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Suitably Adapted Education in an Inclusive Educational Setting or A Curricular Approach to Inclusive Education

Some Thoughts concerning Practice, Innovation and Research

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Educational inclusion is seen as the global policy prescribing:

- * development towards a local regular school**
- * that welcomes all children with their unique individual characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs**
- * all children with and without special needs and disabilities**
- * a school combating discriminatory attitudes**
- * a school offering a meaningful and individually adapted education to every pupil within the community of the class**

(Frederickson & Cline, 2002; Johnsen, 2000; 2007; UNESCO, 1994).

From general principles towards a curricular approach to inclusive practices



• **Normalization means sharing a normal rhythm of the day, with privacy, activities, and mutual responsibilities; a normal rhythm of the week, with a home to live in, a school or work to go to, and leisure time with a modicum of social interaction; a normal rhythm of the year, with the changing modes and ways of life and of family and community customs as experienced in the different seasons of the year” (Nirje in Flynn & Nitsch, 1980:32-33).**

• ***Blom Report* (KUF, 1970): The principle of integration introduced explicitly based on the following criteria of individual rights:**

- a) **Belongingness in a social community**
- b) **Participation in the benefits of the community**
- c) **Joint responsibility for tasks and obligations**



Key concepts

- **The diverse class and school in relation to the school for all and inclusion**
- **Inclusive practices**
- **Individually adapted education and differentiation**
- **Curriculum, didactic and “plan and program”**
- **The Curriculum Relation Model**

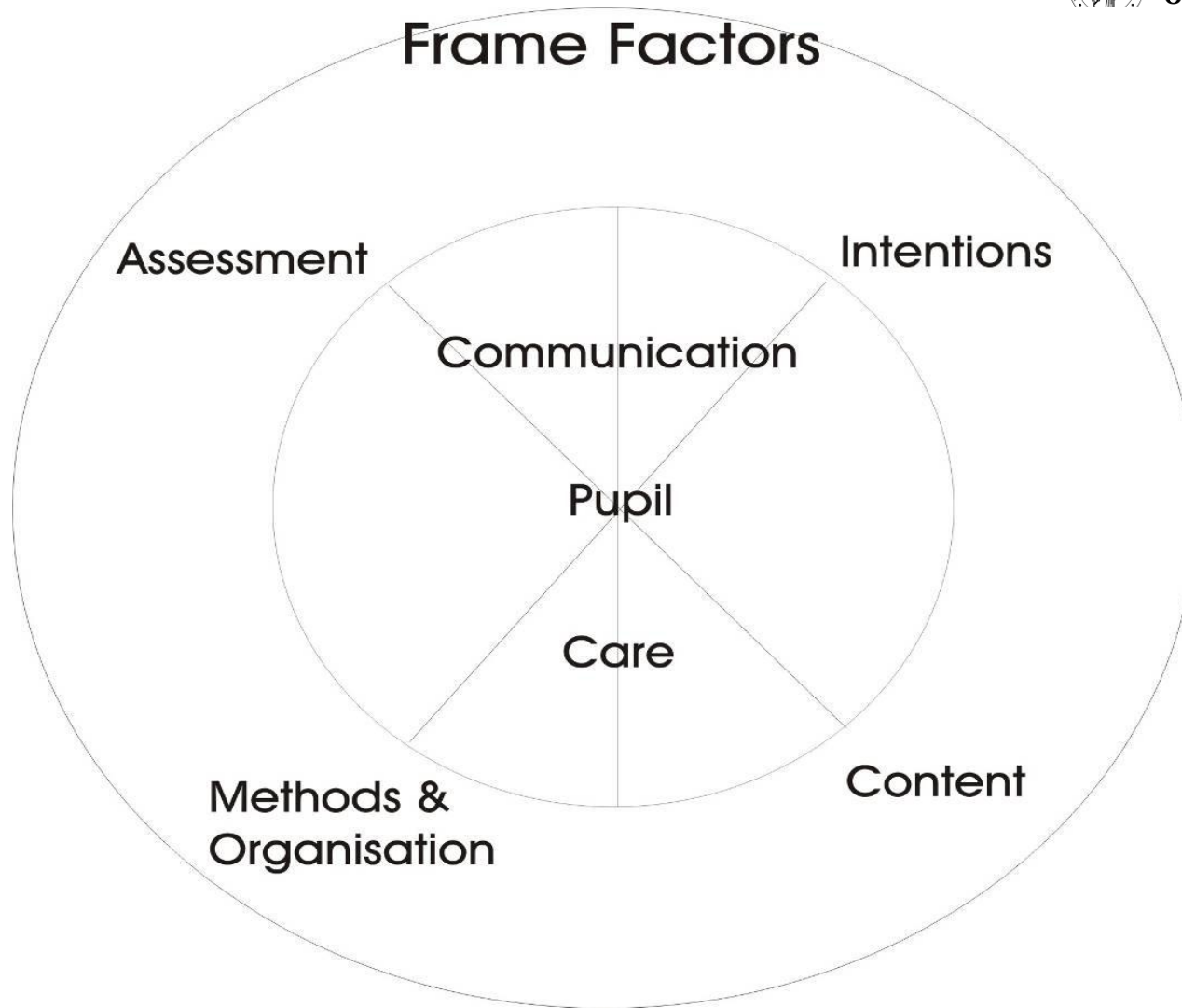


Figure: *The Curriculum Relation Model revised in Johnsen (2007)*

Curricular main aspects - main areas



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- **the pupil/s**
- **educational intentions**
- **educational content**
- **methods and organisation**
- **assessment**
- **communication**
- **care**

- **context / frame factors**

The Curriculum Relation Model



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A Professional- & Research Tool. Areas of application:

- As a guide to an overview of vital aspects and processes related to learning and teaching
- To support awareness of the continuous interrelationship between the above mentioned aspects and processes
- As a guide to ask necessary questions, to discover important sub-aspects and processes, to gather relevant knowledge and to train teaching skills within and between each of the main aspects, aiming towards fulfillment of the plurality of different educational needs and capacities of the pupils in the inclusive class and school
- As a guide to long-term as well as to short-term curricular planning
- As a frame for systematic work in planning, practicing and assessing the relationship between teaching and learning for individual pupils as well as for groups and whole classes
- As arenas of focus, clarification and delimitation in research on practice and theory

Some has asked: “Where is the teacher in the model?” The answer is that the teacher is not in the model. **The teacher applies the model** as a tool in planning, implementing and revising individual and class curricula.



The pupil and pupils

“The turning operation” towards inclusion:

- **From narrow discipline-centred towards learner-centred education**
- **From narrow assessment of the pupils’ learning products towards an extended assessment of all aspects of the teaching-learning situation, process and results.**

Professional educational and special needs educational understanding of the learner is based on knowledge on the following levels:

- **General knowledge about learning and development**
- **Knowledge about disability-specific learning strategies**
- **Knowledge about individual learning strategies, interests and communication types and styles.**



Vygotsky on learning, development & teaching

Vygotsky's (1978:84) about learning and development:

“... in making one step in learning, a child makes two steps in development, that is, learning and development do not coincide”

Vygotsky explains his point in the following way:

Once a child has learned to perform an operation, he thus assimilates some structural principle whose sphere of application is other than just the operations of the type on whose basis the principle was assimilated (Vygotsky, 1978:83-84)

Learning takes place within what Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal development:

It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978:86)



How can we get to know the pupil?

- **The pupil**
- **Parents**
- **Regular class teachers, subject teachers, special needs educators and assistants**
- **Others**

To assess and evaluate is to gather, interpret and reflect on a variety of information in order to adjust the direction towards a future aim. Educational assessment and evaluation consists of considerations and judgments about teaching and learning environments, processes and results, and about their contextual relations. In special needs education assessment and evaluation draw attention to specific barriers, possibilities and adaptations concerning teaching and learning environments, processes and results, and their contextual relations (Johnsen, in press 2003).

Assessment : from a segregation tool to an extensive, flexible and dynamic tool for curricular revision:

- *Extensive because it concerns more than assessing the pupils' learning products**
- * Flexible because form and content of assessment is supposed to be adapted to individual pupils as well as classes and schools.**
- * Dynamic because the assessment is intended to take place in dialogue between teachers, special needs educators, pupils and parents.**

Examples of assessment in a class setting

- **Checklists**
- **Dialogue with the pupils**
- **Observations**
- **Logbook or diary**
- **Pupils' works**
- **Screening tests**
- **Portfolios**

Examples of individual assessment

- **Interviews and conversations**
- **Questionnaires**
- **Pupil's self evaluation**
- **Assessment as part of mediating**
- **Achievement tests**
- **Specific mastery or ability tests**

Assessment of individual and class curriculum

Ethical considerations concerning assessment



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Intentions



Choosing learning goals and objectives in an individual curriculum is based on the three components:

- **Aims and goals stated in education Acts and other official documents**
- **Individual aims, goals and objectives**
- **Assessment of the learner's knowledge, skills and learning potentials** (Vygotsky's zone of proximal development)

Educational intentions related to:

- **Skills**
- **Knowledge**
- **Attitudes**
- **Access to experiences**

Content - the educational WHAT



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Bjørndal and Lieberg (1978:116-118) present a set of general quality criteria for a learning activity:

- **Consistency with the whole teaching program**
- **Adequacy compared to goals**
- **Variety and multiplicity**
- **Adaptive to individual pupils and group**
- **Balancing and cumulative**
- **Relevance and meaning**
- **Open to optimal integration with other learning activities**
- **Open to the pupils' choices.**

Booth et.al. (2000:77) puts forward a number of questions to monitor choice of educational content in a classroom, like the following:

- **Do lessons extend the learning of all pupils?**
- **Do lessons build on the diversity of the pupils' experiences?**
- **Do lessons reflect differences in the pupils' knowledge?**
- **Is the way opened up for different subjects to be learnt in different ways?**

Berit H. Johnsen on selecting curriculum content for the inclusive class:

- **How can we adapt subjects and themes from national and local curriculum to the variety of individual learning needs?**
- **How can we create learning environments, plan learning sequences and obtain materials and equipment to suit the needs of every pupil?**
- **How can we co-ordinate these differentiated individual learning tasks so that the whole class can co-operate in learning tasks within a common theme or subject?**

The “we” mainly refers to teachers and special needs educators; those who use the Curriculum Relation Model or other approaches to planning and practicing teaching in the diverse and inclusive class. In Vygotskyan terms they are mediators in the pupils’ learning process, together with mediating tools such as the Model, all kinds of manifestations of learning content, as well as methods, organisation and other factors that may serve as adaptation to learning (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

Teaching methods and classroom organisation (1)



The educational HOW:

Barriers to learning may be caused by biological, psychological or environmental factors or, as in most cases, from a combination of these

The concept learning difficulties used in connection with teaching methods and classroom organisation is not unproblematic. In light of the principle of inclusion it raises questions like:

- When does an individual way of learning become a learning difficulty?**
- To what extent is the organisation of the environment - the class teaching – or other curricular factors the main reason for labelling a specific way of learning a difficulty, instead of looking at it as an example of the plurality of different ways of learning?**

A serious problem concerns labelling of a small group of pupils as “owners of difficulties”, as “deviations from the normal”, in other words as not belonging fully to the pupil group. The principle of a school for all offers an alternative attitude, which is the inclusion of all pupils in the recognition of the plurality of individual differences, and the positive use of these differences as a source for joint learning and understanding in the class.



The immense field of educational methodology

From the history of educational methodology

Gerhard Brammer (1838):

- **The prescribing method: lecturing, dictation and demonstration**
- **The achromatic method: uninterrupted lecturing**
- **The dialogic method: conversation with questions and answers**
- **The heuristic method: The teacher asks questions and the pupils answer with independent activities**

Currently about dialogue

Bakhtin (1986) and Rommetveit (1992) situates the dialogue in the subject's meeting with another subject or subjects and with other cultural phenomena, such as between mediator and learner, between peers or between pupil and text or other cultural mediating tools for learning.

Thus the dialogue is understood as between different subjects, like master and apprentice, with their own interpretation of the phenomenon in focus.



Henning Rye's (2001) eight themes for caregiver-child and teacher-pupil interaction represent a modern elaboration of the dialogue principle, based on new research on attachment, communication and mediation:

- **To demonstrate positive feelings**
- **To adapt to the pupil(s)**
- **To talk with the pupil(s)**
- **To give relevant praise and acknowledgement**
- **To help the pupil(s) to focus the attention**
- **To assist in giving meaning to the pupil's (pupils') experience**
- **To elaborate and explain**
- **To help the pupil(s) achieve self-discipline**



Two other examples of methodological approaches:

SCAFFOLDING described as structured and systematic assistance in the zone of proximal development through social interaction between an expert and a novice.

STORY TELLING is another teaching method with historical roots that has recently been revitalised.

What characterises a well-told story is that it reaches the feelings of the listeners, creates interest and involvement, and is therefore well suited to change attitudes and increase knowledge.

Ole Vig (ca 1852) on story telling:

It was very important that the teacher did not tell directly from the book, but used his or her own free oral presentation. The content of the story had to meet the children's understanding. It should be illustrative, with the use of examples, explanations and repetitions. The story telling should be fluid, lively, amusing, preferably like a tale. This would awaken interest and engagement in the children, and then their learning would be free and not forced (Johnsen, 2000:174, translated by the author).



Special needs education has a number of classical methodological aspects, like breaking down learning tasks into small steps, systematic repetition and variation in use of examples. In general, adapting methods and approaches to the plurality of different educational needs consists of the following aspects:

- **Continuous acquirement of new methods and approaches**
- **Overview of different methods and approaches**
- **Flexible application of methods and approaches**
- **Multiple uses of methods and approaches in a joint classroom setting.**

Class and “classroom” organisation



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Although the class is important as a main organisational entity, as the educational home space of all pupils so to speak, additional arrangements should also be taken into consideration, like the following:

- Organising into large classes (Two or more classes together)
- Organising into groups
- Individual teaching
- In and out of the classroom

Flexible organising of pupils in the class is closely connected to physical frame factors of the classroom and how we are able to utilise them to create flexible solutions and – most important of all – a friendly and welcoming learning environment with room for all.

Collaborative learning



Group work and collaborative learning takes into account Vygotsky's (1978) focus on peer support in the learning process, as argued in his theory on the zone of proximal development

Collaborative learning is an important approach to developing democratic skills and attitudes. However, collaborative group work is not learned over night. There are many pitfalls to successful co-operation. Collaboration has to be learned step by step, under close supervision of the teacher.

Collaborative learning calls for collaborative teaching, where more than one teacher and/or special needs educator are working together in the classroom, possibly with the help of an assistant

More about flexible classroom organisation:



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The classroom may be seen as the base

Outdoor activities

Classrooms combined with smaller rooms for group- and individual work

Ideal:

The school library as the heart of the school

Berit H. Johnsen



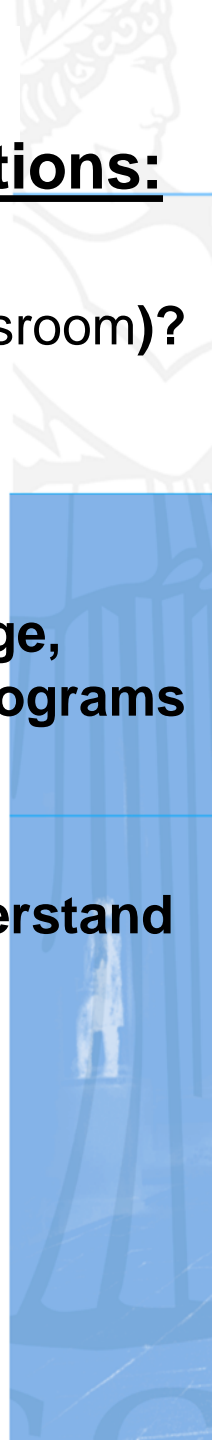
Communication and care, two main aspects of the Curriculum Relation Model, represent an extended view of education, compared to the traditional main aspects or commonplaces - assessment, intentions, content, methods and organisation.

Communication and care are placed inside the circle of the classical didactical aspects, as bridges to the pupil. This symbolises the necessary relation between planned learning and the learner.

Without communication there will be no education, no matter how qualified and relevant the adaptation of intentions, content, methods and organisation seems to be.

Communication may be divided into two aspects:

- **a technological aspect**
- **a human relation aspect**



Examples of communicational technological considerations:

- **Do we hear and see each other (light and level of noise in the classroom)?**
- **Do we, or some of us, need special hearing aid?**
- **Do we need special communication media such as sign language, signed speech, Bliss-signs, icons, computer communication programs or other augmentative devices?**
- **Do we need systematic step-by step support in learning to understand and apply a language?**



The human relation aspect of communication

has to do with our ability to see and hear the single pupil, every pupil and the whole class.

According to Rye (2001, 2005) research and development of theory during the last decades indicates the following traits in human nature and child development:

- The child has an inborn social nature and potential for development of communication and social interaction**
- The child has a fundamental need for establishing a reciprocal social relationship in order to survive, develop physically and socially, and to learn to understand and relate to the physical and social world**
- The child – particularly throughout the early years - learns through social interaction with the caregivers, who normally become the child's important mediators and supporters in the process of socialization and mastery of her/his relationship to the surrounding world.**

**Human relationship is based on being seen,
listened to and taken seriously.**



To see and be seen is a fundament for human relationship and communication.

Communication or the communication act may be illustrated with Martin Buber's (1947) discussion of the concept 'inclusion'. Buber relates 'inclusion' to concepts similar to communication, namely 'dialogue' and 'dialogical relation', and argues that 'inclusion' is the opposite of 'empathy'. He proceeds with his clarification:

It (inclusion) is the extension of one's own concreteness, the fulfilment of the actual situation of life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates. Its elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and, third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.

A relation between persons that is characterized in more or less degree by the element of inclusion may be termed a dialogical relation (Buber, 1947: 124-125).



Care represents an extended professional understanding compared to traditional limited discipline or knowledge and skills related education

We need to be aware of – not only the learner – but the whole child and young person within her or his social and cultural context, and with his or her personal history

Our pupils need to find our care. It shows in our attitudes, in small informal talks, in eye contact or a light touch on the shoulder, in some nice words about what was good in the homework as well as in concern.

Care and involvement show in how we plan, practice and assess all aspects mentioned in the Curricular Relation Model.



Noddings (1992; 2003) on care: The challenge to care in school

Befring (1996; 1997; 1997a) on care from a special needs educational point of view: Care and learning are complementary functions.

To care in an inclusive school means to support and encourage play and learning. I

t also means to adapt for meta-learning through encouraging the pupils to create interests, self-confidence and competence, self-reflection and what he calls ethical intelligent behaviour.

Gross (1996) and Webster-Stratton (1999)



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describe a number of concrete CARING ACTIONS that are in line with Befring's and Nodding's earlier mentioned recommendations:

- **Encouragement and participation in play activities with the pupils**
- **Listening to the pupil(s)**
- **Sharing personal experiences with the pupil(s)**
- **Creating opportunities for feelings to be expressed and discussed through play and through a variety of creative activities, like drawing, painting, drama and role-play, literature reading and discussions, writing logbooks, dialogue books and essays, to mention a few examples.**
- **Giving support to pupils who have experienced disappointments, traumatic events and losses**
- **Supporting the pupils to develop positive coping and mastering strategies**
- **Promoting self-confidence through self-talk and other empowerment strategies**
- **Showing the pupil(s) trust.**

Context:



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- **Laws and policy**
- **Economy**
- **Professional quality**
- **Physical frame factors**
- **Social and cultural frame factors**



Practical considerations

- **How can we organise our work as teachers and special needs educators, so that relevant main aspects of importance for the individual pupils and the whole class are considered?**
- **How can we assure enough flexibility in our work, so that the variety of individual needs is met?**