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The traditionalism-inclusionism controversy in special education: a conceptual analysis

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The aim of this study has been to challenge or expand the present views on special education found in the literature. In a series of six articles this thesis will directly or indirectly debate questions relating to inclusive and exclusive mechanisms in society. It is claimed that the tension between traditionalism and inclusionism within special education may harm the legitimation of special education as a profession of the welfare state. The articles address the relationship between these two approaches. There are three major areas of this discussion: first, the use of paradigms to describe the epistemological discussion within special education (articles 1–3); secondly, the relationship between the special educational profession and the wider social role of the special in this profession (articles 3–5); and thirdly the relationship between special education and humanity (article 6).

The first part presents the theory of research programmes as a way of describing the content, the possibilities, and the problems of the different approaches (article 1). The chief argument is that the concept of research programmes more clearly emphasises the ethical responsibilities involved in research within the field of special education than does the paradigmatic approach (article 2). In a manner similar to the theory of paradigms, the research-programme approach clearly emphasises the social aspects of research and knowledge development (article 3). However, in contrast to the paradigmatic approach, the theory of research programmes captures the heterogeneity within this field and offers a way of assessing the status of any given direction of research.

The second part considers the social aspects of the debate between traditionalism and inclusionism from different perspectives, including those of Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, and Ian Hacking. A central claim made is that the work seen within special education must be understood as a reaction to the social and political world that the profession is part of, and that this also is part of a specific historical development (articles 3 and 4). Even though it is possible to claim that the main aim for special education is to help people that are looked at as disabled or feel disabled, it is also necessary to understand that the profession is highly constrained by the grand narrative of the welfare state and the historical discourse that this profession is part of (article 4). It is therefore stated that the special education profession plays a role in defining people with special needs into society and with certain social roles (articles 4 and 5).
The third part focuses on a central aspect of special education: the humanistic solutions towards people who are left behind by ordinary education. The humanistic obligation for special education is part of the general aim of the welfare state to provide an education for a democratic and an inclusive society. This humanistic aim and the goal to offer an education for democracy seem therefore to dominate the understanding of how special education works (article 6). The traditionalism-inclusionism controversy is partly rooted in different ways of understanding the role of special education with respect to democracy. It seems, however, that the traditionalism-inclusionism controversy tends to lead researchers to debate paradigmatic positions with each other than to develop alternative strategies for dealing with the delicate challenge of the differences within education.
Acknowledgements

Anyone who writes a dissertation will surely end up in situations where one is asked what they are writing about. Over the years I have worked with my thoughts, written and rewritten, and have been asked the question many times. Every time I tried to tell a new story based on what I believed I was writing about at that time. This is not a dissertation related to a specific diagnosis, a specific treatment or a description of alternative organisational solutions. This thesis is the result of a seven-year journey of trying to understand the educational and special educational landscape. After more than ten years as a social worker and teacher I had become acquainted with the challenges of teaching in practice, and it was with excitement and enthusiasm that I began this doctoral project. Finishing this part of the journey, I must admit that I started out more as an idealist of the special education profession than I am today. The challenges that this field faces, as pointed out in this thesis, are enormous. At the heart of this recognition lies the fundamental question of what special education actually is.

This question was perhaps not particularly difficult to answer 40 years ago, but today we must think through our answers much more carefully before replying. Globalisation, increased demands for knowledge, and alternative ideological views on learning challenge special education in ways that were unknown 40 years ago. However, in order to legitimise its place as a profession in the welfare state the special-education profession cannot but respond to these challenges.

This thesis would not have been possible without a lot of help and support from family and friends. I am delighted that Helsinki University has given me the opportunity to write a PhD thesis under the supervision of Professor Jarkko Hautamäki. Professor Hautamäki’s knowledge of the field of education is indeed enviable. I am very grateful for the possibilities given to me by Lillehammer University College. I am thankful to Professor Stephen Dobson who believed in me and my academic opportunities, and discussions with Steven Connolley have stimulated new thoughts. I would also like to thank Professors Marjatta Takala, Øivind Haaland, Hansjørg Hohr, and Thomas Nordahl for comments on this body of work over the years.

During my bouts of deep frustration and dark thoughts, I was able to find relief and comfort in my family. My parents, and especially my mother, Gerd Hausstätter, a special-needs teacher for several years, are perhaps the reason for my going into this field. My dear wife Sanna Sarromaa has been a good and supportive partner, but also challenging and demanding at times during these years. Finally, I would like to thank my three little terrors, Rudolf,
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Lillehammer, March 2011

Rune Sarromaa Hausštätter
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Introduction

*Special education* (as education in general) is essentially a value-based enterprise. Educational as well as habilitational and medical practices have the aim of serving the interests and good of individuals and society. The way we value the lives of individuals with cognitive impairments inevitably affects our attitudes towards these people [...] Special education cannot thus be effective and serve its purpose suitably if its value-based aims are not defined satisfactorily. (Vehmas, 2002 p. 13)

This project is an analysis of the value basis of special education in school and society. In order to do so, I employ the concepts of traditionalism and inclusionism as a point of departure for describing two established approaches within this field (Gallagher et al. 2004; Mostert et al. 2008). This thesis has two central assumptions concerning the debate between these two approaches. First, the dispute is understood as a discussion about the role of special education as part of the welfare state and the goal for establishing a school for all, and hence the practice seen within special education must be understood in relation to the general goals of the welfare state. Secondly, traditionalism and inclusionism draw on different epistemological bases, and this difference has to be emphasised as an important aspect in the attempt to clarify how special education can act and legitimise its existence.

Arguments presented in this thesis are to some extent constrained by the Norwegian special education culture, both in research and practice. The research presented here is nevertheless of international interest with respect to the ongoing debate on the role of special education within an inclusive society.

This study is directed towards the academic field of special education and the special education profession. One central issue for the profession of special education is whether special education can be used for increasing overall school performance (Lunt & Norwich, 1999; Hausstätter & Takala, 2010). There are indications, however, that this is problematic. As pointed out by Kavale and Mostert (2004), while there is much research within educational and special-needs fields that insist that special education is an effective way of promoting educational standards in general, closer inspections have demonstrated that these claims fail to meet general scientific standards. Söder (1992) has observed another problem regarding special educational support and the time it takes to implement it. The period from the point of detection of a problem in need of special education to the point of implementation of a special teaching solution is lengthy, because the problem must first be treated both theoretically and methodologically before it can be recognised as ger-
mane to the welfare policy of special education. During this time from detection to practice, the circumstances of the people in need of help may have changed, and thus the special-education service given might fail to be of any help. This is further complicated owing to the debate about the role of special-education research and the scientific justifications for this profession (e.g., Gallagher et al., 2004; Mostert et al., 2008; Hausstätter, 2007a). A central part of this discussion is the role of inclusive education and inclusive practices in schools. This inclusive element is, for example, essential to Skrtic’s (1991a) analysis of excellence within regular and special education. Skrtic (1991a) makes a helpful observation in the following quotation:

... the failure of public education to be either excellent or equitable can be understood in terms of the inherent contradiction between democracy and bureaucracy [...] Special education, then, can be understood as the institutional practice that emerged to contain this contradiction in public education. And because social institutions are best understood from their dark side [...] special education is a particularly insightful vantage point for deconstructing twentieth-century public education (p. 153).

The attempt to bridging the approach used in this study to Skrtic’s statement is telling of the background of this thesis, which is to investigate the processes involved in the legitimisation of special education within the welfare state.

**Research aim**

The questions raised in the traditionalism-inclusionism controversy are decisive to special education and education in general. With reference to the goal of creating an inclusive school and society, Slee (1998) points to the importance of theorising special education and rejects that this is:

... an academic indulgence, a retreat from the ‘real-world’ problems of responding to difficulties in everyday life of schools and classrooms: it represents a chance to throw into sharp relief the anti-democratic policies of special education submerged in normalising disclosures and dividing practices which produce hierarchies of ‘scholastic identities’ (p. 126f).

The aim of this study has been to challenge or expand the present views on special education in the literature debating the role of this profession. In a series of six articles this thesis will directly or indirectly debate the role of traditionalism and inclusionism within special education. By approaching the reason for special education, this research project has sought to highlight the value basis within this profession (Slee, 1998; Vehmas, 2002) by addressing some of the questions of inclusive and exclusive mechanisms in society. This
analysis has investigated the theoretical background of the relationship between traditionalism and inclusionism. Through several theoretical perspectives this thesis will explore the academic field of special education. The aim is to get a better understanding of the challenges experienced in special education, and whether or how special education can be legitimised within the welfare state.

The Norwegian framework

Voices critical towards the content and structure of education have always been part of the Norwegian pedagogical culture (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). The criticism directed towards special education was intense in the early 1970s when scientific studies made strong claims that special schools had very limited academic success (Haug, 1999; Stangvik, 1970). This criticism, together with a worldwide humanistic upsurge, resulted in a common-school law for all children from 1976 and the closure of almost every state- and county-owned special school and a focus on integration in normal schools. The Norwegian debate is closely linked to the international discussion about the role of special-needs teaching in relation to integration, inclusion, and teaching quality¹ (e.g., Kaffmann & Sasso, 2006; Brantlinger, 1997; Hegarty, 2001; Wilson, 2000; Barton & Slee, 1999; Danforth, 2004; Gallagher, 1998; Odom et al. 2005).

The debate resulting from academic results and possible exclusion of people is again gaining attention in the Norwegian discussion (e.g., Dale, 2008; Elstad & Sivesind, 2010). However, as stated by Nordahl and Hausstättter (2009), there is an discrepancy between the role of special education at the level of policy and the experiences of special teaching at a practical level.² One reason for this discrepancy might be the lack of a theoretical framework for understanding the role of special education as part of the scientific and practical developments of the educational system within the welfare state (Hausstättter, 2007a; Skrtic, 1991b; Slee, 1998).

Norway and the world

Much of the literature within this area is based on theories from an international, mainly British and American, discussion about the role of special

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¹ For more on the difference between Norwegian and Finnish special education, see Hausstättter & Takala (2008; 2010), Hausstättter & Sarromaa (2009a,b)
education. Looking at the role of special education in a cross-cultural context, we may observe that this area deals with a number of central general issues, but at the same time we must be aware of the national differences within special education (e.g., Armstrong, 2003; Armstrong & Barton, 1999; Emanuelsson, 2001; Gaad, 2004; Hausstätter & Takala, 2008; Nutbrown & Clough, 2004; Safran, 1989). As pointed out above, Norway has a relatively long tradition of integration and inclusion. The amount of special education in schools is also quite low in a global comparison (Vislie, 2003), and the political goals of making schools in Norway inclusive and of keeping the amount of special education to a minimum remain strong. The discrepancy as observed by Nordahl and Hausstätter (2009) between policy level and the practical level must therefore be understood in a Norwegian framework, and it might well be that the Norwegian school is fairly inclusive and open to disabled pupils in the global context (Hausstätter & Takala, 2009). As emphasised, the debate between traditionalism and inclusionism and the theoretical perspectives presented are mainly developed by researchers and scholars from the United States and Great Britain, and the school system that they discuss and debate is quite different from the one from which this thesis has evolved. An awareness of these national differences is, therefore, important to bear in mind when using theories and perspectives found in the discussion within special education. Still, the ideas presented in this dissertation, is grounded on the assumption of reasonable comparability. The central concepts of this thesis constitute part of the hidden frame for special education, a frame which is important to make visible with a conceptual analysis.
Theoretical framework

This thesis approaches special education by starting with how we define the core of this area. In other words, what does this area have in common, and what is so unique about it that makes it possible to talk of a profession or a specific academic field? The answer to this question is of course dependent on the concepts used, and which approach we choose in order to understand special education from, that is, traditionalism or inclusionism. There is however one common aspect that seems to be shared by most of the perspectives found: the task for special education is to help and support people who in some way or another are not offered sufficient education to grow and develop as part of their society (Danforth, 2004; Gallagher, 1998; Hausstätter, 2004; Persson, 2007). The goal of offering educational help constitutes, therefore, the core of how this profession might be legitimised. Still, the question of how to offer this help and support is contested, and must be constantly discussed.

The aspect of help that seems to present itself as a common denominator for special education is that it is directed to someone who is in need of help, and hence special-needs education. Due to this need these people are traditionally defined as being disabled in some way. The ways that a person is defined as disabled are, however, not straightforward and therefore this is an aspect within special education that has undergone much scrutiny and debate (table 1).
Table 1. Different perspectives of disabilities (developed from Smith, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical models</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Understanding of disability</th>
<th>Dominant part of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-essentialist individual deficiency</td>
<td>Disability is caused by fixed medical characteristics that inevitably prelude a life of deficiency and ‘abnormality’</td>
<td>Traditionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-essentialist individual deficiency</td>
<td>Whilst disability is caused by the above medical characteristics, these can be partially alleviated by changes in the social environment so as to enable some degrees of ‘normal living’</td>
<td>Traditionalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social models</th>
<th>Politics of disablement interpretation</th>
<th>Disability is caused by social practices that systematically exclude impaired people from the activities of ‘normal citizenship’</th>
<th>Inclusionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social construction of disablement interpretation</td>
<td>Disability is caused by the way impairments are defined and associated with characteristics that are necessarily assumed to have a negative impact on personal identity, development, and fulfilment.</td>
<td>Inclusionism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special education and the welfare state

This study regards special education as a profession of the welfare state\(^3\) (Brante 1988; Ravneberg, 2003; Molander & Terum, 2008; Sabel et.al, 2010). Special education has historical roots that extend well before the establishment of the welfare state, but it has been through the welfare state that this profession has established itself both as a key element of this regime and

\(^3\) This thesis does not go into depth about different definitions of the welfare state. There exists a broad spectrum of theories on this topic. In this thesis a welfare state is simply a concept of government where the state plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. In a Nordic framework this is further based on the principles of equality of opportunity, the equitable distribution of wealth, and a notion of public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life.
as a separate academic field. As a profession within the welfare state, special education must legitimise itself as being competent to educate people with special needs; in other words the profession must be seen as a necessity by the welfare state.

A central criterion for a profession, such as special education, is that it be considered professional, with people who have professional knowledge and a professional system that is accepted as a correct way for giving support (Abbot 1995b,c; Schein, 1972). As a welfare-state profession special education must be acknowledged as an occupation that supports the welfare system and the state. The state in turn protects this profession with its support of the educational system of the profession, the control system of the profession, and the financial systems that enable it to exist within the state. According to Wolpe (1990; 1994) the professional community is based on a set of myths, a body of research, and a range of techniques that construct a common cultural understanding and ideology. This cultural community is dependent on formal and informal rules that both define and constrain the profession both academically and practically (Danforth, 2004).

According to Molander and Terum (2008), a profession is defined by organisational and performative aspects. The organisational aspect implies that a profession must have a monopoly on some tasks or areas of work in a community. Standards are established by a profession that define the tasks and who can perform them, and these pronouncements protect its monopoly. To secure a monopoly a profession must also have a high degree of autonomy whereby the professional knowledge is the fundamental basis for its practices, and not an external authority. Some professions, and most of the welfare-state professions, are politically constituted and have had their autonomy legally recognised (Abbot, 1995a). Another important part of the organisational aspect is the ethical element of the profession. A professional structure is a way to institutionalise a collective service orientation so that it is not entirely based on the ethical standard of each person (Molander & Terum, 2008). The performative aspect of a profession is the practical dimension of the profession. In general, a profession offers a service. The receiver of this service is often described as a client, one who is dependent on the service. The point of this service is to change the situation of the client, which might involve a transition from sick to healthy or from un-normal to normal. This change is made possible by, first, a definition of the problem (e.g., a diagnosis), secondly, an evaluation of what needs to be done, and thirdly, a decision on how it should be implemented. This process is driven by standards that

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4 In Norway from 1961.
both define professional knowledge and what is the correct assessment of a
given problem.

Accordingly, the special pedagogue must base his or her activity on scien-
tific facts developed within an academic context. Further, as a welfare-state
profession, the cultural community of special pedagogues acquires its legiti-
mation from academic support based on research and theoretical develop-
ment. However, the academic basis for special education is under critical
scrutiny, and this may weaken the legitimacy of the profession. A central
challenge for special education thus involves the political and ideological
aspects of the welfare state that define the goal of all welfare professions
(Abbot, 1995a).

It seems that special education, as a part of the welfare state, plays a role
in the political goal of offering a school for all (Kivirauma & Ruoho, 2007;
Sabel, et.al. 2010). Developing a school for all is, however, a challenging
task as long as there are general academic standards for the pupils to meet. As
described by Hautamäki (1993) this is a task that has been challenging the
Western educational system since at least the Second World War.
Hautamäki’s (1993) descriptions facilitate a presentation of some of the cen-
tral challenges facing the general educational system and special education. In
a historical and cultural context, the school has developed dramatically over
the last 100 years. This development can in the context of this thesis be used
to describe the place of special education in the educational system in the
following way: “Long ago”, only a few people were offered the possibility of
schooling, and what these people were taught was defined as necessary for
learning in school. Over the last 100 years, and especially after the Second
World War and the development of the welfare state, more and more people
gained access to schooling as a part of the official goal of providing school-
ing for all.

As pointed out by Hautamäki (1993) this development has faced the deli-
cate challenge of the treatment of difference. By offering schooling for all
pupils, the school is constantly facing this challenge, and this can be experi-
enced by an increased range of academic performances within the pupil co-
hort. The statistical result of this effect might well be a decrease in the aver-
age academic results.

The decrease in academic skills is, at least politically, very difficult to
justify (e.g. Brunner, 1960; Kjærnsli et al., 2007). In order to meet this chal-
lenge several strategies can be implemented:

• One strategy might be to reduce the goal of education.
• It can be claimed that it is not possible to measure satisfactorily the
  learning outcomes in school.
Similar to the strategy above, another option is to assert that certain groups of pupils should not be included in the statistical measures of the school’s results (full-time special education).

Another strategy is to give compensatory education through special education (part-time special education).

The alteration of normal education is also possible in order to meet the challenges of difference (inclusive education).

Special education plays a role in the last three strategies presented here. Traditionalistic special education has developed a series of pedagogical strategies to use both within full-time and part-time special education. These strategies are, however, challenged by perspectives developed within an inclusive framework that highlights the need for a greater focus on the content of general education than on special education.

The relation to different strategies in order to meet the central goal of creating a school for all as part of the welfare state pinpoints the tension found between traditionalism and inclusionism that is emphasised in this thesis. In addition it points to the institutional tension that today is found within special education.

**The controversy**

[…] postmodern nonsense is attempting to colonize special education in much the same way that it has taken control in other disciplines, and it is time for us to engage in what can be called boundary maintenance (Kauffmann & Sasso, 2006, p. 67)

The theories presented by Abbot (1995a), Brante (1988), Schein (1972), and Wolpe (1994) regard the special educational profession as having a core and boundaries based on a professional knowledge of how to give educational support to people who in some way are understood as being special. This professional knowledge is protected by research and institutional arrangements that strengthen the fundamental assumption that special education can offer a type of special support for people described with special needs. As long as there is a clear correlation between the professional competence and the needs defined by the welfare state, the profession will legitimise its existence (Danforth, 2004). With respect especially to the special educational profession, this profession will enjoy this situation as long as its professional knowledge correlates with the needs of the school. The problem today is that the ideology of the welfare state is changing or being challenged (Øvrelid, 2002), and this leads to conflicts within special education, especially in regard to the question for whom and for what purpose do we offer special edu-
cation (Danforth, 2004). In particular, the controversy between traditionalism and inclusionism (e.g., Brantlinger, 1997; Skrtic, 1991, Danforth, 1997; 2000, Gallagher, 1998) challenges the legitimacy of special education. Both traditionalism and inclusionism offer solutions towards the challenge described previously.

**Traditionalism versus Inclusionism**

According to researchers, traditionalism and inclusionism are incompatible, and their respective understanding of disabilities is very different (Hausstätter, 2007a; Brantlinger, 1997; Danforth, 2004; Vehmas, 2008). As part of this debate, several different theoretical descriptions have appeared over the last two decades in order to operationalise the different ways of understanding special education (e.g., Skrtic, 1991; Skidmore, 1996; Emanuelsson, Persson & Rosenqvist, 2001; Haug, 2003; Hausstätter, 2004).

At the heart of this controversy is the role of special education in today’s school and society, which is based on the question of whether disabilities are a real and unchangeable part of our society or whether they are socially constructed (e.g., Gallagher, 2001; Gallagher et al., 2004; Kavale & Forsnes, 2000; Mostert et al., 2008; Vehmas & Mäkelä, 2008). This debate draws out the ethical challenges of education in general and special education in particular. The problem with this discussion is that it seems to be ridden by traditionalist and inclusionist orthodoxies instead of being guided by pedagogical knowledge and ethics (Iano, 1990; Kavale & Mostert, 2004). This lack of pedagogical reflection results in the lack of a clear focus aimed at the school and its obligation to prepare children for their adult years (Connolley & Hausstätter, 2009).

Much of the debate between traditionalism and inclusionism does not offer concrete solutions on how special education should be implemented. As emphasised by Hausstätter and Connolley (2007), a significant part of this debate should be a focus on the actual effects of special education in order to support or legitimise the given perspective. Yet it is challenging to identify what policies or methods are effective. Kavale and Mostert (2004) have noted that the field of special education is full of examples of how ideological and cultural positions have defined the results of special education. The solution presented by Hausstätter and Connolley (2007) is to establish a framework for defining the goal for special education outside of special education itself. Hausstätter and Connolley (2007) presented the Salamanca statement as one such framework. Hegarty (2001) has also suggested another possible goal of special education, namely, the core business of schooling: teaching young people to become responsible, productive members of society.
Towards a conceptual analysis: The disabled as a process

The distinction between impairments and disabilities seems to be indispensable for emphasising the role of special education. Vehmas and Mäkelä (2008) have defined ‘impairment’ in terms relating to physical properties:

[...] impairment is a class name for natural properties that, depending on the context, in part cause or constitute functional limitations—although the limiting implications of the property in question can in part be explained in social terms [...]. Thus, impairment is a physical or organic phenomenon whose identification and definition are determined culturally and socially; it is inevitably about attaching some meaning to individual properties (p. 44).

‘Disability’, on the other hand, incorporates the social effects of impairment:

Disability, however, is a relational phenomenon that consists in the relation between the natural properties or features on the one hand, and the surrounding social and physical world on the other. [...] What distinguishes disability from impairment is that it can become dissociated from people’s physical conditions. Disability often involves very general social structures and mechanisms that cannot be reduced to people’s physical or mental characteristics (p. 44).

Vehmas and Mäkelä (2008) have described the connection between impairments and disabilities by drawing on John Searle’s philosophical work on the distinction between ‘brute’ and ‘institutional’ facts. Brute facts are ‘out there’ and ‘indifferent’ (Hacking, 2002), and they are neither dependent on a social structure for their existence nor do they change if they are an essential part of a social structure. In contrast, institutional facts are dependent on a social structure and its mechanisms in order for them to have any meaning for us. The statement, ‘Hans has one foot’, is a description of a brute fact, but the statement ‘Hans has only one foot’ is an institutional fact; the first does not imply any institutional evaluation of the situation Hans finds himself in, but the adverb ‘only’ of the second statement underlines the discrepancy between what we regard as normal in our society and Hans’s condition. Further, the statement ‘Hans is disabled’ indicates greater institutionalisation, since stating that someone is disabled might well lead to a change in this person’s perception of herself or himself and, according to Hacking, these kinds of classifications are interactive:

The inter may suggest the way in which the classification and the individual classified may interact, the way in which the actors may become self-aware as being classified in a certain way, if only because of being treated or institutionalized in a certain way, and so to experiencing themselves in that way (Hacking, 2002 p. 11).
Schools are social institutions that employ a series of mechanisms in order to teach people to become responsible, productive members of society. In other words, pupils in schools are acting in a social context, and their ability to succeed is also judged according to this context (Hautamäki, 1993). Hence the special need for education presents itself when we compare certain people to others who are acting in the same social context. It is, however, important to bear in mind that even though disabilities are socially constructed, it does not make the disability in itself any less real, as some would claim within the full-inclusion debate (e.g., Gallagher, 2001). Michel Foucault’s works make it clear that we do not have the possibility of denying the reality of our world even though we admit that our world is socially constructed. Disabilities are thus real: feeling disabled is a real feeling, and being a disabled person is a real way of being a person (Hacking, 2006). Furthermore, educating the disabled person is equally a real task, and the goal of this education must be to make this person more able and less disabled. However, we can be critical towards this reality as pointed out by inclusionism, not because we want to liberate all who are labelled disabled (Løvlie, 1992), but because we have an ethical responsibility to give all people the same opportunities of schooling, work, safety, and other vital areas of one’s life (cf. Salamanca statement).

Disabilities are constructed, but as pointed out by Hacking (1999), simply saying that something is constructed is close to saying nothing. There are several accounts of the constructed disabled person as a product of our society, usually accompanied by arguments about how this is wrong and bad. The view of disabilities as a product is not, however, very helpful if we aim to understand and reduce the negative aspects of this construction and wish to increase the effectiveness of education. As emphasised by Hacking (1999), it is also possible, and in this context necessary, to look at disabilities as a process whereby we look at how people become disabled in our society, or for our purposes, a person in need of special education. This approach means that we have to understand the actual process of construction, that is, the social mechanisms underlying statements of institutional facts.
Methodological reflections

Løvlie (2003) claims that the academic field of education is a hybrid. One can also claim that the place of special education in society is clearly open to discussion because the academic discipline of special education is not directly linked to a single theoretical field (Hausstättter, 2007a). As a science, with the aims of establishing theories and practical solutions, special education can take advantage of several theories and perspectives from, for example, philosophy, sociology, and biology. The identity of the discipline is not clear and unidimensional, but it is rather a cocktail where the content is up to the one who happens to be mixing. As an open science and discipline, the field of special education is also influenced by changes in society and changing political ideologies. Changing ideologies are clearly a central part of the traditionalism–inclusionism controversy. These approaches are based on different epistemological perspectives. Traditionalism is part of modernity in the sense that the distinction between truth and falsehood is important (Gallagher, 2001; Mostert et al., 2008), whereas it is claimed that inclusionism is part of a postmodern criticism of society.

Modernist special educators hold that the profession should follow the lead of empirical social science to describe accurately the reality of mental retardation and identify the modes of intervention best suited to those conditions. From this perspective, hope lies in the gradual, scientific production of improved approximations of “truth” and the development of intervention technologies. Practices […] and instruments “that work” according to the truth-clarifying research (Danforth, 1997 s. 94).

To analyse the relationship between traditionalism and inclusionism this study draws on different philosophical theories that relate to a series of concepts and questions about the description of this profession, such as how special education can be described as scientific, how special teachers reflect on their work, and how we define the special within special education and the role of education in a democratic state. I employ two main approaches in the conceptual analysis here: the philosophy of science and philosophical theories within social science that in different ways present critical descriptions of our conceptualisation of the social world. The social critical approach in this project is originally established out of a postmodern criticism, but, as seen in the articles, the theoretical framework used in this project covers more than established postmodern theories.
Philosophy of science

The selection of the various texts and the description of the various research programmes that are presented in articles 1–3 are based on existing classifications of the special-education field (e.g., Skidmore, 1996), and the intention has been to show how the understanding of these programmes has an impact on special-education theory and practice. The objective is to describe the special-education field and to point to opportunities for development of special education.

From paradigms to research programmes

Despite the fact that Kuhn’s (1962) book on scientific revolutions is based on examples from the natural sciences, the concept of paradigms and paradigmatic shifts have had a central place in the social sciences in attempts to describe the various theoretical positions. Kuhn’s description of paradigms and scientific revolutions were seen as proof that even science does not have a rational basis, and can thus be compared with other disciplines such as social science (Chernoff, 2004). One can argue that the lack of scientific coherence and unity within the social sciences means that the field is still in a pre-scientific phase, and that normal science and scientific integrity in line with what we experience in the natural sciences will only develop when the revolutions are completed (Ball, 1976).

However, Kuhn’s description of paradigms, scientific revolutions and normal science is more problematic. There are different aspects of the theory of paradigms that should convince researchers not to adopt this description of research and development (Ball, 1976). First, Kuhn’s (1962) description of normal science as a puzzle can constrain researchers into the belief that science is narrow and often dogmatic. This theoretical framework can then reduce creative scientific activity and the researcher’s ability to make autonomous choices. Within the framework of paradigms, one can argue that the social sciences should not strive towards a normal state of science, but rather remain in a state with a multiple paradigmatic position (Masterman, 1970; Ritzer, 1975). The second critical remark to Kuhn’s description is the lack of a rational basis for choosing one scientific theory and direction over another. The description of science as something that is based on attitudes and more or less justified beliefs represents nothing new to social science. According to Ball (1976) Kuhn’s description of paradigms cannot introduce something new to the scientific understanding of social science because it does not bring the research field towards a more universal state. The solution of a multiple paradigmatic model still faces the same challenges and distorts Kuhn’s theory and important aspects of scientific activity that his theory sheds light on.
Lakatos’ project is an attempt to reconcile Popper and Kuhn with the theory of research programmes. Like Popper (e.g., 1985) Lakatos wishes to establish an objective, rational basis for the scientific activity while also accounting for the social and psychological dimensions. In other words, science may well be socially and culturally constructed, but it is constructed on a logical basis that makes it possible for us to discuss and evaluate the scientific work and progress. It is precisely this basis that makes it possible for us to discuss the foundation of science—for Popper the criterion of falsification, and for Kuhn theories about paradigms. Inspired by Kuhn, Lakatos supports the claim that scientific theories and perspectives continually rise and fall, but he does not support the revolutionary developments that Kuhn describes. According to Lakatos, history has shown that there is not one single paradigm at a given time, but several theories existing at the same time. For example, Newton’s laws are still used in research, despite the fact that this theory has been rejected or expanded on by the theory of relativity (Chalmers 1999).

To recognise this historical fact, Lakatos (1995) introduces an alternative theoretical framework: the theory of research programmes. These research programmes do not have the fundamental character of paradigms, and several programmes simultaneously might exist within a research field. The potential of a research programme is stated in the programme’s core. The core contains the fundamental theories and theoretical assumptions that the research builds its existence upon. Research developed from this core will form a protective belt around the core and will serve to defend the research programme against attacks. This process makes the old and stable programmes difficult to reject; however, Lakatos’ theory leaves room for young research programmes to develop, make mistakes, and present false assumptions without them being automatically discarded (Chalmers, 1999).

The core of the programme sets the framework for research through what Lakatos (1995) refers to as negative and positive heuristics. Negative heuristics set the outer limits of the scientific work, that is, what area and fundamental assumptions that one must accept within a research programme. The negative heuristics partially replace Kuhn’s description of a paradigm, but the negative heuristics are not as complete as Kuhn’s paradigms (Fawundu, 1991). The positive heuristics are the rules and laws that research have arrived at through research based on the negative heuristics. The rules and laws that a researcher can formulate through the positive heuristics can be falsified, in line with Popper’s criterion of falsification.

A successful research programme is one that addresses the scientific problems quickly and in the least complicated way (Chalmers, 1999). Those programmes that fail to solve the tasks they face will slowly disappear. A research programme’s demise takes time—it is not a revolution as Kuhn de-
scribes it. A programme can diminish with little support, but rise again if it becomes better equipped to meet new problems.

The descriptions of the progressive and degenerative programmes are problematic because a final evaluation is not really possible. An assessment of whether a programme is degenerative or progressive can be done a posteriori, but can a programme be judged for what it has done previously when the criterion for assessing a programme’s success is based on what it can predict in the future? The same problem applies to the adherents of a programme: how can they recognise when their programme has become degenerative and then tries to make itself progressive? How can one judge whether there has been a transformation of a programme into being progressive when the negative heuristics cannot be falsified? Can a transformation into a progressive programme be caused by a redefinition of the world that the programme is attempting to predict? The relationship between degenerative and progressive programmes is, according to Fawundu (1991), a logical failure in Lakatos’ scientific model. Fawundu (1991) also argues that this model lacks social description of the scientific development. When a new programme evolves, the question is one of how the participants in the already established programmes should deal with a new, partly competing programme. Despite the fact that Lakatos tries to describe scientific development, Fawundu (1991) argues that this lack of a description of the social aspects of the various research programmes makes the model miss its original goals:

*Lakatos’ theory bypasses the social dimension of scientific research, even though Lakatos makes some attempt to fuse the logic and the sociology, the methodological norms and the social reality of scientific progress. His work is less a synthesis than a compromise. This is probably the main reason it was rejected by Kuhn and ignored by Popper* (p. 30).

It is possible that Lakatos’ scientific model is moving towards a more idealistic picture of scientific activity than an actual description of scientific development. Within the philosophy of science, this can probably lead to an academic problem, but as a methodical way for operationalising the special education field, it is possible to live with the criticism presented by Fawundu (1991).

Contrary to the idealistic drift that Fawundu (1991) argues for within the research programme approach, this theoretical approach demonstrates the implicit ethical obligation that is part research. The ethical aspects are important in this thesis because both traditionalism and inclusionism accuses the other of favouring theories that more or less are unethical. In this way, Lakatos’ model not only acts as an operationalisation of an academic area, but it can also be used to establish ethical standards in a profession.
This project focuses on the special-education profession as part of the welfare state, and the assessment of whether a programme that is progressive or degenerative is within this context measured by the actual experience of receiving educational help and support. How one can make this measurement is clearly challenging, but as pointed out in article 2, the criteria for assessment of whether a programme is progressive or not can be part of political goals and ideas. These objectives can and should be discussed, and the opportunity for discussion underlines once again the clear ethical aspect of the special-education profession and the importance of debating the traditionalism–inclusionism controversy.

**Postmodernism**

Both traditionalism and inclusionism share the goal to help people—to help them by offering the possibility to learn and develop as active citizens of our society. The disagreements between these two approaches are located in how such help is given. Gjessing (1969), from a traditionalist perspective, claims that special education should offer a therapeutic treatment in order to provide disabled people enough skills so that they can become active citizens of our society at a later stage in life. Inclusionism, on the other hand, claims that the only possible way of becoming an active citizen in our society is actually to be allowed to be one. From this point of view, special education should be the profession that ensures the active participation of disabled people by reducing excluding mechanisms.

Special education within the framework of traditionalism is part of what Lyotard (1984) describes as a narrative of modernity. However, as pointed out in articles 6 in this thesis, it seems also possible to state that inclusionism is taking the shape of a narrative within the welfare state. Common to such narratives is the safety net that they offer. The narrative helps one to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, and, as pointed out in article 4, this is also a part of creating a feeling of a safe social environment.

The grand narrative that special education is a part is the modernist story about the school and education. The content and structure of the school has changed (Thuen, 2002). However, as part of modernity the school has gained a central position as an institution that should ensure the position of the state (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003). The school is, therefore, a political project—where the political legitimation today, at least in Norway, is to be found in the goal of offering a school for all. A school for all is therefore part of the grand narrative of the welfare state. None of the politicians of the welfare state are against the goal of creating a school for all. It is acceptable to admit that it is difficult to reach this goal, but the grand narrative says that it is possible and that this should be a general goal of a modern state today. The prob-
lem of special education is that it seemingly works against a school for all because, it is claimed, special education in essence excludes people from ordinary schooling (Markkusen et al., 2007).

**Postmodernism and special education**

The rational split of the world into ‘true’ and ‘false’ is challenged by the relativistic approach and the postmodern critique. Usher and Edwards (1994), Hutcheon (2002), and Gubrium and Holstein (2003) underline, however, that it is impossible to describe a dominant theoretical framework of postmodernism. In an attempt to clarify the different theoretical perspectives, it is possible to identify two main schools: the radical relativists and the moderate relativists (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Hutcheon, 2002). The radical relativists challenge the social structures through irony or vulgar critique, for example. This form of critique identifies problems, paradoxes, and dilemmas without coming up with clear strategies for solutions and furthering development (Hacking, 1999). There are some debates on disability where the argument that disabilities are socially constructed is raised. Those of an extreme perspective will also claim that these problems will disappear if societal structures are changed—but they have no clear ideas of what these changes should be (table 1) (Ravneberg, 1997; Reindal, 2007). The moderate relativists also regard knowledge as socially constructed and they are critical towards our faith in an autonomous, free, and rational individual, but they try to explore the possibilities by placing the human being in the centre of social development and change. The moderate relativists claim that there may well be a world out there, but it is the representation of that world that is problematic. Those who support the moderate relativistic critique claim that they do not throw away or condemn the long cultural and historical tradition of knowledge that is a part of our culture. While they recognised the tradition of tradition, they also criticise it:

> In its more extreme sceptical incarnations, postmodernism questions the very foundations especially the empirical core of the social sciences, radically dismissing it. Its more moderate affirmative formulations set up camp outside of modern paradigms in order to deconstruct them. They encourage re-examination of social scientific goals, assumptions, logic, and methods and promote innovation in how studies […] might be done and presented (Gubrium & Holstein 2003, p. 4).

The moderate relativistic approach does not free itself from the necessity of having a pivotal point for its theoretical base, and according to Løvlie (1992) this point is the ‘individual’, a position that is highly influenced by critical theory. In relation to special education, it is the human point of departure that makes it possible to continue the debate and the discussion about a good
education within special education. In this respect, this thesis draws on a moderate relativistic approach in the analysis of the debate between traditionalism and inclusionism.

The tension between modernism and postmodernism is part of the discussion between traditionalism and inclusionism. It is also necessary to point out that one can also relate this debate to the discussions between positivism and hermeneutics (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Traditionalism represents a modern understanding of reality and is linked to positivistic philosophy. Disabilities are ‘true’ in this programme and we can, through empirical analyses, describe this. Because disabilities are true and real, we are also able to generalise through naming different types of disabilities by, for example, the use of diagnosis. It is also possible to develop methods within special education to meet these defined problems (Walker et al. 1998). The belief in scientific procedures to handle disabilities and to come up with concrete strategies to help the individuals involved is therefore central for traditionalism:

The most damaging effect in special education, however, is that postmodern pessimism about finding truth or effective methods of interventions undermine efforts to see that teachers can contribute to a more equitable life for people with disabilities through the effective application of willed effort and objective thought (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006 p. 67).

The postmodern perspective that Kauffman and Sasso here criticise is found in inclusionism. The very idea of a neutral researcher is impossible, as is the belief in empirical and positivistic procedures that can generalise disabilities and in this way present methods based on diagnoses (Gallagher, 2001). The idea that we can generalise disabilities and make general methodological conclusions is, according to this approach, misguided when one takes into account that when people act in the social room they have their own sets of values and goals. The social room changes and as a consequence, we change as human beings. Research within inclusionism is heavily dependent on hermeneutics, therefore (Gallagher, 2001; Odom et al. 2005) the solution for inclusionism is that one meets individuals with disabilities and their story as being disabled. Special education within this framework must, therefore, strive to understand people’s experiences of being disabled and should suggest solutions for both the individual and for society. Inclusionism is, however, divided with respect to its interpretation of the relativistic approach (as presented in table 1).
Summary of the articles


Several researchers, when describing the theoretical differences between traditionalism and inclusionism, consider the two approaches to be different paradigms. Thus, the discussion between traditionalism and inclusionism can be understood as a paradigmatic war between two fundamentally different approaches within special education (Gallagher et al. 2007; Mostert et al. 2008). A central point made by Kuhn (1962) in his description of a paradigm is, however, that a research field can contain only one paradigm, and that a paradigmatic change with a field can be described as a revolution where the whole research field undergoes a serious and dramatic change. In Kuhn’s view, an important aspect of a scientific revolution is that researchers try to avoid them by abiding by the established paradigm. In other words, researchers do not seek to change the paradigm in which they are working:

A paradigm is therefore more than simply the rules of how to do a particular type of research. The paradigm is located in the community itself through books and journals, through educational practice and even in the way in which problems are defined and described. The paradigm is therefore beyond the grasp of a simple, singular description and classification. To operate and describe more than one paradigm in special education research, according to Kuhn’s (1996) definition of a paradigm, will be problematic (Hausstätter, 2004 p. 369).

The aim of this article was to emphasise Kuhn’s notion of paradigms and to present an alternative description of the paradigm in order to conceptualise more precisely the different understandings found within special education. The theory of research programmes by Imre Lakatos was here presented as an alternative theoretical framework for understanding the different approaches within special education (table 2).
Table 2. Example of research programmes in special education (presented in Hausstätter, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research programmes</th>
<th>Hard core (negative heuristic)</th>
<th>Positive heuristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psycho-medical programme</td>
<td>Human behaviour is based on biological and psychological aspects. People who behave and develop differently in relation to the majority of the population must be helped and treated so that they can overcome their difficulties. If these difficulties are analysed and scientifically described, there is a possibility that a form of treatment might be developed to help people overcome their problem (Positivist-empiricist standpoint (Skidmore, 1996)).</td>
<td>Dividing subjects into different categories according to their problems (diagnosis), e.g., Down’s syndrome, Asperger’s syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, AD/HD, etc. These categories are studied and different pedagogical programmes are developed. Pedagogical solutions aim at helping people with disabilities to cope better with society. The pedagogical solutions that are developed are falsified and later abandoned if they do not produce any positive development for the people undergoing the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociological programme</td>
<td>Disabilities are created by the society in order to exclude and marginalize groups of people who in one way or another do not fit in with the bourgeois status quo. Special education in this perspective reproduces social inequalities. The only way to solve this problem is to present alternative solutions to the social structure. In planning pedagogical activity, the disabled people themselves must participate in the planning process (Structuralist standpoint (Skidmore, 1996)).</td>
<td>Everyone should be treated in the same way. Pedagogical solutions; alternative social structures should be outlined and presented in order to find social structures which everybody will find useful. Pedagogical solutions that are developed are falsified if they do not produce any positive development in the social structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational programme</td>
<td>Human behaviour is an answer to the organizational structure to which we all belong. The aim for special education is to create a system in which everybody, regardless of their disability, can act and function in the same community—the goal is to create an inclusive society (Functionalist standpoint (Skidmore, 1996)).</td>
<td>Pedagogy should look at how organizations work and function. The goal is to ensure that everybody is included. Scientific activity should be concerned with analysing organizational structures in order to find out if they are inclusive or not, and alternative solutions should be presented in order to make the organization as functional and inclusive as possible. The pedagogical solutions that are developed are falsified if they fail to create or develop an inclusive community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By focusing on the increasing plurality of research programmes in special education, this article argues that research and researchers can act in a more dynamic manner and change scientific perspectives related to problems and new dilemmas that arise. Instead of supporting a debate between paradigms that seems to be the case between traditionalism and inclusionism, it might well be that one problem can be solved within the framework of traditional special education while others are better solved within the framework of social change and inclusion. A central point made is that the possibility of working between research programmes depends on researchers in each research programme being able to communicate with one another. Instead of waging a paradigmatic war, researchers should conceptualise the frame of reference that they use to understand and work in the area of special education.


Article 1 presents the theory of research programmes as an alternative theory for conceptualising the special educational field. Article 2 examines further the use of the research-programme approach. The main emphasis here is on the ethical dimension that can be drawn from this theoretical approach:

*In Lakatos’ (n.d.) view, there are ethical implications for those who undertake research, and the notion of research programmes brings this issue into clearer focus because there is a choice involved. [...] Lakatos (n.d.) believed very strongly that his concept of research programmes brought into focus important ethical implications for researchers because it made clear that ethical choices are unavoidable. In particular, he wanted researchers to be aware of the danger of being seduced by sentiments regarding a programme’s infallibility and consequently remaining loyal to the programme, no matter how inaccurate or harmful it may be. (Hausstätter & Connolley, 2007, p. 375)*

The concept of research programmes clearly emphasises that special educationists are faced with a choice when they commit themselves to a research programme. However, even after the original choice of a programme has been made, researchers must continue to evaluate the potential and drawbacks of the programme. The key consideration in this evaluation is whether the programme is ahead of or behind the facts. Those programmes that are ahead of the facts are what he called *progressive* or *scientific*; those that are behind, he called *degenerative* or *pseudo-scientific*: 
Understandably, one might guess that he believed it was unethical to choose to support a degenerative programme. But this was not the case. Instead, Lakatos (n.d.) insisted that “intellectual honesty” should be the prime consideration when making an ethical choice. “It is not dishonest”, he asserted, “to stick to a degenerating programme and try to turn it into a progressive one” (Lakatos, n.d.). The key for Lakatos, therefore, was that one must seriously ask oneself whether one’s choice of research programme might be lagging behind the facts. If this is the case, then there is a difficult choice to be made: either one abandons the programme or fights to turn it around. It is, however, unacceptable to turn a blind eye to the programme’s failures. (Hausstätter & Connolley, 2007, p. 376)

Now, the obvious challenge for special education within the framework of the theory presented in this article is the following: how can we tell whether a programme is helping or hurting those with special educational needs? How do we decide whether a programme is in front of or behind the facts? As pointed out in this article with reference to Van der Klift and Kunc (1994), some methods, even with the best of intentions, can result in negative unexpected consequences. Special education is, as pointed out previously in this thesis, not a closed scientific enterprise—there are many different philosophical, political and practical viewpoints that can lead to widely divergent conclusions on what we can identify as either helping or hurting people with special needs.

The solution presented in this article to this problem was to relate special education to decisions made outside the scientific community. As emphasised, special education is part of a welfare-state strategy and one solution may therefore be to consider political decisions when evaluating which programme to support. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was presented as one example of political decisions that can influence the work within special education.

This framework emphasises that special education is part of a political structure that influences the work within this area. However, researchers are also confronted with fundamental ethical choices concerning their response to political demands. In this article the argument is that the idea of research programmes makes it possible to propose a consistent model for the relationship between special-education research and the ethical considerations particular to the field. The notion of the research programme, with its emphasis on the possibility of several programmes simultaneously existing within the same field, demonstrates to special educationalists that there is indeed a choice in this research, and that this choice will be made, either implicitly or explicitly. Researchers must continue to examine their own programmes carefully on the basis of the ability to predict successful solutions for those with special educational needs. The challenge that lies ahead for an ethics
grounded on research programmes is to formulate a consensus that all special educationists can use to determine whether their respective programmes actually benefit or harm people.


Whether special education benefits or harms people is a central question in this article. In article 3 the different research programmes presented in articles 1 and 2 were used to construct a small questionnaire directed towards first-year students in special education. The small empirical study serves as the background for a discussion on why people choose to study special education and how this reason can explain some of the challenges experienced in special education today in relation to traditionalism and inclusionism:

*The field of special education has its own tradition and, through this, its own discourse. However, as emphasised and exemplified by Helsby (1995) and Winter (1997), the profession does not develop independently, but reflects the wider social order, which sets standards on how it should function in relation to society in general. Accordingly, it is important to understand that the teaching profession and its discourse are neither self-driven nor independent of the society of which the profession is a part* (Hausstätter, 2007b, p. 46).

This study reveals that there are two major reasons why students choose to become a ‘special-needs’ teacher: to help those who underachieve in the classroom and to improve their qualifications for the labour market. This investigation also shows that students expect teacher training to offer methodological guidance on how to intervene as special-education teachers. The reason why people choose to study special education is not the main focus of this article. Rather, the interesting part is how this kind of information can be linked to the discussion between traditionalism and inclusionism in special education. A central theoretical contributor to this debate in this article is the Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim (1926–1999). His descriptions of participation and spectator (1974, 1996) as part of his attack on the professional view of objectivism in personal interaction are central here. According to Skjervheim (1974/1996), human interaction is rooted in the crucial relationship of possible conversation, a communication that can manifest itself in two different ways:

*In a conversation with someone, the other says: ‘The cost of living is bound to increase even more’. Here there are two fundamentally different attitudes I can take...*
towards what he says. Firstly, I might, together with my interlocutor, turn my attention to the subject raised and consider how the cost of living might increase. In other words, I participate, and let myself get engaged in his problem. It is the same if the other makes a judgement; I can get involved and possibly make a judgement in return. ... But I can also take quite a different attitude by not letting myself get involved with his problem or caring for the subject matter he refers to but simply registering the fact that he refers to that subject matter i.e. I register the fact that he says the cost of living will increase. (1996, p. 127)

As pointed out in the article, the relationship in the first solution is triangular: my interlocutor, the subject of our discussion, and myself. This type of communication is, according to Skjervheim, driven by the fact that we are participants working together towards a specific problem or phenomenon. It is this type of participative attitude that is perhaps one of the fundamental elements for developing and acting in an inclusive society. In the second example there is no common subject: I neutralise my interlocutor’s statement about the ‘cost of living’ into a statement that I can observe and objectify without becoming further engaged with that specific problem. This type of communication, or perhaps lack of communication, turns us into mere spectators of human interaction. The problem is that it positions human issues and interactions as facts, rather than as an issue of ethics and aesthetics, where further discharges of emotion and emphatic relationships are possible. Skjervheim’s (1974) view is that, in order to avoid this ‘fact-relation’, human interaction must be based on participation—a state of intended or perhaps achieved equality among the partakers.

From an inclusive perspective, the distinction between spectator and participant is one of the major differences between the traditional perspective and the approaches that aspire for an inclusive ideology. This is nowhere more apparent than with the traditional perspective and its dependency on learning problems that constantly reinforce a ‘fact-relation’ between the teacher and the pupil. This dependency on problems is clearly reduced in the inclusive framework, where participation, as opposed to spectatorship, is central.

The students’ dominant understanding of special education was that the main emphasis is directed towards people with clearly defined special needs who require some sort of special treatment. This view is in line with the traditional understanding of special education, and it is, therefore, not a surprise that this was the most commonly held discourse by students.

The connections made in this article between, on the one hand, the different ideological perspectives, and, on the other hand, the reasons for choosing to become a special-needs teacher (the participant-spectator distinction) suggest that special education faces certain challenges that are connected to dis-
courses, traditions, and ideologies. This article related this challenge to the planning process of the teacher-training studies. If we implement Skjervheim’s terminology, the challenge for this kind of teaching is that the students have to learn how to be participants. This study exemplifies that those who plan and teach courses in special education cannot presume that students already have this participative ability.


Skjervheim’s philosophical project is closely connected to critical theory and the Frankfurt School. Critical theory was the major contributor to the discussion presented in article 4. This article presents an analysis of why we in a community establish systems that marginalise and exclude people through our instrumental reasoning. Through this analysis, it is claimed that the struggle to create a safe environment is central when trying to understand human co-existence and marginalisation (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1995). We marginalise and exclude individuals and groups of people as a result of the desire for security and control in the world. Special education as a profession is no exception to this process.

Traditionalism within special education is an example on how we organise our social environment according to the instrumental reasoning. Traditionalism uses categories such as ‘disabled’ and various subcategories, such as diagnoses, in order to describe the social world. These categories help us to relate to the world and to understand and predict our social environment because we have learned how to react according to these categories. The concept of ‘disability’ is in this context necessary because it explains to us that the people named disabled are not able to follow certain general rules of society. Disabled people may exhibit behaviours and have requirements or wishes with which we are not familiar. This unfamiliar behaviour can be daunting and can challenge the social structure of which we are part. The historical reaction to this challenge has been to exclude these people from ordinary activity in society (e.g., Thuen, 2002; Kirkebekk, 1993; Foucault, 1999). The ‘marginalised’ solution used today is to arrange alternative rules and explanations for disabled people within a traditional or inclusive context. The special-education profession plays an important role in the development of these rules. As pointed out in this article, both traditionalism and inclusionism offer such explanations on how to understand and interpret the dis-
abled person. The task of the profession is to introduce these rules both for the people who fall under the category of ‘disabled’ and also for those who do not belong to this category.

The task of a welfare state’s professions is, then, to develop, inform, and help to ensure that the alternative rules are followed. In view of this, the traditional approach within special education helps disabled people to function better in society by defining problems, diagnoses, and methodological solutions that reduce the disability issues; in other words, the disabled are better able to follow the generally accepted rules in society. Inclusionism presents alternative organisational and social solutions.

A central point made in this article is that it seems that we in today’s society have developed an ideology that fosters our respect and care for the individual—all are equal and everyone should have equal rights. In order to meet the individual demands for equality and rights, we offer disabled people solutions that we hope will give them the feeling of being included and integrated. The questions are, then, if our arrangements make disabled people feel included and perhaps more importantly, if the arrangements are sustainable within the framework of instrumental reason.

*The problem with this development is that it does not necessarily lead people towards a better and more civilized world; on the contrary, history has showed us that it is not a history of progress, but rather a disaster perspective. [...] because the aim of instrumental reasoning is the survival of man, instrumental reasoning is violent in its nature.* (Hausstätter 2006a p. 22)

The result of these processes is that the people who we feel do not live under the same social rules as the rest of us are being sacrificed. They function as a valve for us from the pain we feel by being part of society (Freud, 1999). Bjarnason (2010) emphasises this issue by raising questions of what will happen in Iceland as a result of the economic recession that the country finds itself in. The question she raises is whether this will cause the service to the disabled to suffer, as it will be easy to gain general acceptance for reducing such support in a society that feels it is under pressure.

As pointed out in this article, both traditionalism and inclusionism use the category of ‘disability’ or ‘disabled’ as a description of a group of people. But by using ‘disability’ or ‘disabled’ as a category, special education commits an ‘instrumental mistake’ (Skjervheim, 1972): the ‘disabled’ person becomes an object of discovery and research for alternative solutions and strategies. Both traditionalism and inclusionism are, therefore, part of instrumental reasoning and exclusionary processes continue as a result of our desire to control the world we live in.

Naming occurs in sites, particular places, and at particular times. For a name to begin to do its creative work, it needs authority. One needs usage within institutions. Naming does its work only as a social history works itself out [...] Objects come into being. We have a technical word in philosophy for the study of being: ‘ontology’ (Hacking, 2002, p. 8).

In following part of the argument in the previous article, this article’s central claim is that special education is dependent on the special for this field to make sense. The task in this article is, therefore, to take the special seriously by trying to understand how we get the special to exist and live in special education, and further to point out some ethical challenges that follow this way of defining the special. In an attempt to approach the special in special education, this article raised two questions: a) How, and with which strategies, is it possible to speak of the special within education? b) How, and with which strategies, have we through the cultural constructions of disability made disabled people into anomalous beings who are excluded from social participation?

The argument presented in this article is mainly built on the work by the philosopher Ian Hacking and his perspectives on ‘changing people’. This change was here presented as being dependent on different groups of people with different tasks when dealing with the special in special education. Two ‘types’ of people are here presented. The expert who through research classifies the special and through this classification the special is created as something real. With respect to ethics, the process of classification and creation should be governed by research ethics (table 3).

Table 3. The special in special education

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<th>The special</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Ethics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Research ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Maintain</td>
<td>Professional ethics</td>
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The amateur’s task is to create a position in a social system and further to maintain this position for the special. The amateur can, for example, be the
special teacher and the work that the teacher does in the school. Again, in
relation to ethics, this type of amateur must relate to professional ethics, the
ethical codes developed within the profession (table 3).

These distinctions matter to more than the sciences. Most of our familiar descrip-
tions of other people and ourselves have very little to do with science. The ways in
which we classify others and ourselves matter to us. Especially interesting are the
ways in which new classifications, or modified ones, open up new ways for us to be,
or to act. They can also close off options that we once had, or dimly imagined.
These are some aspects of the ways in which we ‘make up people’ (Hacking,

As a reflection on how we position people with disabilities in our structured
society this article also presents a theoretical framework that holds that we
can distinguish between the common person, the criminal person, the insane
person, and the special person when offering educational support:

- The common person is normal and morally good. This person will re-
  ceive educational assistance and support through the general education
  offered in schools.
- The criminal will within our society be defined as normal (judicial ac-
  countable), but immoral and evil because he or she has violated our
  common norms and rules of behaviour that we regard as acceptable in
  our society. The criminal will then get help and support within prison
  facilities (Foucault, 2001).
- The insane person is medically, biologically, and psychologically ab-
  normal and therefore not legally sane. The insane condition means that
  he or she can break our common norms and rules of behaviour, and
  they will get help with their problems within clinical facilities (Fo-
  ucault, 2000).
- The special person is abnormal and morally good. The special person
  will therefore be able to receive special help in school.

The point made in this article is that our understanding of the disabled person
is in continuous flux. From this, we should also recognise that there will
emerge new classifications and positions that can explain the special in the
future. Professional practitioners of special education must relate to the clas-
ification and position of disabilities and how this influences the educational
support offered.

The debate between those who argue for a traditional special education
and those for an inclusive arrangement is largely a discussion of the position
of the relation between normality and morality. Inclusionism believes that the
so-called special person is normal and good and that all or most pupils should
receive educational help to develop and learn through normal education. Traditionalism argues conversely that special education includes educational elements that pupils with special needs must have access to because this makes it easier for the special to evolve and learn.


In this article the question about the special-education profession’s legitimation of practice in schools is raised. The theoretical basis of the analysis made here is Foucault’s (1994) concept of governmentality. The concept of governmentality is similar to Foucault’s historical thesis that we have gone from ‘power over life’ to ‘power over man’. In this shift of power, the institutionalisation of society plays a central role. By creating institutions, the state has more subtle control mechanisms that it can use to make humans control themselves.

According to Foucault (1994), there has been a clear historical shift in the way of thinking management, from the classical to the modern managerial model. The classical approach is to claim that a person has to prove that he (or she) can manage himself (or herself) before they can control others. In the modern ideal of governance, this is reversed. Here, a well functioning social state should make humans run themselves according to the demands of society. The challenge for the state is, therefore, to develop a state policy that makes people govern themselves, that is, to develop governmentality. The development of the welfare state is an example of one such attempt.

*Each society has its regime of truth. Its general politics of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctified; the techniques and procedures accorded as value an in the acquisition of truth: the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true* (Foucault, 1980 p. 131).

A small questionnaire distributed to special-education teachers in Norwegian schools asked them about their theoretical and ideological backgrounds in relation to what they practise. Out of 109 answers, 70 teachers reported that they had reflected about what ideological basis their practice was built upon.

The data from this survey show that teachers are quite unanimous in how they justify and understand special-education practices. The teachers said, among other things, that they have a respectful relationship with their stu-
dents largely based on the humanistic values which the pupils referred to as freedom and self-worth. The description of the free and unique pupil is followed up when one speaks about the strategy and methodology the special teacher chooses to use. Adapted teaching based on pupils’ strengths is common to most special educators. In addition they have a common understanding that the main goal of education is to get pupils to acquire a sense of mastery and increased self-esteem.

The conclusion of this study is that special educators legitimise their practices with references to equality and humanism. The pupil will be largely characterised as a person with low self-esteem, which creates problems for the pupil in daily life. Through adapted education, based on pupils’ strengths and abilities, this self-esteem can be enhanced. The result of this enhanced self-esteem should be that the pupil is willing to take on new tasks. The special-education teacher describes his or her position as that of a ‘helper’ and ‘supervisor’ of this process of increasing the pupils’ self-esteem. Knowing the special educational system in Norway (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008), I did not find these findings to be very surprising. The important question in this article is whether the answers given by special teachers are an expression of the welfare state’s governmentality?

The special pedagogue has an obvious position of power in the school. The danger is that the teachers become blind to the power they have. The discourse about the pupil who receives special education is based on a hegemonic humanistic argument. From the data presented, this discourse is so obvious that it is possible to argue that teachers are characterised by a human mentality. Herein lies the source of the problem. It seems as if the teachers are almost blind towards this humanistic argument. Although the teachers relate to the unique human being with equality and autonomy, there is a hegemonic consensus in relation to their description of the pupil and what methods one should use. The paradox is thus that the teacher believes in a unique human being, but this unique human being is looked upon in a uniform way, and as a result of this inequality becomes similar. The claim made in this study was that special educators are an obvious part of the welfare state’s professions. These are professions that through scientific and institutional technologies group people within the state system according to how the welfare state presents itself. The hegemonic discourse shows that there is a clear presence of governmentality, that is to say, special educators share the values that largely fall within the Norwegian state discourse.

Modern humanism is therefore mistaken in drawing this line between knowledge and power. Knowledge and power are integrated with one another and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power; this is just a way of reviving humanism in a utopian guise (Foucault, 1980 p. 52).
Conclusion

The position of special education within the welfare state and the tension found between traditionalism and inclusionism clearly influences how this profession conceptualises human existence and development. The aim when developing this project was not to make a clear-cut decision to support either traditionalism or inclusionism. However, the articles that are part of this project can, when read independently, be looked at as supporting one of the sides. This experience is perhaps one of the most central findings of this wider project. When developing and writing these articles, I found it was a lot easier to choose sides, paradigms or research programmes, and to develop the argument from one side. This experience clearly emphasises the challenge of this profession when discussing the value-base of special education.

Choosing to support either traditionalism or inclusionism was quite easy, but the real challenge was changing perspectives and trying to compromise between different views. As pointed out in article 1, being able to change discourses or research programmes can be a fruitful way for the further development of special education. Changing perspectives and being critical are challenging. For example, there is no statement made in this project that clearly justifies placement of children in segregated settings. However, there is also no statement made that children with special needs ought to be part of normal schooling. There is, however, a series of points made where it is shown that this either-or argument is highly problematic, and that we have to dig deeper into the traditionalism-inclusionism controversy in order to comprehend what this debate is really touching upon. Still, it seems that the dogmatic way of arguing is well rooted in the debate between traditionalism and inclusionism, and that there is still a very long way to go before this ‘paradigmatic war’ is over (Vehmas, 2008).

It might be that this disagreement is partly rooted in an incongruity about how to relate to concepts that play an important role in today’s educational literature. The inclusive ideology, for example, represents a conceptualisation of the human being. Inclusionism within education is then a manifestation of society’s belief in human individuality and freedom:

*The very rational of the educational process and the role of the educator are founded on the humanist idea of a certain kind of subject who has the inherent potential to become self-motivated and self-directing, a rational subject capable of exercising individual agency. The task of education has therefore been understood as one of ‘bringing out’, of helping to realise this potential, so that subjects become fully autonomous and capable of exercising their individual and intentional agency* (Usher and Edwards, 1996 s. 24–25).
Concepts such as ‘democracy’, ‘development’, ‘progress’, ‘liberation’, and ‘enlightenment’ have great power because they have been a part of the educational tradition for at least a century. This long tradition is part of the basis for how we think and act within an educational system when we try to legitimise educational practice. The different approaches presented in this thesis are not against the aim to Educate for Democracy. However as several articles in this thesis have pointed out, one should be cautious about how to define the specific rights people have, and to present them with educational objectives. The special-education profession must be understood as one that exists between political, ideological, and practical objectives. These various positions represent their own regime of ‘truth’ when they, for example, define the concept of democracy in education, and it is these regimes that are exposed in the traditionalism-inclusionism controversy. It is thus important to emphasise that this ‘truth’ is not something we can escape from, but rather use to develop the special-education profession further in order better to support and help people who feel disabled in society. A central aim of this thesis was, therefore, through the articles, to present ways of conceptualising how these processes are part of the reasoning of special education.

Because process is masked in the prevailing truth, it is obvious that it will often be difficult to identify the various aspects of this development. The critical reader may claim that this thesis is partly masking an aim to find a legitimate reason for special education to exist within the criticisms raised within the debate between traditionalism and inclusionism. If special education is to be able to justify its existence, it must convince the public that the profession is good or right. Special education must be identified as a humane endeavour.

The issues that are presented in this thesis are also part of another tradition in the educational literature: the criticism of the school’s mission and content. Plato presented in The Republic certain views on how education should be organised. Rousseau’s Emile presented an alternative educational project over 2000 years after Plato. Nietzsche (1995) chopped away at the German tradition of Bildung and the corruption it caused among German students. Adorno (1988a, 1988b) takes hold of the criticism of the German tradition of Bildung, and thereby emphasises Nietzsche’s statements with reference to the Jewish homicide. The German peasant’s son had been a victim of the cultural industry that made him ‘half-educated’ and easy to lead (Adorno, 1988). Today, the criticism continues in research in the philosophy and history of education (e.g., Biesta 2004; Dale, 2001a, b; Løvlie, 2003, 2005, Schmidt, 2003; Telhaug, 2003, 2004, Steinnes, 2006). The challenges experienced within special education are, therefore, not unique to this profes-
sion, but are included in a general discussion of the social situation in today’s society and the role of education.

Following up the approach described in article 2 of this thesis, one should evaluate whether this thesis is progressively scientific or degenerative. This consideration should be based on whether this thesis brings something new to the field. Basically my preparation of the articles was not simply to avoid copying the earlier work, but was rather to illuminate the familiar phenomena by means of alternative theories in order to expand the self-understanding of special education. An alternative focus on the well known phenomena are not unknown within the special education research (e.g., Froestad, 1995; Kirkebæk, 1993), but perhaps this thesis changes the themes and theoretical perspectives more than is usually seen within a doctoral thesis because of the different aspects raised and the different theoretical framework used.

I hope the relatively large perspective shifts which have been submitted in order to conceptualise the special education area have proven to be both challenging and provoking. I believe that special education to a greater extent needs to be able to perform a meta-analysis of its own epistemological roots and position in order to deal with the traditionalism-inclusionism controversy within special education. However, it is not enough to be critical; it is also necessary to formulate and try out new ideas and approaches in order to meet the needs of people that feel disabled. The scientific development of special education should, according to this thesis, increasingly present research that cuts across the various research programmes. In line with Danforth (2006), I shall attempt to offer some tentative guidelines for future progress within this field:

- How do we understand such concepts as democracy, liberty, and equality within the educational setting, and what role should the special educational field play there? The goal of special educational research should not only be to develop methods based on an already accepted theoretical framework, but should also focus on the relationship between research and practice in accordance with how we understand such concepts.
- It might be that the school itself is not a good place to make democracy work, but that should not reduce the school’s obligation to make every effort to offer an education about democracy. A democratic society seems to be a general civic goal and special education should cooperate with general education in order to deal with this goal.
- Special education must deal openly with the fact that this profession is dependent on the special, the different, person existing. However, this profession’s obligation is to reduce, or to minimise, the deviant social implications of being special. As pointed out in this thesis, the tradi-
tionalism-inclusionism controversy is partly caused by different approaches to reducing the problem of being disabled in society. However, both approaches should be aware of their dependence on the special, and this fact should constantly remind the profession that our understanding and how we approach the special is changing and so is the special. Therefore, in order to develop new ways of understanding special education, spaces must be made where it is possible to think differently. Special education can thus draw on alternative research areas in order to discover alternative strategies for the delicate task of dealing with difference within education.
Literature


Original Articles