



Linnæus University

Sweden

Independent Project

Inclusive Education in Sweden

Provisions for children who have Special Educational Needs, with a specific focus on Down's syndrome.



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Title: Inclusive Education in Sweden - *Provisions for children who have Special Educational Needs, with a specific focus on Down's syndrome.*

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Abstract

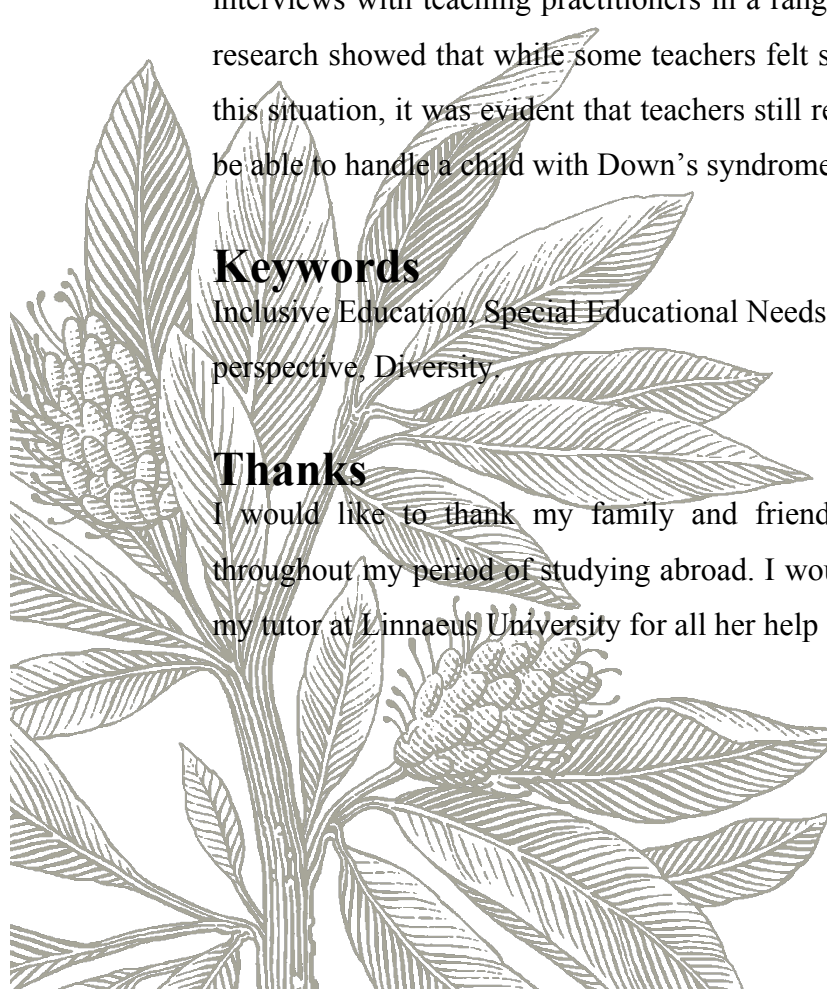
The aim of this paper is to show the level to which teachers within the Swedish mainstream schools feel prepared at the possibility of teaching a child with Down's syndrome in their class. The paper further goes on to look at what teachers feel needs to be done to make this an easier task, as well as hearing some reasons why they feel parents choose a special school. In the background the writer looks at the development of inclusive education and how things have progressed for children with Down's syndrome. Through the use of a qualitative method, the researcher conducted six interviews with teaching practitioners in a range of different schools. The result of this research showed that while some teachers felt slightly prepared if they were faced with this situation, it was evident that teachers still required a lot of training and resources to be able to handle a child with Down's syndrome.

Keywords

Inclusive Education, Special Educational Needs, Down's syndrome, Teacher's perspective, Diversity.

Thanks

I would like to thank my family and friends for their constant love and support throughout my period of studying abroad. I would also like to thank Marina Wernholm my tutor at Linnaeus University for all her help and guidance throughout this project.



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1 Introduction

Sonia Sotomayor (2011) a Judge in the American Supreme courts is quoted for stating that, “until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society.” This statement highlights the dire state of equality not only within our education system, but throughout society as a whole. It is a sad fact that within various education systems all over the world there are groups of children who, through no fault of their own are found to be excluded from the learning process. With education being a fundamental part of society it is therefore imperative that teachers strive to see the idea of inclusive education carried as far as humanly possible if we ever hope to see an equal society.

The writer of this research paper is a student with a passionate viewpoint on equality within education, and holds that all children should be included despite any special needs, or learning difficulties that they may have. Having been given the opportunity to spend a semester abroad it seemed fitting therefore to carry out a research paper highlighting the approach to inclusion taken by the host country. The writer originates from Northern Ireland, a country that in 2007 underwent a revision of its curriculum, bringing the topic of inclusion to the forefront of its educational policies. Within the curriculum document an emphasis is drawn on the importance to provide equal opportunities for all, CCEA (2007, p.03) state that, “schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to give every pupil the opportunity to experience success in learning.” Further to this, the curriculum highlights the role of teachers in that they must, “be aware of the requirements of the equal opportunities legislation and special educational needs and disability order and should have high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs.” Having completed various placements, the writer has gained an in-depth knowledge and

understanding of inclusion within Northern Ireland and wishes to develop a deeper understanding of the practices in other countries.

A further area of interest within the topic of inclusion for the writer concerns the education of children with Down's syndrome, particularly in the mainstream school. The reason behind this is a personal one, as the writer has a relative with Down's syndrome who has thrived socially and academically during his time in a mainstream classroom. An emerging pattern indicates that children with Down's syndrome are typically taught within a specialist school, when they have the same rights as any child to be educated in a mainstream school. With democratic values being a core aspect of the Swedish education system, the freedom to choose the school your child attends is according to Elkhölm and Modigh (2000, p.16) considered to be, "a democratic right." Elkhölm and Modigh (2000) further highlight that often parents will choose a specific type of school because they feel their child's needs will not be met elsewhere. The researcher aims to see what teachers believe the choices are for parents who have children with Down's syndrome, as well as considering how teachers feel about teaching children with Down's syndrome in a mainstream classroom.

1.1 Inclusion as a Human Right -Policy Documents

Inclusion has become a crucial element of policy documents regarding the education of all children within schools. DFES (2001) in the SEN Code of Practice have reminded teachers that they should consider themselves collectively as teachers of children who have special needs. UNESCO (1994, P.4) have stated that, "the fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have." UNESCO further go on to highlight that it is the role of these schools to wholeheartedly meet the needs of each

and every student regardless of their needs, and to ensure that everyone receives the best possible education they can. Highlighting just how important this issue is.

Further policy documents have been written which lay out that education is a human right, and therefore should be delivered equally for all children. Christensen 1996 (as cited in Mitchell 2004) states clearly that to exclude or isolate a student with special needs is to directly deny them a basic human right. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Articles 28 & 29 is one such document that highlights this, and they indefinitely state that is not just specific to children without special needs, it is written for all children and that they should be educated equally. Further to this the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975) in Articles 2 & 6 states that disabled persons shall benefit from all rights without any discrimination. This includes the right to education and an assortment of other services, anything that allows them to develop upon their competencies and talents as far as possible to help them thrive in society. It is evident that all children are entitled to an equal education as stated in the various policy documents and that it is indeed against their human rights to be excluded and segregated.

This research paper will serve as part of a larger study in order to provide the writer with background knowledge on the current provisions for children with special educational needs within Swedish schools, but will make a particular reference to Down's syndrome. The Swedish Curriculum (LGR 11, 2011, p.09) stipulates that, "each and every one working in the school should encourage respect for the intrinsic value of each and every person." This highlights that inclusion should be a vital aspect within the life of a school, and the writer aims to see how Swedish schools hold up to this aspect of the curriculum. Upon completion of this research, the writer will present all

observations made regarding the topic and discuss the results. This paper will then be used at a later date to assist further studies into the area.

2 Background

Armstrong (2011, p.1) highlights that, “Inclusion is one of the most important, yet elusive concepts to emerge internationally in recent years.” Through this section of the research, the writer will explore how inclusive education has evolved and developed over time, as well as looking at the criticisms attached with the subject. Furthermore this section will look into the varying attitudes of schools regarding inclusive education, and will end by looking at what Down’s syndrome is, and how education for children with has developed and progressed over the years.

2.1 Origins and development of inclusion

In today’s society, inclusion is without doubt one of the most talked about aspects of education systems globally. It is important to note however, that it has not always held a position of importance within education. In the past it was not uncommon that if a child did not fit the perceived norms of the system that they ended up either excluded or left to underachieve. During this period there were no specific provisions in place to accommodate their needs. Over time however these attitudes have changed, with one of the earliest moves towards inclusion according to Mitchell (2004) was the, concept of normalisation, which spread throughout Scandinavia during the 1960’s. According to Kumar (2013, p.667) Normalization is the theory that, “calls for providing all the opportunities to all persons with disabilities which are available to a non-disabled person in society.” During this period in Scandinavia there was an in-depth discussion on how people with special needs should be entitled to the same basic rights as those without special needs. Mikkelsen (cited in Kumar 2013) stated that anyone who has any form of special needs must be recognised first and foremost as a human being, and with this in mind should have equal rights like any other citizen. With the implementation of this theory people with special needs and disabilities began to be included within

society as they were finally seen to have exactly the same rights as everyone else. Prior to this Sweden's education was solely reserved for those in the middle and upper classes of society. Berhanu (2011) highlights that in 1842 the allmän folkskola came into effect and during this time special needs education displayed itself as a two track system where both special needs and mainstream education schools were formed. Children with Down's syndrome were at this time excluded from the mainstream and segregated into their own school. However in the 1960's to 1980's the term 'En skola för alla' (A school for all) recognised the importance of inclusion for all students and meeting their individual needs in an integrated environment. From this point on inclusion in Sweden began to increase and improve.

The Warnock Report (1978) can ultimately be seen as a turning point regarding attitudes towards inclusion and Special Educational needs globally. Warnock's report had three overarching aims of independence, enjoyment and understanding. These aims stemmed from Warnock's belief that where possible, children should be educated alongside each other regardless of their educational ability. Warnock recognised that special schools still held a place in the education system as some parents preferred their child to be educated in a specialist setting, and the right of the parent to exercise their choice of school had to be respected. This new wave of inclusion led to vast changes in educational policy already highlighted within the introduction to the paper. It is apparent that inclusive education has developed greatly over the years, and in many ways has had a positive influence within the education system as many attitudes have already been changed regarding the matter. Most of the documentation referenced refers to inclusion on a global level as there is little literature regarding inclusion in Sweden.

2.2 Criticality of inclusive education.

As previously stated, inclusive education is viewed as an essential and vital part of education. However it is also important to consider the criticisms associated with providing inclusive education. The Warnock Report (1978) was indeed influential in changing attitudes towards the subject globally, however in 2005 Warnock published a document calling for a rethink on the matter. In this publication she stated that a rethink on the matter was necessary and many of the points that she published here conflicted and contradicted many areas of her original report. Within this publication Warnock stated that there was increasing evidence which highlighted that inclusion was not working as originally hoped, and that while it was an ideal in society it was important for government bodies to realise that in a school situation, inclusion is not always achievable. Clough and Garner (2003) also believe that current education systems and policies are themselves flawed as many pupils are actually excluded due to the fact that schools are coming to the conclusion that they are unable to cater for all children. Ballard (1999) furthers this by highlighting how parents are continually coming across educators who are not supportive of a child's innate right to be educated in a mainstream school. Armstrong (2011) goes on to highlight that concerning inclusion, many schools are claiming they promote an inclusive environment when in reality this is far from the truth. Many schools are indeed willing to work on creating an inclusive environment, but it seems that they are mostly unaware of the correct way to go about it. If schools are to create a more inclusive environment then they need to be adequately trained and prepared to confidently deliver it. Overall it is clear to see that the concept of inclusion is one that is in a constant state of improvement and development and is never stagnant. Warnock (1978) has described the process as, "springing from hearts in the right places," while it is ultimately a wonderful ideal it is has only been moderately

successful thus far. In many ways the current system can be said to be more about integration or segregation and that full inclusion may be a mere educational ideal.

2.2.1 The Attitude of schools

While research shows that schools tend to show a positive approach to inclusive education, it doesn't always get valued by every school. Glazzard et al (2010) highlights that any reluctance from schools to fully embrace inclusion often stems from the fact that it places pressure on them to increase their performance and their level of accountability. Schools are under a tremendous amount of pressure to meet numerous different standards and as it stands they may not approach inclusion with the level of care and commitment that would usually be required for it to have a greater success. Another issue with inclusive education is that the idea of it can send teachers into a sense of panic as they may not feel prepared to undertake this task. Some teachers will have completed their teacher training at a time when inclusive education was not relevant in the life of the school, and therefore they have not been trained on how to best handle certain situations. This often leads to feelings of insecurity and a lack of confidence. Black-Hawkins et al (2007, p.31) highlights that, "if such feelings such as fear, humiliation, failure, intolerance and anger are ignored then barriers to inclusion and achievement are strengthened." It appears that often schools find it hard to look past the disability and instead look at the person who they would be helping by including them in the life of the school. Stephen Hawking 2011 (cited in Kannabiran 2012) sums it up perfectly by stating that, "disability need not be an obstacle to success," highlighting that children with disabilities have every chance to succeed provided they are included and given a fighting chance. In regards to teaching children with Down's syndrome Dolva (2009) highlights how over time they have become educated in

mainstream schools more and more, and with this there is a need for a deeper knowledge as to how their inclusion in the mainstream can be furthered.

2.3 Medical model of Down's syndrome.

Down's syndrome can be classified according to Lorenz (1998) as, a hereditary condition which comes as a result of an abnormality which takes place during the cell division process. As a result of this children will have an extra copy of chromosome 21, meaning that they will have 47 chromosomes instead of 46. Due to having this extra chromosome, those who have Down's syndrome will experience certain delays in development as they grow up. Lorenz (1998) explains how all children with Down's syndrome will show delay in their development but there is a wide variation in the levels of ability. It is important to remember that each child is unique in their learning ability. Lorenz (1998) further goes on to highlight that short term auditory skills alongside the development of speech are often areas which prohibit their learning, and that children with Down's syndrome are more unlikely to be motivated to use the skills that they actually have acquired. These are all factors which prohibit the learning and education of children with Down's syndrome, and often why they are not educated within the mainstream school. Further to this Buckley and Bird (2002) highlight the fact that all children with Down's syndrome are different and that they have unique profiles which will determine the level of assistance they require. There are varying levels of Down's syndrome as a child can have a mild diagnosis, and is therefore more able to do certain things that a child with a more severe form of Down's syndrome wouldn't be able to achieve at the same time. Teachers need to be aware of the different levels to which their health, social, motor, cognitive, speech and language skills as well as working memory will develop. An awareness of these needs will help teachers to cater for them appropriately.

Milestone	Range for Children with Down Syndrome	Typical Range
GROSS MOTOR		
Sits Alone	6 – 30 Months	5 – 9 Months
Crawls	8 – 22 Months	6 – 12 Months
Stands	1 – 3.25 Years	8 – 17 Months
Walks Alone	1 – 4 Years	9 – 18 Months
LANGUAGE		
First Word	1 – 4 Years	1 – 3 Years
Two-Word Phrases	2 – 7.5 Years	15 – 32 Months
SOCIAL/SELF-HELP		
Responsive Smile	1.5 – 5 Months	1 – 3 Months
Finger Feeds	10 – 24 Months	7 – 14 Months
Drinks From Cup Unassisted	12 – 32 Months	9 – 17 Months
Uses Spoon	13 – 39 Months	12 – 20 Months
Bowel Control	2 – 7 Years	16 – 42 Months
Dresses Self Unassisted	3.5 – 8.5 Years	3.25 – 5 Years

Figure 1.1 – Grid showing the stages of development and the differences between a child with Down’s syndrome and the typical range. (National Down’s syndrome Association 2012)

2.4 How education for children with Down’s syndrome has developed

Prior to the legislation that saw inclusion take the front stage in educational settings children with Down’s syndrome were at a disadvantage when it came to education. Buckley and Bird (2000, P.14) highlight the negativity prior to 1971 when a child with Down’ syndrome was “unable to benefit from education in school.” Ballard (1999) goes on to paint a disturbing picture of just how severely children were excluded from education. He highlights how prior to all the legislative changes such children were segregated from their peers and were grouped together with similar children to be educated together, and were ultimately denied the same educational rights and experiences that children their age were receiving. This exclusion of course brought with it many damaging effects not only to their education, but also deprived them of a better cognitive and social development. Education for children with Down’s syndrome finally in 1971 saw a change according to Buckley and Bird (2000) with the introduction of the Access to Education act which saw the creation of the special

schools where almost all children with Down's syndrome began to attend. They further state that prior to this landmark in educational progression, adults aged 25 and older with Down's syndrome had received virtually no education. Further developments were seen with the 1981 Access to Inclusive Education act which enabled children with Down's syndrome to be educated in the mainstream with their peers, as well as the introduction of the SENCO role in 1993. This role meant that children who were included in the mainstream had access to a professional who would oversee their personal development in the mainstream.

The use of technology in the classroom has also proven to be beneficial to the development of a child with Down's syndrome. Scherer (2012) comments that while nothing can be done to cure a developmental delay in a child with Down's syndrome, there are now a wide range of approaches in place to assist their current development and ultimately prepare them for the future. In recent years, the introduction of the Apple iPad along with its many apps have proved useful in helping develop fine motor and cognitive skills of children with Down's syndrome and other disabilities. A study carried out by Durham County Council showed just how much they impacted such children (see below).

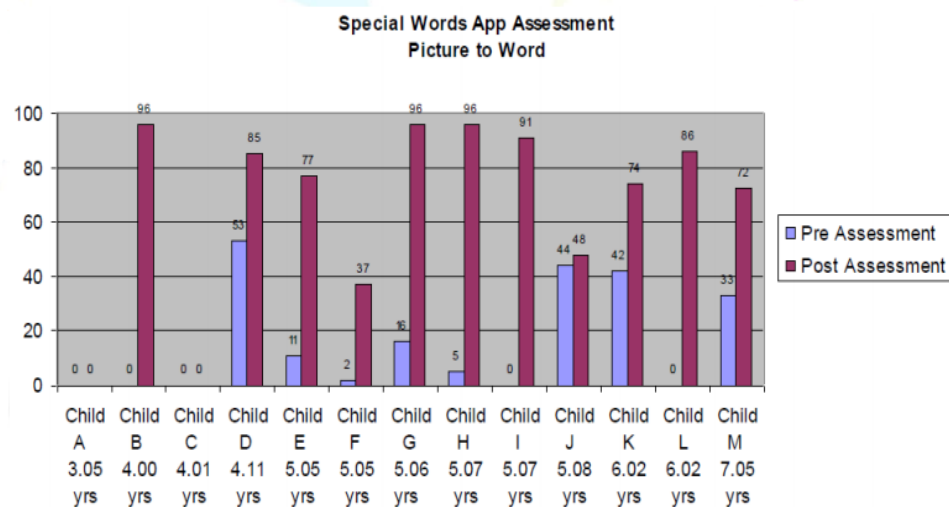


Figure 1.2- Graph showing the progress made by a child through using an iPad app.

(Dean 2014- Durham Ipad Project)

This graph highlights that technology can play a vital role to further a child's development, and therefore is a great asset to the education of a child who has Down's syndrome. Ballard (1994, p.15) holds that the development and achievement obtained by children with Down's syndrome, "is not because they have changed, but rather because our ideas about them are different." Education for these children has come a long way from their previous treatment prior to 1971.

2.5 Parental Involvement

Much of the change in attitudes towards teaching children with Down's syndrome has come as a result of hard work on behalf of their parents advocating on their behalf. Ballard (1999, p.29) in his research states how he found that there was a rising number of parents who were striving to see their child educated within the mainstream alongside children without special needs. He commented that the parents, "wanted their child to receive a schooling as normal as possible." Many parents have fought long and hard to see their child educated alongside peers of their own age so that they grow up making friends who don't have special needs, friends who will be supportive of them and help include them in society. While this is positive Ballard (1999) also mentions that some parents still feel that their child is, "better off in a segregated school environment with their highly differentiated, individual focused teaching and counselling approaches." Parents will always be a child's best advocate in receiving an inclusive education, but it is important to remember that all parents will feel differently about what is best for their child.

2.6 – Theoretical Framework

When writing a research paper it is important to establish a theoretical framework that the research is going to follow. This research paper will be written from a sociocultural perspective as it aims to understand what influences the attitude and behaviour of teachers when teaching a specific group of children with special educational needs. This framework stems from the ideas established by Vygotsky (1978 cited in Kozulin 2003) who believed that looking at problems from this perspective allowed the learner to actively participate in the construction of knowledge, which was usually based around the solving of a problem. The area under exploration in this paper is the feelings and the level of readiness held by teachers towards teaching a child with Down's syndrome within their classroom.

This paper also considers the use of another Vygotskian theory known as the, 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) (Figure 1.3) as this is an important model to consider when looking at inclusive education for children with Down's syndrome. Vygotsky (1978 cited in Gauvain and Cole 1997) in providing this model has enabled educators to understand the internal development of learners. A model like this is essential when working with children with Down's syndrome as it enables their development to be categorised into, things they can do on their own, things they can do with help, and things they can't do.

The Zone of Proximal Development

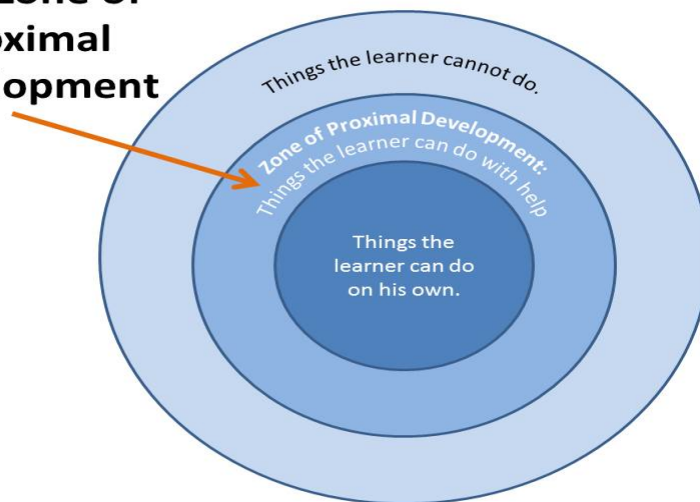
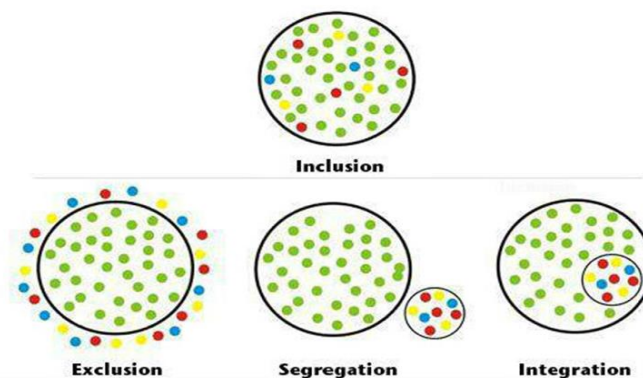


Figure 1.3 – Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) n.d)

<<http://imgarcade.com/1/vygotskys-zone-of-proximal-development/>>

Another model which is important to consider in this research is the model of inclusion. While inclusive education is sought for all children regardless of their needs, there are varying stages (as seen in Figure 1.4). It is important for teachers to be aware of these different levels to know how they treat children with special educational needs.



(Figure 1.4 – Inclusion, Exclusion, Segregation and Integration n.d)

<<http://sportsconflict.org/disability-sport-integration-inclusion/>>

3 Aim

The aim of this study is to gain an insight into how teachers within the mainstream classes feel about teaching children with Down's syndrome, as well as their perceptions about parental choice. Prior to beginning this research project, the writer has recognised the importance of setting out a clear set of research questions to be answered throughout the paper. This is a vital starting point for any research project as emphasised by Jonker and Pennink (2010, p.14) who state that, "the research question establishes the main question, outlining the research objective in a comprehensible way." They further highlight the importance of this in being an, "important starting point for deriving (logical) sub-questions." With this in mind, the research questions that the writer aims to address throughout this paper are as follows;

- How are Swedish teachers within the mainstream school equipped to include children with special educational needs such as Down's syndrome?
- What needs to be done for teachers in the mainstream schools to feel comfortable teaching children with Down's syndrome in their classroom?
- What factors do teachers think influence a parent's decision when it comes to choosing a school for a child with Special Educational needs?

The writer believes that the research questions laid out above will provide a logical progression for the research to follow, as well enabling a variety of sub-questions to form as the research takes place. While these research questions will hopefully enhance and assist with the research it is important to avoid as Brymann (2007, p.14) has coined it, "the dictatorship of the research questions in steering the design and conduct of the enquiry." The research questions are in place to guide the research and should not limit the researcher to using specific methods of data collection, something the writer of this paper hopes to avoid.

4 Methodology

In order to discover how teachers within the mainstream classroom feel about teaching children with Down's syndrome, and finding out what factors they believe influence a parent's choice of school, appropriate methods of data collection were necessary. To make this research possible, a series of interviews with teachers in the mainstream classrooms. This methods was selected in order to gain a deep understanding of the area in question, and to provide the researcher with significant data to write this paper.

The writer interviewed a variety of teachers from different mainstream schools in order to gain a wider range of results regarding the attitude of teachers on the issue of teaching children with Down's syndrome in the mainstream school. With this method chosen it was clear to the writer that the paradigm of this particular study should be an interpretivist approach. The paradigm is categorized by Cohen et al (2011, p.5) as, "a way of looking at or researching phenomena." Therefore choosing an interpretivist approach allows the researcher to understand the particular intricacies of the group under study without disrupting the natural order (Thomas, 2013). Cohen et al. (2011, p.17) further go on to state that the interpretive paradigm is "characterized by a concern for the individual". In regards to this research, the researcher hopes to understand how teachers feel about teaching children with Down's syndrome in the mainstream classroom alongside their peers.

Finally, it is important to note that using such an approach can actually prove to be limiting towards the researcher. Cohen et al. (2011, p.21) state this by arguing that in some cases, interpretivist studies 'have abandoned scientific procedures of verification meaning generalisations of behaviour cannot be discovered'. With the researcher interpreting the data, and in this instance a small amount of data, it will prove difficult to make this research representative of the whole Swedish education system.

4.1 Size and Nature of Sample

In order to obtain clear results on the education of children with Down's syndrome in Sweden the researcher would be required to obtain a significant amount of data. Thomas (2013, p.135) suggests that it is best to gather data from, "a manageable sample, which is representative of a larger population." With this being a small study it was immediately clear that it would be unrealistic to obtain a large number of interviews. As a result six interviews were conducted in a selection of schools. In doing this the researcher should gain some insight into the Swedish education system and will be able to reference this data when completing this study in Northern Ireland on a larger scale. In order to source participants the researcher will send out a letter to schools (see Appendix A) to ask them for their participation in interviews.

4.2 Interview

The writer has decided on using a semi-structured interview when carrying out the data collection regarding teachers' attitudes. Thomas (2013, p.198) highlights that this method is useful in that it offers, "the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary."

The decision to use this method of questioning was due to the fact that it would open the study up, and enable the researcher to go more in-depth during discussion with a practitioner, as other areas could be addressed during this time. The questions used will mostly be open ended questions which according to O'Hara et al (2011, p.18) are useful as they, "do not close down the debate by limiting respondents to a predetermined set of responses." They further stated that, "you need to offer participants the opportunity to

include whatever information they feel is relevant.” Using open ended questions will undoubtedly allow the writer to find out the information required for completing this project, while providing teachers with a forum to add additional information which they feel may benefit the research. Due to the short time frame allocated for this research project, it was therefore the most rational approach in comparison to sending out questionnaires to various teachers. Sending out questionnaires held with it the risk of a low response rate, with the possibility of the language barrier being a factor in this. The researcher of this paper appreciates that the sample size for this project will be of a small scale, and therefore the results cannot possibly be a representative of the education of children with Down’s syndrome in Sweden as a whole. The paper will rather offer an insight into the area, and assist further research into the area.

4.3 Selection and Procedure

When carrying out this research the writer decided to interview teachers from three different schools in order to get a wide range of data. When carrying out the research it was the aim to interview teachers from a large number of different schools in order to get a wider range. This however proved initially difficult as teachers were slow to respond to requests for interview. In some cases teachers did not get back to the writer at all. During the interviews, all of the participants except for one agreed to have the sessions recorded, and this therefore meant the sessions could be transcribed and analysed at a later date. In the one interview where permission was not given the researcher wrote notes during the session and typed it up after. Further to this the researcher took additional notes during all sessions of additional points that were raised in the interviews.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

When conducting a piece of research it is important to consider a variety of factors that may affect how it is carried out. There are a wide range of ethical issues that must be considered before any research is started in order to make sure that the research is viable. Within the Vetenskapsrådet (2011) Good Research Practice document there are four essential ethical ideologies to be addressed during research. The first of these ethical ideologies is the informant requirement which states the importance of the researcher informing the participants about the overall aim and purpose of the study they are aiding. In this study a letter was sent to schools explaining what the study was about. The second principle highlighted is the consent principle which states the rights of the participants to either take part or refrain from being involved in the study. This was again stated within the letter sent out to practitioners. The third requirement concerns the confidentiality of those who agree to participate in the research, and reinforces the importance of keeping all related data about participants confidential. During this study no names were mentioned of schools or teachers in order to ensure the research was ethical. The final ideology considered was the use requirement which refers to how the information collected from the participants can only be kept and used for the purpose of the specific research project. Once used for its specific purpose, said information should be disposed of. Upon the completion of this research, all recorded interviews were deleted from the digital recording device.

This research can be classified as being sensitive education research, as its main focus is looking into the lives of a group of people with special educational needs. In regards to making this an ethical project, Cohen, et al (2011, p.175) remark that the research should, “not add to the disempowerment of already disempowered groups... it is important to actively promote their empowerment or to leave them untouched in the

position in which contact was first made.” Thomas (2013, p.42) highlights that ethical risks may appear as a result from the research, such as; causing psychological or physical harm, and invading the privacy and confidentiality of participants. Throughout the duration of this particular piece of research the researcher has taken these considerations into account and has aimed to keep all aspects of the study as ethical as possible.

4.5 Data analysis

Upon collecting the data needed to complete this paper it is important to choose an appropriate way to analyse the data. With the main method of data collection being interviews, it will firstly be necessary to transcribe all recorded interviews to make the data manageable. When analysing the data a grounded/constant comparative method will be used. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) highlight how analysing data is an organised procedure which involves working through all the information that was obtained. In doing so the researcher should begin to observe trends in the data, and develop a clearer understanding of the area. Kolb (2012, P.83) points out that this theory was developed as a way to refine and categorise data in order to make it manageable and clear. The researcher will work through every transcript highlighting common areas to obtain clear data which will then be refined in the results section.

5 Results

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding as to whether or not teachers in the mainstream schools felt prepared to teach children with Down's syndrome and what teachers felt would be needed to make this easier for them. Another aim of the study was to see what teachers thought the reasons were for parents mainly choosing to send their child with Down's syndrome to a special school.

5.1 How Swedish teachers in the mainstream school are equipped to include children with special educational needs such as Down's syndrome

This first results section shows the result of whether or not teachers within the mainstream feel equipped to teach a child with Down's syndrome. The teachers interviewed came from a variety of schools, and had been teaching for varying lengths of time. The average time spent teaching was seventeen years, with most teachers having taught in around three schools. Before looking at this, it is important to state what ways the school already facilitates for children with Special Educational needs.

5.1.1 How teachers already cater for a diverse range of abilities.

The practitioners interviewed demonstrated through their responses an awareness of how to cater for a wide variety of levels within their classroom. Many of the teachers stated how they would differentiate the work in class so that the level matched that of the individual child,

As you have noticed there is a wide range of abilities within my classroom so the work is differentiated to accommodate them. For example when reading texts there are two versions available to the students, a simpler version and a more advanced one.

Teachers also made reference to various learning supports in place within the school's to cater for children who may have special needs, or children who come to Sweden and Swedish is not their first language,

Right now in our school we have a programme called Däcket where the children who have a hard time will go to for extra help. When they go up there they have a special schedule which will aim at meeting the needs of their individual learning.

When asked about the different school policies on the issue, most teachers were unable to refer to a specific piece of documentation, but stated how their schools were dedicated to making sure that each child felt included in their education,

The aim of this school is to give all children the best education they can. However when it comes to inclusive education it can often be a question of money and resources that really impacts how the school carries this out.

5.1.2 – How teachers feel about teaching a child with Down's syndrome

When processing these results a clear pattern was evident to the researcher, out of the six practitioners interviewed half of them stated that they were not equipped for this role. The reasons given for this mainly fell down to practitioners feeling that their education had not prepared them for this. While some teachers saw this as an interesting challenge that they would give their all, others felt that they would not be able to do a sufficient job in this area.

None of the practitioners interviewed had ever had the experience in working with a child with Down's syndrome, but some were aware of practices in place with these children in previous schools they had taught in. One of the practitioners interviewed felt

very uncomfortable at the idea and stated that they disagreed with the principle of inclusion and claimed that children with Down's syndrome or any other special needs,

Are sad when they are surrounded by children who don't have any difficulties/disabilities because they know they can never be like these children.

This view was however only held by one of the practitioners interviewed, the other practitioners interviewed believed that inclusion was a great approach to education and would like to receive further training to better prepare them for all eventualities. Teachers also stated that it would depend on the severity of the individual child's diagnosis,

It would depend on that child and how severe their Down's syndrome was. I recognise that some children with Down's syndrome will be low functioning and require more work while others are higher functioning and will need less help.

5.2 What teachers need to feel comfortable when teaching children with Down's syndrome in their classroom

This results section focuses on the comments made by teaching practitioners regarding what extra requirements they would need to facilitate a child with Down's syndrome. When processing these results it was apparent that teachers required a variety of extra resources.

5.2.1 Extra Training

Practitioners highlighted that an essential element to becoming at ease with the prospect of teaching a child with Down's syndrome in the mainstream would be to receive adequate training. The trend observed during these interviews was that several teachers were uneducated in how to do so. One teacher commented that,

I don't have the appropriate education to teach them, I don't think it would be something I could personally do.

Many of these teachers qualified at a time when the idea of inclusive education was either unheard of, or in the early stages of development. It was therefore not surprising that many felt unprepared for this scenario. While all teachers highlighted the importance of this, at least two teachers stated that due to having worked with a variety of children with special needs and disabilities in the past that they felt prepared for this scenario,

In this school I personally would feel very equipped to do this because I work with so many children with special needs that it wouldn't be difficult for me to adapt my teaching and plan activities that help them and include them in the process.

5.2.2 Teaching Assistants

The provision of extra staff/teaching assistants in the classroom was another of the popular suggestions made by interview participants,

An extra teacher would be a must, I don't think there would be any other way around it really. It would probably be good to have a smaller sized class in this scenario also.

They felt that this would be an important factor in making the inclusion of children with Down's syndrome successful within the mainstream class. Alongside this it was suggested that class sizes would need to be smaller in order for teachers to give more attention to all the children equally. The current class sizes would prohibit this kind of support.

5.3- Teachers opinions on the parental decision regarding schooling

The results in this section are purely speculative as they are the opinions held by the practitioner's interviewed on the issues, and are not statements provided by parents.

5.3.1 – Quality of Education

Teaching practitioners within the mainstream collectively seemed to agree that a possible reason for parents to avoid sending a child with Down's syndrome to their institutions was to do with the quality of the education they would receive. Teachers were under the impression that because a teacher within the special school has trained this specific environment that parents will see them as better trained, and able to meet the specific needs of their child.

The teachers who work at these special schools have better equipment, better education, and a better understanding of the situation. These teachers may be specifically trained and can give each child the attention and level of education they need. I think this is a big draw for parents.

The suggestion of more individual work alongside a teacher was also suggested as a big draw to parents.

5.3.2 – Social Problems

Another point that teachers raised was the facts that parents will want to protect their child from being bullied because they are different, and this is less likely to happen if their child is surrounded with other children with similar special needs to them,

I think that parents may send their child to a specialist school in the fear that their child will be bullied because they are different.

All teachers understood that a parent will do whatever it takes to make their child safe, and in many cases parents will not even stop to consider the possible social benefits of having a child with Down' syndrome taught within the mainstream classroom,

I think parents recognise that pupils with the likes of Down's syndrome will disappear in a mainstream classroom as the classes are much bigger and therefore they don't receive the correct amount of attention. The parents obviously care for their children, I think that if a parent cares for their child they will send them to a special school.

6 Discussion

The discussion for this paper will begin with an analysis of the method chosen to obtain the collected data. Following this will be a discussion regarding the data obtained for each of the research questions set out at the beginning of the paper. The discussion will end with a summary of the results as well as suggestions for further research.

6.1 Method discussion

During the early stages of this research project the writer decided to use two methods of data collection, interviews and a focus group. It was disappointing that due to lack of response that the focus group element had to be removed as a method of data collection. The reason behind this initial choice was highlighted by Liamputtong (2011, p.02) who stated that through this method a researcher can obtain data from a wide range of people and fast. Liamputtong (2011, p.04) further highlights that by using a focus group, it allows the researcher to, “capture shared lived experiences, accessing elements that other methods may not be able to reach. [It] permits researchers to uncover aspects of understanding that often remain hidden in the more conventional in-depth interviewing method.” The writer still holds that this would have been a successful method and would have provided significant data from parents regarding their child’s education. As a result of having to remove this method, one of the research questions set out in the paper had to be directed towards teaching practitioners instead. The writer believes that if there was a longer time frame available in writing this paper that there may have been a greater chance at securing a focus group, and essential data would have been collected. However seeing that this is a pilot study, the writer intends to use this method when carrying out this research on a larger scale in his home country.

The only method that was therefore used in this paper was the use of interviews as a means of collecting data. This method presented some issues initially as the writer found it difficult to secure interviews with teachers. Thankfully enough practitioners agreed to participate, and in the end sufficient data was collected. Cohen et al (2011, p.409) states that interviews are a useful method because the views expressed are, “on a topic of mutual interest,” and this, “emphasizes the social situation of the research data.” This proved to be true, as the teachers interviewed all expressed an interest in the topic and wanted to discuss it further after the interviews. Using this method was worthwhile as it allowed the writer to hear from teacher’s first-hand about their thoughts on the subject, rather than reading something they wrote on a questionnaire. In the writers point of view it is possible for a recipient of a questionnaire to write what the researcher wants to hear instead of what they really feel. Interviews tend to put the participant on the spot, and generally they respond truthfully what they think and feel on the subject. The writer feels that sufficient data was collected from using this method, but feels that the data would have been better if more time was available to interview more teachers. Another limitation of this approach was the fact that some of the practitioners interviewed often struggled to express themselves in English, and this possibly affected the quality of their responses.

6.2 How Swedish teachers in the mainstream school are equipped to include children with special educational needs such as Down’s syndrome

The results to this research question were initially surprising as all the teachers interviewed collectively had taught for numerous years, and in a range of different schools and yet none of whom had ever had the chance to teach a child with Down’s syndrome, nor even experienced them in a mainstream environment.

The practitioners interviewed commented that the schools were equipped to educate children with a vast range of special educational needs or disabilities. Many schools had special units, educational psychologists at hand, and teachers who made a clear effort to differentiate the learning in lessons to ensure all children were included in the learning. However from what the teachers said it is clear that the type of education being delivered is not always inclusive education. As previously stated in the introduction to this paper, UNESCO (1994, P.4) claim that, “the fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have.” When examining the data it appears that regarding inclusion, teachers are providing more of an integrated approach to education (See Figure 1.4) rather than full inclusion. When a school sends a child with special educational needs to a special unit for all their lessons then they are in many ways going against what it means to be an inclusive school. Some would go as far as to say that they are being segregated within the mainstream, yet the fact that they are being educated within the mainstream would suggest otherwise. Of course as teachers have rightly pointed out during interviews, these students will mix with their peers during break and lunch as well as many of the more creative and physical subjects, and therefore they are integrated into the life of the school as they are included alongside their peers in certain aspects of school life.

On a more individual level however only half of the teachers interviewed stated that they felt equipped and prepared if a child with Down’s syndrome were to enter their class tomorrow. These teachers felt that having worked with children with special educational needs previously, it would make it easier for them to adapt their methods of teaching to include a child with Down’s syndrome. Mention was also made regarding having access to extra help, extra technology, and extra learning resources which would

aid their teaching, and again made them feel prepared in this scenario. These practitioners also mentioned that it would not be without its challenges but nevertheless they were willing to give it their all. This is a great attitude and one that the writer believes should be held by all teachers in the aim of including every child regardless of their special educational needs.

Two of the teachers interviewed further pointed out that a lot had to do with the severity of the child's Down's syndrome when considering how prepared they were. Some children will have what is known as mild Down's syndrome and will therefore as a result be higher functioning. In reference to Vygotsky's (1978) theory on the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) children who are higher functioning will have more areas where they can do things on their own, and some areas where they will require assistance. In comparison children who have a more severe diagnosis will have a wider range of areas that require more attention and assistance due to their delayed development. It appears that teachers would feel more equipped in dealing with a child with a mild version of Down's syndrome rather than a child with a more severe diagnosis.

The other half of practitioners interviewed stated that they were in no way equipped to take on the role of educating a child with Down's syndrome. These practitioners commented how their own education had not prepared them for this role, and therefore they would feel uncomfortable undertaking such an important role and in doing so deny the child of a full education. These results back up the previous research in the area, and as Black-Hawkins (2007) mentioned, if nothing is done to address the feelings of fear and anxiety that many teachers hold regarding the teaching of children with the likes of Down's syndrome, then it will only continue to increase the barriers to inclusion.

Dessent (1987) believes that all teachers should have the mind-set that they are all teachers of children who have special educational needs, and thus hopefully diminishing the levels of anxiety held. The results for this area are a fifty-fifty split, some teachers feel that their training has prepared them for this scenario and that the school has adequate resources, while others feel under prepared and under resourced.

6.3 What teachers need to feel comfortable when teaching children with Down's syndrome in their classroom

After gaining an insight into how prepared teachers felt in this particular scenario, the writer felt that it would be a logical idea to see what else could be done for teachers to be more at ease with the idea of teaching a child with Down's syndrome. As stated within the results, teachers felt that smaller classes and extra help from either a classroom assistant or another teacher would be beneficial. It is clear that teachers have a full understanding of how they could better handle a situation like this, but of course many recognised the issues attached to this such as funding, and issues with having to restructure the layout of classes throughout the school. Having an extra teaching professional within the classroom is of course an excellent way of helping a child with Down's syndrome to complete their education within the mainstream. If a school can have a specific member of staff to help this pupil then the class teacher can deliver the learning as usual, and the extra staff can work on a one-to-one basis with the child to ensure they understand or explain in simpler terms what they need to do. One way schools can ensure success for children with special educational needs is through the appointment of a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). It is the job of a SENCO to ensure that the school makes adequate provisions daily for children with Special Educational Needs, offering support and advice to teaching staff to ensure that a high quality of education is delivered to these pupils. Teachers also claimed that more

training would be needed to improve the way they would handle this kind of situation, and a SENCO is very person who could train staff with ways to handle children with Down's syndrome in their class. It would be unfair to tell a teacher they were going to have to teach a child with a specific set of educational needs and expect them to just adapt instantly. Teaching is a career in which the practitioner is constantly learning new approaches and therefore it is important that all teachers be made aware of how they can cater for children with special needs. If teachers are provided with the appropriate training then chances are they will feel more at ease if they are come into a situation where they have to teach a child with Down's syndrome.

6.4- Teachers opinions on the parental decision regarding schooling

In the results section the writer stated that the data retrieved for this question was purely speculative due to not being able to set up actual sessions with parents. Teachers who were interviewed however appeared to have a fair insight into the reasons behind parental choice. It was suggested that parents may opt for a special school as they feel their child will receive a better quality education there. It is easy to see why this may be perceived to be the case seeing as how the members of staff are specifically trained how to work with children with special needs. Since these teachers have adequate training then they will recognise the needs of individual children and will be more tuned in as to how to respond appropriately. There are also more opportunities for staff to work with their children on a one-to-one level where the learning will be tailored exactly to every child's needs. It is understandable that this may not be the same approach in a mainstream school, as teachers rightly pointed out they have specialist units, and often other members of staff who will take the child out to work with them. Layton (2005) highlights that one of the many problems with having extra staff and units is that it promotes a culture of passiveness amongst staff. Instead of all teachers being concerned

with the education of all children in their class they can pass the child off to someone else or recommend them to a unit where they are out of sight and out of mind. This attitude contradicts that of the inclusive school and in this case it would be understandable why parents would choose a special school for their child.

Another possible reason for this choice was also suggested to be related to social issues that the child may come across in a mainstream school. Teachers stated that parents always want what is best for their child and will want to protect them from being bullied due to their differences. While the writer understands this point of view, it is also important to consider the many social benefits that can emerge from being educated within the mainstream classroom. Children with Down's syndrome can benefit socially as they are included by other children, and in many ways it can help the development of their language and behaviour as they observe and mirror what other children their age do. The mainstream classroom can provide many useful ways to help children develop, but of course it is understandable that parents will seek to do what they feel is best for their child.

6.5- Conclusion

Having carried out the research and collected the results the writer feels that it is evident that inclusive education within Swedish schools still has a long way to come. While some teachers felt equipped and prepared to teach children with Down's syndrome within the mainstream, training and appropriate resources need to be made available to all teachers in order to create a more inclusive environment. Results showed that teachers felt parents sent their children to specialist schools based on them being able to receive more specialised teaching in a safer environment. While all children have the

rights to be educated in a mainstream environment, it is fair to say that progress needs to be made for parents to send their child to a mainstream school.

In the future further research could be done in this area to focus on parental views and involvement in their child's education. The writer would have been keen to research this area alongside the current research if time had permitted, as it would have provided interesting data on the education of children with Down's syndrome.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Letter to teachers asking for involvement



Gareth Leddy
Arrheniusgatan 20
Kalmar, Sweden
392 38

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Gareth Leddy and I am an international student at Linnaeus University in Kalmar. In the coming weeks I will be conducting a research project, and for this I have decided to look at, inclusive education within the Swedish compulsory school for children with Special Educational Needs, giving a particular reference to Down's syndrome. I hope to consider current educational practices and from this gain a better understanding of what provision is already available and what possible improvements could be made if needed.

In order for me to study this in depth I would like to gather some information from schools about their current policies regarding the admission of children with Down's syndrome into the mainstream environment, as well as looking at current approaches to dealing with children with Down's syndrome. I would very much like to meet with you and ask you some questions in a semi-formal interview

In regulation with the guidelines provided by the University I assure you that any information provided to me will be treated with confidentiality and that the school's name along with any children or staff will not be mentioned within the research write up. As my research deadline is 19/5/2015 I would greatly appreciate if you could contact me as soon as possible, but I understand if you would not like to participate.

Sincerely,
Gareth Leddy

Appendix B – Interview Questions

- 1- How long have you worked as a teacher?
- 2- How do you cater for a diverse range of abilities within your classroom?
- 3- What is the school's policy on inclusive education?
- 4- What do you think about the idea of inclusion in the life of the school?
- 5- How does the school cater for children who have severe learning difficulties?
- 6- Have you ever had to teach a child within your time in the mainstream classroom who has Down's syndrome, if so how did you find this experience?
- 7- In what ways would you be equipped to teach a child with Down's syndrome in the mainstream class alongside peers of their own age?
- 8- What extra requirements would you need in order to feel more at ease in doing this? How could the school prepare you better in this scenario?
- 9- Why do you think parents of a child with Down's syndrome may tend to send their child to a specialist school instead of a mainstream class, when they have the same rights to be educated together with their peers?