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Development towards the Inclusive School: Practices, Research and Capacity Building

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Introduction

This book is the first of three anthologies in the series *Comparative Classroom Studies towards Inclusion*. It focuses on two related questions, namely how to prepare research projects and how research competence has been and is developed through establishment of universities, higher education, doctoral programmes and research projects.

The book is inspired and initiated as a result of the cooperation of senior and junior researchers in the planning phase of our joint Western Balkan-Oslo project. Thus, it is a contribution to researchers who intend to apply to international cooperation programmes and international students searching for PhD fellowships as well as for researchers in the implementation process of studies, supervisors, peer-reviewers and doctoral committee members. It aims at capacity building through updating practicing and upcoming researchers within education, special needs education and related fields. Keeping in mind the recent fast growing number of international research cooperation programmes and doctoral fellowships, the book offers insight into the changing history of recruitment and training of researchers through a steadily changing Europe. Thus, it also provides reflections concerning the on-going Bologna Process of Higher Education.

This is an anthology directed at two areas of activity: 1) international research, including PhD studies, using the Norwegian university system and the University of Oslo (UiO) in particular as example, and 2) international research cooperation between universities in Norway and other countries, focusing on research on practice within the educational, special needs educational and related sciences. The publication of the book is financed from these two areas of activities: 1) the research group Humanity Studies in Pedagogy (HumStud) at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, UiO; and 2) the international research cooperation project WB 06/04: *Development towards the Inclusive School: Practices – Research – Capacity Building: Universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla, Zagreb & Oslo*.

Part One of this book consists of three articles. Two of them are contributions to on-going capacity building. They discuss selected key concepts within theory or philosophy of science. This article, the first one in the collection, situates this first anthology as the beginning of a complete research process from preparation to conclusion. It gives an overview of the book's various articles, and it provides a preliminary discussion of the core concept of the joint research project being the primary purpose of the classroom studies described and discussed in these anthologies, namely to provide examples of schools moving "towards inclusion".

The first anthology in a series of three

As mentioned, this book is the first in a series of three anthologies presenting the research process from planning to conclusion of the joint international comparative classroom study, which is the main topic of the project *Development towards the Inclusive School: Practices – Research – Capacity Building: Universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla, Zagreb & Oslo*. The joint study is the main activity and covers one of three related goals of the project, as quoted from the project description (WB 06/04):

1:   Comparative classroom studies towards inclusion
2:   Improving competence in classroom research with focus on methodology and theory
3:   Sharing of knowledge and experience related to the Bologna Process

Thus, this first book, *Research Project Preparation*, covers the planning process of the research project, which is the first mentioned goal and by far the largest part of the WB 06/04 project. As mentioned, the articles on philosophy of science are contributions to the second goal concerning improvement of research competence. In addition, focus is also directed towards the third goal concerning sharing of knowledge and experience related to the Bologna Process, as discussed in more detail later in the article.

In the second anthology, with the working title *Theory and Methodology in International Comparative Classroom Studies*, focus is on the research process. A large part of the book covers the second main project goal concerning improving competence in classroom research with focus on methodology and theory. Several of these articles have been written by distinguished international researchers, who were invited to give open lectures combined with project seminars at the ambulating workshops. It also contains seven articles on methodology written by each of the project universities.

The third anthology has the working title *Comparative Classroom Studies towards Inclusion – Studies on the South-Eastern and North-Western Outskirts of Europe*. Here the results of the joint comparative study are presented along with individual articles about the studies from each of the seven universities. As initially mentioned, the anthologies are included in the book series *Comparative Classroom Studies towards Inclusion*.

The common research theme, towards inclusion, serves as a "red thread" throughout the three books. This article marks the starting point of the discussion of this concept with a short preliminary introduction.

Towards inclusion

What is inclusion? What is the history and context of this principle? What encompasses the concept, and which aspects of it are in focus in the international comparative research project presented here? The following introduction of the concept is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, the aim is to develop the concept in theory, context and practice throughout the series of books. But what do we mean with a concept in this presentation? As a beginning, this needs to be clarified.

Concepts cannot be universally defined. They are not static. On the contrary, they are steadily changing in relation to historically, culturally and individually based interpretations (Johnsen, 2000; 2001). Bakhtin (1986) argues that the

essence of a text or an utterance develops between two subjects- the author of the text and the reader – at any given time. Thus, the meaning differs from one individual reader to another within the same time and place as well as across cultures and history. However, although concepts are continuously changing, some degree of inter-subjective agreement is necessary in order to maintain an on-going discourse between groups of individuals, such as between the author and the reader or between a group of cooperating researchers (Johnsen, 2000; Rommetveit, in press 2014; Schriewer, 1999).

As pointed out, the concept of inclusion is a basic concept in the international comparative classroom study. How is it manifested in international discourse? Inclusion is not a new term. It may be traced back to 1600 (merriam-webster. com/dictionary), and it is applied within a number of different areas from mineralogy to educational sciences. The humanist educational philosopher Martin Buber (1947) applies the term inclusion in his discussion of communication and the communication act. Buber relates 'inclusion' to concepts similar to communication, namely 'dialogue' and 'dialogical relation', and argues that 'inclusion' is the opposite of 'empathy'. He proceeds with a conceptual description of inclusion:

> It (inclusion) is the extension of one's own concreteness, the fulfilment of the actual situation of life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates. Its elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and, third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.
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> A relation between persons that is characterized in more or less degree by the element of inclusion may be termed a dialogical relation (Buber, 1947: 124–125).

Unaware of the ensuing widespread importance assigned to the concept, Buber argues for inclusion as an interpersonal ideal. However, it was not until 1994 that inclusion was introduced formally and gained international acceptance as a principle bringing together education and special needs education. At that time UNESCO called upon all governments to "adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in ordinary schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise" in the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (1994: ix). Since then, the principle of inclusion has been widely defined, discussed and applied in discourses on human rights, educational and social matters.

What, then, is the historical and international context of this relatively recently introduced principle of inclusion? And how is the principle described within different contexts? The following brief presentation places the principle of inclusion within these two contextual dimensions, the historical and the international.

Starting with the international context, the principle of inclusion emerges out of a number of human rights documents on behalf of United Nations (UN) and UN System agencies, such as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and UNESCO's first conferences on education for all (EFA) in Jomtien (1991), together with the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1994), which was published the same year as the Salamanca Statement. The principle was confirmed in the later UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). On UNESCO's homepage the long-term Education for All (EFA) project and the principle of inclusion are closely connected, and a large number of texts and materials related to the principle are presented. In these texts the principle is applied as educational inclusion or inclusive education, the inclusive school or the inclusive classroom. The latter two expressions usually place the focus on inclusive practices (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/). Ideas about inclusion have developed and spread all around the world to schools, politicians, governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and to higher education and research institutions. Several universities and university colleges offer educational programmes in inclusion[1]. Through their educational activities within EFA and Inclusion programmes, UNESCO supports initiatives related to vulnerable and marginalized groups, aiming at development of inclusive quality Education for All. In their *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (2009: 4), the following interpretation of the principle of inclusion is presented:

> The concept and practice of inclusive education (…) is increasingly understood more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. Inclusive education is a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all children – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well.

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1.   Instead of documenting few examples related to inclusion, the reader is advised to take a look at the vast amount of information on the Internet.

This statement contains two important points. 1) Catering for the diversity amongst all learners requires a transformation process to take place in schools. 2) The groups of children that need special attention in this transformation process, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, are further specified as including "boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning". This specific litany of different groups may be seen as an attempt to prevent disadvantaged groups remaining invisible in the "Education for All" efforts. Currently, UNESCO is focusing specifically on Roma children, street children, and child workers, children with disabilities, indigenous people and rural people (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/).

The principle of inclusion is also applied to so-called social inclusion, and another of the UN System agencies, UNICEF, is strongly involved in this field. A basic description of social inclusion has not been found on behalf of UNICEF. Rather, it seems that the concept is described in relation to other concepts, such as in contradiction with social segregation and marginalisation, or in relation to security, employment and education. However, the concept has gained international application, and two attempts at descriptions or clarifications are presented in the following. The first relates to one of the Norwegian ministries, namely the *Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion*, which is presented as seeking "To strengthen consumer rights, interests and safety. To allow children and young people to grow up safely and to participate in public decision-making processes. To promote economic and social security for families. To promote full equality of status between men and women" (http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld). A somewhat clearer concept description is presented at the Victorian State Department of Health, Australia:

> A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity. Social exclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community (Cappo, 2002 in Victorian Government Health Information: http://www.health.vic.gov.au).

From the perspective of social inclusion, educational inclusion is an often mentioned sub-category. UNICEF has also arranged conferences and other activities regarding educational inclusion, such as the Regional Conference on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities (Johnsen, 2011b).

In order to give a short account of the historical dimension of the principle of inclusion, the presentation is delimited to Norwegian school history, where the principle of the inclusive school is situated in relation to the two other highly related official intentions, namely the principles of "the school for all" and "the unified school" (Johnsen, 2000; 2001b).

The compulsory school has a long tradition in Norway, dating back to King Christian VI's Decree relating to the free elementary school "for all and everybody", as it read in 1739 (Forordning, 1739). What kind of school was this in the beginning? According to official documents and scattered pieces of information from these early years, the main intention seems to have been to establish schools in every local community so that "all and everybody, even the poorest of children, would receive sufficient education". While the term "sufficient education" primarily meant reading and the acquisition of Christian religious knowledge, the Decree provided additional possibilities of teaching pupils writing and arithmetic if the parents so desired. Since its establishment the Norwegian compulsory school has been the object of wave after wave of different and at times contradictory ideologies, legislation and practices. Concerning this very first statement about "the school for all", the much later school laws of 1889, the "People's School Laws" (compulsory primary school. Lov om Folkeskolen) indicated that at this point in time, the authorities had noticed that a certain number of children would not manage to cope with the new and much more sophisticated curriculum that contained a number of school subjects corresponding to those taught at the private payment schools at that time. Confronted with the choice between the school for all children or for those only that were able to fulfil the requirements of the school, the new laws represented the latter option, thus excluding children with certain characteristics or diseases from attending compulsory school. A few years prior to this event, the first Norwegian special school law had been passed. However, the concept "a school for all" reappears later.

Another concept related to the development towards inclusion is the principle of the unified school, which came to play a prominent role in Norwegian school development. The principle dates back to the early nineteenth century, with Frederik Moltke Bugge (1806–1853) as the first scholar to make a holistic design for a Norwegian educational system from elementary to university level. He brought the ideas home from continental Europe and the Prussian educator and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835). Bugge's plan for the unified school was a systematic organisation of all levels of education within a national framework. His plans had little to do with what is today called educa-

tional equality. Indeed, at this time the great majority of pupils attended only elementary schools financed by the municipalities, whereas children of a small number of wealthier families went to private elementary schools and from there moved on to higher education (Johnsen, 2000). It was not until the turn of the next century that the principle of the unified school came to mean that pupils from all societal levels were expected to go to the same school (Dokka, 1974; 1983; Høigård and Ruge, 1971; Johnsen, 2000). During the twentieth century the content of the principle of the unified school was further expanded. In the nineteen-seventies the concept of the unified school came to include all pupils regardless of economic or social status, geographical location, cultural background, gender or ability (Østvold, 1975). With the last decade's rapid change towards an internationalised society, the principle is again being challenged in the direction of new extensions, including multi-linguism and multi-culturalism.

From the 1960s on, the concept of the "school for all" reappeared in Norway, only now with focus on children with special needs. In the years that followed, public information and debate were advocated by parents, special needs educators and politicians. It led to changes in legislation, national curricula and school practices. Decentralisation to local communities was also an international trend. Institutionalisation of persons with disabilities was seriously questioned in Denmark and Sweden in the 1960s. Thus, when the two pioneers Niels Bank-Mikkelsen and Bengt Nirje presented the principle of normalisation in the USA, it soon became an international principle. (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1980; Kirkebæk, 2001; Johnsen, 2001a; Nirje, 1980; Wolfensberger, 1980). Nirje described the principle in the following way:

> Normalization means sharing a normal rhythm of the day, with privacy, activities, and mutual responsibilities; a normal rhythm of the week, with a home to live in, a school or work to go to, and leisure time with a modicum of social interaction; a normal rhythm of the year, with the changing modes and ways of life and of family and community customs as experienced in the different seasons of the year (Nirje, 1980:32–33).

A huge wave of system criticism swept over international discourse, focusing on the vulnerability of institutions to neglect, abuse and cover up, and of isolated living conditions for children and adults with disabilities. The wave hit institutions for persons with disabilities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean hard, as it also did with orphanages. In Norway, journalists revealed harsh and unethical conditions for children with intellectual challenges. Parents started to organise in NGOs (nongovernmental organisations). NFU – Norwegian Association for People with Developmental Disabilities, which was founded in 1967, had and

has on their main agenda equal rights, a comprehensive local school for all and inclusion. Concerning education, Norway fronted the Nordic turn towards normalisation starting with the so-called Blom Report (KUF, 1970). It introduced the principle of integration explicitly and stated the following three criteria:

a)   Belongingness in a social community
b)   Participation in the benefits of the community
c)   Shared responsibility for tasks and commitments

As a consequence of this work, the third and final Norwegian special school law was abolished, and matters of special education were integrated into the Educational Act in 1975. The new main principle was that all children were to fall under the same educational act. The consequences of the principle were described in more detail in the Act of 1969/75 and in the current act (Education Act; 1969/75; 1999/05). Three pillars in Norwegian education acts and national curricula after the turn in 1975 outlined the principle of the school for all in the local community for all. Those are:

1)   The school shall have room for everybody and teachers must therefore have an eye for each individual learner. The mode of teaching must not only be adapted to subject and content, but also to age and maturity, the individual learner and the mixed abilities of the entire class (L, 1997:35)

This passage focuses on the right for all children to attend their own local regular school. The right was stated in the Educational Act (1969/75. See also Educational Act, 1999/2005, section13–1).

2)   Teaching is to be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils, apprentices and trainees (Educational Act, 1999/2005, section1–2)

3)   Pupils who either do not or are unable to benefit satisfactorily from ordinary instruction have the right to receive special education (Educational Act, 1999/2005, section 5–1).

The current Educational Act (1999/2005) is related to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, including adult education within the level of primary- and lower secondary education. It also contains the same rights and additional resources for special needs education at preschool age. In addition to the core principles quoted above, the Act describes special regulations, such as securing the right to use Braille writing system. A few minority languages have their own national curricula, such as sign language and the Sami languages.

Aspects of the abovementioned educational principles became the focus of educational debate in Norway as well as internationally under several headings, such as comprehensive schools, mixed-ability teaching, mainstreaming, normalisation and integration. The current shift of terminology to the concept and principle of inclusion may be seen as a criticism of tendencies in educational integration policies. The criticism focused on what was seen as half-hearted efforts when local ordinary schools were opened only to pupils with certain types of special needs or when special classes or "special schools" were organised as special units within ordinary schools. Some main ideas behind the principle of the inclusive school may be described in the following way:

- Every child belongs to her or his local community and to an ordinary class or group
- The school day is organised with a great amount of co-operative learning tasks, educational differentiation and flexibility with regard to content choice
- Teachers and special needs educators co-operate. They have knowledge of general, special and individual learning strategies and tutoring needs, and how to facilitate and appreciate the plurality of individual differences when organising class activities.

To sum up, the two principles of the school for all and the unified school with their continuous changing conceptual content, and current principle of the inclusive school, may be seen in many respects as similar to one another. The main issues of the three principles are that every person has the equal right to receive meaningful and individually adapted education in their local community along with other citizens. The specific focus in this article, as in the three anthologies, is on the rights of individuals with disabilities and special educational needs.

On the basis of this summary review of international and historical contexts out of which the concept of inclusion has emerged, it is timely to repeat the questions: What is inclusion, what encompasses the concept, and which aspects of it are in focus in the international comparative research project presented here? As indicated above, the concept of inclusion was introduced and gained recognition as criticism of what was described above as half-hearted efforts when it came to interpretation as well as implementation of former similar concepts such as integration and the school for all. It may be assumed that this criticism was a reason for pointing out in the Salamanca Statement that: "It is not our education systems that have the right to certain children. It is school

system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children" (UNESCO, 1994). This point illustrates the essence of the principle of inclusion and also connects the concept of educational inclusion to the previously described normalisation principle.

Sadly, an international literature review of articles on inclusion would reveal the same limitations to the application of this newest concept as to those it was meant to replace. Although the principle of inclusion (UNESCO, 1994; UN, 2006) is accepted by a large majority of governments, questions about how this new principle is interpreted and implemented on the national level as well as in local schools have not yet found satisfactory answers, in spite of a large number of innovation- and research projects worldwide. Julia Kristeva (2008) warns against pitfalls and backwards interpretations of the relationship between people with disabilities and the principle of social inclusion. Such interpretations, she argues, involve a reductionist ideology that renounces disabilities and needs for special education and other kinds of support while at the same time praising the way disability almost disappears by giving the persons with disabilities what she calls "greater social responsibility". She argues that behind this attitude is a desire for economic gain.

In view of the huge difference in economic and other resources and frame factors between countries and continents, reductionist interpretations and limited implementations are not surprising. School history shows that it may take years, decades and even centuries to realise educational principles. This also applies to Norway, where although educational legislation favours the inclusive school, there is a serious gap between these official aims and actual practices. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that practicing the principle of inclusion is hard with current increasing competition with other educational intentions in the race towards attaining "the best school system" in Europe or the world. Opening school to all children with the fundamental aim of supporting each pupil in a meaningful learning process demands a radical change from deep-rooted academic and competitive educational traditions (Johnsen, 2000; 2011a). In light of international discourse and current answers to questions regarding how the principle of inclusion is understood and what it encompasses, it is fair to say that inclusion is understood differently on different levels from official aims to practices or lack of practices in the local school.

What aspects of inclusion are in focus in the international comparative research project presented here? Professor Ljiljana Igrić, who is the main project coordinator in the WB 04/06 project on behalf of the University of Zagreb,

has adopted a conceptual description which is an extension of UNESCO's Salamanca statement (1994) and in line with current description of inclusive education on UNESCO's home page, as quoted above (2009). She characterises the inclusive school as a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his/her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his/her educational needs met (Stainback and Stainback, 1990, in Johnsen, in press, 2013). This understanding of educational inclusion is in line with the introductory clarification of the principle presented in the common WB 04/06 project plan, which is presented in Part Four of this book (Johnsen, 2013c). When considered together, the two statements or conceptual descriptions are complementary and they are also in accordance with UNESCO's current outlines of the inclusion principle. They support and supplement each other with additional nuances. The introductory project description of inclusion is as follows:

> Educational inclusion is seen as the global policy prescribing development towards a local regular school that welcomes all children with their unique individual characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs; all children with and without special needs and disabilities; a school combating discriminatory attitudes, and offering a meaningful and individually adapted education to every pupil within the community of the class (Frederickson & Cline, 2002; Johnsen, 2000; 2007; 2013c; UNESCO, 1994).

All six countries participating in the WB 06/04 project; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Slovenia; have incorporated the principle of inclusion in their educational laws in different ways and at different times. The six countries differ regarding official emphasis and how far the implementation process has come. However, a common trait is, that none of the countries have reached full inclusion in official intentions or practice yet; a trait that these countries share with the rest of the world. The concept of 'towards inclusion' is therefore fundamental to this joint research project. "Towards inclusion" is a concept that admits the lack of satisfactory realisation of inclusion, and emphasises the process towards fulfilling the principle in school practices; the development towards the inclusive school. Moreover, the main focus of the joint project is research on practices.

The perspective towards inclusion is thus the primary focus underlying the joint research process presented and discussed in the three interconnected anthologies. Aiming towards inclusion is the normative perspective for 1) the joint descriptive research process, 2) the common capacity building in research methodology, theory and former studies related to inclusive practices, and

3) the emphasis on cooperation between regular teachers and special needs educators, also taking into account the history and development of higher education within these two related professional and research disciplines.

The next topic that needs introduction and clarification is the joint upgrading and further development of research competence, paying special attention to the first part of the research process; preparing and presenting a research plan.

Development of research competence

Development of research competence is a matter of individual education as well as institution building. This section gives an introduction to institution building with focus on establishment and development of universities, research disciplines and methodology. Norwegian and European university development is in focus, but with particular attention on the seven universities in the WB 06/04 project; the universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla, Zagreb and Oslo.

Knowledge about research institution building in the past is an important source of reflection. Part Two, *Doctoral Programmes in Past and Future*, contains historical articles that shed light on the establishment and development of European universities and doctoral degrees, and more specifically the development of education and special needs education as research disciplines. Two articles focus on the Norwegian development from different points of departure and applying different sources. Thus, an article presenting an interview study of four professors with many years of experience as doctoral researchers and as subsequent doctoral supervisors and adjudication committee members, adds interesting in-depth information to a historical text study of similar historical topics. In a third article glimpses into European university history are presented in a joint contribution of colleagues on behalf of the seven participating universities in the WB 06/04 project.

Part Two is in this way directly related to one of the three main goals of the WB 06/04 project mentioned above, which is about sharing knowledge and experiences related to the Bologna Process. This was a continuation of a former cooperation project (SØE 06/02) between the universities of Tuzla, Sarajevo and Oslo. In the WB 06/04 project the information exchange was continued and extended to all the participating universities. Over the years, while the two projects were formally taking place, all seven universities went through transition processes concerning the structure and content of higher education related

to the European Bologna Process. These processes are still on-going (Bologna Declaration, 1999; The Official Bologna Process Website July 2007 – June 2010). During the later project, time was allocated for these discussions at the workshops, which rotated among the universities and was held each semester. The historical articles in Part Two are initiated and inspired by these discussions.

Research project preparation

Development of research competence is, of course, closely connected with the ability to prepare and present a high quality research plan. This section draws attention to the researcher and the research project, whether it is an individual contribution or a cooperative project. When it comes to development of individual research competence, the issue of "studying abroad" is addressed, specifically when it comes to opportunities and barriers for foreign applicants to Norwegian PhD studies and research projects.

Regarding international research at Norwegian universities, there is a need for a broad and thorough understanding of the opportunities and barriers encountered by international or non-Norwegian researchers and PhD applicants. Generally speaking, research and research methodology are undergoing rapidly accelerating developments. This is also the case within the educational sciences. Therefore continuous upgrading is an obligatory part of every researcher's capacity building, as it also was for all of us who took part in the WB 06/04 project. Research discourses and development take place on different levels, including national and local levels related to specific sciences and universities. Thus, there are certain explicit as well as implicit particularities within the local research traditions and discourse in Norway and at the University of Oslo as well, including at the Faculty of Educational Sciences. It may be difficult enough to be socialized into general and local research discourse for Norwegian students and research candidates. But it is even more challenging for foreign researchers and PhD applicants who are socialized within other local traditions and, in addition, do not master Norwegian language. Many years of experience working with Master students and PhD research fellows at UiO coming from different countries and continents has made me aware of this challenge. At the Faculty of Educational Sciences, UiO, there have been steady improvements when it comes to information in English during the last few years. However, new information still tends to be published later and with fewer details than in the university's local language. Part Three in this book is an

attempt to cover the gap regarding access to information as well as contribute to general capacity building for international benefit. It is also an effort to provoke reflection upon the continuously changing field of research through history and, as it is also assumed to be, in the future. Three articles in this part consist of examples of successful research plans to PhD and Post Doc scholarships within different areas of education and special needs education. (Biseth, 2013; Damşa, 2013; Melby-Lervåg, 2013). The three articles represent a selection among the few successful research applications in the English language at our Faculty of Educational Sciences, UiO, since they are difficult to find, while it is easier to gain access to successful research applications in the Norwegian language. In addition, Part Four contains a shortened version of the joint plan for the project *Development towards the Inclusive School: Practices – Research – Capacity Building: Universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla, Zagreb & Oslo* (WB 06/04), with a focus on international comparative classroom studies towards inclusion. This part also contains individual research plans made by each of the seven participating universities based on the joint project plan.

However, the first article in Part Three is based on an interview study with senior researchers and successful international PhD applicants. The intention of this study was to shed light on possibilities, dilemmas and challenges related to development and presentation of research plans (Johnsen, 2013a). Thus, the article may be seen as an addition to the general advices found in research handbooks.

Theory or philosophy of science is a powerful tool for systematic reflections and argumentation for methodological choices in relation to research topics. Tone Kvernbekk (2013a and b) gives an introduction to the philosophy of science with two articles in this first part of the book. We will return to these contributions at the end of this article.

The structure of the book

Previously, the articles in this book have been introduced in connection with the two main target groups for the book, who are 1) international researchers and research applicants to Norwegian universities and other research institutions, and 2) researchers applying for or taking part in international cooperation projects. The articles have also been situated in relation to the three main goals of the European WB 06/04 research cooperation project.

As mentioned, the focus in this first anthology is on the preparatory steps leading up to the beginning of a research process. The book is divided into four parts:

Part One contains three articles, whereof this is the first. The next two articles provide an introduction to theory of science and discuss a selection of essential philosophical aspects related to educational research.

Part Two contains a discussion of the emergence and development of doctoral programmes from medieval to present time with a glance at further developments. The part consists of three articles and an introduction.

Part Three focuses on how to prepare and present research plans through an article based on interviews with senior researchers and PhD research fellows. Three examples of successful research plans within the educational sciences are presented.

Part Four is devoted to the WB 06/04 project containing eight research plans; one joint plan for the common project and seven individual project plans related to the common plan, one from each of the cooperating universities. The title of the joint research project is *International Comparative Classroom Studies towards Inclusion*.

Philosophy of educational research

What is science and research? And what characterizes educational research? These questions lie behind the simpler questions we may ask ourselves in the heat of research preparation or in the middle of a research cooperation process: "Is it worth it to spend so much time on this activity? Does this study lead to more applicable knowledge about education?" Such questions may be even more intrusive today than forty years ago when I was preparing my first study, since the landscape of research methodology has become much more diversified than in my student years. Methodological approaches which then seemed self-evident may now stand out as one of several options. As an example, qualitative methodologies were tried out for the first time by some of the universities in the WB 06/04 project, which had long traditions within quantitative methodology. The growing complexity in the field of educational research calls for analysis of different scientific options with its possibilities and limitations. The meaning and applicability of the key aspects constituting the scientific quality of a research project need to be examined.

In the two following articles Tone Kvernbekk (2013a and b) focuses the attention on a selection of key concepts within the educational sciences; categorization, justification and the distinction between observation and theory. She cites different interpretations and applications and offers a critical analysis

of their applicability and limitations. The concept of evidence- based practice has currently become a trade mark of different educational programmes and approaches, however, not without controversy among researchers as well as practitioners. Kvernbekk clarifies a number of the main discussions related to the concept in her second article.

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