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Otherness, Vulnerability and Inclusion

Julia Kristeva's Ethical-Political Critique and Program concerning Disabilities

Berit H. Johnsen

Introduction: principles and practice in inclusion discourse

Since the UNESCO Salamanca Statement was formulated in 1994, many countries on all continents have ratified the principle of educational inclusion. Through a series of declarations and statements on behalf of the United Nations and UN agencies, social and educational rights of all children including those with special needs have been formulated and promoted. The main documents are the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Children (1989), the statement of the World Conference in Jomtien, Thailand (1990) where the principle of education for all was explicitly introduced. Subsequently, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was published in 1994 the same year as the mentioned Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education. The most recent convention is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), where the principle of inclusive education is repeated and established in an even wider context.

It is tempting to conclude that the massive acceptance of the principle of inclusion and its integration in educational laws worldwide has led to inclusion in practice. However, although some countries have tried hard to fulfil this principle, no country seems to have reached full educational inclusion in practice. The reasons for the gap between principle and practice when it comes

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to exhibiting awareness of special needs education and inclusion are many and complex. This article focuses attention on individual attitudes and cultural mentalities of the majority society towards disabilities.

The French-Bulgarian scholar Julia Kristeva asks why persons with disabilities are not seen and why it is so difficult to create an inclusive society. She brings into focus an important aspect of inclusion discourse, which she calls 'our encounter with the stranger'. Who is this stranger? The stranger might be someone from another place, a foreigner or someone who seemingly is different from us. In her texts the concept 'the other' or 'the stranger in us' is developed as a psychoanalytic construction that provokes anxiety. The concept represents something which was once familiar; something mysteriously scary and hidden in our unconscious – the stranger in us – that is activated when we encounter something that we spontaneously perceive to be unfamiliar. The book *Strangers to Ourselves* (Kristeva, 1997c) describes this mental reaction towards foreigners. In a later text she argues that the intensity of this provoked anxiety is much stronger when we are confronted with disabilities.

Kristeva's message is that we need to acquire consciousness of the stranger in ourselves in order to be able to recognize the other, the stranger, as a unique and vulnerable fellow human being and citizen. This is the core of her psychoanalytic argument for an ethical-political humanism as well as for our social and individual responsibility. On this foundation she strongly criticizes current conditions for persons with disabilities in France, and applies arguments from the same scientific disciplines in her discussion of the reasons for these conditions as well as her proposed steps to improve the difficult situation. She lays out a line of arguments armed with several UN and UNESCO decrees and good examples from Canada and Sweden (Kristeva, 2008; UN, 1989; 1994; UNESCO, 1994) when advocating for making major improvements towards achieving an inclusive society; a society standing shoulder to shoulder with all citizens.

Kristeva's criticism and explanations and her optimistic engagement is in focus of this article on disability and education, where I use examples from Norwegian discourse and practice from where I draw upon the majority of my experience, in addition to other international examples. While Julia Kristeva's writing is well-known in a number of related discourses, her texts are still new to special needs education and inclusion discourse. It is therefore appropriate to provide a further introduction of her background and body of work.

Julia Kristeva

Julia Kristeva was born in Bulgaria in 1941. She learned French language and culture at a young age through her education by French nuns. Simultaneously, she was socialised within Marxist and Slavic culture, studying Russian language and literature. In 1966 she moved to Paris on a French-Bulgarian research fellowship, where she continued her studies and writing under the supervision of Lucien Goldmann and Roland Barthes. By the time she published her PhD work, *La révolution du langage poétique* (Revolution in Poetic Language, Kristeva, 1997a), she had already published several texts. She also studied clinical analysis, and is still practicing this profession alongside her academic work. As a newly qualified PhD, Kristeva was employed at the Research Institute for Text and Document Studies at the University of Paris 7 – Denis Diderot, where she is still working as Professor Emerita. She has held visiting professorships at several universities; with her most extensive connection with Columbia University in Toronto, Canada. Julia Kristeva has attracted interest and caused discussions within several disciplines both internationally and in Norway, where she was awarded as the first Holberg Prize Laureate in 2004.

Kristeva entered the Parisian linguistic and literature theory community with an outsider's ability to observe relationships between theorists from the eastern and western parts of Europe. She was welcomed into the politically radical Tel Quel Group and soon became a central figure there. She collaborated with her fellow countryman, the French-Bulgarian philosopher and linguist Tzvetan Todorov as well as with Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and other renowned persons in the French academic community.

Together with Todorov, Kristeva introduced the works of the Russian philosopher and literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, to the western world. It is worth mentioning that along with the texts of Lev Vygotsky, Bakthin's works are currently amongst the most discussed and applied within special needs- and regular education as well as psychology. One of the prominent interpreters of his texts within these scientific disciplines is Norwegian scholar Ragnar Rommetveit, who has contributed an article to this book (2014).

The May Revolution, which gave the designation 'The '68 Generation' to intellectuals all over Europe made an impact on Kristeva. She mentions this in her autobiographical essay, where she describes the Tel Quel Group's central position in the intellectual and political fermentation leading to the march towards Sorbonne (Johnsen, 2010a; 2011; Kristeva, 1997b; Moi, 1987; Oliver, 1997; Witt-Brattström, 1990).

Kristeva's texts are steeped in philosophical ideas. In her development of new ideas, she argues with references ranging from Antique philosophers to Kant and Hegel and her contemporaries, and she gives Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalytical texts a central place in her analysis, as we will see later in this article. The point of departure of Kristeva's ethical-political program is a psychoanalytic analysis of the relationship between the single person's inner psyche and the collective social consciousness.

Kristeva on vulnerability and the marginalising meeting

At the request of former French President Jacques Chirac, Kristeva wrote a critical report highlighting the living conditions of the disabled in France (2008[39]) in which she emphasizes encounters between disabled and non-disabled. She draws attention to indifference and fear being all too frequent aspects of the latter group's spontaneous response towards persons with disabilities, arguing that they appear as strangers. Even the manner in which they are excluded is different than for other groups, she argues, because more than those that are excluded due to their economic status, culture or religion, a person with a disability confronts us with our anxiety about our own vulnerability, our own incapability, and even our own mortality. In this way Kristeva places the encounter between disabled and non-disabled in the centre of marginalisation, exclusion and invisibility. We are dealing with individual attitudes towards fellow citizens that have human and social consequences, and she draws the attention to disability in an extended line of reasoning, regarding the phenomenon of being "strangers to ourselves".

As mentioned, Kristeva analyses this "excluding meeting" with reference to her previous publication, *Strangers to Ourselves* (Beardsworth, 2004; Kristeva, 1997c; McAfee, 2000). In this work the concept of 'the other' or 'the stranger in us' is developed as a psychoanalytic construction based on Sigmund Freud's discussion of the "Unheimlich", in English "uncanny strangeness". The concept represents something which was once familiar; something mysteriously scary and hidden in our unconscious – the stranger in us – that is activated when we meet something that we spontaneously perceive to be unfamiliar. *Strangers to Ourselves* describes this mental reaction towards foreigners. However, as already mentioned, in her *Letter to the President on Persons with Disability* (2008), Kris-

39. Kristeva's report was originally published in France in 2003.

teva argues that the intensity of this provoked anxiety is much stronger when we are confronted with disabilities. Eeven so, our reactions to physical or sensory disabilities are not as strong as when meeting a person with intellectual challenges. According to her line of argument, analysis that delves into our own psychic depths may bring to consciousness our fear of the stranger in ourselves. Our rejection of the other, the stranger, is actually about our own vulnerability. When we admit our vulnerability, we give ourselves a chance to recognise that there is a relationship between us and "the others" – those who are different – strange – those whom we are used to keeping at distance. This relationship is deeper than language categories and conventions, argues Kristeva, who continues with the thought that we must recognise our own vulnerability in order to acknowledge others' vulnerability.

However, the stranger in ourselves is not the only uncanny phenomenon hidden underneath our consciousness which contributes to our vulnerability. Another obscure and loathsome phenomenon haunts us, creating so much self-disgust that we abject it; we degrade it and eject it from our consciousness. Kristeva gives a nuanced description of the abject in the text *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). In line with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition, she takes the beginning of life and mental activity as her point of departure when describing the abject as the most fragile and archaic sublimation, or transformation of a human being's initial mental energy. The abject is neither a subject nor an object; it nonetheless remains inseparable from drives. It may appear within the gaps of what in psychoanalysis is called secondary repression[40]. Kristeva is unafraid to take into account the darker sides of the human mind in her construction of individual human and culturally situated reactions. She describes abjection as immoral, sinister, scheming and shady; it is essentially different from and more violent than what would be covered by the term 'uncanniness'. Thus, although our exclusionary encounter with the stranger to ourselves and abjection are two reactionary patterns that evoke negative and even frightening emotions, the reactions are due to different internal and possibly external incentives, and they have different features. According to Kristeva's analysis, the abject is a mental phenomenon characterised by being opposed to the conscious "I" at the same time as it safeguards the conscious mind against loathsome aspects of its complex initial development in its cultural context.

40. In psychoanalysis secondary repression is a form of repression in which conscious material that is reminiscent of repressed material is removed from consciousness.

The abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin – nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory – and meaning collapses. It is in this manner that the abject contributes to sublimation, which may lead to creativity and art (Ives, 2010). It also creates vulnerability. The "tightrope walking" of abjection in order to keep the conscious mind in balance and away from hunting the meaningless creates vulnerability. In her works *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), *Strangers to Ourselves* (1997c) and other related texts, Kristeva constructs explanations of different aspects and mechanisms of human vulnerability. Her arguments are psychoanalytic, focusing on the initial phase in the development of the human mind and using abjection as one point of departure and our confrontation with the stranger to ourselves as another. Her conclusion is that vulnerability is part of being human; in short, we are all vulnerable whether we have a disability or not. She discusses the confrontative encounter between disabled and non-disabled in order to focus attention on our joint vulnerability as human beings and promote our common solidarity as fellow citizens.

Through her analysis Julia Kristeva has provided a theoretically based explanatory model to some of the more shadowy aspects of the human mind; phenomena that have also been elucidated within the world literature, from Shakespeare and Ibsen, Tolstoj and Undset to contemporary authors. Her French colleague Charles Gardou elaborates on her characterisation of our shared human vulnerability in the following way:

> We are all intermediary human beings between plus and minus, the best and the worst, above and below. Unfavourable circumstances may, without warning, smash to pieces the self-confidence we are used to as unchangeable members of the good side of destiny. In any moment, it can throw us beyond ordinary conditions. No one is protected from being a stranger in relation to collective norms; to become a stranger in relation to the usual course of life; to become a stranger in the universe of others, in the eyes of the collective (Gardou, 2014).

Within the humanities and social sciences, Kristeva's model adds understanding to the folklore studies of *Fools, Loonies and Spookies* (Tullinger, skrullinger og skumlinger, 1998), made by Barbro Sætersdal, Professor in Special Needs Education. The studies reveal aspects of the non-official history of attitudes towards persons with intellectual challenges. In line with Kristeva's reasoning, Sætersdal wonders if there is actually room for these kinds of human beings in modern everyday life with its hunt for more beauty, more intelligence, more trendiness and more money. She questions how inclusive we truly are in our social circles

and local communities (Engebretsen, Johnsen & Markussen, 2008). Kristeva's focus on taking individual responsibility for our attitudes in our encounter with a stranger is an important contribution to Nordic as well as international disability- and special needs education discourse. She presents a psychoanalytic argumentation for an ethical and political humanism characterised by our recognition that the other, the stranger, is both unique and vulnerable. Kristeva also argues that we must take individual and social responsibility through making a personal commitment, not for fear or pity, but towards the other's face as our fellow human being and citizen. Thus she argues for individual and social responsibility.

Revitalisation of French Enlightenment ideas

In her urge for a change of attitudes, Kristeva reveals a new and expanded form of enlightenment. Through her use of psychoanalytic arguments to gain an understanding of the individual as a point of departure, Kristeva raises the discussion to a normative manifesto aiming to make cultural and social changes regarding mentality. She anchors the main pillar of her program historically by looking back on the initial French Enlightenment ideas concerning liberty, equality and fraternity. Thus she revitalises this internationally renowned slogan, so dear to her French fellow citizens, through reinterpreting and expanding on the notions of liberty, equality, community[41] by adding a fourth key concept; vulnerability. This expansion centres on recognising the community of vulnerability as well as of liberty (Kristeva, 2010).

Argumentative movements like these between the individual and culture/societal levels are characteristic of Kristeva's discussions. Oliver (1997) shows in her analysis of Kristeva's earlier works how she situates the single person's sub-consciousness in the centre of individual ethical choices that are related to the ethical mentality of the community.

41. The notions of liberty, equality and fraternity, became a slogan for the French Revolution from August 26, 1789. Kristeva refers directly to this. The emphasis on the community of brothers was, however, quickly criticised by contemporary women's rights activists. The French Olympe de Gouges pronounced the Women's Rights Declaration in 1793, and the English philosopher and educational scholar, Mary Wollstonecraft, argued for gender equality (Rustad, 2007). Against this background the initial slogan becomes less faltering by being rewritten to liberty, equality and community. The transformation from fraternity to community is done by the author of this chapter.

Social criticism and future optimism

Julia Kristeva's discussion of the strangers to ourselves follows after heavy criticism of the living conditions for persons with disabilities in France. She points to lack of governmental priorities, lack of sufficient education and social support, lack of education of special needs educators and lack of awareness of disabling conditions within other fields of education. She also points to examples of good practice in several countries, such as Sweden and Canada. However, she moves beyond the detailed social criticism and refers to current positive trends within international disability discourse manifested in a series of principle decrees on behalf of the United Nations and related organisations. In her *Letter to the President on Persons with Disability* she also shows optimistic engagement towards developing an inclusive society; a society standing shoulder to shoulder with all its citizens (Kristeva, 2008; UN, 1989; 1994; UNESCO, 1994).

Kristeva appeals to her French fellow citizens, reminding them that the cradle of care and education of the blind, deaf, developmentally and mentally disabled was in Paris. With a genealogical eye, she divides the history of modernity regarding humankind's attitudes towards disability into three stages: The first stage, the beginning in Paris in the second half of the eighteenth century, spread throughout Europe. As this optimistic wave reached the Nordic countries, Norway was one of the last to react, enacting its first Law on Schools for Abnormal Children in 1881 (Indst. O.Nr.12. 1881; Johnsen, 2000a). At that time Kristeva's second stage had already started further south on the continent. She characterises this stage by its transfer of responsibility for disabled persons from charity to the government. However, at the same time as governmental institution-building developed, another much more pessimistic tone emerged in European discourse. A new vocabulary appeared containing concepts such as uneducable, degeneration, race hygiene, eugenics, segregation and sterilisation (Johnsen, 1999–2000b; 2000a; 2001a). This change of mentality culminated with the radical eugenic experiments by the German Nazis in the genocide of Jews and Romans as well as the killings of sick and disabled. The post-Second World War awakening to these horrific facts necessitated an ideological turn towards what Kristeva describes as the third stage in humankind's attitudes towards disability, moving towards equality and inclusion.

The division into three periods does not indicate easily won simple changes of attitudes, and as the eugenic period shows, the development has not been a simple linear process towards steadily more equitable conditions for all citizens. On

the contrary, the process throughout history of modernity is complex, diffuse and often contradictory. However, Julia Kristeva hopes for an inclusive society.

The third stage in international attitudes towards education for all

According to Kristeva, the third stage of humankind's attitudes towards disability is characterised, not by "able supporting disabled", but by joint liberty, equality and mutual recognition of each other's vulnerability as well as support and care amongst all citizens. This is how Kristeva situates the idea of inclusion (2008). When this idea is applied to education, her understanding of inclusion is compatible with a core description of inclusion applied in current international research project among seven universities in five European countries; *Comparative Classroom Studies towards Inclusion* (WB 04/06):

> 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, 2000a; 2007; 2013; UNESCO, 1994).

In line with Kristeva, participating researchers in this study realise that we are only at the threshold of this third stage; we are still in the initiating phase towards achieving a school for all and inclusion. As in the second stage discussed by Kristeva, this new stage is also marked by complex and contradictory ideas, priorities and practices. In the following, national and international principles, policies and practices related to the beginning of Kristeva's third step are discussed in light of knowledge independent of Kristeva's texts, but in connection with her argumentation. At first, focus is on principles related to special needs education and inclusion as they appear on the international stage and with specific attention to Nordic and Norwegian discourse. In the subsequent discussion of practical consequences of inclusion discourse, examples are mainly taken from Norwegian sources.

Efforts towards education for all in historic perspective

As Kristeva points out, inclusion is currently on the political agenda in France as in other countries, and efforts are made to realise the principle worldwide under very different conditions. In some countries national expansion of non-payment schools goes hand-in-hand with a growing awareness of children with special educational needs in joint efforts towards achieving education for all. Based on my own international experiences, I would like to mention two countries on the African continent, Uganda and Ethiopia, where governmental authorities have taken different yet significant steps in sector reforms, higher education and development of free schools for all; girls, boys and children both with and without special educational needs (Johnsen & Teklemariam, 2006; Okwaput, 2013).

What are the roots of educational inclusion; how it is related to education in general and to special needs education in particular? As long as mankind has existed, there has been some kind of formal and informal education of the upcoming generations. Europe has a long tradition of providing systematic education. Compared to the ancient writings of Ethiopia and the developing educational traditions in Europe, Norwegian writing culture and formal education is young. However, Amos Comenius' (1592–1670) theories on education for all and the German Pietist, August Hermann Francke's (1663 –1727) realisation of his educational model for all children – rich and poor alike – became models for the Norwegian or free school, which has developed without interruption since that time (Johnsen, 2000a).

The Norwegian case. The roots of the Norwegian free school were founded with a Royal Decree or Educational Act) in 1739, almost one century before political parliamentarism was reintroduced in the country in 1814. This first "Act" pronounced that the school should be "for All and Everybody" (Forordning, 1739). What did they mean by a 'school for all' at that time? Or did they understand the full commitment of the concept "all"? As a matter of fact it took almost 150 years until the authorities realised what it really meant to open the school to ALL children, and a new act indicated that the regular school was for those children only who could handle school requirements. Some children were excluded. At that time the first Norwegian special school law had just been passed (Indst. O. No. 12. 1881).

As Kristeva (2008) also pointes to, the cradle of modern special needs education was situated in Paris, far away from Norway during the late eighteenth

century. From Paris ideas and skills spread throughout Europe. The three Scandinavian countries joined hands in following up this new knowledge through holding seminars and creating a joint professional journal. Norway was the last of the Scandinavian countries to establish special classes and schools. The mentioned special school law stated that the Norwegian special education profession should be based on regular teacher education and further specialisation in special needs. This close connection between regular- and special needs education has always been a main feature of the Norwegian special education profession, higher education and research. During nearly one century, three so-called "special school" laws were passed, the last one after the Second World War (Johnsen, 2000a; 2000b; 2001b; Lov, 1915; Lov, 1951). Thus, even though a large number of children with limited special needs were offered schooling in special classes within the regular school, development of education for children with disabilities was segregated from the regular school during this century; and many children with disabilities were not enrolled in school at all, in spite of their legal right to attend.

The turn towards normalisation and revitalisation of the school for all. Institutionalisation of persons with disabilities spread all over Europe and was accompanied by segregation of increasing numbers of groups with different special needs. How did this development change course? During the 1960s, segregated institutionalisation was seriously questioned and a turn away from this policy appeared – first in Denmark and Sweden. The principle of normalisation, and later integration and inclusion became internationally recognised[42]. Thus, educational inclusion in a school of generosity with teaching adapted to the educational needs of all pupils was confirmed as principles in Norwegian educational acts and national curriculum during the 1970s. Similar efforts were made in many countries.

Between principles and practice

Due to this turn in Norwegian educational legislation it is without doubt quite different to be a child or youth with disabilities and special needs in the Norwegian education system today than it was forty years ago. Laws and official policy indicate that the greater society has taken important steps towards realising ideas about equal access to education in local regular schools. All children and

42. For more details on the turn towards normalisation, integration and inclusion, see Johnsen (2014).

youth have access to free education at all levels. Additional finances cater for special needs education. On local level a large number of schools are developing increasing knowledge and skills in inclusive practices. However, as mentioned in the introduction, although many countries have made efforts to implement this principle, no country seems to have reached full educational inclusion in practice. This also applies to Norway, and there are still many obstacles to surmount. Thus, it is appropriate to ask, in the spirit of Kristeva's new humanism, if cultural, professional and individual attitudes have managed the radical turn from exclusion and neglect towards acceptance and solidarity with all pupils – with and without disabilities.

In spite of the many good examples of inclusive practices, it is sad to observe the creativity which many municipalities and schools display in order to find ways around the official intentions regarding inclusive schools. In the shadow of local educational responsibility, extensive segregation is practiced through organising of special units and special schools. Parents are confronted with the choice between sending their child with special needs to the local school or to another school with special expertise located far from friends. Studies indicate good and less good practices when it comes to cooperation between teachers and special needs educators within schools and between schools and educational psychological services (EPS) (Mjøs, 2007; Solli, 2004). A survey among parents and teachers of 350 primary school pupils with developmental disabilities (Ytterhus & Tøssebro, 2005) documents that 57% of these pupils were placed in special units the majority of their time at school, and 34% were in their regular class less than five hours a week. The study indicates that it was not the pupils' needs but rather practical conditions and personal opinions of the school and teachers that decided the extent of segregation. Here we are confronted with an existing widespread mentality towards pupils with special educational needs. These findings are supported by Nordahl & Hausstätter's report (2009), which documents a general increase in segregated special needs educational practices between 2006 and 2008. It also shows that 1/3 of the resources spent on special needs education was not carried out by professional special needs educators, but by assistants without any professional educational competence. The studies referred to above reveal a gap between official intentions and practice in several municipalities. They raise questions about the relationship between officially formulated attitudes and professional and individual attitudes on local level. They may even indicate that the positive trend towards Kristeva's third stage of humankind's attitudes towards disability is about to turn. Nordahl and

Hausstätter's study (2009:175) seems to support this suspicion when they conclude: "It looks as if focus on academic results in global contexts and on transfer of responsibility to local level is met by strategies reducing acceptance of divergence and difference".

In keeping with Nordahl and Hausstätter's conclusion, there is reason to question whether the educational principle of the inclusive school has vanished in the mist of recent years' media coverage of international school-performance evaluations and new-liberal privatisation debate. It was therefore interesting to note that one of the main journals of the Norwegian teacher trade union, *Utdanning* (Education), devoted an entire issue to a status review of inclusion in Norwegian schools (Holterman & Jelstad, 2012[43]). According to the union leader, the argument for this focus was that everybody who attends a Norwegian school is a future citizen in Norwegian society, and it is important that as many individuals as possible learn to be a part of this community. In other words, the argument for educational inclusion was social inclusion. Holterman and Jelsted interviewed leading politicians, officials and researchers and studied statistical information on educational organisation of pupils with special educational needs. Their research issue concerned what has happened with pupils with special educational needs after the close-down of national special schools and the transfer of responsibility for all children with special needs or otherwise, to the municipality level. They found that inclusion was still on the political agenda of the current Minister of Education. However, they also found a lack of priorities and systematic follow-up of the political principles on all levels of political and public administration; the national Directorate for Education (Utdannings-direktoratet) as well as the commissioners of education on the county and municipal levels. Incomplete information gathering concerning pupils with special educational needs seemed to be one of the unfortunate consequences. The most serious finding was, however, that the number of pupils with special educational needs placed in special units or schools did not appear to have decreased. Larger municipalities had preserved former special units and schools and established a number of new ones, while some smaller municipalities cooperated in establishing similar units. Thus, it seems that several municipalities and schools have not taken into account the fundamental change of

43. Since 2012 Sonja Holterman and Jørgen Jelstad have continued to write about "the new special schools". In 2013 the first Specialized Press Assosiation Price (Fagpressens pris) for investigative journalism was awarded to Holterman and Jelstad in the journal *Utdanning* for their articles on "The new special schools" (Svendsen, 2013).

educational practice that is required in the principles of educational inclusion. Holterman and Jelstad's critical report was followed up on the national radio channel, NRK2, during prime time, when a number of key spokesmen were interviewed in the program EKKO (2013). Perhaps a renewed debate on inclusion and human dignity is on its way into the media?

In spite of the rather discouraging criticism expressed by researchers and journalists, substantial resources are spent on school development towards educational inclusion. The funding mostly come from the national level and is directed towards research and innovation; either directly from research funds and the Directorate for Education or indirectly on the municipal level. A recent example is the project *Model Development or Brainstorming*? (Fylling & Rønning, 2007), where the Directorate financed three years of school innovation followed by an evaluation project. The innovation activities involved ten municipalities and three counties. The intention was to develop models for individually adapted education practices in order to reduce the extent of special education as more students get a well-adapted programme within regular education. As the title of the evaluation indicates, the researchers found several new "good practices" in individually adapted education, but few of systematic models or any noticeable reduction of special needs. They concluded with asking the questions: 1) Why was there no marked reduction of decreasing special needs? 2) Could the reason be unrelated to the changes in regular education (Fylling & Rønning, 2007:13)? One might ask if they thought it was the children who did not fit into the project.

How do the stakeholders of these two related projects understand the phenomena of individually adapted education, special education,[44] regular education and the relationship between them? It seems as if special education is understood as segregated teaching and individually adapted education as regular education. Where is the special needs educational knowledge situated between these two constructed opposites? A glance at the Internet shows a wide range of different interpretations and applications of these key concepts in Norway and internationally, and there is consequently a general feeling of insecurity concerning the fundamental understanding of educational inclusion and the role of special needs educational knowledge in the inclusive school.

As shown, inclusion discourse is complex, divided into different branches and at times contradictory. Kristeva has observed this and warns against pit-

44. The term special education used here is the English translation in Fylling & Rønning, (2007) of the Norwegian concept "spesialundervisning", or "special educational teaching".

falls in attitudes in current efforts towards achieving inclusion. She directs the attention towards what she calls a reverse interpretation of inclusion which, in her opinion, implies a new reductionist ideology. This ideology, she argues, renounces special needs and at the same time praises the way a disability almost "disappears" when the disabled is given what may be called "increased social responsibility". She points out that there may even be a desire to save money lying beneath this attitude (Kristeva, 2008; 2010). Similar reductionist views are recognised in the argumentation that special needs education does not belong in the inclusive school; an argumentation which has also been imported directly from international contexts and discourse into the Norwegian context.

Towards inclusion and Kristeva's third stage of humankind's attitudes towards disability

Above, the twisting path towards Kristeva's third stage of humankind's attitudes towards disability has been outlined by pointing to some international and mostly Norwegian educational history and current policy, and to the seeming gap between policies and practices. In view of the mentioned reductionist view of special needs education as part of inclusive practices a clarification of the role of special needs education in the inclusive school is timely.

The answer to the question on the role of special needs education must be related to regular teaching, since both teachers and special needs educators are necessary in the inclusive school. According to Norwegian educational tradition the teacher and the special needs educator have a common field of knowledge and skills that gives them a solid basis for cooperation in the common arenas of the school and the class. In addition, the teacher holds qualifications in all school subjects, something the special needs educator does not have; whereas the special needs educator has qualifications beyond the regular teacher related to the diversity of learning processes, barriers to learning and corresponding skills in educational support. In philosophical terms, special needs education develops knowledge about the ontological and epistemological situation and conditions of disability and the variety of special education needs. Therefore,

the presence of both professions and the quality of their cooperation are fundamental to creating inclusive practices in the polyphonic class and school[45].

At the centre of this cooperation are the two levels of curricula, which are the keys to individually meaningful education adapted to the level of mastery and proximal learning capabilities of each pupil in the class; the individual- and the class curricula. The relations between these two levels of curricula constitute the core of the inclusive school (Johnsen, 2001c; 2007; Vygotsky, 1978).

Conclusion

To return to the question of whether Julia Kristeva's discussion on the stranger in ourselves may contribute to the Norwegian case, the answer is 'yes' when confronted with the gap between official intentions and practices in school, as reported studies indicate. There is reason to believe that individual and cultural-social mentality towards the stranger – be it a foreign immigrant or a person with some kind of disability – functions as a serious barrier to bridging the gap between official intentions concerning educational inclusion and practices in some local communities and schools. Instead of seeing the individual pupil who is situated on the side-line of traditional teaching due to his or her unusual educational needs, the school seems to hide behind organisational, financial and even professional barriers.

Many options as well as obstacles have to be visited in the work towards inclusion in Norway and internationally within different contexts. In addition to providing sufficient professional skills, financial and physical frameworks, legislation and structure, the school needs, in Kristeva's spirit, humanistic acceptance of all pupils. It also needs the recognition and acceptance of the stranger in us, whether we are professionals, researchers or politicians. Kristeva's ethical-political challenge is therefore that each and every one of us confronts our own ghosts; that we confront the fear of our own vulnerability and lack of ability to encounter persons with disabilities. These are the prerequisites of humanistic acceptance of all individuals – with or without disabilities – as our equals as partners and fellow citizens (Engebretsen, Johnsen, Kirkebæk & Markussen, 2010; Johnsen, 2010b; Kristeva, 2008).

45. According to an OECD-report in 1982 (in Johnsen, 1985) Norway had at that time the highest number of teachers with continuing education in special needs education in the regular school of all the OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

However, we may not believe that internalising appreciative attitudes to persons with disabilities happens once and for all. The stranger within us does not disappear, but reappears from situation to situation and from generation to generation.

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