

## English summaries

**Ann Ahlberg, 2007: Special Education: Past – Present – Future/ Specialpedagogik av igår, idag och i morgon/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 12, No 2, pp 84–95. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

This article focuses on special education as a research area and field of knowledge. Special education is often associated with school practice and as such is seen as strongly depending on ideological and political decisions in society. When educational goals are changing along with the ideology, politics and values in society, special education is affected. The views expressed about how schools should deal with pupils in need of special support have changed over the last decades.

With regard to political visions and goals for education, there has been a movement from segregation to integration. Current official documents state that schools should offer equal opportunities for all pupils; issues concerning the practical implementations are, however, not made explicit. Furthermore, the notion of integration has, during the last decade, been frequently discussed and to a great extent been replaced by the term inclusion.

Special Education entails a broad and interdisciplinary field of research. On an overall level a distinction is often made between two dominating research perspectives, one of those being directed towards individuals. This perspective is sometimes referred to as being compensatory or categorical with roots in psychologically oriented research. The second perspective is directed towards participation and inclusion, orienting towards social sciences. Both perspectives have been criticised.

Opinions have been expressed arguing that research in special education lack a theoretical grounding and has been directed towards individuals and deviations (Clark et al. 1995, Dyson & Millward 1998, Haug 1998, Persson 1998). Recently the criticism, however, has taken another direction in proposing that the research is ideological and rhetorical (Högskoleverket 2006, Thomas & Loxley 2001). This criticism, however, has had positive consequences by way of contributing to self-reflection, dialogue and a vigorous discussion among researchers within the field. It is considered to be of great value describing and examining the ongoing research and to problematise it by asking questions about the nature of special education, what kind of research is conducted and what knowledge has been created.

According to Ahlberg (2006) there is an extensive and varied ongoing research within the field of special education. Investigations are grounded in different theories in education and sociology, but are also related to psychology, philosophy and medicine. It is obvious that the variation of theoretical approaches in research are increasing and that an eclectic view has become more common. The two earlier mentioned perspectives; individual versus including, therefore do not in a reliable way manage to describe and capture research in special education of today.

In the article questions are raised concerning future research in special education and it is proposed that future research has to build on the identity of special education by establishing new perspectives and contributing to the development of theory. The determining factor for successful research is the establishing of research environments characterised by a consciousness of perspectives and an ambition to improve the theoretical tools in order to achieve a cumulative development of knowledge within the field. A step in this direction is to describe research in terms of object of study and objects of knowledge. This is one way of taking advantage of the multi-disciplinary character of special education and developing cross-sectional research.

Furthermore it is important to make visible, problematise and critically scrutinize research in relation to special education as ideology and practice, and to create arenas for dialogue and communication making it possible for a meeting between theory and practice. In order to gain a wider, broader and deeper knowledge of special education, it is important that studies are carried out in different social practices. Empirical studies in the daily work in school focusing on conditions and requirements for pupil's participation, communication and learning at an individual, group, organisation and society level constitute an important way of making progress.

According to Ahlström (2006) it is seldom that research can give answers or point out some directions in practical, educational issues. However, empirical research in school practice is a beneficial method of generating knowledge in special education. Knowledge generated in practice is linked to teaching and daily work and is often looked upon by the teacher as being relevant and desirable (Rönnerman 1996). One way of consolidating on this point could be action research. Special educators, teachers and researchers would then be participating in a joint process of creating knowledge. The theoretical knowledge inherent in the practise concerning participation and learning could in this way be used in school-practice in an on-going process.

The article concludes by pointing out that there must be room for co-existence of different research interests, including studies in practice and critical ideological research, if future research in special education is to be viewed optimistically.

**Claes Nilholm, 2007: Research about special education – about advances and developmental paths/ Forskning om specialpedagogik – landvinningar och utvecklingsvägar/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 12, No 2, pp 96–108. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

Four important questions asked in the invitation to this special issue are addressed in the paper: (i) Which are the most important advances in the research about special education.<sup>1</sup> (ii) What is the status of research about special education today? (iii) Which are the most important questions for the future? And (iv) How should we proceed? Especially the first question is focused upon in the paper.

The question about advances is approached through a discussion of the metaphor »landvinningar» (literally translated: land reclamations) used in the invitation, the relation between the natural and the social sciences and recent research policies in Sweden. While useful, it is warned against an uncritical acceptance of the metaphor which relies upon neo-positivistic conceptions of social science. Instead, it is argued that the issue of research advances should be approached in an empirical manner.

In this way, an empirical investigation by McLeskey (2004) is utilized in order to empirically address the issue of research advances. McLeskey utilized »objective» research methods in order to find the historically most important articles in special education. Notably, only articles in three general American journals were investigated. Out of 60 articles in *Journal of Special Education*, *Exceptional Children* and *Remedial and Special Education* with high impact-values, McLeskey makes a selection of 12 articles which he argues are the most influential articles in special education.

Thus, the 12 articles could be considered to be exemplars of what at one point in history could be considered to be advances in research about special education, at least in the American context. Consequently, we can use his sample of articles in order to further approach the issue of research advances: Do results that at a certain point in history are regarded as advances last? Is there consensus as regards what the big advances are? And are such advances a result of research or the spirit of the time or some other entity?

It is argued in the article that what is regarded as advances at one point in history often seems to get criticized at later points. The advances can be divided into two main kinds: criticism of existing practices and suggestions for new practices. In this way, several articles challenges what has been more or less accepted as advances. Further, it seems hard to arbitrate whether the advances are caused by research, the spirit of the time or some other entity. Two examples from research about learning disabilities are used to illustrate this point. It is concluded that one should be cautious when it comes to the originality and durability of advances, especially as regards the relations to extra-scientific factors, and further research is needed in order to scrutinize how the spirit of the time, pressure groups, professional aspirations and scientific advances have interacted in the historical process.

The issues of the status of research today and the most important questions for the future are discussed with a recent review of international research concerning special education as a point of departure (Nilholm 2006). Four different areas of research are discerned, research about »problem groups», integration/inclusion, participant perspectives and research about research.

Research about distinct »problem groups» would benefit, from the authors' point of view, of systematic research reviews (which is starting to become more common), a critical analysis of the category »learning disability» (which has begun already) and to contextualize the research about problem-groups within didactic, democratic and educational philosophical issues. At the same time, it is pointed out that more thorough reviews concerning each »problem group» will suggest additional developmental pathways.

It is further argued that research about integration/inclusion which is situated within the political issues of the day will always be important. It is suggested that a more radical research agenda concerning inclusion should involve action research in constructing more inclusive practices and will benefit from reviews of what is already known from prior studies. Moreover, the study of the interplay of different identity categories might be a possible developmental path.

From a less normative point of view, the study of participant perspectives as well as the negotiation of perspectives in different educational contexts seem to be an area where more research is needed. Finally, it is argued that, not least from a socialconstructive perspective, it is important to research »research», e.g. to further study who exercises power on research arenas and how research questions and perspectives interact with extra-scientific issues.

Finally, the issue of how to move on is discussed. A distinction between research as entrepreneurship and research as a community of practice is taken as a point of departure for the concluding discussion. It is argued that encounters between different points of view are important. Also, it is argued that coordination of research hopefully will contribute to more efficient knowledge building.

#### *Note*

1. The expression »research about special education» is used instead of the alternative »special educational research». The empirical reference of the two expressions are similar, but the two expressions imply different perspectives (cf. Nilholm 2007).

**Jerry Rosenqvist, 2007: New domains towards a school for all/ Landvinningar på väg mot en skola för alla/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 12, No 2, pp 109–118. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

It may seem presumptuous to act as an expert, especially when it comes to prognoses – about what is going to happen within a scientific field in the future – as to the theme for this issue of *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, »Special education». Research is not living its own life, does not exist in isolation, it cannot set its own rules and it is always situated in a relational connection to truth. What is true today can be false tomorrow. But, at the same time may this unsteadiness make an exciting and challenging platform, a stance towards a future that you may influence in some way or the other.

To make research is to test the prevalent order in the world around us in a critical way. To make research also means a humble relation to the reality that is investigated, to the human beings that form the foundation for the knowledge you want to make evident, to the data you collect, arrange and interpret. During recent years special education has been put forth conceptualised as a pedagogical dilemma, both as scientific discipline and in practice. There are several reasons for this dilemma, which must be looked upon in a serious way. One ground reason is the difficulty to define the meaning of the concept special education in a scientific way.

Another ground for the dilemma is that special education has a normative character, which means that there often exists a national, officially sanctioned, politically correct recommendation for the way to look upon certain problems in the school, and how to solve these problems, as well. This is valid especially for the educational practice and a consequence is that such solutions differ a lot from scientifically grounded, more neutral and problematized solutions. To make this problem even more complicated it seems as if more than one »politically correct» point of view exists at the same period of time.

A third background aspect of the said above dilemma is that one is often forced to put forth define »the special» in order to see »the general» in (special) education. This dilemma becomes especially apparent in research, as well as in practice, if one tries to approach special education problems in relation to the total school practice, and avoids looking upon these problems as special qualities connected to certain people.

On the basis of the points outlined above, the following article makes an outline of some crucial points as to »Landvinningar på väg mot en skola för alla» (New domains towards a school for all) under the following headings.

*Approved experience – a growing special educational practice*

This section offers a historical overview of the development of a special education practice starting up with Pinel at La Salpêtrière in Paris, via the Swedish pioneers Per Aron Borg, a teacher for deaf children in Stockholm, and Emanuella Carlbeck who taught some »sinnesslöa» (imbecile) students in Göteborg, and ending with the steady growing help-class system in the 1950ies with a total of 11.500 students, i.e. around 10%, in 1952.

The next section »A kind of scientific approach« deals mainly with the sorting of people with mental diseases, with reference to Kraepelin, Esquirol, and two Swedish psychiatrists, Erik Gadelius and Bror Gadelius.

In the section »Modern incursions into a traditional paradigm« Goffman's theory of stigmatisation as well as Foucault's theories of viewpoints during different historical epochs are explained. Further, the »social model of disability« and disability as social construction are discussed followed by a scrutiny of special education as connected to medical and psychological research. A first embryo for a dualism between special education needs as individually bound or bound to society is put forth described with reference to school staffs' comprehensions understandings of former »mentally retarded students«. Finally it is pointed out that many scientific studies of special education at the end of the 20th century lacked a broader context in relation to the investigated problem area. For example a diagnosis was often taken for granted and its correctness seldom questioned in connection with school placement.

The final section discusses »Current special educational research«. For Emanuelsson, Persson and Rosenqvist (2001) and Skidmore (2004) the said dualistic approaches described above are still relevant, in the text called the psychomedical oriented and the societal oriented approaches, respectively. With reference to Persson (1998) the two approaches could be characterized as »the categorical and the relational perspectives« and distinguished with the labels »students with« or »students in« difficulties. In the UK Skidmore (1999) when discussing »how mainstream schools can be made more inclusive« refers to »individual deficits« and »curriculum presentation« respectively. Skidmore (2004) comes back to this dichotomy raising »two forms of pedagogical discourse«, namely »discourse of deviance« and »discourse of inclusion« (Skidmore 2004 p 112 ff), and his suggestion for a solution of locked positions is that the two positions should meet in a dialogue. A similar suggestion is put forth by Emanuelsson et al. (2001).

In spite of the said dilemmas noted above, a certain development seems to have taken place. A view where all human beings, and especially students in the school, are looked upon as equal with a broad definition of »normality« seems to get more and more recognition. Furthermore, the policy of »a school for all« has strong support and the new classification by the World Health Organisation, »International classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, ICF« (WHO, 2001) stresses a health perspective and considers and includes all human beings, not only those »with special needs«. The first international classification (ICDIH 1980 – the predecessor of the said ICF 2001) made a difference, too, introducing a new contextual and relational interpretation of disability. The new basic teacher training program in Sweden is directed to the education of all students, and it is emphasised that all students should be looked upon as resources in the the school (SOU 1999:63 p 192; translation JR).

The big challenge is – from a political point of view and from an activity the point of view of practice – is how the pre-school and the

school should handle the fact that students have different prerequisites, experiences, knowledge, and needs. How can students' differences appear as resources and drive the direction of the pedagogical work in the school in a direction that is at best for all students?

*Finally*

The referred Salamanca declaration establishes the terms Inclusion and Inclusive Education as a model for a new partnership and in contrast to the former term Integration. The change of terms and the difference between the two concepts has been described by Corbet and Slee (2000 p 143). Talking about the integration perspective they say:

This view accepts that the technical approach often amounts to little more than variations upon an assimilation score. Inclusion is not assimilation, it speaks to the value and contribution to the patterns within the social mosaic.

Thus, from an educational point of view some various trends, both national and international – political, ideological and to some extent scientific – seem to point in a certain direction: towards »a school for all«.

**Rolf Helldin, 2007: Class, culture, and differentiation – A focal point for future special educational research/ Klass, kultur och inkludering – En pedagogisk brännpunkt för framtidens specialpedagogiska forskning/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 12, No 2, pp 119–134. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

Fairness has long been a central concept in debates on Swedish school democracy. Many serious attempts have been made over the years to establish a school based on equality, both organizationally and with the support of laws and of the contents of the curricula. Despite all the efforts inclusive school environments are seldom the rule, and usually the exceptions.

This article is inspired by a current socio-philosophical discussion about fairness that problematizes the relationship between two political theoretical models, liberalism and socialism, and their interplay with the concepts of differentiation and inclusion (Fraser 2003). The text is based on two contexts; school and society. Such a parallel analysis can primarily, I believe, contribute an explanation for the contradictory differentiation logics that exist, and also be useful in the various kinds of educational work that create the conditions necessary for inclusion.

I argue in the text that school is being shaken up today by two large and growing problem systems that are both symptomatic of a »pathological« society. The first, the class-based and historically most frequent picture works

with financial inequality in a class society; the poor with their bad life situations and prerequisites for the future, and the more fortunate wealthy have incompatible interests.

The second, the culture-based picture, of a later date, often has a global signum and speaks of social »recognition problems» as being the greatest contemporary social conflict. Recognition is often described in key words as, for example, »moralistic autonomy for all collectives», »appreciation of foreign lifestyles» or »desirable characteristics in the relationships that different subjects have with each other» (Honneth, 2003).

Especially the last mentioned problem system today has completely altered conditions for educational work. Special education teachers, educators, and educational researchers live today in a confusing political multiplicity of various colliding spheres of values. The multiplicity means that special education teachers, regular teachers, and other school personnel must be able to handle many confrontations that are often destructive, where communication paths are blocked. Cultural minority groups risk unfair treatment and are thrust out into isolation, to simply take care of themselves.

The liberal welfare state can be regarded as a compromise, in the sense that it has institutionalized and bureaucratized in laws and regulations the support for vulnerable groups whose living standards and knowledge do not reach an acceptable level. Rawls (1971) reasons that a social »contract» is required between the state and its citizens in the liberal state logic, to regulate the relationship, for example in the form of a tax structure that is based on social and financial equality. Especially the low-paid, the sick, and the unemployed in the welfare state – the »welfare recipients» – should be compensated for their weak positions in the market society. This protection has pacified and depoliticized the class conflict that otherwise would have broken out in an overly unfair society. With their policies, welfare states obstruct lasting change, while they are of course simultaneously critically necessary for the groups that are dependent on them.

I argue that with welfare logic, the school easily gets stuck in compensatory thinking that upholds a differentiation between »knowledge» and »ignorance», »promising» and »depraved» or »capable» and »incapable». Differentiation, in the form of a maintaining bureaucracy and its harmonized pupil categories, is necessary in the school organization if the reduced resources are to »hit the mark» and be regarded as fair. That is how the welfare state functions, and that is how the school functions when it tackles its problems. We can talk, I mean about structurally profound inequalities, necessary to uphold the welfare state.

That is how we should interpret the special education organization, I believe. Actual inclusion becomes an impossible task on these bases – and the motivation, the theoretical support, and the educational methods that are needed to promote inclusions fades away, or never even get a chance to appear. Compensatory education constructions are very difficult to reject ideologically as well as theoretically. The needs are, under the prevailing structural conditions, necessary for the groups that are disadvantaged. The reverse side of this logic is that it is immeasurable and has a tendency to constantly adapt

itself. It can moreover be linked, I mean, to another characteristic which itself is contradictory; it is a self-destructive vein that in the longer term shakes up the welfare state compromise.

The redistribution that occurs makes the privileged (and perhaps even worn-out teachers in the school) begin to question »the compensated others» because a compensation that grows too large begins to gnaw at the resources of the privileged. Resource problems, financial redistribution between groups of pupils, can thus »tip over» to »recognition problems». It is therefore untenable in the long term (but perhaps necessary in the short term to counteract the acute problems). In the history of special education we have seen such breakdowns in compensatory thinking, for example in Sweden when the earmarked »0.3 resource» was removed in the regulation texts. The limits were exceeded.

It is also possible to carry on a parallel discussion of the school situation today on other social levels. The independent school system can probably also be interpreted within this framework; in various respects powerful parents start a process to protect their own children's resources, while their distrust of the »one school for all» idea is supported by an increased antipathy toward the welfare theory. Inclusion is thus stopped, and a parallel segregation trend grows in the educational society. The pupils and staff who remain in the regular school can then encounter difficulties in many ways. Redundant individuals have been created.

Based on Fraser's (2003) political analysis, I have reviewed the relations of liberal education to special education's traditional context by comparing liberal theoretical models with the pedagogy that labors critically for a change in the basic structural terms – the structurally profound inequalities that exist.

Redistribution of resources in a welfare logic requires an »affirmative» pedagogy that emphasizes, specifies, and distinguishes between the needs that are to be compensated. It follows a social liberal theoretical model that acts as a »guard», that is, it leads to differentiation and shapes the problem for the inclusive school. Needs for diagnostic knowledge to identify various »syndromes», needs that are constantly increasing, can be seen in that light. This educational method both requires, so to speak, and strives toward differentiation.

A »transformative» (deconstructing) educational method, however, sees the societal basic structural injustice as time's greatest educational challenge. The latter form for educational work leads primarily long-term thinking to a school where differentiation does not occur, and where inclusion is the measuring-stick. This kind of, what I mention critical social thinking criticizes, for example, the increased use of diagnostic methods: instead school be built on completely different basic structures. The disadvantaged class, culture, or individual should in the long term be neutralized as a disadvantaged group – in the school, of course, with the support of »pedagogy» in the broader sense.

The consequence of these principle discussions is that the educators who want to support an equitable school fall into a gap. Here we see two (special) educational orientations on a collision course, despite the serious attempts of both to make conditions acceptable for disadvantaged groups and individual

pupils in the school. As general efforts they really should not be questioned other than in exceptional cases. They presumably include similar ethical positions. The moral standpoints probably have certain characteristics in common.

We can perhaps agree that both the affirmation and transformation »logics« are necessary in a society that is characterized by the fact that the structures that govern are »pathological« and need to be fundamentally changed. Poverty also exists in Sweden today and poor people need to be compensated for their poverty. The connections between financial conditions and school success are stable. School children with foreign backgrounds are the most vulnerable; »their parents generally have less education, lower incomes, and less contact with the labor market than do families with Swedish-born parents«. They also perform worse in school, due partly to the fact that »they more often go to schools with high teacher turnover and schools that have many pupils with great needs for special support« (Social rapport 2006 p 246).

The two efforts to be fair to disadvantaged groups pull in opposite directions, although both forms of educational interventions have as their objectives the creation of a fair school for all, both for groups and for individual pupils. My thesis in this article has been that an educational differentiation logic – for example, in the form of compensating education – is shortsighted. An educational processing of the basic structures of inequality, the distinguishing organizational and educational contexts, is needed in the long run.

The relationship between education, society, and differentiation is complicated by the fact that the school contains what Fraser (2003) calls »bivalent collectives«. In the school »problems« of various kinds are usually mixed; class and culture needs generally do not appear »endogenously« within a collective. They are more often »exogenous«, says Fraser; that is to say that they are mixed simultaneously in several kinds of collectives.

It is where these different needs intersect each other that the educational efforts presumably also counteract each other. For example, how can one work educationally with the poor South African children that are also functionally impaired and need extra resources for support in reading and writing because of their bilingualism, where xhosa is the main language?

The transformative solutions to these two conflicts seem to me to be the best path forward, but perhaps not the only one in an area as complex as that of social special education. A deconstructing educational method is, however, the only kind that works toward the future. Deconstruction also creates, says Fraser (2003 p 211) »the best conditions for building coalitions«. They are the only solutions that »can give equality to all the battles that are now being fought against inequality«. She emphasizes that social antagonism must be confronted with full strength in a collective opposition against unfairness and democratic undermining from various vulnerable groups.

Marianne Döös and Lena Wilhelmson, 2007: Distance and proximity – on data analysis in research teams/ Distans och närhet – dataanalys i forskarlag/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 12, No 2, pp 135–153. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788

This article takes as its starting point difficulties associated with data analysis in qualitative studies, where large quantities of data are collected for analysis later on. The aim is to contribute towards a development of method by describing and discussing the analysis of qualitative data in an intensified research team activity.

Taking a work-life pedagogical study as its example, the article describes how research design and qualitative analytical method can be developed through team work so that empirical data will make a difference, i.e. contribute towards theory generation, with theoretical questions being resolved on an empirical basis. Thus, the concern is with the classical issue of the relation between data and theory. In studies aiming at analytical generalisation, the research question has a theoretical basis, requiring active use of theoretical concepts and conceptual relations in the data analysis, with vast quantities of data involved. Hence the need to combine proximity to data and to the empirical field with the need for analytical distance.

The research team consisted of four researchers with a similar theoretical background and understanding of learning in organisations (three researchers from Sweden and one from the USA). The American researcher took part in the so called proximity phase where data collection and analysis were integrated and on another two concentrated analysing occasions. The research work was of abductive character. Data were collected mainly through semi-structured interviews with development engineers and their managers, individually and in reflection groups, through field observations and by sitting in on working meetings. Data analysis and expansion mainly took place at reflective meetings of the research team, later also individually. Six months after data collection, the three Swedish researchers carried out a validation of the working approach in accordance with Wilhelmson's dialogue model. There did not appear to have been any imminent risk of unreflected uniformity.

Analytical work was divided into two phases. First came a proximity phase in which concentrated data collection was intertwined with analysis, and then followed a longer in-depth phase of closer scrutiny which included regularly recurrent analytical meetings and longer concentrated sessions. Data collection followed a timetable of interview appointments and joint research team analysis. 26 individual interviews were conducted in the first week. In the second week the researchers assembled six reflection groups to discuss tentative hypotheses generated during the first week. This gave rapid feedback to the organisation studied.

Unusually, data analysis and interpretation was at its most intensive during ongoing data collection. The researchers recounted interviews, observations, insights and surprises to each other daily in the analysis sessions. There was an

intensity which was manifested by jostling for space to narratives and interpretations, but also by people really listening and actively asking for what others had experienced in interviews and observations. The analytical work was concrete, closely founded on data and, as increasingly steady, thanks to a shared meaning context. It was also full of creativity and fresh ideas, associations and metaphors. This was a process of both understanding and making intelligible, and a process in which new questions unfolded.

The proximity phase implied that the research team in its sessions, additionally created their own meaning context, consisting of the researchers' notions and interpretations of the empirical field. In this sense the team created a joint world, inhabitable through colloquies and thoughts. A temporary world whose duration was confined to the proximity phase and a few weeks thereafter. It faded away, but during the in-depth phase could be returned to at joint sessions prepared through individual work on the data material.

The article describes phases and active ingredients in a methodical approach characterised by intersubjective data analysis integrated with data collection, by a shared meaning context, the use of footnotes, question marks and metaphors. Structuring the amorphous and combining it with conceptual distance was made possible in the present study by team-driven intersubjective data analysis divided into proximity and in-depth phases. To conclude, intersubjectivity in data analysis provides a possibility of deeper understanding, higher quality and concentrated use of time. Intradisciplinary research teams, however, should actively counteract the risk of hasty conclusions and groupthink by critically scrutinising the work of analysis in this respect. More knowledge is needed about such procedures, and more instances of research team analysis.