we in the school were impressed by the big steps of progress Alex was taking in participating, belonging and social development, his mother saw it differently and she was focused on the academics. We needed to show her that there was a balance between the academic and social factors in Alex's education.

An echo of the performativity perspective, described by Ball (2003) as an outcome of society's obsession with statistics, testing, grades and goals, can be detected in the mother's worries. This can be attributed to the change in structure; Alex had been treated as a Special Education Needs pupil since he began his formal schooling with his own personal SE keeping everything under control and in close collaboration with his parents. Now, the support was changed as Alex was being included to a greater extent into the complexity of a classroom, a team was responsible for his education and, most importantly, the close personal contact between the SE and his mother was not in place anymore. The phone call reminded me of the importance of collaborating with parents and working with them as partners in the educating of their children. I felt I had failed there and I

needed to strengthen the role of the team leader in keeping contact with parents, collaborate so that everyone knew to which tune we were dancing (or suggest a different tune or a new dance) and make sure that the weekly plan was sent home. There had been regular meetings with the mother since before school started but we had clearly not given her space to discuss how the family saw Alex's education. We had perhaps fallen into the trap of being the know-it-all professionals informing parents how we were going to support and educate Alex instead of it being a joint venture where the parents views and visions were considered and their dreams and hopes for Alex were central. The question remains, however, whether our way of working with Alex (that we decided was inclusive pedagogy) was right in all the senses of that word. The answer lays in how one understands the purpose of education, in the ideas of how children learn, what it means to learn and what should be the main ingredients of that learning.

5.1.4 Sharing responsibilities

Building collaboration around pupils in the tailored system means that knowledge of pupil's needs and strengths is shared and the responsibility for supporting the pupil is not exclusive to one person. Sharing the responsibility meant being able to discuss and plan with others, which lightened the load and brought new ideas and interesting side effects. By shifting the responsibility, we saw that the pupils became more independent and they were participating more in the daily classroom work and routines.

Nína, a classroom teacher for sixth grade, approached me in the cafeteria. She says smilingly: "The kids in my class are beginning to show Daniel a lot more attention and care than they did last year. Now that he doesn't have one support person with him all day, but three that take turns supporting him during the school day, he is not as dependent on the support and looks to his peers for company and assistance." She proudly continues: "I met Marta who was with him last year and told her that he was beginning to carry his own plate to the table during lunch and he is also helping to clean up afterwards. Marta was so surprised and asked if he wasn't always spilling his food. I just told her that things weren't always tidy around him, but the main thing is that he can do this by himself." (Research journal, September 26th)

This excerpt from my research diary was a sunshine story that represents a step towards inclusive practice as it shows how Daniel is becoming an active participant in class, empowered to be more independent. I saw this as an effect of having changed the structure. A SEN had supported Daniel since he was in first grade and she knew him as well as her own children. She had been working closely with his family and with Daniel's teachers through the years, writing his IEP and adapting his learning material. Now we had changed it so that there was a team working with him, as well as working with two other pupils in sixth grade. The team consisted of a newly hired SE, who was the head of the team, two LSA (also new recruits) and a SEN teacher (not the same one that had worked with Daniel before). The classroom teacher was proud of this development and she was happy that she had now a more significant role towards Daniel, which meant that she was accepting him as her pupil, taking responsibility for this well-being and education, and finding ways to include him in the lessons by providing a learning space where Daniel and his classmates participated and belonged.

Getting to this stage, which the journal entry above exemplifies, was relatively quick in terms of time but not without struggle that constantly highlighted the complexities involved. There were however interesting side effects. Changing the structure of support diverted the responsibility for supporting Daniel from one person to the team of people working with him, as well as to his classroom teacher and classmates. This meant that to begin with, when the grownups were insecure about what they were doing or how they should approach this task of teaching Daniel, which also made him insecure, the children in his class showed their resourcefulness. They were the untapped resource, the ones who knew what to do and how to calm him down. Most of them had been in class with him since first grade, some even since preschool, and were more than willing to work and play with Daniel.

5.2 Challenges to inclusive practice

This section addresses the issues that conflicted with or could be presented as barriers to inclusive practice. These were the challenges that I identified during the enactment phase.

5.2.1 The barriers

The barriers to inclusive practice are many and complex and sometimes seem to be held up by one another. Some teachers and support persons

had a hard time letting go of their fixed ideas of who has which role towards the educating of pupils in the support system and did not see the reason for changing their ways of working. Sometimes these ideas were maintained by systemic or even physical structures. The following is an example from my data that reveals how barriers develop.

I received a copy of an email from a mother of a pupil in fifth grade:

Hi xxxx,

We, the parents of Susan, were very disappointed on Friday when we could not review the material with Susan for the geology test. These were precious days to read and learn with her to prepare for the test. Why did her books not come with her home on Friday as you had said in your previous email on Thursday? We have discussed many times in school that Susan needs assistance in remembering what to put into her schoolbag to take home.

The parents

The teacher replied and cc'd to me:

Dear parents

Susan is not taking this test. Yrsa [LSA] is completely in charge of her affairs and therefore this is no mistake. Yrsa will send you an email when Susan is supposed to take the test.

The teacher (Research journal, September 26th).

I was amazed and in shock over this exchange of emails. How could the teacher send an email like this? She is responsible for the education of all her pupils and cannot place her responsibility on the learning support assistant. I went to talk to the teacher in her classroom and asked her about the exchange.

The teacher said: "I do not know anything about Susan, she barely comes in here and when she does Yrsa is with her and she works with her. So, this is just a misunderstanding, the parents can't expect me to test her in geography." (Research journal, September 26th)

I went into the room where Yrsa was working with Susan and asked her to talk to me. She is a learning support assistant with a strong position in

the school and many years of experience. Early in September I had a discussion with her about the changes that I was working on and she expressed some insecurity towards her role. She is used to play a large role in the education of the pupils that she supports, in some ways acting like a social educator or special needs teacher, taking care of adapting learning materials and being in contact with the parents, and with the proposed changes she felt somewhat threatened, like I was taking something away from her. She had this to say

Well, I take care of Susan. The teacher is not tending to her needs, so someone needs to do that. I have chosen to take her out of the classroom because she is just so lost in the class and there just isn't room for me to be in the classroom with her. I don't see why the parents are making a fuss, I know what she can do in the subjects and we will make a test for her soon and let the parents know. The mistake we made was to not let the parents know that the letter about the test was not meant for them. (Research journal, September 26th)

In their words, both the teacher's and Yrsa's, I heard a lack of understanding of what inclusive practice is about and detected disrespect for the parent's worries. I felt I needed to call the fifth-grade team to a meeting to discuss how the planning of support is coordinated.

In that meeting, I learned that most of the time teaching and learning in fifth grade is about books and working on an individual basis in workbooks, and neither the physical classroom nor the lesson plans gave pupils with tailored provisions space to belong. The teachers discussed that they are teaching large classes (23 and 24 pupils each) in small classrooms, there are many pupils with complex learning needs (47% of pupils in fifth-grade has some kind of diagnosis) and that their way of coping is to keep to 'conventional' teaching.

The reaction of the support team to this situation was to use the 5th grade support room as a special division where they were teaching three to four pupils each day and three of those pupils had a homeroom there. This development was what I was working against and I worried that I was not being direct enough in my leadership. I could, however, understand the reaction of the support team.

In a meeting with the administrators we discussed this situation. The administrators were well aware of the crowded classrooms and there had

been complaints both from the teachers and parents on that matter and because of pupils' disruptive behaviour, so there were worries about pupils' social- and emotional welfare. Looking at the situation in fifth grade from the different perspectives of stakeholders sheds a light on the problem. I saw it as barriers to inclusive practice and to the inclusive education of excluded pupils. For the teachers' this was a way of surviving; they were coping with a large group of pupils in small rooms and a classroom schedule that constricted attempts to respond to the problem. Parents worried about behaviour problems in the group as well as the ability of the teachers to cope with this complicated group of pupils. The administrators, under pressure from both teachers and parents because of issues of space and of behaviour problems in the group, saw the problem as pressing to solve to keep order and ensure the well-being of pupils and teachers (which makes the parents content as well).

A decision was taken to add a third teacher part time so that in about 2/3 of the lessons each week the grade would be divided into three groups across classes. When preparing for this change one of the teachers came to my office with an idea of how to divide the pupils into the three groups. Her list had all the pupils with the most needs for support in one group and two other mixed groups. The rationale for this was that the support personnel would be able to work with the support group.

I was astonished by this solution but tried to keep calm and not sound patronising as I asked: "Would you like to teach this group yourself?" She said: "Hmm, no I think it will be very difficult." I asked: "Do you think the other teachers would like to teach this group?" She laughed and thought for a moment before she said: "I see what you mean. It would be better to have all the groups mixed and divide the support between the groups." (Research journal, January 17th)

So now there were three groups with fifteen to sixteen pupils each. The groups had mixed gender and ability and for each group there was a teacher and a support person. The teachers also changed the lesson plans towards being more project based and hands on to be able to accommodate to different learning needs.

5.2.2 The discourse of diagnosis

The discourse of diagnosis is a dominant structural issue in the school. Diagnosis can be said to constitute an important conception of how

normality and deviance from the norm are constructed (Hamre, 2016). Since the school gets funding for the tailored support based on the number of pupils with diagnosis, the school administration has stated that children cannot get tailored support unless they have a diagnosis. The excerpt below describes a meeting with the parents of Ari in first grade. The primary support team, classroom teacher, the parents and I attended this meeting.

I came in little late from another meeting and could sense that the atmosphere was tense. The classroom teacher coordinated the meeting and she was telling the parents about all the problems Ari was creating for the class. She said: "he has a big temper, cannot sit still at the lunch table, does not like to be touched, likes to hug the other kids but does it in an attack fashion, gets easily distracted and makes unbelievably loud and strange noises." I felt the parents' defensiveness growing with every word that the teacher said about the child. The parents replied that they were worried about him being violent, which they did not want. Then, the mother stated: "Ari does not want to go to school in the morning; he hates school and does not want to be here." I decided to change the mood of the meeting and asked the parents to suggest some things we could try out to help him feel better in school. The teacher interrupted and wanted to discuss if Ari had any diagnosis. The parents said that the preschool had sent them to a psychologist but that nothing came out of it, however there was autism in the family. The teacher then asked for the parent's permission to consult the school psychologist on how to work with Ari in the school. (Research journal, October 11th)

This meeting was difficult for everyone attending. I imagine the parents felt quite powerless and under attack. The teacher was obviously at her wits end with Ari in the classroom, she was finding it hard to teach him or approach him, and the things that she had tried had mostly failed. She had got some support and consultation from the social educator to organise a behaviour management system (reward system) for Ari but as he was reading above grade level and good at math he did not need the assistance of a special needs teacher. An LSA was assisting in the classroom for some lessons per day but Ari was mostly rude towards that person and did not want to work with her. Looking at this meeting it seems that the aim of the teacher was to get the parents to agree to a diagnosis so that Ari would get

full support and the responsibility for him, and his education, would be shared with (or taken over by) the support system.

A diagnosis from a certified medical or psychological authority is needed to guarantee pupils tailored support; information from teachers based on their professional knowledge and experience of teaching and of pupils has not been a sufficient argument. This leads the teachers to press parents to agree to a psychologist diagnosis in the hope that they will get more support into their classrooms and even that the responsibility of educating a pupil that has complex needs is assumed by or shared with “those that know more about pupils with disability”.

In trying to work against the discourse and directive of diagnosing, I worked with the municipality and the administrators in changing the funding for the tailored support to being based on the need of pupils for support and information from teachers rather than on labels or diagnosis. One way of using those funds better for pupils was to strengthen collaboration and consultation between teachers and the grade level support teams. In the case of Ari I got permission to add an LSA into his classroom, a young man who seemed to reach Ari better (than his teacher and former LSA) and could assist him when he needed to get out of the classroom to let off steam or to concentrate on his work.

I decided I did not want to submit these parents or other parents to being set up for these kinds of unproductive meetings so I developed preparation meetings where I, when needed, met the teams before meeting the parents to set the agenda and discuss how the meeting could be valuable and productive for all. In these preparation meetings, I emphasised focusing on solutions instead of dwelling on the difficulties and discussed strategies to work with parents as partners.

5.2.3 Pupils' voices: Effects of support

When I discussed with the pupils about support, it was clear that they “like helping each other” (Interview with 4th grade girls) but also stated that they “are not allowed to do that much” (Interview with 4th grade girls). They talked about how “boring” (Interview with 6th grade) it must be to have always a grown-up sitting next to you and argued that they did not “communicate as much as normally” (Interview with 6th grade) with the pupils that have a support person close by at all times. It was also evident that pupils thought it was unfair or unjust that some pupils are more entitled to support than others.

Figure 4 Kristin's drawing of how she sees support in the school



Their view was that everyone should get the support they need, as one girl explained in her drawing (Figure 4) "I can have my hand raised for the longest time but one pupil gets all the help and attention" (Interview with 6th grade).

Other issues of support that the older pupils noted have to do with the perceived labelling of pupils

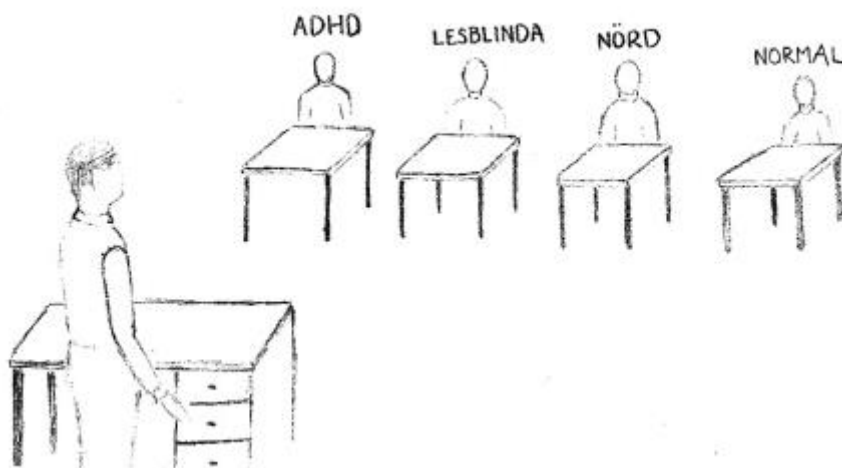
Edda: Do the pupils get assistance in school if they are struggling?

Helga: It depends, some have dyslexia or something and they get more assistance than those who struggle [but do not have a label]. My friend is not particularly good at maths and all of a sudden, she had five pages of homework because she could not keep up with what we were doing in class. She got no support.

Edda: So if you have a diagnosis, like you show in your drawing, you will get support?

Helga: Yes, then you get more support than if you are just struggling. (Interview with Helga in 10th grade)

Figure 5 Helga's drawing of how pupils are labelled (ADHD, Dyslexic, Nerd, Normal)



Here a distinction is made between “struggling in maths” and having a diagnosis and Helga, a tenth grader, clearly saw that there is a difference in the service and support pupils receive based on their label. In her drawing (Figure 5), she furthermore shows how in her view inclusion is based on labelling pupils in order to support them in education.

Another pupil at the lower secondary level, whose brother is disabled, pointed out a different side of the support for pupils with diagnosis

Edda: Is there something you see that we could do differently in the school?

Signý: Uhm, I sometimes feel, or this is my opinion, that like my brother, I sometimes think that everyone is very easy on him. Like, “well, now we should start working” and then he does not want to and nothing can be done about it, instead of pushing him a little. I think this is too easy for him.... Sometimes you just have to be able to do things on your own, because when you get home there is no one to help. I find this is the case with my brother because he always has someone next to him [in school] and there he needs help with really easy tasks but [at home] I just tell him to read it again. He reads it again and can solve it himself. ... Maybe it does not concern this, but I think it is not good that sometimes when someone has special support

the teachers and everyone start to have lower expectations for that pupil. (Interview with Signý in 9th grade)

The danger of support is that pupils, who belong to the tailored support system, are subjected to lower expectations and that they become dependent on the support they receive. This is supported by the words of Alma, an LSA who stated: “some of the pupils are rather dependent on the support. Kalli does nothing on his own, he waits for the support person to come fetch him when he has to go from one room to the next” (Interview with LSA). This can be described as learned helplessness, where the pupils have become dependent on support and believe they are unable to perform actions because they have gotten used to having an adult supervision, which confirms their dependency.

Looking at this from the pupils’ perspective it is clear that the school needs to change the way pupils are dependent on adults for assistance. Pupils could be encouraged to be active in assisting each other; be allowed to take part of the responsibility for their education instead of it being solely on the shoulders of the teachers or other significant grown-ups.

5.3 Improving collaboration

This section addresses the collaboration between stakeholders in the school. The changes to the coordination of support called for attention to the collaboration. Collaboration is central to providing a space for discussions and negotiations of perspectives, hence developing an inclusive culture based on shared language, values and beliefs. However, establishing teams of collaboration is not enough because teams need structure, trust and ways to deal with conflict. Furthermore, the team members need to have equal status, with rights to be heard and to receive information.

The category of improving collaboration has several subthemes relating to responsibility, problem solving as a structure for collaboration, and the challenges confronted in collaboration.

5.3.1 Structuring collaboration around problem solving

In my action plan, I had decided I was going to invite teachers to so-called Teacher Assistance Team Meetings (TATMs) that would meet monthly to collaborate and problem solve around issues that arise regarding pupils learning or social situations. The intention was that these teams would support teachers in dealing with problems, giving them ideas to try before allocating support or involving the school psychologist. I discovered quickly

that it was nearly impossible to add this kind of regular meetings to the teacher's work schedule so I needed to find another way of providing consultation to the teachers.

I had always seen it as my role as a leader to relieve teachers of their problems by solving them for them. Metaphorically it could be said that the staff would empty their rucksacks of worries onto my desk and I would pick them up and put them into my rucksack to deal with. In my journal, I see how I transformed the way of dealing with problems or challenges that teachers bring to me. The excerpt below is an example of an emailed request from a teacher

Hi, Edda

We need to do something about Tom in my class. He probably needs a support person next to him in school. He might need a diagnosis for attention deficit because he is very unfocused, is always losing his books and does not pay attention in class. Can you help me with applying for a diagnosis? (Research journal, January 30th)

Usually I would do exactly what he is asking without thinking more about it. However, in the analysis a shift in my thinking can be recognised. Instead of doing what I usually do, take on the teacher's problem; I asked for more information.

I asked the SEN: "do you think Tom has ADD?" She answered: "No, Tom does not have ADD, his dysfunction is a learned behaviour. Icelandic is his second language, so he often does not understand what to do or how. His response is often to do as little as possible and be invisible." (Research journal, January 30th)

I decided to call a meeting with the teacher and those who are supporting Tom. I made a list of things to discuss in the meeting and set it up to be a meeting to brainstorm and problem solve:

- What do we know about Tom? – Strengths and challenges
- What kinds of support is Tom currently receiving?
- What can we do more/differently? (All ideas are valid)
- What are we going to try now?
- Who is responsible for what?
- Set the next meeting in two weeks to reassess the situation

The meeting was held on the 11th of February and present were the classroom teacher, the LSA, the SEN teacher, the teacher for Icelandic as an additional language (Ice2 teacher), and the school counsellor. I decided to focus the discussions in the meeting on the structure explained above. It turned out that the LSA knew Tom outside school, so she could tell us that he was very clever with computers and was even asked to people's homes in his neighbourhood to assist with setting up and fixing their computers. Another skill was his strong visual memory. However, he did not have many friends and was often alone on the playground. His reading skills have progressed slowly and often he does not understand written instructions. He is prone to losing his schoolbooks and takes a long time to begin working. He is currently getting support from the Ice2 teacher and homework assistance two hours a week each.

We decided to add one lesson of support in mathematics, adapt the homework, add reading moments every day with an LSA, and to use every opportunity to give Tom positive attention, not negative. Also, the teacher would talk to the IT teacher and ask her to give him a role in computer class.

February 27th, we had a follow-up meeting to reevaluate our interventions. The meeting was short because as it turned out everything has been going better. Tom is happier, does not forget or misplace his books, he asks for assistance, he completes his homework and is taking more of a part in classroom activities. The school nurse furthermore gave him a check-up and found out that he probably needs glasses.

The effects of this problem-solving meeting (PSM) were unbelievable. In just over two weeks we were seeing a happier, better functioning pupil. This kind of structured meeting was clearly effective and it opened new possibilities of acquiring diverse views and information from various sources. Gathering together in a structured meeting those who are working either directly or indirectly with the pupil created great possibilities for viewing the situation from a broader perspective.

It was intriguing to discover that the strength of the team problem-solving meeting lay in it being context bound and ad-hoc based, whereas the teachers did not really see the need for the idea of Teacher Assistance Team meetings prescribed monthly. Upon seeing the effect of the PSM, I presented an idea to the school psychologist and the administrators. The idea was to redesign the process of applying for a diagnosis or intervention from the psychologist. Instead of the process being that the teachers fill in a form, get parents signature and hand it to me to discuss with the Student

Protective Services (SPS) that then refers it to the school psychologist, we set up steps for the teacher to problem-solve and collaborate with others before reaching that stage. The following presents a new procedure that was used with teachers who wanted to refer their pupils to the school psychologist.

Process of referring a pupil to the school psychologist

When worries arise about pupil's behaviour, learning or social status the first step is to contact parents and discuss the situation, get their ideas and build collaboration. Then the next steps are:

1. The teacher asks for a PSM with the support team of the grade along with others, as relevant. The following meeting structure is kept:
 - a. What is the problem?
 - b. Do we need more information about the pupil or situation?
 - c. Brainstorm solutions – anything goes
 - d. What solutions can we try now?
 - e. Who is responsible for doing what?
 - f. When are we going to re-evaluate?
2. If the problem still persist after two rounds of PSM has been tried, the next step is to seek advice from the study counsellor or school psychologist, and ask the Student Protective Services to review the case
3. If the above has not had the expected results and problems still persist, consent from parents is sought for involving the school psychologist. (Research journal, April 10th)

Before the end of the school year we had tried this process a couple of times with good results and one of the SEN claimed:

“This is brilliant! It is much more effective than sending all those pupils to get a diagnosis from the school psychologist. This way we get a much better overview of the problem and usually we get a thousand ideas to try that are more efficient than placing a label on the pupil” (Recorded meeting May 2014).

One important consequence of this change in the process of referral was that many of the staff were now willing to view the academic or social environment as being the contributing factor in the problems pupils encounter in school, instead of viewing the pupil as the problem needing fixing to function. This also meant that the LSA, who often held key information about the pupil in the school as their work takes them to places and situations that are outside the classroom teachers' scope of practice (such as lunch room, recess, PE or swimming lessons), got a place at the table. They got the agency to participate as equals in the solution seeking process. In order to secure that this work process was not just a document in a file, I printed bookmarks for the support staff with the questions for the PSM so that they had them handy whenever the situation required.

5.3.2 Challenges to collaborating

Data suggests clearly that establishing teams of collaboration is not enough. Teams need to have a purpose and ways of dealing with conflict, where active trust is the norm (Sachs, 2002).

In the beginning of November one of the classroom teachers came to my office and wanted to know how the LSA were deployed to her classroom. I showed her their schedules and told her that the SE in her team had all the schedules and she could get copies for her class. She maintained that support is often missing in her class, and the pupils that need support were on their own and she could not help them on top of everything else. I said "ok, but that means someone is not doing their job because there are three people taking turns in supporting your class and according to the schedules your classroom should have support in every lesson". She replied: "No, they are all doing their jobs, it is the SEN teacher who is not on top of what she should be doing". (Research journal, November 6th)

This teacher did what is common practice in the school, to bring conflicts to a higher authority instead of communicating directly with the person they disagree with or discuss discontent in their teams. Her real intention seemed to be to let me know that the collaboration between her and the SEN teacher was not working, even though she came into my office to discuss schedules. It appeared that their disparities had to do with their different understanding of roles and responsibilities. The teacher was

critical of the way the SEN teacher was working and the SEN teacher somehow did not trust the teacher. This was a case of dysfunctional collaboration that presents a picture of the culture of dealing with conflict in the school.

I discussed this problem with the administrators in the school and the principal suggested that we do a switch. There had also been complaints from other grade teachers about the SEN that was working with their team so we decided to call these two SEN teachers to a meeting and present the idea of them switching teams. I was, however, sceptical of this idea because I thought it would not change anything.

Wednesday the eighth of November Olga the assistant principal and I met with the two SEN teachers to discuss them switching teams. We began by talking about their assignments and the pupils. Then Olga presented the idea that they would switch places. They were both visibly pleased with the suggestion. I saw that both the SENs were relieved. I was very relieved as well on two counts, because they did not object to this change and because maybe now our teams would start to function properly. (Research journal, November 8th)

This change took effect immediately and already in the first week I saw how much effect our switch had on the collaboration in both grades. The teams became better functioning as there was more energy and somehow trust had been reinstated in the collaboration. Being able to react to the dysfunctional teams with flexibility was important and I learned valuable lessons about the influence of personal relations, about how characters need to fit together, and that when collegiality is absent from the team, the collaboration does not work. Professionalism alone is not enough in close team work; the personal connection is no less important for a collaboration to function.

5.4 Reflections on the coordination of support

Reading through the journal still raises uncomfortable feelings within me. The memory of disappointment and sometimes a sharp sense of despair is strong when I read some of the entries. These entries depict moments of distress where my insecurity and uncertainty can be read between the lines. The moments portray the micro-politics at work in the school, where I felt powerless to perform the change I was planning because my colleagues had other ideas, and sometimes, instead of taking their criticisms directly to

me, went to the principal to complain about my work. The journal, luckily, has entries in between that bring hope and are testament to how things can be improved. From my reactions to co-workers who were not collaborating according to my proposed action plan, I could sense my aversion to conflict in the early stages of the research. As I wrote about these instances in the journal I became aware of my aversion and began to form ideas of how I could be stronger in dealing with conflict, to argue my point without fear of judgement, to not take on their baggage of worries but help them find ways to deal with it.

As I was beginning to write chapter five, I discussed my uneasiness in reading the journal with my critical friend and this was her response:

It is because of the chaos. It is important to anticipate and accept chaos in changing practice. Chaos is a natural phase in the change process and when you accept that then it is easier to find a space to deal with it. It is normal for changes to take time, there is always a period where everyone is insecure and stressed which leads to the chaos. (Research journal, May 2015)

She advised me to look at the chaos as my friend, to view my insecurity as a normal rather than an abnormal state and to search for the lessons to be learned from the data. Heeding her advice, I looked for lessons in the journal, choosing those that could explain how practice was brought forward or lessons that cast a light on the restraints and barriers to implementing inclusive practice.

The golden thread that runs through the previous sections is the discourse of how pupils need to be supported, and even protected, to be able to take part in the regular classroom. Echoes of the discourse of deficit that entails regarding disabled pupils as too difficult to accommodate in the regular school system can be heard in the way support is assigned to pupils, not to classrooms or teachers, and in the way teachers, support staff and even parents understand the support system. Traces of the medical discourse that states that some pupils need diagnosing and therapy to function and be normalised into society, ignoring their strengths, resources and humanity, can also be detected (Hamre, 2016; Rieser, 2011). This discourse is the directive behind the funding policies for tailored support and has effect on how people think about how to coordinate special needs education. While these discourses influence the discussions and decision-making in education it is difficult to envision how to move forward in

transforming the education system towards inclusion, focusing on curriculum, pedagogy and practice.

Reflecting on the data now, I can see that my thoughts and actions were coloured by these discourses without me being aware of it. My understanding of inclusion as removing barriers to participation, belonging and learning were still focused on the role of the support system and viewing the support system as the answer to removing barriers. I believe in supporting diversity, even though the practice I was coordinating was focused on assimilation; on normalising pupils to assist them with belonging and to be participants in education. It can be said that I, as most of those people I was working with, was trapped in the 'needs' paradigm focusing on compensating the difficulties pupils encounter, which leads to low expectations for pupils and learned helplessness of the pupil. This leads me to wonder how inclusive my ideas of inclusive practice, as presented here, really were.

Reading my research journal today makes me feel that my attempts to develop inclusive practice were somewhat underdeveloped, because I was not considering the alternative: to focus on how the resources, competences and funds of knowledge that pupils bring to school are the answer to the challenge of diversity and thereby to move away from focusing on meeting pupil's needs (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007). Planning education and organising learning situations that respond to pupils is then grounded in the knowledge that teachers have about their pupils.

6 Discussions: Constructing an inclusive system

The aim of this research was to study the implementation of changes or improvements to the system of support and how working with the pupils in that system was made more inclusive. Furthermore, the aim was to understand how I as a practitioner grew in my role as a coordinator for support. The main question leading the research was *How can I as a coordinator for support services improve the practice of support services in an inclusive school?* And the following questions were added to support and define the main question: *What can I do to make the coordination of support more inclusive? What actions can I put in place to improve collaboration between regular education and the support service? How can I develop my leadership practice in order to support inclusion?*

In chapter two I presented a linear model (see Figure 2, p. 39) of how I envisioned the connections between the concepts that frame this research. My idea was that leadership for inclusion would influence collaboration between professionals, define roles and responsibilities, and lead to inclusive practice. All of this should take place by engaging in a reflection on practice, where practitioners question their actions and look for improvements in practice to benefit pupils and parents. Through writing my findings I have seen that this is an over-simplified representation; the process to inclusive practice is far more complicated and iterative in nature. So, to answer the research questions, I provide here a revised model of an inclusive education system which constitutes the first part of this chapter.

The revised model is based on my findings, as well as on the literature, of how an inclusive education system can be developed. This model offers a systemic view on inclusion and can be used by those within the system to examine and develop inclusive practices at the classroom, school or local government level. The second part of the chapter aims to answer the question of how a coordinator for support services can improve practice in an inclusive school and how the model can be utilised in that purpose.

6.1 An inclusive education system model

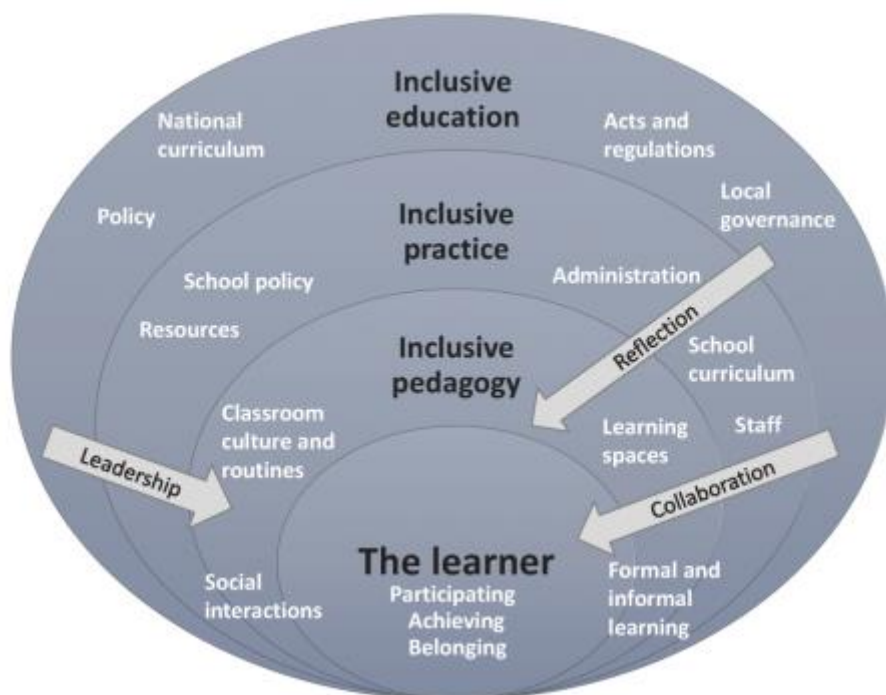
Inclusive education is a social construct that relies on relationships between people and systems in society. As a system, inclusive education is an important factor in creating socially inclusive societies, reducing

discrimination and racism as well as school failure and pupil drop-out (European Agency, 2015). The ultimate goal of such a system is to provide all learners opportunities for meaningful high-quality education in their neighbourhood school alongside their peers. This creates a fundamental challenge for policy makers and practitioners to find ways of breaking connections between disadvantage, educational failure and restricted life chances, to aim for equity and excellence for all pupils.

I have found that in order to reach an overview of how to develop and construct an inclusive education system it is helpful to distinguish between inclusive education, inclusive practice and inclusive pedagogy (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Spratt, 2013). These three interlocking parts of the system are coexisting and constantly influencing each other to different degrees and they help explain the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in creating inclusive schools and school systems at each level.

I have created a systemic view of inclusive education (see figure 6 below) to sort out the complexities and interconnectedness of the levels in the inclusive education system. This systemic view is based on ideas from Anderson, Boyle, and Deppeler (2014) as well as Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) and builds on the learning I acquired from my research findings. The figure shows how the learner is at the centre and how each level influences the pupil directly or indirectly.

Figure 6 The inclusive education system



The inclusive education system is not an isolated entity; it is influenced by culture and society, by international conventions and agreements as well as social developments. Inside the system there is a constant flow between the levels as each level resides inside the other and cannot be taken out of context and the concepts of leadership, collaboration and reflection are important across the levels. There is vertical communication and influence across and between the levels, and decisions made at each level influence school staff and administrators, learners and parents directly to a varying degree. The different factors in the various systems around the learner affect the process of inclusion and how successfully he/she is participating, achieving and belonging in the school. These will be further discussed in the following sections.

6.1.1 Inclusive education

The level of inclusive education has to do with the acts and policies governments (both state and local) create and enforce. These build on principles of equity and human rights, and have the aim of increasing pupil participation and decreasing exclusion from culture, community and curricula of the mainstream schools (Booth et al., 2000). Education policymakers and legislators are important at this level. Although they cannot make the education system inclusive on their own, their role is to state clearly what schools are expected to do without directly prescribing how (Pijl & Frissen, 2009). Removing hindrances in regulations, encouraging additional training for teachers and evading funding policies that involve formal labelling procedures, are methods policymakers can utilise to support the road to an inclusive education system (ibid.). The role of policies is to provide a clear vision of how to implement inclusive education and how the implementation is a shared responsibility of all educators, leaders and policy-makers (European Agency, 2015).

Policy makers, legislators and researchers recognise and acknowledge that there exists a gap between policy and how that is enforced in practice. The goals and objectives set forth in the national level policies for inclusive education systems may not always “be effectively translated into successful practice at organisational levels” (Watkins & Meijer, 2016). Two main influential factors on inclusive practices within this level are the national curriculum and the models of funding inclusive education.

6.1.1.1 *The national curriculum*

The national curriculum has direct impact on inclusive education. It is a device of managing education, by setting forth a mosaic of skills for learners

to master and strategies for teachers to employ. In order to support inclusive education, it needs to be flexible and dynamic enough for teachers to provide all pupils with appropriately challenging work, thus rejecting competitive individualism.

The Icelandic national curriculum, from the year 2011, is based on six fundamental concerns for education. These are literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality (equity), health and welfare, and creativity. These fundamental concerns, named pillars in the English version of the curriculum, are grounded in an imperative to provide a general education to all, serving to promote each individual's abilities to meet the challenges of life. Furthermore, the pillars are

socially oriented as they are to promote increased equality and democracy and to ensure well-educated and healthy citizens, both for participating in and for changing and improving society and also for contemporary employment. The fundamental pillars are meant to accentuate the principle of general education and encourage increased continuity in school activities as a whole. In evaluating school activities, the influence of the fundamental pillars on teaching, play and studies have to be taken into consideration. (Ministry of education science and culture, 2011, p. 14)

The ideas behind the national curriculum are in line with inclusive education and can influence and sustain inclusive pedagogy and practice. The national curriculum supports flexibility in teaching and learning, by e.g. stating that each compulsory school can decide whether specific subjects and subject areas are taught separately or in an integrated manner. It is further emphasised, that an effort should be made to make education as integrated as possible (Ministry of education science and culture, 2011). In the emphasis on flexibility there is inherent trust in the teacher as a professional, who is free to make choices based on their professional knowledge of pedagogy and content to create inclusive learning spaces.

6.1.1.2 Policies of funding inclusive education

A central issue for a successful implementation of inclusive education is the policy of funding. The policy of funding for special needs in Iceland through the Equalisation fund serves as a classification system that leads to labelling pupils based on categories of need. In my research findings, the story of Ari and a meeting with his first-grade teacher and his parents is an example of

this fault in the funding system. Looking at this meeting it seems that the aim of the teacher was to get the parents to agree to a diagnosis so that Ari would get full support and the responsibility for him, and his education, would be shared with (or taken over by) the support system. This is a testament to how the funding policy leads to teachers trying to get parents to agree to diagnosis and statements of special needs in order to push pupils up the funding ladder (Sodha & Margo, 2010).

According to a recent external audit on the Icelandic system for inclusive education, the current mechanisms for funding and resource allocation have a direct influence on local and school-level stakeholders' attitudes, thinking and behaviour regarding inclusive education. The results from the audit show that stakeholders across all system levels call for a shift away from allocating funds based on the identification of individual pupils' special education needs, to more flexible funding that allows schools to support all learners' needs in more responsive ways (European Agency, 2017).

Inclusive education calls for flexible support provision and teaching and is dependent on funding policies encouraging such flexibility. The WHO/World Bank (2011) indicate that funding decentralised to a local level and based on the total enrolment of pupils results in more inclusion-oriented provision, as more decentralised education systems tend to cultivate innovative forms of inclusive education, encourage flexible learning and support opportunities, as well as enhance the involvement of families and communities (Bottoms & Presson, 2000; Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training, 2012; Stubbs, 2008). The funding policy should enable education systems to take learner's educational needs into account, encourage schools to be receptive of diversity and ensure equal opportunities.

The policy for funding needs to enable and not hinder inclusive education. It should be based on identification of required supports that enable pupils to participate and learn, rather than labelling or categorising pupil difficulties in order to influence the construction of inclusive practices (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009). For this to work, there is also need for mutual trust between teachers and administrators in charge of allocating support. Teachers must trust that they will be supported in teaching all their pupils. In some cases, there will be a diagnosis in place but administrators in charge of allocating support need to trust that teachers know their pupils, and together, with assistance from the support system, they should work out the kind of support that would be most helpful to create inclusive practice in classrooms.

6.1.2 Inclusive practice

The next level in the system, inclusive practice, focuses on practices that are defined by the school's traditions, culture, ethos, values and ideology, the patterns of authority, and ways of collaborating within the school, with parents, with outside agents and the wider community. The factors in this level affect pupils' experience in school, although they might not exist in their immediate environment. The development of inclusive practices requires leadership with a strong vision of an inviting, supportive school culture (White & Jones, 2011). The responsible actors in this level are school administrators, teachers, support staff and non-teaching staff, and the practice involves creating meaning, support coordination, resource allocation, school policies, organisation and procedures as well as the school curriculum. The interconnection of these factors is further explained in the next two subsections.

6.1.2.1 *Creating meaning*

My findings, in line with results from the external audit on the inclusive education system in Iceland (European Agency, 2017), show that there is a need to explore, unpack and discuss issues of what an inclusive school looks like, of how disability is viewed, and of how to respond to diversity by establishing a discourse and conversation based on shared understandings (Fauske, 2011). Thus, dispelling the myth that all staff share an understanding of inclusive education and what inclusive practice involves. This section is divided into two parts: thinking about diversity and discussing inclusive practices.

Thinking about diversity

Developing inclusive practice demands a welcoming disposition towards a diverse pupil population, an understanding of learning as a creation of meaning and an assumption that all pupils are inherently competent. Inclusive practice requires flexibility in structures and processes (such as classroom schedules and resource allocation) and working within a social justice framework to respond to diversity. Diversity stands for different ethnicities, different interest groups, different power bases; just all the differences that can be found (Fullan, 1999).

A critical social justice perspective emphasises that people with their different abilities, characteristics and backgrounds should be "celebrated and valued, not quashed, ignored or assimilated" (Ryan & Rottmann, 2007, p. 15). Equality, that is sameness, is often mistakenly associated with social justice in the way difference is treated. Critical social justice does not

advocate treating everyone the same because that would simply prolong inequalities that are already in place. Rather, according to this perspective, individuals and groups should be treated according to their abilities, interests and experience; that is, they should be treated equitably. Treating individuals equitably rather than equally provides the potential to counteract existing inequalities (Ryan & Rottmann, 2007). Those advocating for critical social justice seek a world that is fair and equitable, where everyone has the chance to reach their goals but not a world where everyone must reach the same goals.

Just as the human species is diverse, the staff, the curricula, teaching practices and school culture should mirror that diversity, rather than expecting pupils to assimilate to existing structures. In inclusive schools, pupil diversity is regarded as an “asset, an enduring source of uncertainty” (Skrtic, 2005, p. 150), and from it derives the energy that drives and creates new thinking, new knowledge and progress.

Diversity implies that the “myth of the normal child” (Baglieri, Bejoian, Broderick, Connor, & Valle, 2011, p. 2124) needs to be dismantled. This means unravelling the ideologies of difference such as ableism and whiteness (Leonardo, 2009) that position some pupils as normal while others are marginalised and therefore need to be integrated into the traditional educational model that was not created with them in mind in the first place (Florian & Spratt, 2013; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Hence, when creating a learning environment that encompasses different cultural and linguistic practice, where a variety of ability is a valid form of participation and medium for learning, it is important to take a critical and reflective stance toward the myth of the normal child. In so doing, an understanding of the term ‘diversity’ must be expanded beyond disability or ethnic difference to focus on the value of differences in gender, socio-economic status, cultural group, abilities, learning styles and interests (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2004). Thus, inclusive practice is distinct in the ways the school system responds to diversity, how decisions about support and resources are made and how specialist knowledge is employed (Florian, 2010).

Discussing inclusive practices

Responding to diversity and developing inclusive practice depends on the prevailing thinking about disability and difference in schools. In my research findings, the discourse of difference centres around integration and assimilating pupils into the dominant structure of school, that pupils need to be diagnosed to be able to be supported in their education. In Table 8,

this thinking about disability falls under the medical model category, a mixture of medical models one and two, and the support system can also be said to operate based on this kind of mind-set.

Table 8 Types of thinking about disabled people and forms of education.

Thinking about disability - Model	Characteristics	Form of education
Traditional	Disabled person a shame on family, guilt, ignorance. Disabled person seen as of no value.	Excluded from education altogether
Medical 1	Focus on what disabled person cannot do. Attempt to normalize or, if they cannot fit into things as they are, keep them separate.	Segregation: Institutions/hospitals. Special schools (with expert special educators).
Medical 2	Person can be supported by minor adjustment and support, to function normally and minimize their impairment. Continuum of provision based on severity and type of impairment.	Integration in mainstream: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At same location but in separate class/units • Socially in some activities, e.g. meals, assembly or art • In the class with support, but teaching and learning remain the same. What you <i>cannot</i> do determines which form of education you receive.
Social	Barriers identified – solutions found to minimize them. Barriers of attitude, environment and organisation are seen as what disables, and are removed to maximize potential of all. Disabled person welcomed. Relations are intentionally built. Disabled person achieves their potential. Person-centred approach.	Inclusive – schools where all are welcomed, and staff, parents and pupils value diversity. Support is provided so all can be successful academically and socially. This requires reorganising teaching, learning and assessment. Peer support is encouraged. Focus on what you <i>can</i> do.

From (Rieser, 2011)

Focusing on the social model in Table 8, inclusive education as the target brings forward the importance of a common vision and common values in schools with strong leadership in creating and sustaining a dialogue about what constitutes inclusive practice. This involves building professional learning communities, in particular strengthening the collaboration of special and classroom/subject teachers, and increasing the participation of parents and local community in school activities (Shepherd & Hasazi, 2007).

Discussing inclusive practice functions to create a community where participants share understanding and use their shared language to explore and reflect on their classroom and school practices. Without a deep and ideological conversation about inclusive practice and pedagogy among those who have the power to shape schools, there is a risk that schooling will continue to be unfair, inequitable, humiliating, and painful for some pupils (Brantlinger, 2005). This I found to be the case in my school where people had varied understanding of inclusion and inclusive practices and talked about that they never discuss it as a group. The focus of discussions between practitioners needs to be on problem solving and creative approaches to curriculum innovation (Grimes & Ekins, 2009).

Parents and pupils need to be a part of creating and sharing the language and dialogue in collaboration, as their experiences of education, inclusion, and exclusion can be a source of information and insights that will assist in shaping practice (Allan, 2010; Guðjónsdóttir, 2003; Ryan, 2006). Parents, like I witnessed in my research, need to be trusted and valued partners in the education of their children and I found how creating a common ground of understanding was imperative for establishing this trust and for carrying the work forward.

Pupils, furthermore, should be given a “meaningful voice” (Rieser, 2011, p. 158) in their education, and having them present on school boards and councils should not only be a tokenistic policy. They should be empowered to have influence and take responsibility for their own education. Pupils receiving support need to be a part of discussions about the support they receive and how they are progressing academically and socially. There is need for teachers to strategically make room for the voices of pupils about their own learning and about classroom work, as it is obvious that in the busy life of classrooms this cannot be an unstructured event. This was evident in the words of the pupils in my research, who stated that “teachers don’t have time to listen to our suggestions... if they do listen they usually forget about what we suggest” (Interview with 4th grade boys – 4th March).

6.1.2.2 Provision of support

The provision of support as inclusive practice is not a separate entity from mainstream education. The findings show that although some teachers reported that support was decided in cooperation with the special needs teachers, others felt that they had little power over how their pupils were supported or when. For support to be efficient and in the best interest of pupils, it should be a natural part of everyday classroom practice and organised through collaboration between teachers and support staff on an equal footing, where each practitioner has a defined role and responsibility towards pupils and tasks. This section is divided into three subsections addressing collaboration, the role of learning support assistants and various ways of supporting pupils.

Collaboration as a starting point for support

The findings show that the conditions for effective collaboration involve setting designated time for collaboration in the weekly schedule, clearly stating responsibilities and roles, and trusting each other's professional knowledge. Teachers have knowledge of pedagogy and the subjects and the special education needs teachers and social educators have knowledge of various aspects of how to evaluate and support pupils' learning and social development. Learning support assistants have knowledge of pupils in social settings, such as in recess or the sports hall which is added value for the collaboration. Like my findings show it is beneficial for school leaders to keep collegiality in mind, to know the strengths, interest and resources of their staff, or who can work with whom, if collaboration is to be effective. Furthermore, the leaders need to provide time and the necessary resources.

The idea behind the inclusive provision of support is grounded in the principles of the social model of viewing disability (see Table 8), as well as the findings from my research. The aim of support is to reduce disabling barriers to participation and learning, as opposed to support being determined by a lack of ability or what pupils cannot do. The focus of supporting pupils with special education needs is then on creating specific and detailed targets for quality learning, rather than on provision and placement (Ekins, 2013). Processes to track pupil attainment and analyse data must be in place to be able to meet their needs. The goal of tracking and analysing is to measure the degree to which pupils are meeting their learning targets, not to determine their success or failure, but to allow teachers individually and with others reach an understanding of how they are succeeding in their practice (European Agency, 2013). Furthermore,

parents and pupils need to be involved with the school staff in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of support and interventions on overall pupil achievement and well-being (ibid.) My research journal demonstrates a clear example of the diverse meanings and understandings of school and education. While we in the school were impressed by the big steps of progress Alex was taking in participating, belonging and social development, his mother saw it differently and she was focused on his academic achievement. We needed to show her that there was a balance between the academic and social factors in Alex's education. This shows how problematic the meaning of achievement can be. Having agreed on clear targets and how to assess them would have perhaps alleviated this conflict.

The roles of learning support assistants

The discussion focused on learning support assistants (LSA) and their role in supporting pupils had substantial space in my research. While some teachers stated that the LSA were important, others meant that they presented extra work load for teachers and were not useful. The trend that could be witnessed in the school was to support the pupils within the tailored provision by deploying learning support assistants to be at their side and sometimes be fully responsible for their learning. My research, and others (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Giangreco, 2013), shows that an overreliance on learning support assistants aimed at supporting an individual pupil, more than supporting all pupils in the classroom or the teacher, can result in poor use of resources and possibly insufficient support for both learners and teachers (Giangreco, 2013). This is both evident in the story of Daniel, who had been supported by the same person since he was in first grade and in the story of Susan, whose teacher did not see as a part of her class. These stories illustrate how the presence of a learning support assistant can create unnecessary dependency where the focus is only on the lack of ability of the pupil instead of their strengths, and how this dependency on behalf of the teacher excludes the pupil from the classroom (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009).

Nevertheless, my findings show that the work of learning support assistants can be valuable in schools. The problem-solving meeting presents an example of how a learning support assistant was valuable in sharing information about a pupil as well as in brainstorming possible ways of working with that pupil to assist him in becoming more successful in his education. For this to be an effective practice, it is important that teachers understand that they have the responsibility to educate *all* their pupils. So,

when working with learning support assistants some ground rules must be in place to ensure the right of all pupils to quality education and to define the role of the LSA in that respect. These include that the LSA's role is not to replace teachers but to add value to what they do, LSA's role should be focused on assisting pupils to develop their independent learning skills and to manage their own learning, and LSA deployment should be focused on assisting all pupils, not just those having problems learning (Webster, Russell, & Blatchford, 2016). Time has to be scheduled for the teacher and the LSA to meet, where the teacher has the opportunity to supervise the LSA and provide feedback on their work and the LSA can clarify his role in the classroom. Team meetings with the support team for the classroom or age group are a good setting for this. While the meetings provide a space for the LSA to receive clear information about their responsibilities and what is expected of them in the daily routines in the class, the LSA should be respected as knowledgeable and important in shaping the learning space. In the meetings, they should be given opportunities to share information about pupils, discuss their progress, bring up challenges and take part in brainstorming solutions (Deppeler et al., 2005; Giangreco, 2013; Sharma & Salend, 2016).

6.1.2.3 Ways of supporting pupils

Support can also involve pupils working together with their peers, collaborating or tutoring each other. Peer support involves pupils working in pairs or groups to reach a common goal, learning from each other or supporting each other socially, and this partnership is mutually beneficial. This I witnessed in my research when classmates proved to be resourceful in working with Daniel, who had always had personal support, when the organisation of support was changed.

Partnering pupils can be organised in various ways and for various reasons; pupils who are learning a language might be partnered with those who are bilingual or have developed a stronger language proficiency, and pupils who are less verbal can be paired with those who are more verbal (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2012). The possibilities for pairing are many and do not always have to reside in binaries or opposites, this just needs to be grounded in knowledge of pupils and how they can support each other.

Organising support based on the principles of collaboration demands the availability of specialists or specialist knowledge to work with teachers and can reduce the need for labelling learners based on their special education needs. This entails that the purpose of the support system is to promote quality meaningful education for all pupils through collaboration between teachers, special needs teachers, social educators and learning support

assistants. Through their collaboration flexible curricula and lesson plans can be created that make room for and include everyone in the classroom.

Teachers are the key to developing inclusive practices and pedagogies in schools because they are the ones who, based on their beliefs and knowledge, decide and choose the learning environment where pupils are meant to learn, and they work within the structures of the school system (Ainscow, 2008). This task presents a major challenge for teachers in modern times and requires that they are in a continuous search for pedagogy and approaches to meet diverse pupils in inclusive schools.

6.1.3 Inclusive pedagogy

The level of inclusive pedagogy is closest to the level where the learner is central and encompasses all the factors that are in the environment where the pupil experiences formal and informal learning. Here, the teacher is the key player, and in collaboration with the support staff she/he organises teaching, the classroom and culture of the classroom.

The term pedagogy appears in the educational literature to explain the disparate and complex issues of the teaching profession. Three consistent uses of the term 'pedagogy' can be found in the literature; (a) to cover teaching methods, instructional programs and curricula; (b) as an all-embracing term for education in poststructuralist thought; and (c) to express and address moral education and discourse about teaching and learning (Bruner, 1996; Freire, 2005; Van Manen, 1991, 1999). Pedagogy is composed of the act of teaching and the ideas, values and beliefs informing, sustaining, and justifying that act (Alexander, 2013). According to Florian (2014) inclusive pedagogy is an "approach to teaching and learning that supports teachers to respond to individual differences between learners, but avoids the marginalisation that can occur when some pupils are treated differently" (p. 289).

This level is about the choices the teacher makes each moment in her/his teaching regarding learning and social situations. This is exemplified by a need to reflect on the values and processes involved in pedagogy and compare these with the principles of inclusion, asking:

... to what extent do teaching practices and the curriculum exclude, marginalise or demean any groups of learners or individuals; and to what extent do they recognise and draw on students' own rich 'funds of knowledge' (Andrews & Yee 2006) and experience (Armstrong, 2011, p. 10).

By incorporating pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills into practice, an opportunity is created to differentiate among pupils, contexts, methods, materials, resources, and outcomes in designing a curriculum for all pupils.

6.1.3.1 Pedagogical principles for inclusion

The basic presumption for inclusive education based on the social model, depicted in Table 8, gives an idea of the broad ideological model that it builds on. To add to this explanation and give the inclusive education more depth, I have adapted the framework of inclusive pedagogy from Florian (2014, 2015) and Florian and Spratt (2013) here in table 9. This framework can be used as a tool for teachers to reflect on their pedagogical principles in teaching diverse groups of learners.

The principles for inclusive pedagogy, as shown in table 9, are based on the fundamental premise of rejecting ability labelling as a deterministic notion of fixed ability that has historically underpinned the structure of education (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Thus, inclusive pedagogy is particularly aimed at contesting practices that represent provision for most with additional or different experiences for some (ibid.), because the very act of focusing on difference intensifies the isolation and marginalisation of children and adds to the social construction of disability (Grenier, 2010). In the findings from the reconnaissance phase Drífa asks if it is inclusive practice when always the same children go out of the classroom to get special assistance with reading. In this instance, she is reflecting on her understanding of inclusiveness and is questioning the practices of separating pupils and thereby constructing differences.

Table 9 The framework of inclusive pedagogy

	Assumptions	Associated concepts/actions	Key challenges	What to look for in practice
1	Difference is accounted for as essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing all pupils can learn and make progress – learning potential is open ended • Rejecting deterministic views of ability • Ability grouping as organisation of support is rejected • Using language that expresses the value of all pupils • Employing social constructivist approaches 	<p>A comparison to the 'normal' pupil</p> <p>Notions of fixed ability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching practices include all pupils • Opportunities for pupils to participate in co-construction of knowledge are provided • Creating rich learning environments by extending what is ordinary available for all learners • Differentiation achieved through choices of activities available for everyone • Teaching and learning is focused on what pupils can do rather than what they can not • Formative assessment is used to support learning • Pupils are grouped to support everybody's learning • Interdependence between teachers and pupils to create new knowledge
2	Teachers believe that they are qualified/capable of teaching all pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating how the difficulties pupils experience in learning can be considered dilemmas for teaching 	Teachers believing that some pupils are not their responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on what is to be taught rather than who is to learn it • Opportunities are provided for pupils to choose the level at which they engage with learning

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the support of all learners – believing in own capability to promote the learning for all pupils 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of relationship between teacher and pupil • Difficulties in learning are viewed as professional challenges for the teacher rather than deficits in pupils • Interest in the welfare of the pupil as a person, not just in his/her learning • Flexibility in teaching – driven by needs of pupils, not the coverage of subject matter
3	Teachers continually develop creative new ways of working with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to work with and through others • Modelling creative/new ways of working • Focusing on pupils in relationship to each other rather than in isolation 	Changing thinking about inclusion from most and some, to everybody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interplay between professional stance and the stance of the school – creating spaces for inclusion wherever possible • Trying out new or different ways of working to support the learning of all pupils • Working with and through other adults in ways that respect the dignity of learners as full members in the classroom community • Being committed to continuing professional development as a way to develop more inclusive practices • Collaborate and discuss with teachers and support staff to create inclusive learning spaces

Adapted from: Florian (2014, 2015) Florian and Spratt (2013)

Hart, Drummond, and McIntyre (2007) identified three essential pedagogical principles important for the development of inclusive practices. To begin with, there is the principle of everybody that relates to the responsibility the teacher has towards his/her pupils, in the sense that the teacher is responsible for and committed to the education of *all* the pupils in the classroom, not just some of them. This responsibility can however be shared with other staff, such as special education or assistant teachers who collaborate with the teacher in supporting the pupils. The second principle addresses co-agency, where the pupil is seen as an active agent in his/her education and there is interplay between the teacher and the pupil. The teacher creates learning spaces with pupils, and the pupils are responsible for their learning with the support from the teacher. The last principle is that of trust, in that the teacher trusts that pupils want to learn and does not blame them when they do not learn what they are supposed to. The teacher asks what needs to be different for pupils who encounter problems in their learning, what needs to be changed in the learning environment, materials or activities, rather than asking what is wrong with the pupil (Hart et al., 2007), similar to what I report in the findings when a teacher called for a diagnosis of a pupil and I set up a problem solving meeting to find out what could be changed in the environment to help the pupil be successful in school.

The practice of teaching diverse groups of pupils is grounded in a pedagogy that includes more than skill in using prescribed instructional practices. Rather, this practice integrates professional knowledge about teaching, learning and child development, and involves an ethical and social commitment to children. Pedagogical qualities of responsive professional teachers are witnessed in those who understand child development and individual differences, are committed to the education of all pupils, and who have a knowledge base which enables them to differentiate between pupils and the subject as they develop a curriculum that includes all (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000).

6.1.3.2 Organising learning

Coordinating instructional leadership in the school is a key in supporting teachers to build up confidence in their pedagogical skills and belief that they can teach all their students. My findings portray how the teachers expressed their insecurities in how to teach pupils with disabilities and their guilt in not being able to support all their pupils. At the same time, it was evident that they were more open to discuss their organisational issues in their teaching rather than the pedagogy they employed. Research into

effective inclusive classrooms and schools has portrayed the following areas as important for the development of inclusive pedagogy:

- an emphasis on pupil-centred and activity-based learning,
- a focus on the classroom environment for diverse groups of pupils,
- strategies for designing curricula and teaching (Ferguson, 2008; Guðjónsdóttir, 2000; Meijer, 2003).

These areas can be arranged by the phases teachers go through as they prepare lessons, teach and reflect on their teaching. I present here three pedagogical models that serve to create and support an inspiring, productive and inclusive learning environment.

Pupil-centred learning

Pupil-centred learning is a descendant of constructivist learning theories that have defined learning as an “active process in which learners are active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organised knowledge” (Mayer, 2004, p. 14). Strategies build on emphasising responsibility and activity on the part of the pupils who are intrinsically motivated in learning and moving away from focusing on the schoolbooks or the teacher (Cannon & Newble, 2000). Through a range of approaches and technology, the teacher can make the curriculum more captivating and meaningful for pupils so that they are active agents in their own learning. Common features of pupil-centred teaching approaches include that knowledge is constructed rather than received, there is emphasis on both individualised work and group processes, learning and assessment can be performed in various ways, pupils are responsible for their learning, and the teacher acts as a facilitator creating a framework for pupils to work within. Following a constructivist viewpoint, the main aim is that pupils are active sense-makers, learning to learn in a sustainable fashion. Indeed, pupils are not expected to learn the same, at the same speed, or employ the same approach (Wolfe, Steinberg, & Hoffman, 2013).

Universal design of learning

Universal Design of Learning (UDL) is a strategy that teachers can use for planning to ensure pupil-centred learning and to create learning opportunities for a diverse group of pupils (Kurtts, Matthews, & Smallwood, 2009). Traditionally a curriculum is designed with certain pupils in mind, which builds barriers as it excludes others who will then need something different or added to be able to cope. UDL, however, is a form of inclusive practice that refers to the way instructional material and activities are designed to make content accessible for all pupils (Rose & Meyer, 2006).

UDL is based on research of the brain, cognitive-social learning theories and ideas of multiple intelligences and learning preferences (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2012). One of the main features of UDL is that the curriculum is designed to emphasise the end product: what the pupil is ultimately supposed to know, be able to do or understand after having gone through the process. UDL is related to the architectural and design concept of Universal Design (UD) that is oriented towards developing buildings, outdoor spaces, products and devices that assume diversity from the design stage (Hall et al., 2012). The common goal of UD and UDL is to design and create with diverse individuals in mind, rather than adding on or refitting later based on individual differences (ibid.).

Differentiated instruction

Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Understanding by Design (UbD) are two strategies that work well together and can be used along with UDL to cater to individual pupils' abilities, strengths and interests. Understanding by Design is a strategy to use for curriculum planning. It has also been termed 'backward design' as it entails beginning by identifying the desired learning outcomes and deciding how pupils show evidence of learning, similarly to UDL (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Thus, the instruction and learning experiences are planned based on clear learning goals specifying what pupils should know, understand and be able to do.

Differentiated instruction is however aimed at the way content or aims are organised with diverse pupils in mind. Thus, in planning instruction there is variation and inherent flexibility in content (what is to be learned), processes (how it is learned) and products of learning (how learning is evidenced) (Tomlinson, 2003). This means that pupils can choose their learning approach and product rather than the teacher making the choice for them based on some pre-set profile of the pupils (Ferguson, 2008; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). These two approaches together, backward design and differentiation, present a holistic method of organising curriculum, assessment and instruction based on ideas of effective teaching and learning for diverse pupil populations.

UDL, UbD, and DI are three models that can be combined to create and support an inspiring, productive and inclusive learning environment. By combining them they support each other as the focus of UDL is to remove barriers for learning, UbD is a curriculum model focusing on the what and how of teaching and DI is a model based on whom, how and what to teach. By incorporating pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills into practice, an opportunity to differentiate among pupils, contexts, methods, materials, resources and outcomes is created in designing a curriculum for all pupils.

6.1.3.3 *Knowing pupils*

Every pupil brings valuable resources and experiences into the classroom and to empower them through education teachers should notice and make use of these resources. Rodriguez (2007) characterises resources as personal strengths and qualities, which emerge from and shape life experiences and Wertch (1998) considers cultural resources as mediational tools for people to make meaning and act in the world. In that sense, culture is seen as 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez et al., 2005) or in other words, resources to draw upon in the process of learning and in empowering pupils.

In my findings chapter the section about collaboration and problems tells a story about a teacher calling for a diagnosis for one of her pupils. In this story, important information was brought to bear when those working with the pupil came together to discuss and problem solve. However, one central viewpoint was missing: the pupil's. This finding has shown that gathering information about the pupil is important, but discussing with pupils about their knowledge, learning and aspirations is fundamental for meeting their needs in schools.

Teachers who understand their pupils' resources and develop a deep personal knowledge of each pupil are in a better position to differentiate teaching and learning in their classrooms. The key idea here is that while pupils can be different across many dimensions, the most significant difference for education resides in the way they approach and respond to learning tasks and situations, rather than in their pathological or cultural categorisations (Florian, 2008). This idea presents a challenge to teachers in being reactive to those differences and employing responsive practice (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000).

Important elements in the teacher practice then include comprehensive and systematic ways to gather information about pupils: about how they learn and what interests them. As a curriculum is created that is responsive to each pupil, the critical factor is openness to children and young people and a recognition that their resources contribute to the richness of the learning environment (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000). Flexible curricula and lesson plans with alternatives then provide teachers with opportunities to respond to the differences in each class. For teachers who want to respond to diverse learners in effective ways, this is a never-ending pathway.

6.1.4 The learner

The characteristics of the learner, at the centre of the diagram, should not influence the system or the effectiveness of the inclusive education system, rather, the relationships and interconnections between the structures and the environment should determine the learner's success. On the whole, pupils in my research, as others have found elsewhere (Levin, 2000), were amazingly accepting of the standard organisation and practices of the school. However, they would like to be able to have something to say regarding school practices and they expressed a wish to have some more choice about how and what they learn. Thus, every decision and action taken in the system should be based on how they benefit learners and how they are participating, achieving and belonging in the school (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Anderson et al., 2014; Booth, 2010).

Participation means that pupils are actively taking part in all aspects of education, academically and socially. This also means that pupils are engaged in rich and meaningful learning experiences, working cooperatively with their peers in a curriculum that is relevant to them (Evans, 2015). Furthermore, as previously stated, pupils must have a voice in matters that concern them in their education (Bragg, 2007; Portela, 2013), which calls for a platform or a space created by the teacher for democratic discussions with learners both individually and in groups (Todd, 2008). Pupils who have an individualised education plan should be a part of the planning process along with their parents. They should have a strong voice about their own learning, even involving a fellow pupil to support them in meetings. The plan should be forward looking, aiming for where the pupil wants to see him/herself at the end of the school year, at the end of primary school, at the end of lower secondary school and in the future.

Achievement means that learning goals meet individual needs within the bounds of the curriculum, and assessment is meaningful and attainable (Slee, 2011, 2012). Labelling or grouping pupils by anticipated ability can reinforce the idea that some pupils have little to contribute to their own or others learning. This kind of deficit thinking can also influence teachers to think that ability is fixed and nothing can be done about it. The result of 'fixed-ability' thinking is that pupils are subjected to low expectations and their possibilities for achievement are limited (Hart et al., 2007)

Belonging stipulates that pupils are valued and accepted for who they are and for the funds of knowledge they bring to the school (Gonzalez et al., 2005). They must feel that they are noticed and valued members of the school community and that others respect and believe in their abilities

(Aspin, 2007). Pupils can be sensitive to the atmosphere in the classroom, but by involving them in constructing it, they develop an ownership of their physical learning space and feel relaxed towards the teacher and their classmates (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009).

6.1.5 A summary of the model

I have presented here a model of a hopeful representation of inclusive education, practices and pedagogies built on the findings of my self-study and grounded in relevant literature. With the model, I aimed to move away from jargon based, prescribed practices. I want to give teachers and policymakers invested in inclusive education a map leading away from the idea that inclusion is a potentially unattainable ideological issue (Thomas & Loxley, 2007), and towards an encouraging path enabling practitioners to reflect on where they are at and showing them how they can move forward in developing inclusive practices within their schools. The model can act as a thinking tool that can be developed further in other schools or settings. As such, the model provides a way of looking at issues that surface in schools when developing inclusive schools.

6.2 The role of the Coordinator for Support Services in improving practice

This thesis has recounted my journey as a Coordinator for Support Services in a compulsory school researching the improvement of practice. My position in the school was a middle manager in charge of leading special needs education and support within the school. At the outset of my research I firmly held the belief that by changing the organisation of support I could influence the development of inclusive practices in the school, but as the research findings show, this is not so simple.

In the conceptual framework, chapter 2.1, I discuss leadership and how the literature has suggested that shared or distributed leadership more than delegation of tasks in school management would be more efficient in improving schools towards inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Busher, Hammersley-Fletcher, & Turner, 2007). Distributed leadership implies that more than one person leads change and it indicates the confidence and trust of the principal who shares responsibility across leadership teams (Day, 2009; Pascal, 2009). My findings illustrate that leadership was not distributed in the Waterfront school, rather the tasks of leading the support services and inclusion was delegated to me as middle manager. I had the trust and the support of the principal and the other

administrators, but while distributed leadership means *all* leaders are focused on taking action and making changes to improve the school towards inclusion (Oldham & Radford, 2011), I felt that the administrative team and I did not quite share an understanding of inclusion.

There are implications for accountability that illustrate the difficulties of managing in the middle as having responsibility without authority (Szwed, 2007). By delegating leadership for inclusion to Coordinators for Support Services, the leadership role is limited by the values and priorities of the administrative team and the principal about school practices. This role restriction was evident in my findings where the principal had decided to relieve the teachers of their role in writing individualised education plans for the pupils in their classrooms with special needs. That incident, or decision, showed how in reality my role had responsibility with limited authority and how the values and understanding of inclusion were not shared across the administrative team.

Holding one professional responsible for specified groups of learners goes against the core intentions of inclusive education and it indicates that inclusion is a special needs issue (Hallett & Hallett, 2010). This creates a tension in that Coordinators for Support Services are restricted in their power to influence inclusive practices across school and the practice of support resides outside the core purpose of the school (Oldham & Radford, 2011). To solve this tension, a school-wide application of knowledge, skills and understanding about how individual learners learn is demanded. While Coordinators for Support Services can be expected to lead teachers and related professionals in enhancing such knowledge, the responsibility of making sense of the context of inclusion for others should be shared with the administrators and leaders in the school (Hallett & Hallett, 2010). Thus, the focus on inclusive practices and pedagogy should come from the administrative team, with the principal taking the lead, thereby giving the message that inclusion is a whole-school policy and that the teachers are responsible for all their pupils with support from the support service.

The leadership role of the Coordinator for Support Services within the inclusive school agenda needs to be reconsidered. To be effective they must be enabled to work at whole-school level, developing a more collaborative style of leadership (Szwed, 2007). Employing distributed leadership for inclusion in schools holds all school leaders (the school's administrative team) responsible for inclusive practices across the school. This implicates that "everyone involved... needs to consider how far their own actions create barriers to inclusion" (Allan, 2003, p. 17). To create the

conditions for developing inclusive schools, the principal and the school administrators, including Coordinators for Support, must in collaboration evaluate how inclusive practices and policies are in the school as well as clarify the different roles and responsibilities (Layton, 2005). Thus, they construct shared views about the meaning and significance of inclusion as an indicator of school improvement.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation has been to transform the support service in Waterfront School so that it reinforces inclusive practice and to understand my role in improving leadership and collaboration for inclusion. I have gained an understanding through the research that creating a support system that is inclusive is quite a complex venture. It is bigger than improving collaboration and my leadership as a coordinator for support and is dependent on many factors in policy and practice. Transforming practice depends on administrators, teachers and staff being willing to reflect and be critical of practices, policies and processes that can serve to marginalise pupils, parents, and staff, which means that they need to understand equity and social justice principles. Which in turn establishes the importance of shared or distributed leadership and dialogue between school stakeholders.

I have learnt that the position of a Coordinator for Support Services needs to be reconceptualised. For leading inclusive practices, the role can not only be focused on taking responsibility for pupils with disability. The scope of the leadership needs to be broader and involve supporting colleagues in creating learning spaces where everyone can learn and where pupils' rights for quality meaningful education are guarded. The classroom and subject teachers are responsible for their pupils' education on a daily basis, while the role of Coordinator for Support Services is to provide the support and advice required to assist each class teacher in fulfilling their statutory duties.

7 Conclusions

At the outset of my research, employing self-study was a way of reassuring my colleagues in the school that my intention was not to judge them or their practice. I wanted to focus on researching my practice of coordinating support. Of course, my practice is not isolated from other people's practices so it was inevitable that I needed their input and presence to understand and to be able to change it. Self-study has taught me to view research with new eyes, to see how reflecting on actions, my thoughts and the language of practice enables deeper understanding.

Here the concluding section of the thesis is organised into three subsections where I discuss my learning of the self-study, what others can learn from it, and provide my final thoughts about the research.

7.1 Learning from doing self-study

Through this self-study, I have gained a unique insight into practices in my school, and an understanding of the complexities involved in improving practice towards inclusion. Through questioning the practice of support and inclusion, the politics and policies behind that, I have searched for ways to improve myself as a practitioner as well as the practice of support. I have seen how easily some practices could be improved, while other things were more resistant to change, and how a middle manager can be both empowered and restricted in implementing improvements in practice.

Reading the thesis, I can see how I have reframed my conception of practice with the assistance of my research participants in the Waterfront school, and through communication and dialogue with critical friends and the literature. The research participants showed me confidentiality and trust. Their input gave an invaluable insight into the school community as pupils, parents, teachers or co-workers in the support service. The critical friends have supported me in being critical of myself and my practices, assisted me in seeing events and occurrences from different angles, and have reminded me to keep the balance between describing and analysing, which was often a challenge to me, but has added depth to the findings. Conferring with the literature has provided me the tools to understand and analyse what was happening, which strengthened and expanded my conception of practice.

The strength of the self-study research methodology lies in the way the research has the possibility of constantly developing throughout the study. Through this flexibility, I have been able to use what I have learned to transform my thoughts and beliefs about inclusive education, about the practice of support and of schooling in general. My understanding of inclusion as removing barriers to participation, belonging and learning were at the beginning focused on the support system as the answer to removing barriers. The practice I was coordinating was focused on assimilation, on normalising pupils to assist them with belonging and to be participants in education. It can be said that I, as most of the people I was working with, was trapped in the 'needs' paradigm, viewing pupils' difficulties in school as needing repairs and compensation, which is a practice that leads to low expectations and learned helplessness of the pupil. Thus, the self-study has given me an insight into how the school needs to transform practices and pedagogies by focusing on the resources, competences and funds of knowledge pupils bring to school as the answer to the challenge of diversity and thereby moving away from focusing on pupil's needs (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Rodriguez, 2007). Planning education and organising learning situations that respond to pupils is then based on the knowledge that teachers have about their pupils, in the collaboration between school practitioners and in strong leadership for inclusion.

I have learnt that leadership for inclusion needs to be shared between those that lead the school. Holding one professional, e.g. a Coordinator for Support Services, responsible for specified groups of learners or for inclusion in the school goes against the core intentions of inclusive education and it indicates that inclusion is a special needs issue. The responsibility of making sense of the context of inclusion for others, keeping the discussion of what constitutes inclusive practice and pedagogy going, should be shared between the administrators and leaders in the school. Thus, the focus on inclusive practices and pedagogy must come from the administrative team, with the principal taking the lead, sending out a clear message that inclusion is a whole-school policy and that the teachers are responsible for all their pupils. The teachers will however be supported in carrying this responsibility, as teaching pupils and preparing learning will be a collaborative effort between the classroom or subject teachers and the support staff.

This leads to a focus on the importance of collaboration between the support service and the classroom/subject teachers, where roles and responsibilities are clarified, for creating effective inclusive practice. In my research, I learned about the value of gathering together the teachers and

support staff working closest to pupils into collaborative problem solving teams to exchange diverse views and information about pupils whose learning and/or social status teachers were concerned about. The structured discussions in the collaborative problem solving teams created great opportunities for viewing situations from different perspectives and for coming up with ideas of how to react to pupils' difficulties in school. It supported teachers in seeing learning problems not as primarily residing within pupils but as a reflection of how the pupil reacts to the learning environment teachers create.

7.2 Contribution to knowledge

It is acknowledged that schools are complicated environments (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Also, the construct of inclusive education is complex and teachers, administrators and school staff as well as parents have diverse understandings of the term. My contribution to knowledge is the provision of a first-hand account of a middle manager endeavouring to change practice towards inclusion. I have shown how I used the understanding gained from the research to form a model of an inclusive system, which can be employed to inform school change across system levels, to support teacher education and professional development.

The model of the inclusive education system presented in chapter six can be employed as a framework to explore inclusive practices in a classroom, in a school or a school system. Administrators at school or municipality level, teachers, and other school practitioners who want to reform their school or their practice can utilise the model to see where their school or practice is at in the process towards inclusion. They can use the model as a framework for reflecting on the strengths and challenges of their systems, schools or classroom practices. The model can then assist in locating where there is room and opportunity for further development or reform, and provide ideas for how to act. Additionally, as the model is built on findings specific to one school, there is room for developing the model further in other schools and other settings based on their context and situation.

The model of the inclusive system can furthermore be employed in teacher education, leadership education and professional development. The role of the model is then to strengthen understanding of inclusive education as a system that needs systemic approach. I envision how the model can be used to structure teacher- and leadership education for inclusion. I see three successive courses, where each course centres on

each level of the model. The first course is on inclusive education focusing on the theoretical basis, policy and curriculum. The next course is on inclusive practice focusing on collaboration, support, how to create a whole school emphasis on inclusion, and leadership. The third course focuses on inclusive pedagogy, strategies for organising teaching and learning, how to know pupils and assess their learning. Another scenario could be that each course taught in teacher- and leadership education would use the model as a framework, touching on each of the levels, at varying degrees, with different emphasis depending on the subject at hand.

The research findings have implications for professional development in more ways than using the model. The stories of practice told in chapters four and five reflect practices that I believe are not unique to the Waterfront school, but rather they tell of incidents and happenings that can be found in many other settings. The stories are valuable as examples of the various challenges and dilemmas that can arise in school practices. The stories can be used for discussing what constitutes exclusion in schools, examine how school practices influence pupils, and to investigate the meaning of equity, social justice and human rights in school contexts.

Building on the findings, further research into the system of inclusion is suggested. The model can be used as a framework for researching system change, and for looking into the different levels of the model, such as into the influence of funding policies on the practice of inclusion, on the practice of labelling pupils and on support provision. Furthermore, the model can be a foundation for practitioner research projects aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the system to develop schools and school practices towards inclusion. There are endless suggestions for further practitioner research topics, but here I will name a few: a) how can the curriculum be developed for supporting inclusive pedagogies, b) how can the role of the special education needs teacher be transformed from focusing directly on intervention or compensation, into being consultative to support teachers in organising quality education for all learners, and c) how can teachers enhance their pedagogical practices to create inclusive learning spaces for all learners.

7.3 Final thoughts

It's out of your hands, then. What happens here is that you realise that if you try to redo something, you may wreck everything else. But, if [writing] has brought you from one place to another, so that you see something you didn't see

before, you've arrived at another point. This then is one's consolation, and you know that you must now proceed elsewhere. - James Baldwin, 1984 (Gourevitch & Pamuk, 2007, p. 253).

These words by American author James Baldwin, embody how I understand the process of writing this thesis. I wrote the thesis in a chronological and linear order, the oldest part is the introduction chapter, I wrote the conceptual framework and the methodology chapter one after the other and the two findings chapters in a chronological order. This chronology should bear witness to my transformation in understanding special education needs, support and inclusive practices. I realised that if I would rewrite the first chapters based on what I know now, I would misrepresent the process and change that occurred over time in my learning, who I was and how I thought at the outset of the research.

My self-study of practice has brought me from one place to another in the sense of my understanding of inclusive practice and of how to coordinate support in an inclusive school. I have recounted the challenges I faced in my inquiry into how to develop special education support as inclusive practice. This was sometimes a chaotic undertaking, sometimes frustrating and sometimes successful, but through all it was a learning journey.

I no longer see special needs education as a separate entity within the school that needs to be strong to 'save' pupils from learning difficulties, where a diagnosis is important for providing knowledge about pupil's disability to conform to the norm. Rather, I think about school as a place where difference is accounted for as fundamental to human development which means that practices are aimed at creating rich learning environments for all pupils through differentiation, focusing on what is to be taught rather than who is to learn it. The learners and their families are at the centre of every policy, every curricular and pedagogical decision and are given space for an authentic role in decision making about their school and classroom, about their ways of learning and how they want to be supported. Notions of ability as non-changeable are rejected and thus pupils are grouped, not by their perceived ability, but based on the task at hand to support everyone's learning.

I have learned, like others have before me (Benjamin, 2002; Benjamin, Nind, Hall, Collins, & Sheehy, 2003; Danforth & Jones, 2015; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987), that in order for the process of inclusion to continue, there is

need for a paradigm shift in special needs education practices. Continuing with reforming the practices of compensation and intervention will only maintain the system of exclusion and marginalisation. Instead of focusing support directly on pupils, the role of the special education teachers and social educators should be to provide guidance to teachers, to collaborate with them, problem-solve and try out innovative ways of teaching and learning to create inclusive learning spaces for pupils. Thus, I envision that the system of inclusive education needs to transform from being a dual pathway based on perceived pupils' ability, towards being based on social justice and equity and on finding flexible and innovative ways to provide access to quality education for *all* pupils.

References

- Aðalsteinsdóttir, K. (1992). Heiltæk skólustefna: Leið til skólaþróunar. *Uppeldi og menntun*, 1(1), 196–206.
- Ainscow, M. (2005). Developing inclusive education systems: What are the levers for change? *Journal of Educational Change*, 6, 109–124. doi:10.1007/s10833-005-1298-4
- Ainscow, M. (2008). Teaching for diversity: The next big challenge. In F. M. Connelly, M. F. He, & J. A. Phillion (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (pp. 240–260). Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE Publications.
- Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2004). Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools: A collaborative action research network. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(2), 125–139. doi:10.1080/1360311032000158015
- Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006a). *Improving schools, developing inclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006b). Inclusion and the standards agenda: Negotiating policy pressures in England. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10(4/5), 295–308. doi:10.1080/13603110500430633
- Ainscow, M., Farrell, P., & Tweddle, D. (2000). Developing policies for inclusive education: A study of the role of local education authorities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(3), 211–229. doi:10.1080/13603110050059150
- Ainscow, M., & Miles, S. (2008). Making education for all inclusive: Where next? *Prospects*, 38(1), 15–34. doi:10.1007/s11125-008-9055-0
- Ainscow, M., & Sandill, A. (2010). Developing inclusive education systems: The role of organisational cultures and leadership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(4), 401–416. doi:10.1080/13603110802504903
- Alexander, R. (2013). *Essays on pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Allan, J. (2003). Inclusion in Scotland: Progress and prospects. *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, 8(1), 13–18. doi:10.1108/13595474200300004
- Allan, J. (2010). Questions of inclusion in Scotland and Europe. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 25(2), 199–208. doi:10.1080/08856251003658710
- Allison, J. (2007). Giving voice to children's voices: practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. *American Anthropologist*, 109(2), 261–272. doi:10.1525/aa.2007.109.2.261

- Anderson, G. L., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. S. (2007). *Studying your own school. An educator's guide to qualitative practitioner research* (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Anderson, J., Boyle, C., & Deppeler, J. (2014). The ecology of inclusive education. In H. Zhang, P. W. K. Chan, & C. Boyle (Eds.), *Equality in education: Fairness and inclusion* (pp. 23–34). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Armstrong, A. C., Armstrong, D., & Spandagou, I. (2010). *Inclusive education: International policy and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Armstrong, D. (2005). Reinventing 'Inclusion': New Labour and the Cultural Politics of Special Education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1), 135–151.
- Armstrong, F. (2011). Inclusive education: School cultures, teaching and learning. In G. Richards & F. Armstrong (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in diverse and inclusive classrooms* (pp. 7–18). London: Routledge.
- Armstrong, F., & Moore, M. (2004). Action research: Developing inclusive practice and transforming cultures. In F. Armstrong & M. Moore (Eds.), *Action research for inclusive education: Changing places, changing practices, changing minds* (pp. 1–16). London: Routledge.
- Aspin, D. (2007). The ontology of values and values education. In D. Aspin & J. Chapman (Eds.), *Values education and lifelong learning: Principles, policies, programmes* (pp. 27–47). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Baglieri, S., Bejoian, L. M., Broderick, A. A., Connor, D. J., & Valle, J. (2011). [Re] Claiming "inclusive education" toward cohesion in educational reform: Disability studies unravels the myth of the normal child. *Teachers College Record*, 113(10), 2122–2154.
- Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), 215–228.
doi:10.1080/0268093022000043065
- Barnasáttmáli Sameinuðu þjóðanna. (1992). Retrieved from http://www.barn.is/adalsida/barnasattmalinn/barnasattmalinn_i_h eild/
- Barth, R. S. (2006). Improving relationships within the schoolhouse. *Educational Leadership*, 63(6), 8.
- Bass, L., Anderson-Patton, V., & Allender, J. (2002). Self-study as a way of teaching and learning: A research collaborative re-analysis of self-study teaching portfolios. In J. J. Loughran & T. Russell (Eds.), *Improving teacher education practices through self-study* (pp. 56–69). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Benjamin, S. (2002). 'Valuing diversity': A cliché for the 21st century? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 6(4), 309–324.
doi:10.1080/13603110210145949

- Benjamin, S., Nind, M., Hall, K., Collins, J., & Sheehy, K. (2003). Moments of inclusion and exclusion: pupils negotiating classroom contexts. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(5), 547–558. doi:10.1080/0142569032000127125
- Berg, B. L. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234. doi:10.1177/1468794112468475
- Blake, C., & Monahan, E. C. (2006). Wishful thinking or a bag of tricks? Helping the beginning special educator. *Support for Learning*, 21(1), 19–23. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9604.2006.00395.x
- Booth, T. (2010). *How should we live together? Inclusion as a framework of values for educational development*. Paper presented at the Kinderwelten Conference, Berlin. http://www.kinderwelten.net/pdf/tagung2010/07_tony_booth_keynote_engl.pdf
- Bottoms, G., & Presson, A. (2000). *Using lessons learned: Improving the academic achievement of vocational students*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.
- Bradbury-Jones, C., & Taylor, J. (2015). Engaging with children as co-researchers: Challenges, counter-challenges and solutions. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(2), 161–173. doi:10.1080/13645579.2013.864589
- Bragg, S. (2007). 'But I listen to children anyway!'—Teacher perspectives on pupil voice. *Educational Action Research*, 15(4), 505–518. doi:10.1080/09650790701663973
- Brannick, T., & Coghlan, D. (2007). In defense of being “native”: The case for insider academic research. *Organizational Research Methods*, 10(1), 59–74. doi:10.1177/1094428106289253
- Brantlinger, E. (2005). Ideologies discerned, values determined: Getting past the hierarchies of special education. In L. P. Ware (Ed.), *Ideology and the politics of (in)exclusion* (pp. 11–31). New York: Peter Lang.
- Bruner, J. S. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bucholz, J. L., & Sheffler, J. L. (2009). Creating a warm and inclusive classroom environment: Planning for all children to feel welcome. *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 2(4), 1–14.
- Bullough, R. V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study research. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 13–21. doi:10.3102/0013189X030003013
- Burbank, M. D., & Kauchak, D. (2003). An alternative model for professional development: Investigations into effective collaboration. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(5), 499–514. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(03)00048-9
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Busher, H., Hammersley-Fletcher, L., & Turner, C. (2007). Making sense of middle leadership: community, power and practice. *School Leadership & Management*, 27(5), 405–422.
doi:10.1080/13632430701606061
- Byrne, B., Maguire, L., & Lundy, L. (2015). *Reporting on best practice in cross-departmental working practices for children and young people*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- Cain, T. (2011). Teachers' classroom-based action research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 34(1), 3–16.
doi:10.1080/1743727X.2011.552307
- Cannon, R., & Newble, D. (2000). A handbook for teachers in university and colleges: A guide to improving teaching methods (4 ed.). London: Routledge.
- Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge, and action research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (2009). Educational action research: A critical approach. In S. E. Noffke & B. Somekh (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of educational action research* (pp. 74–83). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Carter, N., Prater, M. A., Jackson, A., & Marchant, M. (2009). Educators' perceptions of collaborative planning processes for students with disabilities. *Preventing School Failure*, 54(1), 60–70.
doi:10.1080/1743727X.2011.552307
- Christensen, P. H. (2004). Children's participation in ethnographic research: Issues of power and representation. *Children & Society*, 18(2), 165–176. doi:10.1002/chi.823
- Clark, C., Dyson, A., Millward, A., & Robson, S. (1999). Theories of inclusion, theories of schools: Deconstructing and reconstructing the 'inclusive school'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 25(2), 157–177. doi:10.1080/0141192990250203
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher*, 28(7), 15–25.
doi:10.3102/0013189X028007015
- Coghlan, D. (2007). Insider action research doctorates: Generating actionable knowledge. *Higher Education*, 54(2), 293–306.
doi:10.1007/s10734-005-5450-0
- Cole, B. A. (2005). Mission impossible? Special educational needs, inclusion and the reconceptualization of the role of the SENCO in England and Wales. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 20(3), 287–307. doi:10.1080/08856250500156020
- Cook-Sather, A. (2014). The trajectory of student voice in educational research. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 49(2), 131–148.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2015). Addressing the question of authenticity in middle grades student voice work: Wrestling with politics, power, and purpose in education. *Middle Grades Review*, 1(2), 2.

- Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (1993). Through the lens of a critical friend. *Educational Leadership*, 51(2), 49–51.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Crowther, D., Dyson, A., & Millward, A. (2001). Supporting pupils with special educational needs: Issues and dilemmas for special needs coordinators in English primary schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 16(2), 85–97. doi:10.1080/08856250110040695
- Danforth, S., & Jones, P. (2015). From special education to integration to genuine inclusion. In S. Danforth & P. Jones (Eds.), *Foundations of inclusive education research* (Vol. 6, pp. 1–21). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Datnow, A. (2011). Collaboration and contrived collegiality: Revisiting Hargreaves in the age of accountability. *Journal of Educational Change*, 12(2), 147–158. doi:10.1007/s10833-011-9154-1
- Day, C. (2009). Capacity building through layered leadership: sustaining the turnaround. In A. Harris (Ed.), *Distributed leadership* (pp. 121–137). London: Springer.
- Day, C., Elliot, B., & Kington, A. (2005). Reform, standards and teacher identity: Challenges of sustaining commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(5), 563–577. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.03.001
- Deppeler, J., Loreman, T., & Sharma, U. (2005). Improving inclusive practices in secondary schools: Moving from specialist support to supporting learning communities. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 29(2), 117–127.
- Dervin, F. (2012). Cultural identity, representation and othering. In J. Jackson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* (pp. 37–52). London: Routledge.
- Devecchi, C., & Rouse, M. (2010). An exploration of the features of effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants in secondary schools. *Support for Learning*, 25(2), 91–99. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9604.2010.01445.x
- Egilson, S. T., & Traustadottir, R. (2009). Assistance to pupils with physical disabilities in regular schools: promoting inclusion or creating dependency? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 24(1), 21–36. doi:10.1080/08856250802596766
- Einarsdóttir, J. (2007). Research with children: Methodological and ethical challenges. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(2), 197–211. doi:10.1080/13502930701321477
- Ekins, A. (2013). Special education within the context of an inclusive school. In E. M. Ruairc, E. Ottesen, & R. Precey (Eds.), *Leadership for inclusive education: Values, vision and voices* (pp. 19–33). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. (2003). *Inclusive education and classroom practices*. Odense: European agency for Development in Special Needs Education.

- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2013). *Organization of provision to support inclusive education: Literature review* Odense: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2015). *Agency position on inclusive education systems*. Odense: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2017). *Education for all in Iceland: External audit of the Icelandic system for inclusive education*. Retrieved from https://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/frettatengt2016/Final-report_External-Audit-of-the-Icelandic-System-for-Inclusive-Education.pdf
- Evans, D. (2015). Curriculum adaptations. In A. Ashman & J. Elkins (Eds.), *Education for inclusion and diversity* (pp. 102–130). Frenchs Forest: Pearson Australia.
- Evans, L. (2008). Professionalism, professionalism and the development of education professionals. *British journal of Educational Studies*, 56(1), 20–38. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00392.x
- Fauske, J. R. (2011). Collaboration as transformative and inclusionary leadership. In P. Jones, J. R. Fauske, & J. F. Carr (Eds.), *Leading for inclusion: How schools can build on the strengths of all learners* (pp. 13–28). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Feldman, A. (2003). Validity and quality in self-study. *Educational Researcher*, 32(3), 26–28. doi:10.3102/0013189X032003026
- Feldman, A., Paugh, P., & Mills, G. (2004). Self-study through action research. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Vol. 12, pp. 943–977). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Ferguson, D. L. (2008). International trends in inclusive education: The continuing challenge to teach each one and everyone. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 23(2), 109–120. doi:10.1080/08856250801946236
- Finlay, L. (2002). “Outing” the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), 531–545. doi:10.1177/104973202129120052
- Florian, L. (2008). Special or inclusive education: Future trends. *British Journal of Special Education*, 35(4), 202–208. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2008.00402.x
- Florian, L. (2010). The concept of inclusive pedagogy. In F. Hallett & G. Hallett (Eds.), *Transforming the role of the SENCo: Achieving the national award for SEN coordination* (pp. 61–72). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Florian, L. (2014). What counts as evidence of inclusive education? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 29(3), 286–294. doi:10.1080/08856257.2014.933551

- Florian, L. (2015). Conceptualising inclusive pedagogy: The inclusive pedagogical approach in action. In J. Deppeler, T. Loreman, & R. Smith (Eds.), *Inclusive pedagogy across the curriculum* (Vol. 7, pp. 11–24). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813–828. doi:10.1080/01411926.2010.501096
- Florian, L., & Spratt, J. (2013). Enacting inclusion: A framework for interrogating inclusive practice. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(2), 119–135. doi:10.1080/08856257.2013.778111
- Foulger, T. S. (2009). External conversations: An unexpected discovery about the critical friend in action research inquiries. *Action Research*, 8(2), 135–152. doi:10.1177/1476750309351354
- Freire, P. (2005). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- Friend, M., Cook, L., Hurley-Chamberlain, D., & Shamberger, C. (2010). Co-teaching: An illustration of the complexity of collaboration in special education. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 20(1), 9–27. doi:10.1080/10474410903535380
- Fullan, M. (1999). *Change forces: The sequel*. London: Falmer Press.
- Gargiulo, R., & Metcalf, D. (2012). *Teaching in today's inclusive classrooms: A universal design for learning approach*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Gartner, A., & Lipsky, D. K. (1987). Beyond special education: Toward a quality system for all students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(4), 367–396. doi:10.17763/haer.57.4.kj517305m7761218
- Giangreco, M. F. (2013). Teacher assistant supports in inclusive schools: research, practices and alternatives. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 37(2), 93–106. doi:10.1017/jse.2013.1
- Giangreco, M. F., Broer, S. M., & Suter, J. C. (2011). Guidelines for selecting alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals: Field-testing in inclusion-oriented schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(1), 22–38. doi:10.1177/0741932509355951
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge*. New York: Routledge
- Gourevitch, P., & Pamuk, O. (2007). *The Paris review: Interviews II II*. Edinburgh: Canongate.
- Graham, A., Powell, M. A., & Taylor, N. (2015). Ethical Research Involving Children: Encouraging Reflexive Engagement in Research with Children and Young People. *Children & Society*, 29(5), 331–343. doi:10.1111/chso.12089
- Greene, S., & Hill, M. (2006). Researching children's experience: Methods and methodological issues. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods* (pp. 1–21). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Grenier, M. (2010). Moving to inclusion: A socio-cultural analysis of practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(4), 387–400. doi:10.1080/13603110802504598

- Grimes, P., & Ekins, A. (2009). *Inclusion: Developing an effective whole school approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Guðjónsdóttir, H. (2000). *Responsive professional practice: Teachers analyze the theoretical and ethical dimensions of their work in diverse classrooms*. Unpublished dissertation. University of Oregon. Eugene.
- Guðjónsdóttir, H. (2003). Viðbragðssnjallir kennarar. [Resourceful teachers]. *Glæður*, 13(1–2), 59–66.
- Guðjónsdóttir, H. (2011a). *Rýnt í vinnubrögð starfendarannsókna: Ólíkar leiðir við gagnaöflun*. Paper presented at the Ráðstefnurit Netlu - Menntakvika 2011, Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. <http://netla.hi.is/menntakvika2011/010.pdf>
- Guðjónsdóttir, H. (2011b). *Rýnt í vinnubrögð starfendarannsókna: ólíkar leiðir við gagnaöflun. Ráðstefnurit Netlu - Menntakvika 2011*.
- Guðjónsdóttir, H., & Karlsdóttir, J. (2009). „Látum þúsund blóm blómstra“. [Let a thousand flowers bloom]. *Uppeldi og menntun*, 18(1), 61–77.
- Guðjónsdóttir, S. A., Björnsdóttir, A., & Jóhannsson, Ó., H. (2007). Deildarstjórar í grunnskólum: Hver er afstaða skólustjóra og kennara til deildarstjórarstarfsins, hlutverks þess og mikilvægis? [Department heads in schools: their views on their position, role and importance]. *Netla*, 2007 (fall).
- Guðjónsson, H. (2011). *Kennarinn sem rannsakandi*. Paper presented at the Menntakvika 2011, Menntavísindasvið HÍ. <http://netla.hi.is/menntakvika2011/011.pdf>
- Hall, T. E., Meyer, A., & Rose, D. H. (2012). *Universal design for learning in the classroom: Practical applications*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hallett, F., & Hallett, G. (2010). Leading learning: The role of the SENCo. In F. Hallett & G. Hallett (Eds.), *Transforming the role of the SENCo: Achieving the national award for SEN coordination* (pp. 51–60). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Hammond, M. (2013). The contribution of pragmatism to understanding educational action research: Value and consequences. *Educational Action Research*, 21(4), 603–618. doi:10.1080/09650792.2013.832632
- Hamre, B. (2016). Diagnosing, special education, and ‘learnification’ in Danish schools. *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, 7(Special issue), 65–76. doi:10.15845/njsr.v7i0.903
- Haney, W., Russell, M., & Bebell, D. (2004). Drawing on education: Using drawings to document schooling and support change. *Harvard Educational Review*, 74(3), 241–272. doi:10.17763/haer.74.3.w0817u84w7452011
- Hansen, B. (2013). Forysta og skólustarf. In R. Sigþórsson, R. Eggertsdóttir, & G. H. Frimannsson (Eds.), *Fagmennska í skólustarfi* (pp. 77–92). Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2003). Sustaining leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(9), 693–700.
- Harris, A. (2011). Distributed leadership: Implications for the role of the principal. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(1), 7–17. doi:10.1108/026217111211190961
- Hart, S., Drummond, M. J., & McIntyre, D. (2007). Learning without limits: Constructing a pedagogy free from determinist beliefs about ability. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of special education* (pp. 499–514). London: Sage.
- Hennessy, E., & Heary, C. (2006). Exploring children's views through focus groups. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods* (pp. 236–252). London: Sage.
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2005). *The action research dissertation. A guide for students and faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Hill View. (2011). Hill View school policy. In H. View (Ed.).
- Hinchey, P. H. (2008). *Action research primer*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Hodge, N., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2008). Problematising parent–professional partnerships in education. *Disability & Society*, 23(6), 637–647. doi:10.1080/09687590802328543
- Hoppey, D., & McLeskey, J. (2010). A case study of principal leadership in an effective inclusive school. *The Journal of Special Education*, 46(4), 245–256. doi:10.1177/0022466910390507
- Hunt, P., Soto, G., Maier, J., & Doering, K. (2003). Collaborative teaming to support students at risk and students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, 69(3), 315–332. doi:10.1177/001440290306900304
- Innanríkisráðuneytið. (2010). Jöfnunarframlög til reksturs grunnskóla. Retrieved from <http://www.jofnunarsjodur.is/framlag/grunnskolar/>
- Isaksson, J., Lindqvist, R., & Bergström, E. (2010). Struggling for recognition - parents' and pupils' experiences and special support measures in school. *International Journal of Qualitative Stud Health Well-being*, 5(46), 1–7. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v5i1.4646
- Jóhannesson, I. Á. (2006). "Strong, independent, able to learn more...": Inclusion and the construction of school students in Iceland as diagnosable subjects. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 27(1), 103–119. doi:10.1080/01596300500510328
- Jóhannesson, I. A., Geirsdóttir, G., & Finnbogason, G. E. (2002). Modern educational sagas: Legitimation of ideas and practices in Icelandic education. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 46(3), 265–282. doi:10.1080/0031383022000005670
- Jónasson, H. (1996). Um sérkennslu og sérfræðipjónustu skóla. *Ráðstefna menntamálaráðuneytisins um ýmis málefni barna og unglinga með sérþarfir*. Retrieved from <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/utgefid-efni/utgefin-rit-og-skyrslur/HTMLrit/nr/2158>

- Jónasson, J. T. (2008a). Innland stefnumið og alþjóðleg viðmið. In L. Guttormsson (Ed.), *Almenningsfræðsla á Íslandi 1880-2007* (Vol. 2, pp. 254–269). Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Jónasson, J. T. (2008b). Skóli fyrir alla? In L. Guttormsson (Ed.), *Almenningsfræðsla á Íslandi 1880-2007* (Vol. 2, pp. 272–291). Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Jónsson, Ó. P. (2011). *Lýðræði, réttlæti og menntun*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Kellett, M., & Ding, S. (2012). Middle childhood. In S. Fraser, V. Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellett, & C. Robinson (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people* (pp. 161–174). London: Sage.
- Kemmis, S. (2007). Participatory action research and the public sphere. In P. Ponte & B. Smit (Eds.), *The quality of practitioner research: Reflection on the position of the researcher and the researched* (pp. 9–27). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2003). *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Kosnik, C. & Beck, C. (2000). The action research process as a means of helping student teachers understand and fulfil the complex role of the teacher. *Educational Action Research*, 8(1), pp. 115-136. doi: 10.1080/09650790000200107
- Krueger, R., & Casey, M. (2009). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications
- Kugelmass, J., & Ainscow, M. (2004). Leadership for inclusion: A comparison of international practices. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 4(3), 133–141. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2004.00028.x
- Kurtts, S. A., Matthews, C. E., & Smallwood, T. (2009). (Dis)Solving the differences. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 44(3), 151–159. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1053451208326051
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2008). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage Publications.
- Kyriazopoulou, M., & Weber, H. (2009). *Development of a set of indicators - for inclusive education in Europe*. Odense: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.
- LaBoskey, V. (2004a). Afterword moving the methodology of self-study research and practice forward: Challenges and opportunities. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Vol. 12, pp. 1169–1184). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- LaBoskey, V. (2004b). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Vol. 12, pp. 817–869). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

- Layton, L. (2005). Special educational needs coordinators and leadership: A role too far? *Support for Learning*, 20(2), 53–60.
doi:10.1111/j.0268-2141.2005.00362.x
- Leitch, R. (2008). Creatively researching children's narratives through images and drawings. In P. Thomson (Ed.), *Doing visual research with children and young people* (pp. 37–58). London: Routledge.
- Leitch, R. (2008). Creatively researching children's narratives through images and drawings. In P. Thomson (Ed.), *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People* (pp. 37). London: Routledge.
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership?* Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Levin, B. (2000). Putting students at the centre in education reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1(2), 155–172.
- Loughran, J. J., & Northfield, J. (1998). A framework for the development of self-study practice. In M. L. Hamilton (Ed.), *Reconceptualizing teaching practice: Self-study in teacher education* (pp. 7–18). London: Falmer Press.
- Lumby, J., & Coleman, M. (2007). *Leadership and diversity: Challenging theory and practice in education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008.
- Macmillan, R. (2010). Leadership as trust and team-building for inclusive practice. In A. L. Edmunds & R. B. Macmillan (Eds.), *Leadership for inclusion* (pp. 73–82). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Marinósson, G. (2011). *Responding to diversity at school. An ethnographic study*. Berlin: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Marinósson, G., & Bjarnason, D. S. (2007). Kenningarleg sýn. In G. Marinósson (Ed.), *Tálmar og tækifæri* (pp. 47–58). Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Mayall, B. (2000). Conversations with children: Working with generational issues. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 120–135). London: Routledge Falmer.
- Mayer, R. E. (2004). Should there be a three-strikes rule against pure discovery learning? *American Psychologist*, 59(1), 14.
doi:10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.14
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2009). *Action research: Principles and practice*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Meijer, C. J. W. (Ed.) (2003). *Inclusive education and classroom practices*. Odense: European agency for development in special needs education.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Middlewood, D., Coleman, M., & Lumby, J. (1999). *Practitioner research in education: Making a difference*. London: Paul Chapman.

- Ministry of education science and culture. (2011). *The Icelandic national curriculum guide for compulsory school: General section*. Retrieved from <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/utgefingnir/namskrar/adalnamskra-grunnskola/>
- Morgan, D. L. (2014). Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 20(8), 1045–1053. doi:10.1177/1077800413513733
- Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training. (2012). *Mind the gap: Education inequality across EU regions*. Brussels: European Commission.
- O'Gorman, E., & Drudy, S. (2010). Addressing the professional development needs of teachers working in the area of special education/inclusion in mainstream schools in Ireland. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 10(1), 157–167. doi:10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01161.x
- O'Gorman, E., & Drudy, S. (2011). *Professional development for teachers working in the area of special education/inclusion in mainstream schools: The views of teachers and other stakeholders*. Retrieved from Dublin: http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/Professional_Development_of_Teachers.pdf
- O'Hanlon, C. (2003). *Educational inclusion as action research: An interpretive discourse*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- O'Reilly, K. (2008). *Key concepts in ethnography*. London: Sage Publications.
- OECD. (2012). *Equity and quality in education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*. Paris: OECD.
- Oldham, J., & Radford, J. (2011). Secondary SENCo leadership: A universal or specialist role? *British Journal of Special Education*, 38(3), 126–134. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2011.00513.x
- Oskarsdottir, E. (1993). *Developing a school in Iceland*. Masters project. University of Oregon. Eugene.
- Pascal, N. S. (2009). Developing and sustaining leadership capacity. In A. Blankstein, P. Houlston, & R. Cole (Eds.), *Building sustainable leadership capacity* (pp. 157-172). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peters, S. J. (2007). "Education for all?": A historical analysis of international inclusive education policy and individuals with disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 18(2), 98–108. doi:10.1177/10442073070180020601
- Pijl, S. J., & Frissen, P. H. (2009). What policymakers can do to make education inclusive. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 37(3), 366–377. doi:10.1177/1741143209102789
- Pinnegar, S., & Hamilton, M. L. (2009). *Self-study of practice as a genre of qualitative research: Theory, methodology, and practice*. Dordrecht: Springer.

- Portela, A. (2013). Students and leadership for inclusion. In E. M. Ruairc, E. Ottesen, & R. Percey (Eds.), *Leadership for inclusive education: Vision, values and voices* (pp. 163–173). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Punch, K. (2014). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: Sage
- Reason, P. (2006). Choice and quality in action research practice. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(2), 187–203. doi:10.1177/1056492606288074
- Reay, D. (2012). What would a socially just education system look like?: saving the minnows from the pike. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(5), 587–599. doi:10.1080/02680939.2012.710015
- Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir 585/2010.
- Reglugerð um sérkennslu 98/1990
- Reglugerð um sérkennslu 389/1996
- Riehl, C. J. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: a review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 55–81. doi:10.2307/1170594
- Rieser, R. (2011). Disability, human rights and inclusive education, and why inclusive education is the only educational philosophy and practice that makes sense in today's world. In G. Richards & F. Armstrong (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in diverse and inclusive classrooms* (pp. 156–169). New York: Routledge.
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: SAGE.
- Rodriguez, T. L. (2007). *Language, culture, and resistance as resource: Case studies of bilingual/bicultural Latino prospective elementary teachers and the crafting of teaching practices*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin--Madison.
- Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2006). *A practical reader in universal design for learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Ryan, J. (2006). *Inclusive leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ryan, J., & Rottmann, C. (2007). Educational leadership and policy approaches to critical social justice. *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations*, 18(1), 9–23.
- Sachs, J. (2002). *The activist teaching profession*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Samaras, A. P. (2010). *Self-study teacher research: Improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*. New York: Sage.
- Samaras, A. P., & Freese, A. R. (2009). Looking back and looking forward. An historical overview of the Self-Study School. In C. L. Lassonde, S. Galman, & C. Kosnik (Eds.), *Self-study research methodologies for teacher educators* (Vol. 7). Rotterdam: Sense publishers.
- Samband íslenskra sveitafélaga. (2010). *Greinargerð*. Retrieved from [http://www.samband.is/media/grunnskoli/GREINARGERD-TIL-MMRH-6-DES-2010-\(2\).pdf](http://www.samband.is/media/grunnskoli/GREINARGERD-TIL-MMRH-6-DES-2010-(2).pdf)

- Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2002). Finding the findings in qualitative studies. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 34(3), 213–219.
doi:10.1111/j.1547-5069.2002.00213.x
- Sharma, U., & Salend, S. (2016). Teaching assistants in inclusive classrooms: a systematic analysis of the international research. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(8), 118–134.
doi:10.14221/ajte.2016v41n8.7
- Shepherd, K., & Hasazi, S. (2007). Leadership for social justice and inclusion. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of special education* (pp. 475–485). London: SAGE Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Skrtic, T. M. (2005). A political economy of learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 28(2), 149–155.
- Slee, R. (2011). *The irregular school. Exclusion, schooling and inclusive education*. London: Routledge.
- Slee, R. (2012). Inclusion in schools: What is the task? In C. Boyle & K. Topping (Eds.), *What Works in Inclusion?* (pp. 41–50). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Smyth, A., & Holian, R. (2008). Credability issues in research from within organisations. In P. J. Sikes & A. Potts (Eds.), *Researching education from the inside: Investigations from within* (pp. 33–47). London: Routledge.
- Soan, S. (2012). Multi-professional working: The way forward? In J. Cornwall & L. Graham-Matheson (Eds.), *Leading on inclusion: Dilemmas, debates and new perspectives* (pp. 87–97). London: Routledge.
- Sodha, S., & Margo, J. (2010). *Ex curricula*. London: Demos.
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 30(23), 23–28. doi:10.3102/0013189X030003023
- Steen-Olsen, T., & Eikseth, A. (2009). *Å utvikle en lærende skole: aksjonsforskning og aksjonslæring i praksis [Developing a learning school: Action research and action learning in practice]*. Norway: Cappelen Damm.
- Stone-Johnson, C. (2014). Responsible leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(4), 645–674.
doi:10.1177/0013161x13510004
- Stubbs, S. (2008). *Inclusive education: Where there are few resources*. Oslo: The Atlas Alliance.
- Szwed, C. (2007). Managing from the middle? Tensions and dilemmas in the role of the primary school special educational needs coordinator. *School Leadership & Management*, 27(5), 437–451.
doi:10.1080/13632430701606111
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: a guidebook and resource*. New York: Wiley.
- Thomas, G., & Loxley, A. (2007). *Deconstructing special education and constructing inclusion* (2 ed.). Maidenhead: McGraw Hill.

- Tidwell, D. L., & Heston, M. L. (1998). Self-study through the use of practical argument. In M. L. Hamilton (Ed.), *Reconceptualizing teaching practice: Self-study in teacher education* (pp. 45–66). London: Falmer Press.
- Tidwell, D. L., Heston, M. L., & Fitzgerald, L. M. (2009). Introduction. In D. L. Tidwell, M. L. Heston, & L. M. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Research methods for the self-study of practice* (pp. xiii–xxii). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Todd, L. (2008). *Partnerships for inclusive education: a critical approach to collaborative working*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2003). Deciding to teach them all. *Educational Leadership*, 61(2), 6–11.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction & understanding by design: Connecting content and kids*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Traustadóttir, R. (2003). Fötlunarfræði: Sjónarhorn, áherslur og aðferðir á nýju fræðasviði. In R. Traustadóttir (Ed.), *Fötlunarfræði: Nýjar íslenskar rannsóknir* (pp. 17–51). Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Retrieved from Salamanca: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000984/098427eo.pdf>
- UNESCO. (2000). *The Dakar framework for action. Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments*. Retrieved from Paris: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf>
- UNESCO. (2001). *Open file on inclusive education*. Retrieved from Paris: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001252/125237eo.pdf>
- UNESCO. (2009). *Policy guideline on inclusion in education*. Retrieved from Paris: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf>
- Valle, J. W. (2011). Down the rabbit hole: A commentary about research on parents and special education. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 34(3), 183–190.
- Van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Van Manen, M. (1999). The language of pedagogy and the primacy of student experience. In J. J. Loughran (Ed.), *Researching teaching: Methodologies and practices for understanding pedagogy* (pp. 13–27). London: Falmer Press.
- Wade, S. E., Fauske, J. R., & Thompson, A. (2008). Prospective teachers' problem solving in online peer-led dialogues. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(2), 398–442. doi:10.3102/0002831207308224
- Waitoller, F. R., & Artiles, A. J. (2013). A decade of professional development research for inclusive education: A critical review and notes for a research program. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(3), 319–356. doi:10.3102/0034654313483905
- Walshaw, M. (2008). *The concept of identity positioning the self within research*. Paper presented at the ICME11, Mexico.

- Watkins, A., & Meijer, C. J. W. (2016). Introduction. In A. Watkins & C. J. W. Meijer (Eds.), *Implementing inclusive education: issues in bridging the policy-practice gap* (Vol. 8, pp. xiii–xvii). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Webster, R., Russell, A., & Blatchford, P. (2016). *Maximising the impact of teaching assistants: Guidance for school leaders and teachers* (2 ed.). London: Routledge.
- White, J. M., & Jones, P. (2011). Creating school systems of inclusive leadership. In P. Jones, J. R. Fauske, & J. F. Carr (Eds.), *Leading for inclusion: How schools can build on the strengths of all learners* (pp. 216–227). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wilcox, S., Watson, J., & Paterson, M. (2004). Self-study in professional practice. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 273–311). Dordrecht: Kluwer academic publishers.
- Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretative and critical approaches*. London: Sage
- Wolfe, R. E., Steinberg, A., & Hoffman, N. (2013). *Anytime, anywhere: Student-centered learning for schools and teachers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Woods, P. A. (2016). Authority, power and distributed leadership. *Management in Education*, 30(4), 155-160.
doi:doi:10.1177/0892020616665779
- World Health Organization/World Bank. (2011). *World report on disability*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Appendix A The role of social educators

The social educators that work in compulsory schools work mainly with special education needs pupils. They have the following main tasks:

- Prepare individual education plans in collaborative teams with teachers, special education needs teachers, parents and others as applicable
- Prepare and conduct assessment of pupil's social and life skills and development
- Organise training (of life- and social skills), choose and prepare training material in keeping with IEP goals and train pupils. Assess performance and re-evaluate goals in collaboration with the team.
- Participate in staff meetings
- Inform parents of assessment outcomes and give consultation and advice regarding the pupil's disability
- Provide and seek information regarding the pupils in their care

Appendix B Informed consent reconnaissance phase

Ágæta samstarfsfólk,

Eins og þið vitið er ég í doktorsnámi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands. Ég er nú að hefja gagnasöfnun fyrir rannsóknina mína og erindi þessa bréfs er að biðja ykkur um að vera þátttakendur í henni. Þátttaka ykkar felst í því að leyfa mér að taka við ykkur hópviðtal, svokallað rýnihópaviðtal, þar sem ég hitti starfsfólk skólans í 6-7 manna hópum í senn og spyr opinna spurninga um skólastarfið. Um er að ræða eitt skipti (45 mínútur) á þessu skólaári.

Rannsóknin mín er starfendarannsókn og snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóra sérkennslu og hvernig ég get þróað það frekar. Það sem ég er aðallega að rannsaka er hvernig ég stuðla að því að skólinn okkar sé skóli án aðgreiningar og hvernig ég vinn með kennurum, starfsfólki og stjórnendum skólans.

Tilgangurinn með viðtölunum er að skoða hvernig staðan er í skólanum í dag hvað varðar stefnuna skóli án aðgreiningar.

Viðtalið verður tekið upp en allar upplýsingar sem þátttakendur veita í rannsókninni verða meðhöndaðar samkvæmt ströngustu reglum um trúnað og nafnleynd. Jafnframt verður farið að íslenskum lögum varðandi persónuvernd, vinnslu og eyðingu frumgagna. Rannsóknargögn verða varðveitt á öruggum stað hjá ábyrgðarmanni á meðan á rannsókn stendur og öllum gögnum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni, nema heimildar verði aflað til að varðveita þau lengur. Tilkynning um þessa rannsókn hefur verið send til Persónuverndar.

Leiðbeinandi minn í rannsókninni er dr. Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir.

Þátttaka er öllum frjáls og þátttakendur geta dregið þátttöku sína til baka hvenær sem er ef þeir að einhverjum ástæðum telja sig ekki geta verið með.

Með kærri kveðju og von um góðar undirtektir,

Edda Óskarsdóttir
doktorsnemi

Appendix C Interview protocol reconnaissance phase

Tilgangurinn er að fá fram skilning þátttakenda á skóla án aðgreiningar

- hvernig þeir skilja hugtakið,
- hvernig þeir telja sig starfa samkvæmt hugtakinu,
- hvernig má sjá að XX er skóli án aðgreiningar – og hvernig ekki
- hvernig þeir læra um ólíkar þarfir nemenda,
- hvaða þarfir þeir hafa um ráðgjöf og samstarf
- hver í þeirra huga sér um að kennsla/menntun nemenda sé án aðgreiningar

Spurningar:

Fyrstu 2 viðtölin	Viðbættur listi
Hvaða merkingu leggið þið í hugtakið skóli án aðgreiningar?	Hvaða merkingu leggið þið í hugtakið skóli án aðgreiningar?
Hvað í þinni kennslu eða þínu starfi myndir þú telja að væri dæmi um skóla án aðgreiningar?	Hvað í þinni kennslu eða þínu starfi myndir þú telja að væri dæmi um skóla án aðgreiningar?
Hvernig og hvar kemur það fram að Fjöruskóli er skóli án aðgreiningar? Eru dæmi þar sem hann er það ekki?	Hvernig og hvar kemur það fram að Fjöruskóli er skóli án aðgreiningar? Eru dæmi þar sem hann er það ekki?
Hvernig bregðist þið við ef þið fáið nýjan nemanda í bekkinn sem er t.d. með down syndrome? Hvert leitið þið eftir upplýsingum?	Hver eru þín viðbrögð við frasanum: “greining og hvað svo”?
Hvert leitið þið til að fá ráðgjöf varðandi nemendur og kennslu?	Hvert leitið þið til að fá ráðgjöf varðandi nemendur og kennslu?
Hvernig er samstarfi háttað við samkennara? Stoðþjónustu? Stjórnendur?	Hvernig er samstarfi háttað við samkennara? Stoðþjónustu? Stjórnendur?
Hverjir bera ábyrgð á því að nemendur fái menntun eða kennslu í anda skóla án aðgreiningar?	Hverjir bera ábyrgð á því að nemendur fái menntun eða kennslu í anda skóla án aðgreiningar?

Appendix D Informed consent for pupils' participation

Fyrsta bréf sent foreldrum/forráðamönnum:

Ágætu foreldrar/forráðamenn,

Undirrituð er í doktorsnámi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands auk þess sem ég starfa sem deildarstjóri sérkennslu við Grunnskóla Seltjarnarness.

Doktorsrannsóknin mín er starfendarannsókn og snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóri sérkennslu og hvernig ég get þróað það og skólann frekar í áttina að skóla án aðgreiningar.

Ástæða þess að ég skrifa ykkur er að mig langar að sjá hvernig nemendur skilja skóla án aðgreiningar. Ég vil biðja um leyfi til þess að fá barnið þitt til að teikna fyrir mig mynd og ef til vill ræða við mig um hana á eftir. Þetta fer þannig fram að myndmenntakennarar skólans ætla að leyfa mér að fá eina kennslustund í myndmennt í lotu hjá 4. og 6. bekk og valhóp á unglingastigi. Ég ræði við nemendur um skóla án aðgreiningar og bið þá að teikna fyrir mig. Síðan vel ég nokkrar myndir til að ræða einstaklingslega við nemendur og þá bið ég aftur um samþykki foreldra og nemenda sjálfra. Meðfylgjandi er bréf sem ég bið um að sé sent með barni ykkar aftur í skólann undirritað ef þið veitið leyfi fyrir þátttöku í rannsókninni.

Kveðja,

Edda Óskarsdóttir

Síðara bréf sent foreldrum til að biðja um leyfi fyrir þátttöku í viðtölum

Sæl/I

Í framhaldi af myndmenntaverkefninu sem (nafn nemanda) tók þátt í fyrir viku þá langar mig að fá að taka við hana/hann viðtal. Viðtalið verður 15-30 mínútna langt og tekið á skólatíma. Þegar samþykki liggur fyrir hef ég samband við (nafn nemanda) og finn með henni/honum hentugan tíma.

Í viðhengi er eyðublað sem bæði nemandi og foreldrar skrifa undir að þið veitið samþykki ykkar til þátttöku hennar og hann sjálfur vottar að hann vilji taka þátt.

Ef þú ert samþykk/ur þátttöku xxx og xxx líka þá vinsamlegast sendið nemandann með eyðublaðið undirritað í skólann og hún/hann getur skilað því á skrifstofu skólans - ritari setur það fyrir mig í umslag.

Ef þið hafið einhverjar frekari spurningar þá er hægt að ná í mig á eddaos@gmail.com.

Kveðja,

Edda

Eyðublað til samþykkis (eins fyrir bæði teikningu og viðtal)

Doktorsrannsóknin er starfendarannsókn og snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóri sérkennslu og hvernig ég get þróað það og skólann frekar í áttina að skóla án aðgreiningar.

Teikningar nemenda og viðtöl verða meðhöndlaðar sem rannsóknargögn. Allar upplýsingar sem þátttakendur veita í rannsókninni verða meðhöndlaðar samkvæmt ströngustu reglum um trúnað og nafnleynd. Jafnframt verður farið að íslenskum lögum varðandi persónuvernd, vinnslu og eyðingu frumgagna. Rannsóknargögn verða varðveitt á öruggum stað hjá ábyrgðarmanni á meðan á rannsókn stendur og öllum gögnum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni, nema heimildar verði aflað til að varðveita þau lengur. Tilkynning um þessa rannsókn hefur verið send til Persónuverndar.

Leiðbeinandi í rannsókninni er dr. Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir dósent við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands.

Ég undirrituð/aður veiti hér með samþykki mitt fyrir viðtali

_____ dags: _____
Undirskrift foreldris

Ég undirrituð/aður samþykki hér með þátttöku í viðtali:

_____ dags: _____
Undirskrift barns

Appendix E Data Protection Authority announcement

Edda Óskarsdóttir
Bólstaðarhlíð 29
105 Reykjavík



Persónuvernd

Islandsmög 10 105 Reykjavík
sími 510 9600 heimasíða 510 9606
netfang postur@personuvernd.is
velling.personuvernd.is

Reykjavík 20. apríl 2012
Tilvísan: S5750/2012/ HGRK/-

Hér með staðfestist að Persónuvernd hefur mótttekið tilkynningu í yðar nafni um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga. Tilkynningin er nr. S5750/2012 og fylgir afrit hennar hjálaga.

Allar tilkynningar sem berast Persónuvernd birtast sjálfkrafa á heimasíðu stofnunarinnar. Tekið skal fram að með móttöku og birtingu tilkynninga hefur engin afstaða verið tekin af hálfu Persónuverndar til efnis þeirra.

Virðingarfyllt,


Hlæga Grethe Kjartansdóttir

Hjál: - Tilkynning nr. S5750/2012 um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga.

Appendix F Question protocol for students

Skoða myndina saman – ræða um pælingar út frá myndinni

- Hvernig finnst þér verkefnin sem þú fæst við í skólanum?
- Veistu hvernig þú getur fengið aðstoð ef þú þarft á henni að halda? (hvað gerir þú ef þú átt í erfiðleikum í skólanum – hvert leitarðu – við hvern talarðu?)
- Veistu hvaða hlutverki stuðningsfulltrúar gegna í skólanum? Af hverju sumir fá aðstoð þeirra?
- Hvaða leiðir getur kennarinn farið til að styðja við nemendur?– Færð þú aðstoð frá kennaranum þínum þegar þú þarft á henni að halda?
- Myndir þú vilja fá hjálp frá öðrum – viltu hjálpa öðrum – finnst þér það gott eða vont – hvernig finnst þér best að læra – erfiðast að læra
- Eru einhverjir í skólanum sem þú heldur að gangi illa námslega/félagslega og ekkert er gert fyrir?
- Hver ber ábyrgð á því að nemendum gangi vel/líði vel í skólanum? Er einhver sem ræður meira en annar – tekur kennarinn meira tillit einhverra annarra en þín – tekur kennarinn mark á þér – skilur þú alltaf það sem kennarinn er að biðja þig að gera – heldurðu að einhverjir aðrir skilji ekki
- Ef þig langar að læra öðruvísi – færð þú einhverju að ráða – er farið eftir því sem þú stingur upp á – talið þið um hvernig og af hverju þið eruð að gera hlutina á þennan hátt
- Hverju finnst þér að mætti breyta í skólanum til að gera hann betri fyrir nemendur?

Appendix G Informed consent and questions for participating mothers

Email sent to mothers

Sæl XXX,

Erindi mitt við þig er að bjóða þér að taka þátt í rannsókn sem ég er að vinna til að bæta og þróa starfsemi stoðþjónustu xxxskóla. Undirrituð er í doktorsnámi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands auk þess sem ég starfa sem deildarstjóri stoðþjónustu við skólann.

Doktorsrannsóknin mín er starfendarannsókn og snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóri stoðþjónustu og hvernig ég get þróað það og skólann frekar í áttina að skóla án aðgreiningar.

Það sem mig langar að biðja þig um er að taka þátt í hópsamtali ásamt nokkrum öðrum mæðrum við skólann. Þátttakendur í þessu samtali eiga það sameiginlegt að eiga börn sem fá sérstakan stuðning í skólanum. Samtalið gæti tekið klukkutíma og fer fram í fundarherbergi skólans. Framkvæmdin er þannig að ég verð ekki viðstödd viðtalið sjálf heldur fá þátttakendur nokkur atriði til að ræða sín á milli og verður samtalið tekið upp.

Uptakan af samtalinu verður meðhöndluð sem rannsóknargögn. Farið verður með allar upplýsingar sem þátttakendur veita í samtalinu samkvæmt ströngustu reglum um trúnað og nafnleynd. Jafnframt verður farið að íslenskum lögum varðandi persónuvernd, vinnslu og eyðingu frumgagna. Rannsóknargögn verða varðveitt á öruggum stað hjá ábyrgðarmanni á meðan á rannsókn stendur og öllum gögnum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni, nema heimildar verði aflað til að varðveita þau lengur. Tilkynning um þessa rannsókn hefur verið send til Persónuverndar.

Mig langar að bjóða þér að taka þátt í þessu viðtali. Ef þú vilt þiggja boðið þá vinsamlegast svaraðu þessum pósti í síðasta lagi 14. mars. Þegar ljóst er hversu margir eru tilbúnir til að aðstoða mig þá förum við í að finna tíma sem hentar til að hittast. Geri ég ráð fyrir að samtalið færi fram í vikunni 18. – 22. mars.

Bestu kveðjur,

Edda Óskarsdóttir

Eyðublað til samþykkis

Doktorsrannsóknin er starfendarannsókn og snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóri sérkennslu og hvernig ég get þróað það og skólann frekar í áttina að skóla án aðgreiningar.

Upptakan af samtalinu verður meðhöndluð sem rannsóknargögn. Allar upplýsingar sem þátttakendur veita í rannsókninni verða meðhöndaðar samkvæmt ströngustu reglum um trúnað og nafnleynd. Jafnframt verður farið að íslenskum lögum varðandi persónuvernd, vinnslu og eyðingu frumgagna. Rannsóknargögn verða varðveitt á öruggum stað hjá ábyrgðarmanni á meðan á rannsókn stendur og öllum gögnum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni, nema heimildar verði aflað til að varðveita þau lengur. Tilkynning um þessa rannsókn hefur verið send til Persónuverndar.

Leiðbeinandi í rannsókninni er dr. Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir dósent við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands.

Ég undirrituð veiti hér með samþykki mitt fyrir viðtali:

Spurningar til umræðu fyrir mæður:

Skrifleg fyrirmæli afhent mæðrum um að ræða

- hvernig sjá þið skóla án aðgreiningar í verki í skólanum (eða ekki),
- hvað virkar vel og hvað virkar ekki vel gagnvart ykkur og börnum ykkar í stuðningskerfi skólans.
- Passa að allir fái tækifæri til að tjá skoðun sína!

Takk fyrir!

Appendix H Informed consent and questions for learning support assistants

Sælir stuðningsfulltrúar,

Erindi mitt við þig er að bjóða þér að taka þátt í rannsókn sem ég er að vinna til að bæta og þróa starfsemi stoðþjónustu skólans okkar. Auk deildarstjórastarfsins er ég í doktorsnámi við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands og er doktorsrannsóknin mín starfendarannsókn sem snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóri stoðþjónustu og hvernig ég get þróað það og skólann frekar í áttina að skóla án aðgreiningar.

Mig langar að biðja þig um að taka þátt í hópsamtali ásamt öðrum stuðningsfulltrúum við skólann. Samtalið gæti tekið klukkutíma og fer fram í fundarherbergi skólans á næsta starfsdegi. Framkvæmdin er þannig að ég verð ekki viðstödd viðtalið sjálf heldur fá þátttakendur nokkur atriði til að ræða sín á milli og verður samtalið tekið upp.

Upptakan af samtalinu verður meðhöndluð sem rannsóknargögn. Farið verður með allar upplýsingar sem þátttakendur veita í samtalinu samkvæmt ströngustu reglum um trúnað og nafnleynd. Jafnframt verður farið að íslenskum lögum varðandi persónuvernd, vinnslu og eyðingu frumgagna. Rannsóknargögn verða varðveitt á öruggum stað hjá ábyrgðarmanni á meðan á rannsókn stendur og öllum gögnum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni, nema heimildar verði aflað til að varðveita þau lengur. Tilkynning um þessa rannsókn hefur verið send til Persónuverndar.

Mig langar að bjóða þér að taka þátt í þessu viðtali. Ef þú vilt þiggja boðið þá vinsamlegast svaraðu þessum pósti í síðasta lagi 5. apríl.

Kveðja,

Edda

Eyðublað til samþykkis

Doktorsrannsóknin er starfendarannsókn og snýst um að skoða mitt eigið starf sem deildarstjóri sérkennslu og hvernig ég get þróað það og skólann frekar í áttina að skóla án aðgreiningar.

Upptakan af samtalinu verður meðhöndluð sem rannsóknargögn. Allar upplýsingar sem þátttakendur veita í rannsókninni verða meðhöndaðar samkvæmt ströngustu reglum um trúnað og nafnleynd. Jafnframt verður farið að íslenskum lögum varðandi persónuvernd, vinnslu og eyðingu frumgagna. Rannsóknargögn verða varðveitt á öruggum stað hjá ábyrgðarmanni á meðan á rannsókn stendur og öllum gögnum verður eytt að rannsókn lokinni, nema heimildar verði aflað til að varðveita þau lengur. Tilkynning um þessa rannsókn hefur verið send til Persónuverndar.

Leiðbeinandi í rannsókninni er dr. Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir dósent við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands.

Undirrituð veitum hér með samþykki fyrir viðtali:

Spurningar til stuðningsfulltrúa

Það sem ég vildi gjarna að þið rædduð í dag:

- Hvernig er dæmigerður dagur hjá mér í starfi stuðningsfulltrúa?
- Hvernig er góður dagur?
- Hvernig er slæmur dagur?
- Hvað finnst mér jákvætt við starfið?
- Hvað mætti bæta í tengslum:
 - við starfið mitt?
 - við þá nemendur sem ég vinn með?
 - við skólastarfið í heild sinni?