

## Inclusion for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Individualistic and Collaborative School Cultures

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*Abstract: The main issue of this article is inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Inclusion in our study focuses on three core areas: the role of the school leaders, the role of teachers and the practice of curriculum planning. The results are based on interviews with school leaders and teachers in Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools.*

*We find that most of the teachers are working and planning on their own and seldom collaborate with or support each other. At one of the schools, however, we see a clear tendency for roles and practices that are based on collaboration and joint efforts. The same pattern is also found in the school leaders' focus on strategies in their efforts to realise inclusive education for pupils with SEN. Consequently, the analysis shows a clear and systematic correlation between the results in the three core areas. The roles of school leaders and teachers and the curriculum planning practices differs widely between schools, and seem to be part of school cultures characterized by predominantly individualistic or collaborative approaches in their work on inclusion.*

*Keywords: Inclusion, Special Educational Needs, School Culture, Role of school leaders, Role of teachers, Curriculum planning, Collaborative School Culture*

## Introduction and Background

This study investigates inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools based on school leaders' and teachers' experiences. The focus of the article research is threefold: (1) the school leaders' role, (2) the role of the teachers and (3) the practise of curriculum planning, and how each contributes to inclusive education for pupils with SEN. The study sought to determine how these roles and practices can be seen as indicators of whether the schools are characterised by a predominantly individualistic or a collaborative culture, and whether the work on inclusion varies with such cultural differences.

Education policy in Norway has very long traditions in developing a school system that can foster equitable and inclusive education. This entails the forming of "a school for all" that can facilitate good learning conditions for all children, regardless of their background and aptitudes (Nilsen, 2010). The ideal is that pupils attend their local school in heterogeneous classes. The fact that all pupils should be together despite the differences between them may create tensions between communality and adaptation in everyday school life. Recent educational reforms characterized by inclusive education are not only about physical placement, but also about developing a social, academic and cultural community for all pupils (Report No. 30 to the Storting 2003–2004). This should primarily be done through general education. However, if a pupil does not have a satisfactory learning outcome from general education, he/she also has the right to receive special education services. Most pupils who receive special education services spend most of their time in general education without special support. Their overall learning outcome is therefore highly dependent on the relationship between general and special education teachers.

The development in Norway from integration to inclusion can be viewed as part of an international trend (Vislie, 2003). The formulation of inclusion as a core principle of education in Norway was explicitly expressed in Report No. 29 to the Storting (1994-1995), at the same time that the Salamanca Statement was being drafted (UNESCO, 1994). The right of pupils with SEN to be educated in their local school is becoming more and more accepted in most countries, and many reforms are being put in place to achieve this goal (OECD, 2003). However, the gap between the ideal of inclusive education and the current provision for children with SEN is still too wide in many countries (Kiuppis & Hausstätter, 2014). Therefore, one needs to know more about what factors seem to hinder or promote inclusive education for pupils with SEN. Research indicates that a school's culture is important in this context (Zollers et al, 1999 Ainscow & SanDilla, 2010), but more research is needed to shed light on what kind of cultural factors are most decisive.

Some underlying characteristics of the school's culture which seem to be related to the success of inclusion comprises: an inclusive leader, a broad vision of school community, and shared values (Carrington, 1999). As is the case for organisational cultures in general, the school culture can also be said to encompass both cultural content and cultural expression (Schein, 2010; Bang, 2013). The cultural content – or the values and perceptions of reality – is reflected in the expression of the culture, or the way we act. Conversely, cultural expression conveys the values and perceptions of reality that prevail within the organisation.

The school culture influences its members by providing models for attitudes and actions. This particularly applies in the field of inclusive education. Hargreaves (2001) distinguished between two different school cultures: (1) fragmented individualism and (2) collaborative cultures. Fragmented individualism is characterised by private-practising teachers, who work on their own and are keen to protect themselves from external interference. Collaborative cultures, on the other hand, are characterised by teachers who recognise the value of collaborating and find that it contributes to communality and provides a form of support among them.

In order to improve inclusive practises, forms of content and expression need to be developed that support collective and coordinated efforts. In a collaborative school culture, teachers will assume shared responsibility for the education of all pupils. Teacher collaboration can be viewed as a process where teachers regularly meet to share experiences, learn from each other and refine and assess the impacts of the approaches they are using in their classrooms (Moolenaar et al., 2012). Collaboration and joint reflection among teachers seem crucial to ensure that everyone shares and benefits from their shared experiences and continues to develop as professional participants in the school (Bjørnsrud & Nilsen, 2018). When teacher collaboration is absent, school cultures tend to be individualistic and non-innovative (Lortie, 1975).

Research indicates that changes that improve teacher practice and pupil outcomes may be achieved through comprehensive school reform (Mattatall & Power, 2014). This relates to the ability to meet the educational needs of all pupils, including those with SEN. Key aspects of this reform include the development of a collaborative culture, the use of high-quality professional competence to improve teacher practices, and leadership where school leaders carry out school improvement activities (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). Research also suggests that collaboration between general and special education teachers is pivotal to improving educational practices with a view to meeting the needs of the diversity of pupils (Mattatall & Power, 2014, Nilsen 2017). Collaboration is also vital for pupils being able to achieve learning outcomes and for pupils with SEN when they are included in regular education classes (Cook & Friend, 2010; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Gruenert 2005).

### **The School Leader's Role**

This study will focus first on the school leaders' role in developing a culture and common practice that fosters inclusion. In most areas, we find attempts to operationalise the concept of quality. One of the most current and widespread approaches to constructing theory based on existing research is Total Quality Management or TQM (Shiba & Walden, 2001). This understanding of quality is based on four cornerstones (Skogen, 2004). The first variable focuses on the user, or the pupil. The second is the continuous improvement of practice. The third is total participation, both holistically and cohesively, and the fourth is competence development.

Another framework by Mattatall and Power (2014) is based on a review of a number of studies and is more recent in terms of quality criteria. Their six-point summarising theory includes the following:

- (1) a shared vision whereby a school's culture is based on mutual support, joint work, and broad agreement of educational values;
- (2) a focus on clear and common goals;

- (3) attention to results;
- (4) structured and on-going inquiry;
- (5) deprivatisation of teaching practices; and
- (6) time for reflective dialogue about learning and teaching.

Throughout the literature, the role of organisational cultures and leadership seem crucial to develop inclusive education systems (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Riehl, 2017). Using the two theoretical approaches above, we have based our data analyses on three areas with regard to the relevant school leaders' approaches to influencing the culture of their schools. The first area is the degree to which the school leaders have contributed to *a shared vision* to develop an increasingly more adapted education for their pupils. The second is how effectively the school leaders have helped ensure that teachers work together to maintain a *focus on the individual pupil's* learning and mastery. The third considers how well the school leaders have helped ensure that the teaching staffs have a focus on their own *competence development* through, for example, learning from their own experiences in their daily work. These three aspects are central approaches of the school leaders' development of inclusive school culture.

### **The Teacher's Role**

The second core area is the teacher's role in implementing inclusive practice for pupils with SEN. The focus in the literature is on the importance of collaboration, as well as on developing teacher competence supporting through sharing knowledge and experiences in collaborative networks.

Teacher collaboration supports the teachers' developments of skills to implement inclusive practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The translation of policy into practice is shaped by the way teachers understand inclusive education and how they develop a common understanding with the collaborating teachers (Lawson, Parker, & Sikes, 2006). The challenge teachers' face in inclusive education is to get support from other professionals to enable them to adapt their teaching to the diverse aptitudes and needs of all pupils (Davis & Watson, 2001). A lack of collaboration and expertise among general and special educational teachers, insufficient resources, inadequate joint planning time, and the absence of administrative support are the primary barriers to inclusive efforts (Wayne & Youngs, 2003). Teacher collaboration has proven to be successful in several studies but it requires a large degree of faith between participating teachers and a flexible approach to lesson planning and the implementation of instructional strategies (Lederer, 2000). This collaboration needs to be well planned within a structure in which the teachers' roles and responsibilities are specified and carried out along with daily management and instructional decisions and classroom interactions (Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

Building teachers' competence through collaboration is a significant prerequisite for successfully implementing reforms in schools and improving practice, and therefore a crucial factor in implementing inclusive education in school (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Competence development that is based on teachers sharing their experiences with others is shown to be beneficial, and it enables teachers to reflect on their own practices as a basis for improvements (Buli-Holmberg & Malini, 2016; Bjørnsrud & Nilsen, 2018). Collaborative networks are key factors in competence development of teachers. Teachers' reflections on their practice together

with other colleagues, seems to improve their skills and change their practice (Senge, 2006; Schön, 1983). These reflections may pave the way for developing competence and a new and improved practice.

### **Curriculum Planning**

The third core area, which is considered to be a key factor in achieving inclusive education is curriculum planning. International perspectives regard the education of pupils with SEN as an issue for the whole school and for the educational team, and not just for individual teachers (OECD, 2003). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) emphasised that inclusion is dependent on the teachers' shared responsibility for and collaboration in serving pupils with SEN. A key aspect of such collaboration is curriculum planning. Collaborative curriculum planning seems important for ensuring that the education is adapted to the individual pupil's needs (McLaughlin, 2002; Nilsen, 2017).

The Norwegian Education Act requires an individual education plan (IEP) to be drawn up for all pupils who receive special educational services. Furthermore, in the planning of general education, it has become common practice to devise work plans for the class in different subjects for a period of one or two weeks (Dalland & Klette, 2014). Such plans set goals and tasks for the pupils' work during the period, both at school and at home, and give pupils the freedom and responsibility to spread and perform the tasks over the course of the plan period. An important prerequisite for collaborative curriculum planning seems to be that teachers develop a common understanding of their responsibility for facilitating the education of pupils with SEN (Carter et al., 2009). In this way, school culture can influence how teachers take responsibility for, plan and work with IEPs and special education (Pearson, 2000).

Collaboration and a shared responsibility for curriculum planning between general education and special education teachers seems vital to being able to meet the learning needs of diverse learners through a holistic approach (Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996). Guidelines from central education authorities emphasise that IEPs must be coordinated with the curriculum for the general education as far as possible, while also being adapted to the individual pupil's aptitudes. At the same time, the planning of the general education must facilitate the work on adapted education and accommodate pupils receiving special education (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2014). Such practice seems to be essential for ensuring a close coordination between both forms of education for pupils receiving special education. However, research suggests that, in practice, there may be major challenges in relation to collaboration and coordination in curriculum planning in special and general education (Nilsen, 2017). Thus, the main focus of the analysis of our data in this area is whether curriculum planning has an individual or collaborative approach and whether the planning seems coordinated or fragmented.

## Method

Qualitative interviewing was selected as the methodology for addressing the research goals. The sample was based on a purposeful selection of informants in order to ensure that they have a large base of experiences in the field of research and was therefore considered most able to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013). The sample include school leaders and general and special education teachers at two primary schools and two lower secondary schools in two municipalities in Norway. A total of 20 interviews were conducted in the four schools. One school leader and four teachers (two general education teachers and two special education teachers) at each school were interviewed. General and special education teachers were selected from the same classes in order to shed light on both general and special education for these pupils. Teachers were selected from classes with at least one pupil receiving special education who has reading and writing difficulties and/or mathematical difficulties. These are among the most common reasons for providing special education in Norwegian schools. These pupils receive special education for some of the lessons in the problematic subjects (Norwegian or mathematics) and the rest of the time is spent taking part in general education. The interview study was based on voluntary participation, and great emphasis was placed on anonymizing the informants' background in the presentation of the results.

The aim was to ascertain the perceptions and experiences of both the school leaders and the general and special educators concerning the realisation of inclusive education for pupils with SEN. The interviews enabled the informants to explain and reflect on how the education was organised, planned and carried out. The interview guide was semi-structured and contained questions on pre-selected themes and a flexible and open form of conversation. It made it easier to maintain a focus on the themes, and also provided opportunities for follow-up questions, allowing the informants to give supplementary information. The resulting interview data provided us with comprehensive descriptions of how the informants perceived the school practice (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014).

We chose a thematic approach for our data analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main themes were derived from our research focus on the role of the school leaders, the role of the teachers, and the practice of curriculum planning. The sub-themes under each of these three main themes largely emanated from information that emerged during the interviews. As such, the themes are formed based on the interaction between a deductive and inductive approach. The chosen themes helped to illuminate different aspects of the data material that were relevant to the research focus, and enabled us to see indications of the content and expression of the predominant school cultures.

## Results

The presentation of results derived from the analysis of the interviews covers three main themes: (1) the role of the school leaders, (2) the role of the teachers, and (3) the practice of curriculum planning. The focus is on illuminating whether roles and practices in these three areas are characterised by a primarily individualistic or collaborative perspective and how the roles and practices contribute to the realisation of inclusive education with a main focus on pupils with SEN.

*The School Leaders' Role*

Based on our theoretical anchoring of the school leaders' role in the introduction, this presentation will focus on three approaches that seem crucial to influencing the culture of their schools and to develop inclusive education for all pupils. The three approaches represent the school leaders' contribution to (1) a shared vision and strategy, (2) a focus on the individual pupil's learning and (3) teachers' competence development.

Our study identified major disparities between the schools in terms of the leadership's prioritisation in individualistic or collaborative direction. The individualistic direction is evidenced by the fact that most of the school leaders' do not emphasize any common vision or strategy among teachers to foster inclusive education, but seem to regard their school as a conglomerate of competence where teachers are responsible for working independently to realize inclusive education. They neither have any personal involvement in the follow-up of special education, but instead they delegate the management of this to others, without monitoring or quality assuring practices.

However, a collaborative direction appears at one of the school leaders who emphasize more on a common vision and a strategy based on a collective responsibility among teachers. This leader considers a common understanding of the school's primary and secondary goals, as well as of the path to the goal, as essential prerequisites for good learning for all pupils. Furthermore, the continuous assessment of strategies and working methods is also seen as important. However, this seems to work best within a collaborative culture with collective responsibility, where everyone can safely reflect on their assessments and express their opinions without fear of being punished.

Our data indicates that most school leaders underline that a clear focus on individual pupils' learning and mastery is a prerequisite for creating good learning conditions. In order to foster inclusion, the school leaders acknowledge that the pupils will need help and support from teachers based on their individual abilities and aptitudes.

However, an important difference exists between school leaders who consider this as teachers' individual responsibility and those who emphasizes that teachers must have a common strategy and a coordinated approach in order to achieve this. Consequently, school leadership may promote individualistic or collaborative values and practises that could have consequences for whether pupils with SEN will meet fragmented or coordinated strategies from the teachers. It may also affect if different aspects of the pupil that impact on his/her learning is familiar to all teachers that the pupil meets. When the teachers have an inconsistent and fragmentary understanding this can obviously be confusing for both teachers and pupils. A collaborative culture with an information flow will in this context be a prerequisite for creating good teaching and learning processes at a school and school leaders have a particularly important challenge in this regard.

Furthermore, some school leaders seem rather hesitant about developing such a focus on pupils' diverse abilities and aptitudes for fear of accusations of stigmatisation. At the same time leaders are referring to limited resources. An important factor relates to insufficient financial

resources, including a low teacher-pupil ratio and not enough money for equipment and aids. A more favourable teacher-pupil ratio is regarded of primary importance where a stronger focus on pupils and individual adaptation are desired. A lack of recruitment of teachers with special education competence was often mentioned as an important factor in this regard.

In addition to a focus on pupils, teachers' professional competence was also considered important to develop inclusive education for all pupils. School leaders characterized by individualistic attitudes emphasize the individual teacher's competence, while leaders characterized as having collaborative attitudes strive for team building and teacher complementary competence. One of the school leaders underlines that in order to develop inclusive education practises, it is crucial for the school leaders not only to recruit and constructive make use of special education competence, but also to help create a culture of collaboration with reciprocal competence development and support among teachers.

In our study, school leaders underscore the need for special needs education competence and consider this from three angles. First, they express that there is a need for special needs education knowledge to be integrated with the regular education. This requires a combination of a subject component, a pedagogic-didactic component and a special needs education component. Second, they consider that it is necessary to have specialisation competence in the different areas of learning disabilities. Thirdly, the school leaders prefer that the teachers' context-adapted and pupil-adapted competence must partly be further developed through practice, with an emphasis on learning from their own experiences and the experiences of colleagues. Such competence enhancement through daily practice benefits in a number of areas from a collaborative climate where teachers can make each other good.

### *The Teachers' Role*

The teacher's role is the second focus area that shed light of the work on inclusion for pupils with SEN. Through the interviews, we have studied the teachers' role related to collaboration and also competence development through participating in collaborative networks. It can be seen as an indication of an *individualistic school culture* when most of the general education teachers feel that they are left alone with the responsibility for pupils with SEN in the classroom. They express the need for collaboration with and support from other teachers in order to adapt their teaching to pupils with and without SEN. They also say that they wish to discuss pupils' learning challenges and difficulties with other teachers, concerning how this manifest themselves and what kind of provision pupils with SEN can benefit from. The teachers find it difficult to set aside time to collaborate, and the collaboration mainly relates to short-term planning as opposed to evaluating the implementation of plans. They express their need to establish appropriate forms of collaboration with pupils and parents as well as with teachers, and to exchange information about how the different parties can interact to support the pupil in his/her learning process.

Indication of *collaborative school culture* is in evidence when teachers expressed the belief that sharing of knowledge and experiences with professionals is an important part of further developing the quality of the education provision for pupils with SEN. When several teachers work together in the classroom, they noted that they complement each other's competence. They talk a lot about how they can solve problems, achieve goals, and share ideas



with each other. Collaboration seems to help teachers to learn to know each other, find solutions together and complement each other's competence.

The teachers report that they do not have sufficient knowledge of specific learning difficulties, and teaching aids that can be adapted to pupils' special educational needs. They also say they lack knowledge about assessment and teaching methods to improve inclusive education in practice. The teachers expressed their need for someone with relevant experiences to share their challenges and their belief that collaboration will strengthen their competence and their practice toward inclusive education.

Other teachers express a more collaborative approach through sharing knowledge and experiences in collaborative network. They stated that they have learned a lot through network collaboration, and that collaboration is the best way for them to gain new knowledge. Some of the teachers express that participating in networks helps them to competence development. The results indicate that teachers they feel a need for and that sharing experiences and collaborating in networks serves as a useful tool to reflect and discuss with other professionals how pupils can receive satisfactory learning outcomes from the educational provisions.

### *Curriculum Planning*

Curriculum planning is the third focus area that can illuminate the implementation of inclusion for pupils with SEN, and which can provide indications of different school cultures. Through the interviews, we studied the planning of both special educators through IEPs and general educators through work plans. In both cases, we investigated the collaboration between special and general education teachers, and as well as the harmonisation of the planning of special and general education for pupils with SEN.

With regard to the *planning of special education through IEPs*, the main finding from the interview study is that special education teachers do not only play a leading role, but that they are also more or less left with sole responsibility. This is the case for most of the schools. Consequently, not much collaboration takes place in the planning, making it more of an individual undertaking. The special education teachers say that they sometimes feel this is a lonely role and that they would like more collaboration with the class teachers in this planning process, including the exchange of ideas and experiences.

At the same time, some teachers report to the contrary that the planning of special education services is to a large extent characterised by collaboration. The special education teachers feel that class teachers have important knowledge about the pupil and his/her role in general education that should be incorporated into the planning. This applies both to how the pupil works in the subjects and behaves in the class towards fellow pupils and teachers. Shared knowledge of the pupil's IEP and the exchange of advice and experiences are considered crucial to being able to follow up with the pupil even when he/she participates in general education in the classroom.

The second form of curriculum planning relates to *work plans with a view to adapting the general education services*. The main pattern in our study is that subject teachers take individual

responsibility for planning their subjects using one-week or two-week work plans for the class. This often takes place with limited involvement of special education teachers in devising work plans for pupils with SEN. Consequently, collaboration between the teachers also seems to be rather limited in such cases. One of the dangers that the teachers find with this is that the work plan is devised without sufficient knowledge of the pupil and follow-up of the IEP. As a consequence, work plans for these pupils are rarely adapted. This also means that instruction for all pupils has limited flexibilities.

However, there were a few cases of collaboration between the teachers when drawing up work plans. This is because general education teachers find that special education teachers have important knowledge about the pupil and can provide valuable advice that also applies to the adaptation of the subjects in the general education. Special education teachers are thus drawn into the process of creating adapted work plans for pupils with SEN. This is a form of collaboration generally organised through class teams, where special education teachers also participate.

The question is also what repercussions individualistic vs. collaborative curriculum planning have for the design of the overall education provision for pupils with SEN, both for the curriculum content and the teaching strategies. A practice where teachers largely do their planning on their own contributes to a limited coordination between general education and special education. Teachers acknowledge that this leads to the overall education provision for pupils with SEN which is fragmented rather than being mutually supportive, and that this may have a negative impact on learning processes and learning outcomes. One of the consequences may be that there is no agreed coordination or delimitation for either the overall workload for the pupils or for the degree of difficulty of learning tasks.

When a planning practice is predominantly characterised by collaboration, the teachers find that it fosters coordination between the educators, leading to a holistic and mutually supportive education for the pupils. Here it is evident that special education teachers devise IEPs and carry out special education in cooperation with general education teachers. General education teachers likewise devise and adapt work plans based on a degree of cooperation with special education teachers, with a view to ensuring that pupils with SEN are able to participate in general education according to their aptitudes. These educators believe that participation by all teachers in the planning is important for sharing knowledge about the pupils' needs and strengths, and for ensuring a coordinated follow-up of the strategies employed. The interviews indicate that the collaborative planning practice is characterised by special education teachers and class teachers taking shared responsibility for the education and inclusion of pupils with SEN. On the other hand, the individualistic practice is characterised by fragmentation of responsibility, where both teacher groups tend to ignore their responsibility to harmonise the education through shared responsibility.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

In order to provide an overview of the findings from this study, we have chosen to summarise the main tendencies in the table below. The results are presented in three core areas: the role of the school leaders, the role of the teachers and the practise of curriculum planning.

The results are discussed in relation to whether they indicate individualistic or a collaborative roles and practices in order to illustrate how this characterises differences between two different school cultures. The table (1) below shows the main results related to the three core areas and the main impression of an individualistic or collaborative school culture.

**Table 1. The role of the school leaders, teachers and the practise of curriculum planning**

Characteristics of different school cultures	Individualistic school culture	Collaborative school culture
The role of the school leaders	The school leader regard their school as a conglomerate of competence where teachers work independently to realise inclusive education	The school leader regard teachers as a team that works together towards a shared understanding of the goals of inclusive education
The role of the teachers	The teachers themselves have to find out how to implement inclusive education adapting to pupils with SEN	The teachers work in teams to solve the challenges of meeting the diverse needs of the pupils, and have complementary competence for pupils with SEN
Curriculum planning	General education teachers plan education within the class, and special education teachers plan special education for individual pupils – individually and without coordination	General and special education teachers collaborate on and coordinate the planning of education in the class and special education for individual pupils
Main impression	The work in inclusive education aimed at meeting the diversity of pupils is an individual project for every single teacher	The work in inclusive education aimed at meeting the diversity of pupils is a joint project for the school staff

Based on the findings from this study most of the participating schools seem to be predominantly characterised by a culture of fragmented individualism (Hargreaves, 2001), where teachers mostly work on their own with little degree of communality and mutual support. At one school, however, we saw a clear tendency towards a culture where teachers recognise the value of collaboration in the efforts to realise inclusive education for pupils with SEN. Given that research shows that teacher collaboration has a positive impact on pupils' learning outcomes including those with SEN (Goddard, et al, 2007; Gruenert, 2005), Mattatall & Power, 2014), this finding is a thought-provoking trend that raises serious concerns about the access of all students to a quality education.

Most of the *school leaders* in our study seem to regard their school as a conglomerate of competence where teachers work independently to realise inclusive education. Consequently, the school leader in the individualistic school culture seem to underestimate the need for active involvement in building a culture of inclusion based on a clear and visible policy.

In one of the schools, however the school leader considers teachers as a team with shared understandings and who work together towards practices of inclusive education. The school leader seems to play a key role in fostering inclusive values and to create an organisational culture and conditions as promote inclusive practices (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010, Riehl 2017). However, the forming of inclusive values and practices is not a hierarchical one-way chain of influence (Eide & Søreide, 2014), but will involve social learning processes with school staff, including dialogues, discussions, and exchanges of ideas and experiences that influence the thinking and actions of all the teachers. The school leadership seems crucial for at such processes to occur. This means again that the leadership style has great significance for how the teacher role and the practice of curriculum planning in a school develop whether in individualistic or collaborative direction.

When it comes to *the role of the teachers*, a main tendency is the lack of collaboration whereby teachers share knowledge, experiences and reflections in order to find appropriate educational provisions for pupils with SEN and develop further competence in inclusive education (Senge, 2006; Schön, 1983). The teachers in the individualistic culture feel that they are left alone to provide an inclusive education to pupils with SEN. In addition, they do not participate in collaborative networks within the school. However, in the collaborative school culture the teachers report that they work together and participate in networks with colleagues who have diverse experience and competence. They consider the sharing of knowledge and experiences to be an important part of further developing the education provision for all pupils, including for pupils with SEN (Bjørnsrud & Nilsen, 2017).

It seems that most of the schools in our study have not enabled systems or time a location for collaboration among teachers, and that this is a barrier to the coordination of the overall inclusive educational provision for pupils with SEN (Wayne & Youngs, 2003). A good structure, in which teachers' roles and responsibilities are clear, seems to be an important prerequisite for collaboration (Friend & Bursuck, 2006). True collaborative work capitalises on the talents and skills of the participating teachers and is one of several ways to develop teacher competence (Boudah, Schumacher & Deschler, 1997).

Another main tendency from our study is that *curriculum planning* for pupils with SEN is predominantly characterised by an individualistic practise. There is little collaboration and coordination between general education and special education teachers. Instead, the teachers work individually to plan their own part of the teaching. The individualistic curriculum planning risks fragmenting teachers' practices and pupils' learning and experiences, and suggests a tendency for relinquishing responsibility, thus making it more difficult to plan in a way that facilitates an inclusive education for pupils with SEN (Nilsen, 2017). In contrast, in one of the schools general and special education teachers collaborate on and harmonise the planning of education in the class and special education for individual pupils.

In these four schools, what emerges as an important implication is a clear need for greater emphasis on collaborative curriculum planning, so that teachers are enabled to develop a common understanding of how the education system can accommodate pupils with SEN (Carter et al., 2009; Pearson, 2000), which may lead to a positive impact on pupil achievement (Gruenert, 2005; Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). In order to improve the

learning processes and outcomes for pupils with SEN, there appears to be an important potential in a greater degree of joint involvement and consistent collaborations between special and general education teachers in terms of both the planning and the implementation of the education (Bjørnsrud & Nilsen, 2017). This can be an important element in whole-class planning and responsibility. Collaborative curriculum planning is therefore essential to ensuring better coordination of special and regular education with a view to a holistic education provision for the pupils (Carter et al., 2009; Nilsen, 2017).

When one sees the three core areas in context, this analysis shows a systematic correlation, indicating that the role of school leaders, the role of teachers, and the practice of curriculum planning are all part of school cultures, characterized predominantly as individualistic or collaborative practices. The same pattern is found in the three core areas, and it affects how schools relate to provision of inclusive education for pupils with SEN.

An important implication of this study is that making school values and practices more inclusive is foremost a matter of developing the whole school culture in a more collaborative direction (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). It requires leadership that seeks to develop shared values and a common understanding based on a respect for pupils' diversity. Such leadership must also encourage a collaborative teacher role and consequently collaborative curriculum planning and implementation. It also requires the establishment of organizational systems and routines that support collaboration processes, aiming at developing practices grounded on a common responsibility and a commitment to offering adequate learning conditions for all pupils, irrespective of their abilities and aptitudes.

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