

How Pedagogues Support Inclusion in Denmark: Experiences, Barriers, and Recommendations

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Abstract

Danish school reform around inclusive practices became more prevalent in 2014, and efforts to address the needs of children with disabilities increased. One of the primary ways to meet students' needs in an inclusive setting was to move pedagogues out of their traditionally after-school social settings into the general education classroom to co-teach with content teachers. This qualitative study followed groups of pedagogues and classroom teachers in Denmark for two years, using interviews and observations to ascertain the challenges and successes of co-teaching between pedagogues and teachers. The results mirror in many ways the current research on co-teaching in other countries and with other collaborating professionals. The challenges, barriers, and successes experienced by pedagogues and teachers who were expected to co-teach due to Danish school reform on inclusion are shared. Recommendations build on existing literature and address the unique role that Danish pedagogues can play in moving inclusive practices forward and how their experiences can be applied to co-teachers in other countries and settings.

Keywords: Inclusion, Co-Teaching, Denmark, Pedagogues, Collaboration, School Reform

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Positioning Inclusive Efforts in Denmark

Danish research has long emphasized the importance of children's self-understanding and feeling of belongingness in schools (Poulsen, 2018). The participation conditions that are created by educators in schools have a significant impact on students' experiences of being able to do something or not, of feeling empowered or helpless. Naturally, for students who experience complex learning, behavioral or social needs, those experiences can be exceptionally challenging. The various types of participation structures available to students can influence their actions and, in turn, those of the educators.

Inclusive education is an international goal, as established by the UNESCO Salamanca Agreement in 1994. To be more inclusive in a school setting implies that an increasing number of students with learning, behavioral, emotional, physical, and other needs are having those needs met successfully in a general education environment and context, with a variety of embedded supports. While most schools historically state that they embrace an inclusive philosophy, in 2012 it became a political requirement in Denmark that 93% of all pupils who had previously received their education in special schools now be included in general education schools (Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling, 2012). Two years later, in 2014, this became part of the Danish school reform. While well-meaning, many educators expressed a feeling of powerlessness in the face of this increasing diverse student population and the consequent complexity in the tasks needed to truly include them (Mardahl-Hansen, 2018).

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What is Inclusive Practice?

Inclusion is particularly linked to the work with, and collaboration around, students' participation in opportunities in their various learning communities, as well as to their access to learning (Stanek, 2012). Inclusion relates to students' access, involvement, contribution, and influence, pointing to the significant fact that educators need to create meaningful frameworks under which students can engage and take part in the various learning communities that arise through teaching. Inclusion is also defined as work with the student communities' way of functioning, wherein the students' various contributions are met in dignified ways (Poulsen, 2018) and wherein they can develop a positive self-image. To make these connections, educators must collaboratively direct attention to students' diverse learning processes and offer differentiated activities that are adapted and accommodated to the individual student (Murawski & Dieker, 2021).

Danish researchers overwhelmingly embrace a social practice theoretical perspective, believing that learning takes place via participation in social learning communities. Thus, to be successful in inclusive efforts in Denmark, attention needs to be provided to the social interactions among students. This effort is often overseen by teachers, but is seen as the primary area of work for professionals known as pedagogues. Teachers and pedagogues are two of the main professionals who collaborate on children's learning, wellbeing, and inclusion in Danish schools, especially in primary education.

Clarifying the Role of the Danish Pedagogue

Pedagogues are individuals with typically three and a half years of higher education, as compared to Danish teachers who have four years. Historically, pedagogues focused primarily on students' social relationships and communities, such as learning through play, leisure time activities, children's development, and overall wellbeing. In the past, much of the work of pedagogues was conducted after the typical academic school day. Due to the 2014 mandate (Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling, 2014) however, many schools transitioned pedagogues into the academic arena, with the goal of supporting students' social-emotional learning and participation in academic learning throughout the day. Pedagogues are now expected to contribute to teaching lessons with a variety of playful learning activities that involve movement, recognizing that movement enhances learning (Frødj et al., 2023). In fact, many of these individuals formerly known as "leisure pedagogues" are now called "school pedagogues" or even "inclusion pedagogues" as their primary areas have moved into the school day.

Research has emphasized that the work of pedagogues contributes to the school day going well for many children (EVA (Denmark's Evaluation Institute), 2017; Højholdt et

al., 2012; Højholt et al., 2014). These adults help students participate in lessons, provide them practical and emotional support, help them regulate their emotions, teach them how to handle their conflicts, and even educate them on how to create good relationships with one another. Pedagogues often help students maintain attention on the lesson; they support students in terms of their inclusion and readiness to learn.

While Danish research has indicated that pedagogues can contribute to the process of inclusion, and that teachers benefit from the pedagogues' knowledge of the students (Gulløv, 2022; Højholdt et al., 2012), much work still has to be done. Additional research demonstrates that teachers and pedagogues struggle to collaborate, often delimiting the academic area of professional learning as the sole domain of the teacher (EVA, 2017), while the social well-being of the students is distributed to the pedagogue to oversee (EVA, 2017; Gulløv, 2017). This difficulty with finding parity in a shared classroom mirrors that of general and special education co-teachers often found in the literature (e.g., Karten & Murawski, 2021), wherein one educator relegates the other to a lesser role despite both having substantive areas of expertise.

Based on this relatively new transition of pedagogues into the general education class and the evident struggle between pedagogues and teachers to seamlessly integrate their skills, this research study was designed to delve deeper into these relationships and their impact. Three questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers and pedagogues collaborate/co-teach and include their students in learning the curriculum?
2. What are the possibilities and the positive outcomes of their collaboration?
3. What are the barriers and the dilemmas in their collaboration and, if they exist, how do they or can they overcome these barriers?

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was based on a version of social practice theory, which supports an understanding that pedagogues and teachers collaborate and relate actively and reflectively based on the dialectical relationship between the pedagogue's/teacher's knowledge, language, reason making, actions, and identity and their working conditions (Edwards et al., 2009; Lave, 2019; Mørck, 2006). This implies that knowledge about the pedagogues' contribution and participation in inclusive education and their collaboration with classroom teachers must be investigated as decentralized through the pedagogues' first-person perspectives. According to Mørck (2006) and Lave (2019), a decentralized analysis is built

Table 1
 Participants' Demographic Information

School	Pseudonym	Role	Grade	Years of Experience	Partner
A – Inner City	Isabella	Pedagogue	2 nd grade	11	Helene
	Birgitte	Pedagogue	0 grade -3 rd grade	12	Helene
	Helene	Danish teacher	0 & 2 nd	15	Isabella & Birgitte
B – Socioeconomically Affluent	Sarah	Pedagogue	0 grade	5	Mia
	Mia	0 grade teacher	0 grade	15	Sarah
	Sabina	Pedagogue	2 nd grade	23	Clara
	Clara	Danish teacher	2 nd grade	23	Sabina
C – Socially disadvantaged	Mette	Pedagogue	0 grade	15	Louise
	Louise	Teacher	0 grade	12	Mette
	Mira	Pedagogue	2 nd grade	12	Malene
	Malene	Danish teacher	2 nd grade	12	Mira

into the social practice theoretical concept of participation as part of the dialectical interaction between the pedagogues and their practice structures. By decentering the analysis of the meaning of conditions, the participants' reasons for acting as they do come into focus.

This version of social practice theory aims to generalize first-person perspectives and includes an analytical focus on the importance of conditions for pedagogues' participation in their work with students and in collaboration with teachers. In other words, it is a methodological approach, based on a condition, meaning and justification analysis, which points to how conditions, knowledge, and professional identity interact and become important for the pedagogues' reasons for acting within the inclusive environment (Mørck, 2006).

Thus, it was critical to examine the participation of pedagogues as it subjectively appeared from a pedagogue's perspective. It required an analysis of the pedagogues' changing conditions in the field, the tension created as they moved from "leisure pedagogue" to "school pedagogue", and their positioning as important for the inclusion of students with exceptional needs. Analytically speaking, it was not the separate conditions that were of investigative interest, but rather how these conditions had an impact on the pedagogues' participation in and across contexts in the school, as well as how they collaborated with teachers (if at all) on opportunities to expand their joint agency in working with all students.

Setting and Participants

Three Danish elementary schools, all with reputations as "good schools," from various demographics were approached for participation in the study. "Good schools" were simply defined as schools with a strong reputation among parents and in the general society as having solid

academic achievement outcomes. Researchers did not investigate these schools' academic placement on the Ministry of Education evaluations. One school (School A) was an inner-city school, another (School B) was in a socioeconomically affluent neighborhood, and the third school (School C) was in a socially disadvantaged residential area. The goal of including various types of schools was to capture as much complexity and options for the various arrangements of pedagogues' practice as possible. The aim was not to conduct a comparative study between the three schools, but rather to investigate how the participation of pedagogues unfolded in various school policy structures, all with the same Danish mandate of increasing inclusive practices.

At each school, two pedagogues and their respective collaborating teachers were invited, and subsequently accepted, to participate in the research study. Thus, the study included six pedagogues as the primary individuals of focus, and five teachers as the secondary subjects. One of the teachers collaborated with two pedagogues at her school, both of whom participated in the study, thereby accounting for the difference in numbers.

All of the participating teachers and pedagogues supported students from grade 0 (kindergarten) to grade 3 throughout the day. Specifically, two pedagogues and two teachers worked with students in grade 0. The other two pedagogues and their partnering teachers worked with second graders. For the Danish teacher who collaborated with two pedagogues, one pedagogue supported students at the second-grade level, while the other worked at a resource center offering extra help to students in need from kindergarten through third grade. All pedagogues and teachers were female, Danish, and all had more than five years of experience in education. Table 1 displays the demographic information for all participants.

Clearly, none of the participants were new to education. What was new for all of them, however, was the Danish law established in 2014 requiring that they now collaborate with one another on students' inclusion in the academic curriculum, whereas they historically only collaborated on pupils' participation, social inclusion, and wellbeing in the school.

Research Design

In an effort to capture pedagogues' participation via a first-person perspective, a qualitative design was selected. Specifically, the research design called for an analysis of a combination of field notes of observations and interview responses. The researcher used a methodological combination of qualitative research interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) and the anthropological research method called participant observation (Hasse, 2000).

The research study was conducted from September 2015 to January 2018, spanning just over two years. During this time, the researcher visited each of the three schools two to three times a year for a period of one to two weeks at a time. Prior to the start of the project, participants were informed of the purpose of the project, as well as how the researcher would and would not participate in the daily activities. For example, they were informed that the researcher would shadow them throughout the day, asking questions of their practices and choice-making, but would not do any educational practice or teaching in situations where extra hands were needed. During visits, the researcher "shadowed" the pedagogue, taking field notes and making observations of their practice. Specifically, she sought to answer the questions: What do pedagogues do during the day? Where do they go? What kind of problems do they address with students and with colleagues? Which students do they primarily work with and in what capacity? With whom do they collaborate and what does that collaboration look like? How do they help students when students need support in the typical classroom and outside of it? How is the work inclusive, if at all?

The researcher observed how each pedagogue participated in work with students in and across the contexts of the school day, to include in-class activities, recess time, preparation times, pedagogical meetings, and formal and informal interactions between pedagogue and teacher. Copious field notes were documented by the researcher throughout each visit, documenting actions taken, conversational topics, interactions between adults and interactions with students, and so on. The researcher also observed classes where she was able to spend more time and look more closely at how pedagogues and teachers were interacting with each other and the students. Five observations were made of meetings between pedagogical teams and four observations were made of structured meetings between pedagogues and teachers. During the

observations of meetings and of pedagogical worktime, field notes were taken and later analyzed, coded, and categorized into themes. The researcher sought to determine what appeared most important to pedagogues based on how they prioritized their work with pupils and their cooperation with teachers across various contexts of the school day.

During school visits, the researcher also conducted interviews with pedagogues and teachers individually. Each pedagogue was interviewed twice over the period of the study, while teachers were each interviewed once. Teachers and pedagogues were informed about the purpose of the project, i.e., how the pedagogues participated in various contexts. Teachers were told that they would be interviewed with the aim of better understanding the teacher-pedagogue collaboration and thus gaining a deeper insight into the work of the pedagogues. While the primary goal of the research was to glean the pedagogues' in-depth perspective into their actions in inclusive settings and reasons for those actions (Lave, 2019; Mørck, 2006), the collaborating teachers' perspectives constituted a secondary supplement to this understanding.

Data Analysis

As the primary researcher, the first author was the one who shadowed the pedagogues and conducted both observations and interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and based on the research questions. Both interview and observational field notes were taken in narrative form and then subsequently coded and categorized. Categorization initially followed the themes of the research questions: (1) The pedagogue's contribution to collaboration on inclusive practices, including tasks with which they collaborated with teachers, (2) The possibilities for, and potential positive outcomes of, collaboration on inclusion in the curriculum, (3) Potential barriers to collaborating around inclusion in the curriculum, and (4) The challenges and dilemmas that arise between pedagogues and teachers concerning collaborative practices when implementing inclusion in the classroom.

Once data were coded and categorized, the researcher looked for both common traits and individual specific traits. Common traits were identified when multiple pedagogues reported or experienced the same conditions, possibilities, and barriers. Individual specific traits were identified when pedagogues reported different experiences of collaboration. From these results, the researcher structured the findings and then generalized them. From a social practice research perspective, generalization relates to validity and relevance, and the analysis approach is based on possible generalization from individual cases (Mørck, 2006).

The assumption behind the generalization is that an analysis of possibilities and barriers in participation can

extend beyond the specific context or pedagogues/teachers involved (Lave, 2019). There are thus both special and general aspects of typical possibility spaces (Mørck & Nissen, 2005) in the context of every pedagogue/teacher collaboration. The generalization in relation to the pedagogues' contribution and collaboration with the teachers on inclusion, as well as the possibilities and barriers in their work and collaboration, is linked to how the problems manifest themselves for the pedagogues.

RESULTS

Results fell into two primary categories: actions and statements that led to positive outcomes and possibilities, and those that were focused more on barriers or negative outcomes. Examples and quotes are provided here to highlight each of these areas. Results led to the discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations.

Collaboration, Possibilities, and Positive Outcomes

One example truly highlighted the opportunities that exist for the position of inclusion pedagogue. Those opportunities arose when pedagogues and teachers taught together, agreed in advance what would happen in the lesson, carried out the teaching together, alternated between the activities, included play and movement in the work with subject didactic goals, and then evaluated together in class. This example was demonstrated most clearly in the collaboration between Mette, and her collaborative teacher, Louise, kindergarten teachers (grade 0) from School C. These two were clearly able to co-teach and use a variety of co-teaching strategies during their interactions (Murawski, 2010).

Louise and Mette together focused on arranging teaching activities in ways that ensured flexible and varying participation opportunities for their students. As a starting point, they acknowledged the unique knowledge and practical skills of their various professions (teacher and pedagogue) and then they expanded their joint tasks to go in the direction where they could collaborate on the students' learning, specifically linking to learning goals in the subjects.

During interviews, Mette and Louise shared that they participated in a professional development course together that was specifically aimed at gaining knowledge about good methods for collaboration in relation to subject didactics. Mette and Louise experienced that, through this shared training course, they had an expanded opportunity to collaborate on common matters that dealt with the children's learning and participation through different teaching strategies, as well as on the development of common strategies for learning management and feedback. By analyzing practice from Mette and Louise's perspectives, one can see how educational courses and development

projects that are arranged towards the common goals, as opposed to being aimed at teachers or pedagogues alone, gain significance for how they jointly expand collaboration with each other.

As the teacher of record, Louise recognized that she had the didactic responsibility in relation to achieving the academic objectives the students must learn during the school year. At the same time, she stated it was important for her in the collaboration with Mette to organize didactic frameworks under which the students had varying opportunities for participation, as well as to include activities where the pedagogue could contribute with her leisure educational practice skills. For example, Louise shared how she and Mette collaborated on a learning theme about hedgehogs:

I taught the children some facts about [hedgehogs] and looked in some different books. [With Mette], we went to the forest and tried to see where the hedgehog lives, to sense the forest and the smell there. Mette then set the children to work creating some hedgehog pictures, which were exhibited, and the parents were invited to come and see them. The children also prepared some small specialist books themselves with facts and pictures of hedgehogs. (Louise, teacher)

Louise emphasized how the learning theme about hedgehogs constituted an overlapping goal, whereby each of them were able to contribute differently to the joint work from their positions. The teacher taught facts and collaborated to arrange a field trip, and the pedagogue worked with recreational educational aesthetic teaching aids to concretize learning and engage the students.

At various times throughout the two years, teachers and pedagogues were observed offering "workshops" or "workstations." A lesson would be typically divided into two parts of 25 minutes and the students were divided into two groups (called Parallel Teaching; Murawski, 2010). The teacher and the pedagogue would each take a group and work with them, reducing student-teacher ratio. During interviews, some participants clarified that they would occasionally divide students into groups according to the students' academic qualifications, the degree of difficulty of the tasks, according to how the pedagogue and the teacher assessed that the students learned best and would engage in the task, and what academic difficulties the students seemed to have. Teachers and pedagogues using this co-teaching approach thus ensured that the students were able to work successfully with different types of tasks and materials, providing them with necessary differentiation. Other observations noted that stations and groups were typically created according to participants' respective knowledge and expertise (Edwards et al., 2009), resulting in the teacher most often working with specific subject communication at the blackboard while the pedagogue might have a workstation with activities such

as cooperative learning activities, games, as well as activities that included movement and motor skills.

Another benefit gleaned from this collaboration was the realization between educators that co-teaching was a means to support children to participate in ways that would contribute to the development of motor skills. In interviews, teachers reported having many children who, from a motor skills point of view, were challenged and were not able to participate in a lesson quietly and by sitting down. In collaboration with the pedagogues, teachers were able to work with goals and methods to support students in participating by also having joint attention on the students' motor challenges. Play and movement helped to integrate subject didactic and social goals, including a common goal that aims to make students ready and motivated to participate in the lesson (Fröjd et al., 2023). By working with academic goals for the students' learning, motor skills and communities, pedagogues had the opportunity to be involved in a didactically relevant way and at the same time retain their pedagogic expertise.

Potentials, Barriers, and Dilemmas

Not all observations and interviews demonstrated parity and collaboration, however. As is identified in much of the co-teaching literature (e.g., Hedin et al., 2020; Karten & Murawski, 2021), quite a few site visits resulted in the observation of a teacher teaching at the blackboard, while the pedagogue merely walked around the class and ensured that there was calm among the students. In one specific second grade example at School C where Mira (pedagogue) and Malene (teacher) were collaborating, two young boys found it difficult to sit quietly and follow the blackboard review. In interviews with that team, the pedagogue reported that much of her time in that class was spent on regulating the boys' behavior. The boys were often reprimanded because they could not be quiet. To avoid the boys receiving many reprimands, the pedagogue tried to create some activities especially for them. In an interview, Mira stated:

The children who fall outside the framework where you have to sit quietly and listen are reprimanded a lot. And it is a defeat that they are constantly told that 'now you must stop, now you must listen...!' I try to be ahead of the curve and offer them something relevant instead. When they enter the class, I give them a small suitcase containing scissors and paper, glue, plus pluses, card games... One of the boys is particularly fond of Legos, so there is also Legos in it, and stickers. (...) The fact that they got the suitcases meant that the pace could be slowed down a little, they got a little calm again. They became very uneasy because it was far too difficult for them to be in that learning situation. Once they got the box, they were given the opportunity to concentrate on something else and be a little creative and use their hands. (Mira, Pedagogue, second grade)

Having assessed that the boys found it difficult to maintain concentration and attention, needed to work at a slower pace, and would benefit from using their senses and working with their hands, Mira tried to create some alternative activities. With the suitcases, she tried, on behalf of the children, to create a basis for inclusion. She tried to put the students' learning opportunities in context with participation in the class's common teaching practice (Madsen, 2014), i.e., she sought to ensure that the children had a good experience, were able to remain calm during the lesson, and did not fall out of the learning community of the lesson.

However, in the example above, one can see how the teacher's instructing practice, which primarily happens through blackboard teaching, a common instructional practice world-wide, created a dilemma as it did not fit the learning profiles of those students. An additional challenge was identified by the pedagogue because she found herself limited in developing subject didactic content in the "work suitcases," because she did not have the necessary expertise in the subject matter content. Thus, while the activity may have supported the students in attention, behavior, and engagement, it did not necessarily link academically with the content lesson.

This leads to another identified and very common barrier. Some pedagogues and teachers from all three schools, including the second grade teachers used as an example here, reported that there was no time set aside in their work schedule for joint preparation of the teaching. In fact, all the 2nd grade teachers stated in the interviews that "there is no time set aside for joint preparation with the pedagogue, and therefore the tasks are somewhat strictly distributed". For them, the strictly distributed tasks included the teacher taking care of the teaching, while the pedagogue takes care of tasks of a social nature and well-being in the class. From the pedagogue's perspective, that limited distribution of tasks constrains her opportunities to contribute and collaborate in a meaningful way. Without time to collaborate and co-plan, pedagogues end up serving in glorified aide capacities, similar to what is often found in the co-teaching literature for special education teachers (e.g., Hedin et al., 2020; Karten & Murawski, 2021). Readers are encouraged to recall that Danish pedagogues are not assistants, but rather trained educators with a specialist focus.

From the pedagogue's perspective, the dilemma of 'strictly distributed tasks' results in teacher dominance, and this causes some problems in situations where they do not have the opportunity to align expectations and jointly plan goals and their shared roles during teaching. In these situations, pedagogues found that their professionalism was reduced to an assistant role, where they were expected merely to observe students' behavior, ensure that there was peace in the class, and support teachers with practical

work. Overwhelmingly, pedagogues wanted to make a pedagogically relevant contribution and to be involved in the planning of the teaching. Instead, without time for shared co-planning, many pedagogues found themselves resorting to on-the-spot or reactive adaptations, similar again to what many special educators report in co-teaching literature (e.g., Hedin et al., 2020; Murawski, 2012).

Researcher notes from an on-site observation stated:

The class has mathematics lessons, and the teacher is in the process of teaching the students how to set up calculations and work with multiplication and division methods. While the teacher goes through the ways of calculating at the blackboard, there is a lot of unrest among some of the students. The pedagogue goes over to the teacher and asks if she can take some of the students out into the school yard. The teacher says yes, and the pedagogue takes the troubled students out. Based on the teachers' review at the blackboard, the pedagogue writes the same calculations on the tiles in the school yard and explains to the students how they can work with division. Afterwards, she asks the students to find some calculations they want to work with, and they continue to calculate together on the tiles. (Observation field notes excerpt)

In interviews, multiple pedagogues pointed out that restricted working and collaboration conditions kept students in problematic learning situations that gave them limited access to learning in the subjects, thereby removing benefit to inclusive situations. In the above observation, the pedagogue was able to use her knowledge of the students' difficulties with concentration and their need for sensorimotor stimulation. The pedagogue assessed that some students needed teaching in ways other than at the blackboard. By integrating motor, sensory, and playful activities, the pedagogue was able to include her leisure education expertise in the work with the students' participation in the lesson. When pedagogues stay in the classroom merely to ensure there is peace and no behavioral disturbances, their contribution is solely for the sake of the teacher and the implementation of the lesson, while when they initiate alternative activities, like math on outdoor tiles, it is for the sake of the children. By making use of alternative teaching activities, they can focus on situations where the students' difficulties arise within the context of the teaching.

Unfortunately, when these decisions have to be made on-the-spot or result in taking students out of the classroom, truly inclusive instruction is minimized. While differentiation is responsive to students' needs, a more inclusive class would be one in which the two educators were proactively collaborating to offer a universally designed environment (Murawski & Ricci, 2019). Instead, many of the pedagogues found that the collaboration regarding the teaching is limited and is dependent on what activities they can spontaneously produce that support the

goals of the teaching lesson (Gulløv, 2022; Røn Larsen, 2011). They found it problematic when pedagogues and teachers did not have the opportunity to jointly investigate students' class experiences and difficulties so that they could collaboratively identify proactive ways to address those needs.

DISCUSSION

Ultimately, the intermittent shadowing of pedagogues over a two-year period and the interviewing of both pedagogues and their collaborating teachers resulted in the identification of important qualities for successful collaboration and co-teaching. Five distinct areas, or themes, emerged based on the observations and interviews. Follow-up discussions with teachers and pedagogues provided validity for the areas as each agreed that these items were of critical importance. The themes, which will be discussed next, include basic shared understanding of goals, meeting requirements of co-teaching, understanding of the characteristics of partnerships, discussion of practical logistics, and specifics of pedagogical input.

Basic Shared Understanding of Goals

Pedagogues and teachers alike felt that they needed to have a conversation to determine if they both understood the tasks on which they were expected to collaborate (i.e., social inclusion tasks versus curricular or academic tasks). This need came through multiple times in interviews. In addition, both groups stated that it would be helpful if time could be provided for them to jointly determine what they each perceived the rationales, definition, and activities would be for their shared teaching, differentiation, and inclusion. This need for a common understanding of the tasks and the roles related to the shared goal will be addressed later.

Meeting Requirements of Co-Teaching

Following Murawski's definition of co-teaching, all participants agreed that true co-teaching would require co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing, despite these elements not always being in place. Some teams were better at the co-instructing part more naturally, but all teams noted a lack of strong co-planning based on the lack of identified, shared time to do so. While parity is frequently noted as an important characteristic of co-teaching (Murawski, 2010), only one team demonstrated strong parity (i.e., Mette and Louise, School C) while another displayed what would be seen as very rigid division of labor (i.e., Isabella and Helene, School A). Clearly then, parity was not a commonly agreed upon aspect of co-teaching among these teams.

Characteristics of Partnerships

A frequent refrain from pedagogues and teachers related to aspects of partnerships. Terms that were

frequently brought up related to partnership, equality, and their expectations of each other. They mentioned wanting and needing to understand one another's working roles. They felt that a willingness to share, contribute, and compromise were critical aspects of partnerships. This finding was somewhat ironic, especially given the lack of parity observed as noted in the section above. Finally, many acknowledged that the teacher's teaching style had a significant impact on the curricular contribution of the pedagogue to the inclusive class.

Practical Logistics

Practical logistics were also frequently noted in both observations and interviews. These included how the pedagogues and teachers decided how to divide their labor, as well as the ways in which they shared their knowledge of the students and the curriculum. Practical logistics also included both the time and willingness needed for teachers and pedagogues to take their diverse knowledge and skills into account when planning lessons for students. They concurred that joint co-planning time had a significant impact on whether or not they were able to engage in what would be considered co-teaching (Murawski, 2012). In this area, participants also frequently referred to both the need for strong scheduling and shared time in order to collaborate. Currently, most teams did not have common planning time, which they felt negatively impacted their ability to truly co-teach.

Specifics of Pedagogical Input

A final important characteristic that came through both in interviews and observations related to the pedagogues themselves. The new law required a pedagogue's professional self-understanding and willingness to not only work with the student's wellbeing and social life, as activities that are typically disconnected from the content curriculum, but to connect those to activities that are relevant for the curriculum learning. This was new and difficult for many pedagogues and teachers to fully embrace. The most successful pedagogues appeared to be the ones able to show which professional competencies they could contribute as they work inclusively and to create a variety of differentiated/playful teaching activities easily able to be adapted or connected to the academic curriculum.

Limitations

The first, most obvious limitation of this study is its sample size. Qualitative case study research often faces this limitation. However, the depth and thoroughness acquired with the six teams from the two years of observation helps mitigate issues with sample size. Another limitation is the lack of interobserver agreement (IOA). One researcher did all observations, collected field notes, and conducted interviews. Applying social practice theory ensured a decentralized analysis focusing on the pedagogues' first-person perspectives;

results support a connection to current literature and research findings offering face validity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Need for a Common Understanding of Inclusion and Clarified Roles

While many of the outcomes of this research validate existing literature on co-teaching in general, this particular aspect adds the unique roles of pedagogue and teacher and the application in a Danish context. Despite the inclusion work that schools initiated after the change in the law in 2012, and after the 2014 school reform required implementation, this research demonstrates that, on an organizational level, much work is left to be done. This was also obvious in the interviews and observations of teachers and pedagogues.

The pedagogues' and teachers' opportunities and barriers to collaborate on the students' participation in teaching are clearly linked to how they each understand their respective professional and organizationally assigned tasks, as well as how they understand the role and purpose of inclusion. The following teachers' and pedagogues' comments can highlight their different understandings:

Inclusion is about children who come from special services and must be included in school. I see the pedagogue as a resource. It makes good sense to me as a teacher that the pedagogue supports those students, because it gives me the opportunity to get in depth with and carry out the teaching. (...) When the pedagogue is involved, and the lessons are called inclusion lessons, isn't the pedagogue supposed to support the children who are to be included? (...) In relation to inclusion, I have doubts as to whether there are any didactic goals and plans. It's been so long since it was talked about! (Malene, General Education Teacher, Second grade, School C)

Danish is written in the teacher's schedule, so of course the teacher will teach Danish and therefore also have autonomy over the Danish teaching. When inclusion is written in our schedule, it will also naturally be expected of us to support those students who find it difficult to keep calm and participate as is expected of them at school. But the hours are spent 'putting out fires' or helping with practical things, making sure that there is peace in the class. (...) It would be a good idea for the inclusion lessons to be called something else! – something that signals that the teacher and the pedagogue are together and have a shared understanding of the teaching and the content. (Mira, Pedagogue, Second grade, School C)

The teacher and pedagogue perspectives here demonstrate how inclusion efforts (those in which the pedagogues are appointed 'inclusion pedagogues') created certain expectations for how the teacher and the pedagogue must

each participate in the teaching. From an organizational point of view, when the pedagogue was given the task of inclusion – as opposed to having both equally responsible for its success - it contributed to a rigid distribution of responsibilities, where the pedagogue became solely responsible for the work with the children who came from special services and social emotional support, and the Danish teacher became responsible for the Danish teaching. The teacher expects the pedagogue to take care of inclusion by focusing on well-being, while the pedagogue experiences that the work with well-being consists of regulating the students' behavior so that they can be quiet while the teacher teaches, and to help with practical things. For the pedagogue, creating calm and helping the children to regulate their behavior is a short-term action, whereas by focusing on the students' engagement and maintaining it with the help of alternative activities, they can create well-being and inclusion that contributes to long-term learning. Most pedagogues reported that the strict distribution of tasks limited them from getting the children included in the teaching's learning communities.

The teacher in the aforementioned quote stated that there had not been much talk about inclusion at the school, and no goals or plans had been formulated. The fact that the work with the inclusion plans was at a standstill, even after the 2014 mandate for implementation, is important in practice among the teachers and pedagogues. If teachers believe the “inclusion pedagogue's” task is one that the pedagogue is responsible for and not a shared responsibility, collaboration will not occur. Inclusion in the curriculum is not seen as a joint task for teachers and pedagogues, even if inclusion is clearly also supposed to address work with the students' learning in the content subjects. The teacher's quote points out that the lack of prioritization, and lack of common objectives and collaboration around the inclusion task, creates some ambiguities that contribute to contradictions in teacher and pedagogue positions in the inclusive efforts. The teacher's problematization of the missing goals and plans with inclusion, as well as her understanding of inclusion as relating solely to children who come from special services, also reflect that the inclusion task has been presented ambiguously in school policy. It remains unclear to the teachers what the inclusion task should be aimed at and how they should collaborate with the pedagogues on this (Poulsen, 2018).

The Need for Systemic Change and Buy-In

In the United States, legal supports for students with disabilities fall under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (also known as IDEA). IDEA calls for students to be educated in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE) possible and to receive “free appropriate public education” (FAPE). Both of these

requirements can be interpreted in a variety of ways and lead to numerous lawsuits and disagreements (Rodriguez & Murawski, 2022). While American advocates of inclusive practices may lament the vagueness of these terms and blame them for a lack of systemic change, buy-in, and action in terms of implementing best practices in inclusion, this study demonstrates that even when there is concrete specificity in terms of a national mandate for inclusion, difficulties abound.

Naturally, the task of meeting all students' needs has always been part of a school's directive. However, despite the 2012 Danish target, when it became a political requirement that 93% of all special school pupils be included in the general school curriculum, as well as the school reform initiative just two years later, Danish schools have not unilaterally made the changes needed to address this new population. Instead, many report experiencing a feeling of powerlessness in the face of the diversity in the student groups and a consequent complexity in the tasks (Mardahl-Hansen, 2018). Powerlessness often means that “quick-fix” pragmatic solutions are found - such as assigning pedagogues the inclusion work, so that the teachers can focus on the didactic content and learning objectives of the teaching. The second grade teacher's quote in which she questioned if there were even any existing goals or plans related to inclusion as it impacts didactics or pedagogy reflects that, in many situations, inclusion is an ideology that has “entered the school” and has not had the opportunity to take root as a natural part of the teaching context and organization (Sandgaard, 2019).

By calling for a clearer definition of inclusion roles and of the school's goals and plans for inclusion, educators indicate that they need a clearer prioritization of inclusion on the school's agenda, as well as clarification of what the work with inclusion means and what the collaboration between teachers and pedagogues should look like. Pedagogues report a desire for these practices to be organized so that they can participate in a joint pedagogical and didactic inclusion effort with teachers, wherein both interactive and playful activities are integrated into the instruction of subject matter content proactively. The successful inclusion of students with diverse needs cannot be ensured by a pedagogue alone, and new opportunities must be developed for shared engagement and changes in teaching activities, including the development of social and professional communities that value the collaboration between pedagogues and teachers.

Provision of Professional Development and Time

For systemic change and buy-in, both teachers and pedagogues need shared professional development around inclusive practices. Classroom teachers in Denmark need the opportunity to reflect upon how a pedagogue can function as an agent of inclusion in teaching, and how together teachers and pedagogues can create didactics that

truly enable inclusion for all students. Working collaboratively, teams can develop classroom practices where subject didactic goals require both subject-specific and leisure-time pedagogical means, and can be adapted to varied students' participation requirements.

To achieve the inclusion results desired by the Danish school reform, schools may need to develop a completely new collaborative culture (Hedegaard Hansen et al., 2022). Because pedagogues and teachers are not prepared together, the result can mean that they often do not get the opportunity to collaborate on difficulties regarding teaching (Røn Larsen, 2011) and that they do not have a history of collaboration. Administrators and headmasters need to reflect on their current practices and work to establish a new structure that values both pedagogues and teachers and supports them with the resources they need. A major resource referred to often in the literature and again by the participants in this study was time.

CONCLUSION

If time is set aside in the organization of the school for co-planning between educators, the expectation for collaboration will be clear. If teachers are made more aware of pedagogues' competences, the teaching discourse can come to include a common teaching practice that cuts across the pedagogues' and teachers' professionalism. This may require pedagogues to self-advocate and make their practical competences visible. It may also require educational leaders to set an expectation that co-taught classes will model inclusive best practices. Administrators can emphasize that classes should demonstrate teaching practices that embed activities, which consider the students' challenges in participating in the lessons and proactively address them by using the skills and expertise of both professionals (Murawski & Dieker, 2021). Ultimately, while a mandate for inclusion may help set the stage for change, it is the philosophy and practices of educators that will truly ensure that all students are able to access learning and find success in schools. In Denmark, that success may eventually come through the improved co-teaching between pedagogue and classroom teacher.

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