

# SCHOOLING FOR EVERYONE: NORWAY'S ADAPTED APPROACH TO EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE

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## INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, Norway would appear to have pre-empted international calls for integration and inclusion, such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), as it implemented initiatives such as the integration of the special and general education laws as early as 1975. As a result, in the course of the last forty years or so, Norwegian schools have had an ongoing interpretation of inclusion that encompasses accommodating all children and young people regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or cultural background. Additionally, most special schools (previously in existence mainly for pupils with physical and intellectual disabilities) were closed in the 1980s, as mainstreaming became a practical reality. A significant influencing factor, both politically and philosophically, was the concept of adapted education (*Tilpasset opplæring* in Norwegian), whereby a large amount of what has traditionally been considered 'special education' was integrated with general teaching and brought into the mainstream classroom in order to address pupils' learning requirements individually and in a flexible manner.

In addition, as with other Nordic countries, the strong prevalence of comprehensive schools and a largely public sector-run school system, along with the philosophy of a common school for all, are significant influencing factors in the development of inclusive education in Norway. This chapter examines inclusive education in a North Norwegian context, presenting challenges and issues related to the ever-shifting nature of inclusion. The text will also touch on issues surrounding Sámi and indigenous education in Northern Norway; however, as this topic has been fully developed in a dedicated chapter in this volume, only a brief and illustrative presentation will be made here.

In Norway, creating a general school system for all, combined with other socially democratic initiatives, has helped to make the country a world leader in terms of social equality, including having one of the lowest differences in income gap between the richest and poorest (Gini coefficient of 0.25, OECD, 2016, p. 103). In addition, within countries monitored by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Norway has high levels of youth employment and engagement in education training (OECD, 2016). Nevertheless, while the Norwegian system is internationally renowned for its inclusivity, there is ongoing internal debate around how pupils can benefit from education (Fasting, 2013). A recent national report (Nordahl et al., 2018) found that support systems are not effective and that they create exclusionary special education systems. Most children also receive support from personnel lacking in appropriate qualifications and competences (Nordahl et al., 2018). Additionally, although Norway has been very effective at integration – i.e. when the construct is considered as a right – there is still room for improvement regarding inclusion, i.e. when inclusion is considered as the right to be different (Kristiansen, 2014). However, despite being early implementers of integrated inclusive education policies, like many other countries internationally, Norway has witnessed an increase in the number of children receiving traditional special education (Markussen, Strømstad, Carlsten, Hausstätter, & Nordahl, 2007), with figures stabilising in the last four to five years at around eight percent (Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 10, see also figure 1).

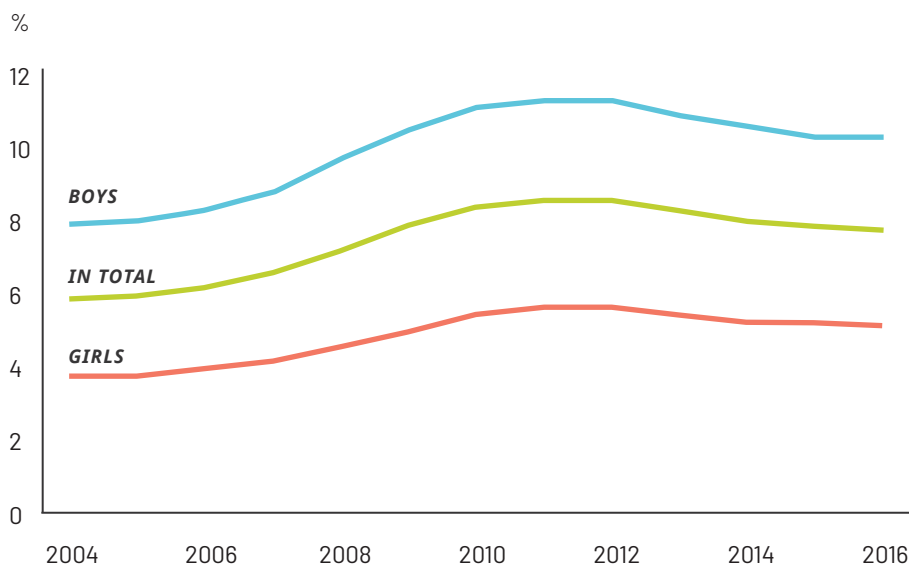
While the Norwegian system has strived to reduce the influence of cultural and socioeconomic barriers to participation in education – i.e. aspiring to provide education for all by broadly trying to create a system that is both equitable and integrative – the country continues to experience inclusion-related challenges,

most prominently related to social integration (Flem & Keller, 2000). In addition, Norwegian-born young people are twice as likely as their foreign-born peers to be in employment or education (OECD, 2016, p. 32). How Norway deals with these challenges in the future is of utmost importance if the country's values and strong international standing are to be maintained or improved.

## **EDUCATION IN NORWAY**

The Norwegian compulsory education system consists of primary and lower secondary education and spans ten years. It is governed by a centralised national curriculum, which operates in either Norwegian or Sámi languages, depending mostly on geographical location (for further details on Sámi schools in Norway, see Keskitalo & Olsen, 2019, this volume). Pre-school covers ages 0–5, and while not compulsory, the vast majority of children attend (national average 91.1%, Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 5). Compulsory schooling starts in the year a child turns six and consists of seven years at the primary and three at lower secondary levels. Most of this compulsory education takes place in public settings, with only 238 of 2,858 (8.3%) of primary and lower secondary schools being private (Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 9), which accounts for around three percent of the general pupil population. While upper secondary education is not compulsory, the majority of children transition directly from the lower stages (98.1%, Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 12) to attend for three years. Thereafter students can choose either tertiary vocational education programmes between six months and two years or higher education following a 3+2+3 year European Bologna model (Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 2).

In terms of children who are receiving special education support – here defined as pupils who receive support above and beyond that delivered within adapted education (see more below) – around eight percent of the general pupil population is classified as having special education requirements (Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 10). Following the general global trend, there is also a larger proportion of boys compared to girls receiving special education support.



**FIGURE 1:** Proportion of boys and girls receiving special education in primary and lower secondary education (Statistics Norway, 2018, p. 10, More information: <http://www.ssb.no/en/utgrs/>)

## ADAPTED EDUCATION

Adapted education (*tilpasset opplæring* in Norwegian) is a central part of the Norwegian education philosophy and stems from the strong emphasis that society places on the school's role in contributing to a socially-inclusive and supportive society (Mordal & Strømstad, 2005). The concept is a fundamental part of the integration and inclusion movement in Norway and has greatly shaped the way in which the mainstreaming of special education has unfolded. The construct is relational and somewhat ambiguous due to its connections to social ideology, human values (humanity/menneskesyn) and the principles of integration, inclusion and normalisation. It also presents a dilemma, as Norwegian schooling is required to simultaneously offer equal education opportunities for all children while also providing individually-tailored education. However, adapted education has generally been seen as a positive factor in promoting and improving inclusion in Norwegian schools.

While the most recent major revision to the Norwegian education law was in 1998 (Opplæringslova, 1998), the principle that education shall be adapted to the child – and not vice versa – has been a regulatory feature in Norway since 1881, when a law for the schooling of the ‘abnormal’ (Abnormskoleloven in Norwegian) was created. Successive education and schooling laws from 1936, 1959 and 1969 all contributed to the further integration of people with physical and mental impairments into the school system, although predominantly with education taking place in segregated settings – such as special schools. These specific intentions relating to equal opportunities and integration were developed during the mid-twentieth century and ultimately contributed to the integration of the special and general education laws in 1975 (Bakke, 2011). In addition to the education law, practice has also been steered through a national curriculum where adapted education plays a central role.

Norway’s ideological position relating to integration and inclusion saw significant developments during the 1960s and needs to be understood in relation to broader changes in the welfare state (Vislie, 1995). Predominant influencing principles in the mid-twentieth century were equality, integration, normalisation, participation and decentralisation, with the ideologies of that time being particularly concerned with the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. One predominant influencing factor (also present in other Nordic countries) was normalisation – the notion that persons with disabilities should have access to the same rights as ‘normal’ people (Wolfensberger, Nirje, Olshansky, Perske, & Roos, 1972). In 1975, integration efforts culminated in the merging of the special education law of 1951 and the general education law of 1969 to form the so-called Integration Act (Opplæringslova, 1975, integreringslova). One specific intention regarding the amalgamation of these laws was to reduce the distinction between special and general teaching, such that teaching and learning would become more widely available and accessible, albeit with the possibility of varied and equitable teaching and learning opportunities for all. Against this backdrop, the foundations for adapted education were laid.

## **THE PREDOMINANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR-CONTROLLED SCHOOLS**

Comprehensive schools (*enhetsskole* in Norwegian) are prevalent in Norway. They have been central to the political and social intentions of the country regarding the

provision of education to all citizens regardless of social and economic standing. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, along with the expansion of the time spent in compulsory education – from 7 to 9 years in 1959, followed by an increase to ten years in 1979 – one of the main intentions of the Norwegian education system was to provide equality across differing social groups and geographical placements (Telhaug, 1994).

In terms of the manner in which education is delivered in Norway, this takes place through devolved local government. Municipalities are responsible for the education of all children who live within their boundaries, with pupils having the right to receive this education at their nearest local school (a point which is also integrated into the regulatory framework for education in the form of the *nærskolesprinsipp*). Local schools are thus required to educate children as far as is practically possible and professionally reasonable. The schools themselves usually have a special education team consisting of regular class teachers, special educators, pedagogues and a nurse. However, more often than not, the teachers are the only ones who are permanently based at the school, while the other support professionals are often based in centralised support centres, operating peripatetically. In addition, the schools have access to additional pedagogical, psychological and social support services provided by the municipality, which provide such professionals as specialised teachers, educational psychologists, social workers, etc. Aspiring to provide an equitable education system requires the collective delivery of both resource and formal equality. Resource equality ensures equal opportunities for all, whereas formal equality means equal access to school and education (Bakke, 2017, p. 149). However, this ideal has not been fully achieved, coupled with additional challenges relating to simultaneously including people while also maintain respect for diversity (Kristiansen, 2014), a point particularly pertinent for previously suppressed groups, such as the Sámi, and previously ignored groups such as newly arrived immigrants.

## **ADAPTED EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION**

The so-called integration law of 1975 ensured that special schools were now governed by the same system and legal framework as mainstream schools. This started the process of closing special schools and bringing all pupils together in

the same school (a philosophy that is also central to the ethos of comprehensive schools). An educational approach with integration as a central theme replaced the previous segregated approach. This understanding of integration subsequently contributed to the narrative of inclusion in the Norwegian context. Inclusion in Norway, much like the international situation, is subject to an ongoing and evolving process whose concerns are more related to social rather than curricular integration (Flem & Keller, 2000). Similarly, there has been a significant amount of theoretical interest and debate (Maxwell, 2017). A central influencing factor in this dynamic has been normalisation, whereby the integration and participation of those who were previously excluded from mainstream schooling have been realised. Normalisation was a central theme in Scandinavia throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and focussed on making everyday life for persons with disabilities the same as that of 'normal' mainstream persons (Nirje, 1969; Wolfensberger et al., 1972).

With the monumental shift in thinking, brought on by the New School Act of 1975, came a corresponding change in language, with the focus moving towards adapted education. The new terminology was intended to remove the distinction between 'special' and 'mainstream' education such that everyone received an education that fit their learning needs, however diverse. The concept was further explored in a white paper (number 98) from 1976-1977:

The concept marks a desire to remove the distinction between special education and mainstream education in favour of a broad unifying conceptualisation of education that has room for varied and equal education for all pupils. (Norwegian White Paper 98 (1976-77), NOU nr. 34 1985:42; author's translation)

Begrepet markere ønsket om å fjerne skillet mellom spesialundervisning og vanlig undervisning til fordel for et samlende, vidt opplæringsbegrep med plass til varierte og likeverdige undervisning for alle elever (St.meld. nr. 98 (1976-77), NOU nr. 34 1985:42)

With this came an intention to conceptualise education more broadly by means of reflecting the values inherent in integration and normalisation. As part of the development of the New Integration Law of 1975, in 1969, Judge Knut Blom was assigned the task of developing a proposal to achieve the unification of the education and special education laws. This led to the Blom Committee developing

a number of the central concepts, including adapted education. The committee defined the concept from four positions:

1. Belonging to a social community
2. Participation in community benefits
3. Collective responsibility for tasks and obligations
4. Benefit from education/teaching

The committee also took a position that included four levels of integration:

1. Physical and functional integration: This denotes geographical proximity, whereby one uses the same buildings and has a presence in relation to other pupils.
2. Social integration: This involves social interactions with mutual positive interactions.
3. Community integration: This means to hold socially and culturally valued roles in society.
4. Benefits that mean that pupils will understand teaching and develop their potential.

Adapted education thus challenged the very fundamentals of traditional teaching knowledge and approaches in Norway. At the curriculum level, it was adopted as a general principle comparable to integration and inclusion (and was central to the integration and inclusion movement in Norway). Ideology-based practices are abstractions that tend to reflect the values placed on the relationships between people and are less inclined to demonstrate how these values will be executed in practice. The uncertainty lies in how adapted education is understood and practised due to various conflicts and dilemmas inherent in the approach. Value conflicts relating to the prioritisation of some pupils over others collide with the general intention to treat all pupils equally. As a result, there is competition between society's general values of equality and the school system's new values of inclusion, which can perhaps explain why adapted education often fails to be practically implemented and often languishes at the theoretical levels of the Norwegian education system.



In an ideal inclusive school setting, an equitable degree of social and academic achievement between students, and between students and the system, is crucial in order to fully realise inclusion. An important dimension of adapted education is, thus, the capability to reinforce students' experiences of cohesion, engagement and participation through better management and awareness of power relations (Bakke, 2017).

## **ADAPTED EDUCATION AS A LEGALLY BINDING CONCEPT**

The interactional and relationship dynamics between adapted education, special education and expert knowledge are central to whether a legislation can be implemented as a rights-based law or a rational-legal authority. While the requirement for education to fit the needs of all of Norway's children has been a feature of the legal system since the Abnormal Education Act of 1881 (Abnormskoleloven, 1881), this right has generally only been realised by the more adaptable members of the child population, with the more challenging cases being neglected (Nordahl et al., 2018). However, in all legal texts, the legal language used expresses the right to receive and duty to deliver and fulfil education. As such, it is relatively clear that there is no interpretation potential regarding either the degree to which children have the right to education or the degree to which the system has a duty to fulfil that education. This lack of specificity means that the right to adapted education is realised as a general right that all children have in Norway.

One on-going and significant challenge in the implementation of adapted education is a lack of special education competence in the general teacher population (Nordahl et al., 2018). This lack of expert knowledge both within schools and elsewhere in the education and support systems – such as the nationally coordinated education support service (*Statlig spesialpedagogisk støttesystem, Statped*, in Norwegian) and the regionally and locally coordinated education support services (*Pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste, PPT*, in Norwegian) – was highlighted as early as 1987 (Eskland, 1987). To this day, however, it remains a challenge, especially for the smaller and more geographically isolated municipalities in Norway. Perhaps as a result of its broad conceptualisation, adapted education has not been fully embraced by either general education or special education, with the teacher training system failing to integrate special education into its professional education

programmes and to adequately prepare new teachers to work inclusively and in accordance with the intentions of adapted education, as highlighted by a recent national report (Nordahl et al., 2018), previous theoretical texts (Bakke, 2017, p. 157), and ongoing studies (Maxwell, Antonsen, & W Bjørndal, 2018). Consequently, as teachers lack the practical competencies in adapted education, they are much more likely to refer cases externally to support specialists, which in turn places additional strain on that part of the system – something the ethos of adapted education is meant to alleviate. Nevertheless, it has been legally clarified that a lack of economic resources is not a valid reason for delayed or absent support, and as a consequence, the main factors relating to children being deprived of their rights to adapted education (i.e. the law gets broken/not upheld) are human – related specifically to deficiencies in knowledge and resources. Pupils are typically placed on waiting lists with the external support service (*Pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste, PPT*, in Norwegian) in order to receive the support to which they are entitled, with waits of several months being common, occasionally years. This situation partly explains why Norway is still struggling to deliver on its inclusive education intentions more than forty years after the merging of the special and general education acts. Additionally, creating a system that still emphasises additional support needs as a specialisation and competence that is external to the school/general education system means that Norway has, like many other countries, seen an increase in the number of children receiving traditional special education (Markussen et al., 2007).

## **ADAPTED EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Adapted education was intended as a bridge between special education and general education that would ultimately remove the need for the distinction. However, as we have already explained, it has not managed to fulfil that expectation. One factor has been resistance within the special education sector itself, particularly amongst special teachers and other support professionals – perhaps feeling threatened – as they felt that their specialist competences could come under pressure. Various reports have highlighted the ongoing issues. After just ten years, (Dalen, 1985) observed that while mainstream schools had opened up to children with disabilities, the teaching in the schools had not. A similar observation was made in a government white paper published the same year (St. meld. nr. 61

(1984-85), 1985). By the 2000s, it had become apparent that additional support resources were being used somewhat arbitrarily to provide general support in Norwegian, English and mathematics (the three core subjects in compulsory school in Norway), regardless of the reason or underlying cause (Markussen et al., 2007, p. 92). At the same time, additional support resources were being used to free the classroom of troublesome pupils, which was most often executed by diagnosing children (Markussen et al., 2007, p. 97), demonstrating the prevalence of a culture of diagnosis in Norwegian special education. In 2003, a Norwegian Official Report (NOU 2003: 16, 2003) concluded that it was entirely possible to deliver effective education to all groups of students through the existing education act, as intended in the original Integration Act of 1975. The arguments in favour of maintaining a distinction between special and adapted education (within the general education context) would therefore appear to be based on legal, economic and competence/resource-related grounds rather than on pedagogy. In 2009, another Norwegian Official Report (NOU 2009: 18, 2009) took the suggestions from the 2003 NOU further but did not manage to conclusively deliver suggestions on how to fulfil the intentions of the integration law.

Debates on the distinction and division between special education and adapted education thus continue to this day, with a recent report concluding that there is a poorly functioning and exclusionary system of special educational support in Norwegian schools and preschools today (Nordahl et al., 2018). Due to the way in which the support system is organised, the report found that children receiving support experience a lack of community belonging with other children and adolescents. Further, Nordahl et al. (2018) maintained that it takes considerable lengths of time for support mechanisms to come into action and for support to be delivered – with support most likely to occur when a pupil is mid-way through their compulsory school career rather than earlier – clearly in breach of the principles of early intervention that the Norwegian additional support policies and services all aspire to. Accountability regarding this failure is placed on the structure and individual-rights based nature of the current system, with specialists being based far from schools and having to spend excessive amounts of their time on bureaucratic administration tasks rather than utilising their specialist competences in the field. A consequence of this poor use of resources is that children are most likely to have their support delivered by unqualified assistants (Nordahl et al., 2018).

The distinction between general and special education is not limited to government reports, bureaucracy and the education system in Norway; the professional and academic fields are similarly undecided and are a far cry from being functionally integrated (Skogen, 2014, p. 85).

## **ADAPTED EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COHESION**

Adapted education was formulated and conceptualised as a further development of a society whose desire it was to become more equitable through better social cohesion. However, very little longitudinal research has been carried out to assess the effect of adapted education on society. As a consequence, there is no knowledge about the effectiveness of adapted education and, more specifically, whether adaptations and measures brought in through the framework have been effective (Nordahl & Læringscenteret, 2003).

There is some existing research on social relations, teaching methods and organisation types (Bakken, 2010), with results showing that family background, income and education level are directly related to the ability of schools to sort children and, thus, influence social structures. Norway's population is still characterised by class distinctions, despite many attempts at removing them (Bakken, 2010). The inescapable reality is that schools will sort society. The strongest actors will master their positions, and weaker ones will be mastered (Bakke, 2011).

In the 2017-2018 school year, 7.8 percent of the general school population received some form of special education, with 39 percent of these pupils receiving additional support teaching in their ordinary classroom settings (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2018) – an improvement from 2013-2014 when the percentage was 28 percent.

<b>PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS PER YEAR/GRADE</b>											
School year	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	Total
2017/18	3.8	4.4	5.7	7.1	8.2	9.5	9.9	9.6	9.9	10.7	7.9
2016/17	3.7	4.5	5.5	6.9	8.4	9.3	10.0	9.7	10.1	10.8	7.8
2015/16	3.8	4.3	5.5	7.1	8.2	9.4	10.2	10.0	10.3	10.6	7.9
2014/15	3.6	4.3	5.7	6.9	8.4	9.5	10.4	10.2	10.2	11.1	8.0
2013/14	3.8	4.6	5.7	7.2	8.8	9.9	10.5	10.3	10.9	11.2	8.3
2012/13	4.3	4.7	6.0	7.4	9.0	10.0	10.5	11.1	10.9	11.6	8.6
2011/12	4.1	4.8	5.9	7.5	8.9	9.8	10.7	10.9	11.2	11.6	8.6
2010/11	4.2	4.8	5.9	7.2	8.6	9.6	10.1	10.7	10.9	11.5	8.4
2009/10	4.0	4.6	5.5	6.7	8.0	8.9	9.3	9.9	10.5	10.7	7.9
2008/09	3.9	4.3	4.9	6.1	7.2	7.9	8.5	9.3	9.4	10.2	7.2

**TABLE1:** Percentages of pupils receiving special education in Norway (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2018)

## **ONGOING INCLUSION CHALLENGES IN NORWAY**

As mentioned earlier, the broad conceptualisation of adapted education has meant that it is an nebulous concept that has experienced difficulties realising its practical potential. The recent neo-liberalisation of the education system in Norway could be one solution to the problem; however, this approach is not without pitfalls. Neo-liberal policies are intent on creating productive and self-capitalising citizens who can readily contribute to the open marketplace. However, as highlighted by

Stangvik (2014) in the context of New Zealand, there are considerable conflicting and contradictory aspects to this approach. By implementing a neo-liberal curriculum in New Zealand, a distinction is made between the abled and the non-abled. This thus creates a group consisting of people who are disadvantaged and become more excluded from the education system, which is in opposition to the promises of neo-liberal approaches regarding inclusion and goes against the international promotion of inclusion and participation. Neo-liberalisation in Norway has led to a more individual-rights based approach to the delivery of additional support to pupils, with the new approach being blamed for the less effective use of specialist competencies – a direct result of the over-bureaucratisation of the system (Nordahl et al., 2018).

Specifically in the North of Norway, factors relating to ethnicity and cultural grouping are of significance. A historical consequence of the Norwegian system and its intention to reduce the influence of cultural and socioeconomic factors is that certain policies and initiatives have become (or became interpreted as) culturally oppressive – for example, the Norwegianisation of the Sámi. Additionally, moves to create a shared and single Norwegian identity throughout most of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries – while intending to eliminate class divisions and increase equity by creating schools for everyone with a homogeneous identity (Angell, 1998) – also meant that groups that did not conform to the intended standard of the modern Norwegian ideal were marginalised and oppressed (Engen, 2003, p. 82). Early attempts at creating a school system for everyone was, therefore, also characterised by severe suppression and assimilation of minority groups such as the Sámi.

Because of this oppression of the Sámi, instantiated through the enforced education system, the understanding of inclusion is often construed quite differently as being associated with notions and policies pertaining to assimilation and suppression rather than the intended liberal understanding as including everybody (Engen, 2003). This is not unique, since policies brought in by previous oppressors are often treated with suspicion and caution, as for example is seen with disability classification frameworks, such as the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (World Health Organization, 2001), are treated cautiously due to their association with previous highly medicalized systems (Pfeiffer, 2002).

As referenced in next chapter (Keskitalo & Olsen, 2019, in this volume) on the Sámi, where there are further details of how Sámi culture is included in the education system and national curriculum, inclusion for the Sámi people in Norway has now come to mean two things: educational inclusiveness in general as well as cultural inclusiveness.

## CONCLUSION

Norway has historically been a strong proponent of comprehensive schools (Skinningsrud, 2017) and has, as a result, led the world in this area. In addition, the education sector is dominated by the public sector, combining to produce a fairly homogenised and relatively integrated starting point for Norway in terms of responding to international calls for more inclusive schooling. One consequence of this head-start is that Norway has fared relatively well in terms of international rankings of educational and social outcomes. However, recent moves towards more performance-oriented assessments, a result of neo-liberalisation and international performance comparisons (e.g. PISA), have led to the erosion of the core intentions of the 1975 law on integration. Additional dilemmas have also arisen in attempts to create a shared intended outcome (a homogenous Norwegian identity) whilst simultaneously catering to diversity – a particularly acute issue in the North Norwegian context of the Sámi people.

Schools are nevertheless well-versed in the theory of integration, adapted education and inclusion; however, they are unable to practically implement these ideals – likely a result of the simultaneous foci on equal education, individualised education, sorting according to performance and an increase in competition. As a result, difference and exclusion have potentially increased in the course of the last forty years, rather than achieved the opposite intention outlined in 1975. Norwegian education also tends to create the potential for both recognition and integration (Seland, 2013), which perhaps opens up the possibility for more recognition within the context of inclusion; for example, taking an approach that is more open to inclusion as the right to be different (Kristiansen, 2014) would present one possible bridge between previously ostracised groups in Norwegian society – such as the Sámi people. Recently, it was also suggested that in order to achieve the ideal

of adapted education and to deliver a system that achieves equality and equity, there is a need for a schooling policy that does not simply look to change the roles and functions of schools in society, but that also considers which societal and socialising values are central to Norwegian society (Bakke, 2017, p. 162).

How Norway deals with the challenges that the future holds regarding inclusive and special education, such as the ever-increasing multi-cultural nature of its population, will be of utmost importance in order to sustain and potentially improve upon the country's core social values and strong international placing.



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