

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COLLABORATION
BETWEEN PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS AND THE
PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS**

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to contribute to an optimal educational situation for children with special needs, by setting focus on facilitating and inhibiting factors in the collaboration between the home and school.

Methodology: The project applied a phenomenological study approach. Main data were from nine semi-structured in-depth interviews. The parents', teachers' and principals' perspectives on facilitating and inhibiting factors in collaboration were explored through a thematic network analysis.

Results: Facilitating factors of collaboration were the teachers', parents' and principals' dedication for pupils thriving and development. However this is not always transferred to the collaboration between home and school. This study reveals inhibiting factors of time, structure, blurry roles and not satisfactory communication that led to non - functional collaboration between home and school, possibly resulting in unsatisfactory conditions for the pupil.

Conclusion: The collaboration between home and school would benefit on having clarity in rules and roles, and better communication by having a clear mission. The inhibiting and facilitating factors in the collaboration are likely to affect the pupils learning and development.

Norsk sammendrag

Hensikt: Formålet med denne oppgaven var å belyse hva foresatte, lærere og rektorer fremhevet som viktige faktorer for hjem-skole samarbeid når eleven har spesielle behov. I denne sammenheng er spesielle behov definert ved elevers bruk av individuell opplæringsplan, IOP.

Metode: Et fenomenologisk-studie design ble benyttet, og bygget på til sammen ni semi-strukturerte dybdeintervju fra foresatte, lærere og rektorer.

Resultater: Fasiliterende faktorer i samarbeidet viste at foresatte, lærere og rektorer er dedikerte for å tilrettelegge for læringsutbytte og trivsel hos eleven. Dette ble dessverre ikke alltid overført til samarbeidssituasjonen, mellom foresatt-skole eller lærer-rector. Hindrende faktorer av uklare roller, tid, struktur og ikke-fordelaktig kommunikasjon førte til ikke-tilfredsstillende samarbeid mellom skole og hjem når en tilrettelegger for elevens spesielle behov.

Konklusjon: Samarbeidet mellom skole og hjem vil ha nytte av klarhet i roller, forventninger, struktur og bedre kommunikasjon. Det hadde bidratt positivt til en felles forståelse av samarbeidet. De fasiliterende og hindrende faktorer i samarbeidet påvirker sannsynligvis elevens læring og utvikling.

1. Introduction

1.1 Collaboration for children with special needs

The school as an institution receives a lot of attention. In politics the school is often discussed in terms of physical environment, learning conditions, educational outcomes, competence of teachers and more. School is a place where considerable time is spent, and where people constantly interact with others. Given the time spent there the school plays an important role in shaping the lives of those who go there to learn, play and work (Leger, Young, Blanchard and Perry, 2010). Worldwide health and education are inextricably linked, thus healthy young people who attend school tend to learn better and good education leads to healthier people (Ibid, p.). Our physical, mental and social wellbeing influence how well we learn, work and play (St Leger et al, 2010).

Customized teaching is generally assumed to be health promoting for the pupil. In this study children with special needs are the pupils that do not have or cannot have dividend from regular teaching. They are therefore granted an individual education plan, IEP. An IEP is a tool, which is intended to provide all pupils with the teaching necessary to develop and enable them to reach as far as possible in their educational careers. There are many factors that contribute to successful learning for pupils (Scarr, ref. Einarsen & Skogstad, 2010). Health (physical and mental), motivation and

the feeling of acceptance and trust in school are among such factors. It is also important to have good teaching customized to the pupils' abilities and skills and further to have support from home (Ibid). The collaboration between the home and school is a means to achieve an optimal educational situation, necessary if special education is to work in praxis (Ekeberg & Holmberg, 2000; Nordahl, 2007). Collaboration between school and home regarding customized teaching is seen to be health promoting and academically beneficial for the pupil.

To have a good and inclusive learning environment one must understand the conditions that promotes the pupils' health, thriving, social and academic learning (Nordahl, 2007). Health promotion is defined as: *“the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health”* (WHO, Glossary, 1998 p. 1).

The home-school collaboration is beneficial for all pupils. In Norway's document of curriculum, “Kunnskapsløftet” (2006), which can be translated “Lifting Knowledge”; the home-school collaboration's significance is enhanced as a pillar for pupils' thriving and health. When having an individual education plan the collaboration intensifies both in time and importance. Research shows that collaboration between the school and parents of pupils that needs it the most is challenging (Stormont, Herman,

Reinke, David & Goel, 2013). This is due to lack of mutual understanding of what the collaboration consists of (Nordahl & Drugli, 2007). The increase of special needs education has led to more pupils not achieving a complete diploma (Bakken & Elstad, 2012). This is disturbing as the comprehensive school of Norway seeks to reduce social inequity and create more equity in the society (Imsen, 2000).

The collaboration is complex and the existing research has measured it differently by addressing different phenomena (Nordahl & Drugli, 2013). Knowledge about the process and the factors that facilitate and inhibit the collaboration would help collaborating partners to increase the chance of synergy (Huxham, 2003), to collaborate about the mutual tasks concerning the pupils learning and development. The aim of collaboration is to produce outcomes that are only possible by working with others (Corwin, Corbin, Mittelmark, 2012).

The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning has been employed to illuminate the collaborative factors in this study. This model focuses on the collaborating process of actual practice, rather than theoretical conceptualizations, which dominates the field of research (Corwin et al, 2012).

1.2 Research question

To contribute to an optimal educational situation for the pupils, and a good collaboration between home and school, the following research question has been addressed:

Collaboration between school and home regarding children with special needs: What is the inhibiting and facilitating factors from the perspectives of parents, teachers and principals?

2. Literature review

2.1 Collaboration between home and school

Health and learning is created in interplay of environmental and personal factors (Naidoo & Wills, 2009). A good collaboration between the school and parents is of high importance for the pupils' learning outcome, and is a process of mutuality in the relations between the parties (Nordahl, 2007). The parents have a significant role and statutory rights in their child's school-life. According to the Children Act §30 (Barneloven, §30) the parents have the main responsibility and a duty to provide the children a safe upbringing and to ensure education in accordance with the child's abilities and interests. While the government has the responsibility for the overarching framework in school (aimed to provide all pupils to develop and enable them to reach as far as possible in their educational careers regardless of family-background), it is the school and the teacher that are responsible to conduct the teaching so that learning outcomes are the best for the pupil. This is also enshrined in various laws and regulations like the §1-1, Education Act (Opplæringsloven §1-1). The school is the professional part and are responsible to initiate the collaboration with the parents. The imposed collaboration is also stated in Kunnskapsløftet both in the general part and in the "*Learning Poster*" (*Læringsplakaten*, Læreplanen Kunnskapsløftet, 2006). The collaboration between parents and school are

in partnership, which means that they are equal partners (Nordahl, 2000). It also implies certain conditions like mutual information. They should know each other's values, interests and discuss ways of dealing with mutual tasks (Nordahl, 2000).

When parents have an active role in the collaboration with the school it leads to better learning outcomes, better self-regulation, job satisfaction, fewer behaviour problems, less absenteeism, good relationships with peers and teachers, improving work habits, and higher aspirations with regard to education for the pupil (Drugli & Nordahl, 2013).

There are several levels in the collaboration, and Nordahl (2007) provides clarity on this by stating the levels in reference to the national guidelines. The first level is information of how teaching is done at school, how the pupil manages and more. It also includes the parents' information to school. Second level is the dialogue and discussion between the parties, where meanings exchange. In this setting it is important that the parents are heard and believed. Third level is the involvement and participation where both parties have influence on decisions and the pedagogics involving the pupil. From the parent's view it is about having their opinion taken into account, where both parties are making decisions. The "School of the future" enhance the good dialogue to be the most important tool in collaboration. (Fremtidens skole) They suggest that teachers and principals

should have instruction in the parental involvement in school, as parents potential as contributors in the children's education is not satisfactory, this is also supported by Nordahl (2007; FUG, 2012).

Poor collaboration is due to several reasons: it is not a necessity for a school to have an institutional system in how to conduct this collaboration, other than the formal parent meetings, also the collaboration between teacher and parent is not in the teachers' formal education, nor in praxis at school training to become a teacher (Karlsen Bæck, 2007). Some teachers may feel insecure about how to collaborate and therefor create a distance between themselves and the parents (Ibid). The collaboration is also affected by parent level of education and their socioeconomic status, both in a facilitating and inhibiting way (Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2010). There is a need for tools in how to handle this collaboration (Karlsen Bæck, 2010), so that good education for all children will be possible (Davis, 1999). If special needs education are to work in praxis, communication and collaboration is needed between the home and school, and between the school and the external support system (Ekeberg & Holmberg, 2000). Special needs education presupposes collaboration between home and school. This is important so that the pupil will have the most of the tutorial (Opplæringsloven, Utdanningsdirektoratet). It is enhanced that the parents

should understand *why* their child needs special education, and to participate and monitor the design of the educational provision (Ibid).

2.2 Health promotion

The Ottawa Charter was the product of the first international conference in health promotion, arranged by the WHO in 1986. The conference had participants from 38 countries including Norway. The charter is considered the most important political document in the health promotion, and puts health on the agenda in all sectors of society. The strategy of health promotion is about conducting measures that increases the probability to achieve good health, thriving and wellbeing. (Aarø, 2011) *”In health promotion the value of partnering is an article of firmly established truth”* (Corbin & Mittelmark, 2008, p. 366).

As early as 1950 the World Health Organization noted, *“to learn effectively, children need good health”* (WHO, 1995a, referred in A. Lee, 2002, p. 29).

The understanding of health is according to Mæland (2010) a reflection of our life perceptions and values of priorities, cultural and social relations. He describes three different ways of perceiving health: as absence of disease, as a resource and as wellbeing. Health promotion sees health as a resource (Mæland, 2010). Health is defined: *“a resource for everyday life, not the*

object of living. It is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities” (WHO, Glossary, 1998, p.19)

There are three main strategies to promote health: (1) to advocate: influence and increase the political and social acceptance and knowledge of health promotion. (2) To enable: to collaborate with individuals and groups, to enable people to take care of own health and (3) - To mediate: to join the good forces to promote health, by creating extensive collaborative relationships (Mæland, 2010, p.76) The five action areas to be addressed are:

1. Build Healthy Public Policy:

Health promotion puts health on the agenda in all sectors and levels. This applies to the comprehensive school of Norway, its curriculum and the various laws and regulations that ensure the wellbeing of the pupils. This level indirectly influences the health of the pupil and schools staff, and the basic foundation for the life-long learning. Awareness and attention to this is beneficial for all involved parties at school and home, to help identify obstacles to create more equity in society.

2. Create Supportive Environments:

This action area applies to the socioeconomic approach to health. This includes taking care of one another other, and letting school and work be a source of health. The psychosocial environment is of importance (§ 9,

Education Act), and parents can contribute positively if invited to collaborate (Nordahl, 2007).

3. Strengthening Community action:

This action area applies to the human and material resources in the community. The collaboration between parents and school will ideally enhance participation. However empowerment and sense of ownership at the community and individual level needs to be fostered for positive change to happen (Mittelmark, Wold, Samdal, 2012 p. 87).

4. Develop Personal Skills:

This applies to education to increase control over ones health to cope throughout life. Education enables and prepares the pupil for all stages in life through building skills and knowledge to allow for mastery and development. Early action and IEP are measures for customized teaching.

5. Reorient Health Services:

This applies to the responsibility of health services. In health promotion this is shared amongst individuals, community groups and institutions and government. They must work together for a system that pursuits health. (WHO, Ottawa Charter, 1998) School too is an institution that influences health.

2.3 Collaboration for Health and Education

In school and workplace the Working Environment Act and the Education Act address health. Health promotion is best achieved through collaboration

and complimentary approaches (WHO, Ottawa Charter, 1998).

Collaboration in partnership has become very common (Endresen, 2007), thus knowledge of functional processes of partnership is useful. The aim of collaboration is to produce outcomes that are only possible by working with others (Corwin et al, 2012). Various definitions have been used on collaboration. Wood and Grey (1991, referred in Corwin et al, 2012 p. 2) provides the following: “*Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain*”. Another definition brought by Straus (2002, Ibid) suggests the collaboration to be problem solving and consensus building. The term partnership has been used to describe various constellations of working together including collaboration (Corbin, 2006). The collaboration between home and school should be in *partnership*, which focuses on equality between the parties (Nordahl, 2007).

There are several factors that influence collaboration, such as the schools culture. There are many definitions to culture, as no single definition of culture is universally accepted, but a general agreement is that “*culture is learned, shared, and transmitted from one generation to the next, and it can be seen in a groups values, norms, practices, systems of meaning, ways of life, and other regularities*” (Huff & Kline, 2008, p. 4). There are also

subcultures, which are formed by members need to maintain and reinforce their culture (Bang, 1988). This can lead to a division of loyalty towards value and interest of the organisation (Ibid). The leaders role and impact of the culture is vital by the leader's power and position. Influence and measures can be done on several levels, such as addressing routines, systems and structures and of course also addressing leader's own actions, rewards and sanctions. Further the leader decides who constitutes the culture and the position in it (Bang, 1988) The leader has a great part and influence in promoting positive cycles of interaction, by attending to the basal psychological needs of the employees (Hetland & Hetland, 2011).

The three basal needs are the autonomy, competence and belonging. A workplace and school distinguished by having these needs fulfilled is considered a resource for the employee and the pupil. Autonomy can be achieved through social support, inspiration and empowerment (Ibid, p. 113). Mæland (2010) explains the empowerment to "gain greater power and control over". Empowerment for health is defined as "*a process through which people gain greater control over decisions and actions affecting their health*" (WHO, Glossary 1998, p. 6). This will strengthen people in dealing with obstacles and allow for development. Competence is about peoples desire to mastery in interrelations with the environment. Mastery gives energy and enthusiasm, and this can be achieved through tasks that are

meaningful and enjoyable for the person. The belonging aspect is of importance for human beings, as “we are not created to be alone”. Lack of a social network or loneliness can have serious consequences for health. (Hetland & Hetland, 2011).

In collaboration some sort of communication is present. Corbin and Mittelmark (2007) (pls. see model chapter 2.4) notes, the face-to-face meetings to be the best way of communication. In this being a good listener is an asset. First to actually listen to what the partner conveys, without interrupting, then to show respect for the content (Egan, ref. in Einarsen & Skogstad, 2010). Also to convey that the message is understood is important along with an empathic face (Einarsen & Skogstad, 2010).

Motivation should also be present between the partners, and further to have knowledge and ability to adapt and customize the message to the other part (Haukedal, 2014). The same author shares that *good* communication is characterized by positive attitude and atmosphere with respect and equivalence. Mutual openness and the will and ability to praise and acknowledge are also assets in the good conversation. Lastly Haukedal suggests to change between listening and talking, and to have flexibilities in roles and to be accountable. (Haukedal, 2014)

Corwin and colleagues (2012) points to the time aspect of collaboration, that collaborating takes the time from the partners. Thus it is important to have time well spent, and synergy should be the aim. The parties should also share a common goal, as that is a unifying effect (Gray, ref. Ibid p. 11).

2.4 Theoretical framework

Health promotion's principle to promote equality in life's chances is best achieved through its core spirit of collaboration. Providing pupils with equal opportunities for education is best accomplished through collaboration. In the home-school collaboration there are set partners to work for the benefit of the pupil. The teacher, parent and principal constitute the participants in this collaboration. They are influenced by environmental factors. The parties represent different values, interests, experience and competence. They may also have different expectations of how to collaborate, and what to expect from the other parties.

The following model has guided this study in an attempt to illuminate the facilitating and inhibiting factors in the collaboration between the home and school. The model has previously proved useful in documenting the functioning of collaboration in a health promotion perspective (Corbin, Mittelmark & Lie, Corwin, 2009; Dosbayeva, 2010; Endresen, 2008; Kamau 2010, ref in Corwin et al, 2012). It has also been applied as a tool in

planning, implementing and evaluating collaborations (Corbin, Fisher & Bull, 2011; Haugstad, 2011, Corwin et al, 2012).

The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning

The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning, BMCF (Corbin, 2006) is a systems model to understand the interactions in collaboration (Corwin et al, 2012). Earlier theories on collaboration have been based upon concepts, rather than the actual practice (Ibid). Exception from this is the work of Wandersman, Goodman and Butterfoss (1997), which introduced the open systems model, which the BMCF is built upon and further develops. The model is based on the functioning of the partnership, by basic components of collaboration and the interaction between them (Corbin, 2006).

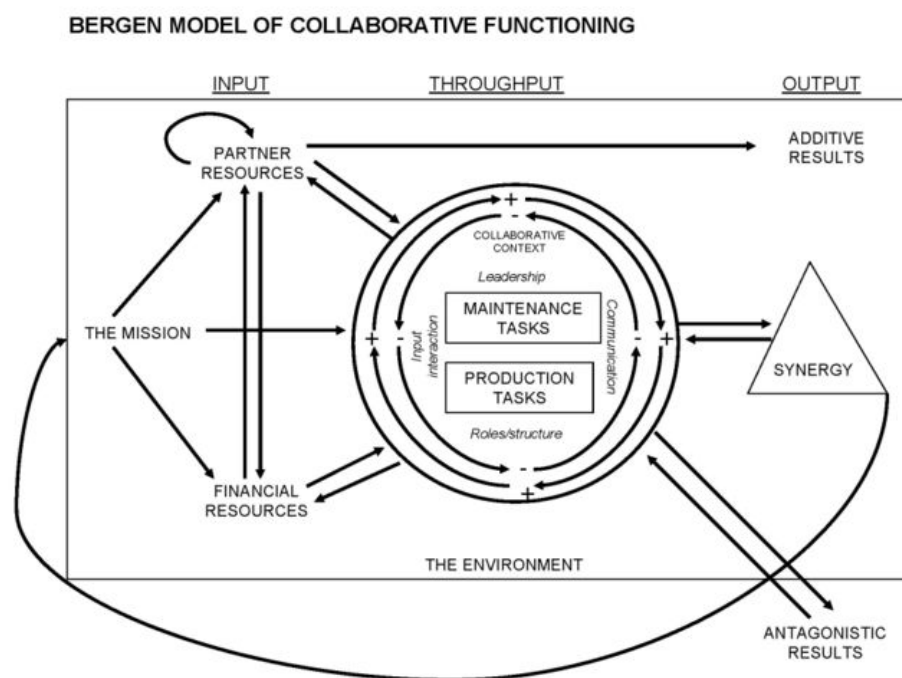


Figure 1. The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning

In the systems model there is input, throughput and output. As shown in Figure 1, the input consists of partner resources, the mission and financial resources. These are the elements brought into the collaboration. The mission unifies the partners, which is the reason for collaboration - in this case the pupil's learning and development. The partner resources can differ widely both in personal aspects and by professional background as they do in this study, represented by the principal, teacher and parent. Partner resources are otherwise referred to as the contributions of time, commitment, skills and competence and so fourth (Endresen, 2007). The financial resources influence the production, and can also facilitate the

external expertise like the Speech Therapist at school. The environment or context will influence the collaboration by the laws and regulations, such as the decisions for an individual educational plan for the pupil.

The throughput consisting of maintenance and production is constantly interacting with the inputs and will result in the outputs. When collaborating the process of maintenance and production activities takes place. While maintenance can contribute to a good relation and working environment, the production is more task specific and leads to the production such as reports, the pupils' development and individual decisions. The production and maintenance are affected by the complex interaction, illustrated by the positive and negative cycles in figure 1. They consist of the roles and structures, leadership, communication and how inputs interact with each other (Corwin et al, 2012). Both negative and positive cycles can be present simultaneously (Corbin & Mittelmark, 2008)

There are three different types of outputs in the model: the additive, the synergy and the antagonistic. These are illustrated by using mathematical numbers. The additive output is having no benefit from the collaboration: $2 + 2 = 4$. Thus the result is not affected by the interaction in collaborating. The synergistic outcome, the purpose of the collaboration is when the

interaction enhances the ability to produce something the actors could not have achieved separately: $2 + 2 = 5$ or more. Lastly the antagonistic, when the dominance of negative cycles produces an output which is poorer than what the partners could have achieved separately: $2 + 2 = 3$ or less. (Ibid)

3. The context of the Norwegian educational system

3.1 The comprehensive school of Norway

In Norway the schools system is built on the understanding of the comprehensive school (*Enhetskolen*). The school shall contribute to reduce social inequities and create more equity in society. The comprehensive school is a common term for a variety of educational policy ideals and practical measures that will help to ensure that schools actually have this influence. This applies first and foremost to the primary school (up to 16 years). The comprehensive school is based on four basic dimensions that explain what the school will promote. (Imsen, 2000).

Telhaug (ref in Imsen, 2000 p.) summarizes the characteristics of the four dimensions of the school to be the resource-, the social-, the cultural- and the inequity dimension. The resources are what the school systems have at disposal. The resources should be equally distributed among schools and

municipalities to avoid differences. The social dimension will facilitate interaction for all students. The schools should not be competing, but include all children in a given geographical area. The cultural dimension involves how the pupils meet a common academic culture basis. Then lastly the inequity dimension which is based on respect for differences, and the acceptance of the individual character. This is conveyed by Imsen (2000) to be the fundament of the Norwegian school: That the children will attend the same school, to learn to respect one another other, accept each other's differences and uniqueness and learn to help one another in a social community.

The inequity dimension is specifically addressed in the document “Early action for life-long learning” (White paper no. 16, Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2006). The government seeks to reduce unjust inequities in the society, like class-differences, the economical inequities, combat poverty and other forms of marginalization (Ibid p. 7). The aim of this is to avoid inequities in health, which are systematic differences in health status between socioeconomic groups in terms of income, education and occupation. Social inequity in health is systematic, unjust and socially produced and can therefore be changed (Whitehead & Dahlgren, 2009, p. 14). The government aims to promote equal opportunities for everybody to develop themselves and their abilities. As the title indicates an early

intervention in the pupils' education is an important means to reduce social inequities. By early intervention it is meant to facilitate the education at an early stage in life for the child and also that action is initiated as soon as the challenges have been discovered (White paper no. 16, Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2006).

Various structural strategies are set to reduce social inequities in school, such as expansion of lessons in the lower grades providing extra time for teaching, the pupil's independent learning and physical activities. This is beneficial for all pupils. However it will be of special importance for pupils that do not have an adequate follow-up from home. Different types of tests and surveys are conducted in the school to reach and evaluate the pupils at an early stage of their education, to determine if intervention is needed. Also Norwegian schools have fewer pupils per teacher than other countries in Europe. (White paper no.16, Ministry of Education and Research Norway, 2006) However a public committee appointed by the Ministry of Education to assess the extent to which the school covers the competencies pupils will need in the future at 2033 point to a maximum of 15 pupils per teacher, as this will contribute to customize the teaching at the different levels of the pupil-groups. Currently arrangement is that it should be provided adequate teaching to the pupil according to the Education Act (Union of Education, 2011), which means that there is not a set number of pupils per teacher.

3.2 The curriculum of Norway - Kunnskapsløftet

According to Bakken & Elstad (2012) Norway's document of curriculum Kunnskapsløftet, was introduced in a time of turbulence. Kunnskapsløftet aims to raise the overall quality of teaching, competence and knowledge, and to "create a better culture of learning". (Bakken & Elstad, 2012, p. 31) The document can be interpreted as a reply from the government to critique raised towards the Norwegian schools system in the early 2000.

Although thriving amongst the pupils was high, the score of basic skills was low. The results from PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) were the same levels as the average of the OECD-countries. The results, seen in light of the Norwegian prosperity level, were disturbing. That and the evaluations of the previous reform showed that the schools system did not succeed in customizing the teaching to the individual pupil. The schools system was criticized on several aspects for instance for having a weak learning culture and not having a routine on evaluation of the teaching quality. Kunnskapsløftet was introduced in 2006, and sent signal of change. However the general part of the document has remained the same as the previous guiding document (Imsen, 2000), and also the schools' social mandate has remained the same, which is to contribute to make children "proper citizens". (Ibid)

The municipalities and schools can through Kunnskapsløftet design local curricula within the frames of national objectives. The teacher has been liberated to choose pedagogical methods of teaching and to develop local curricula. Thus the school has been given greater authorization, which necessitates the collaboration between the parents and school (Nordahl, 2007). The same author recommends collaborating about what should be taught and how to achieve the aims for the pupil (Ibid, p. 28).

Kunnskapsløftet is a general reform; objectives and instruments are directed towards all pupils, independent of the pupils learning abilities. This means that its objectives and measures are not targeted towards equalization of the social inequities in school achievement (Bakken & Elstad, 2012). However official documents from the government show a focus on systematic differences in results, such as the systematic lower results of pupils with parents that have low education. Most frequent is the reference to pupils of weak performance, without specification to their social background or cause. (Ibid)

The NOVA Report 7 (Bakken & Elstad, 2012) was initiated to examine if Kunnskapsløftet had contributed to reduce social inequities in learning outcomes. Comparison was made between various pupil groups, including pupils of different socioeconomic background. The report stated that Kunnskapsløftet had contributed to an increase in the social inequities of the

learning outcomes (Nordahl & Drugli, 2013). This was between boys and girls, and between pupils of different socioeconomic background. Also the increase of special needs education had led to more pupils not getting a complete diploma. (Bakken & Elstad, 20012) The study “Latent profile analysis of teacher perceptions of parent contact and comfort” concluded that collaboration between the school and parents of pupils that needs it the most is challenging (Stormont, Herman, Reinke, David & Goel, 2013). It was also found that pupils with various challenges struggled the most to adapt to the schools system. However if the teacher became an active part and reached out to the parents and invited to collaborate with the school, it had a positive effect on the child’s behaviour and challenges (Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon & Semke, 2012). Nordahl & Drugli (2013) convey that the teacher should not have a set attitude towards parents of low socioeconomic status, but invite to collaborate as there is a lot of research supporting the importance of this collaboration to be beneficial for the pupil’s learning, thriving and health. The collaboration is complex and the existing research has measured it differently, and also studied completely different phenomena (Ibid). Knowledge about process and the factors that facilitate and inhibit the collaboration would help the collaborating partners to increase the chance of synergy (Huxham, 2003). The contact between home and school is intensified when the pupil has challenges and extra needs. The partners in the collaboration do not always have the same understanding of

what the collaboration consist of. This will complicate the process when frequent contact and collaboration is needed, as is with an individual education plan. (Ibid)

3.3 Individual Education Plan, IEP

“Equity in results is created through inequity in effort towards the individual pupil” (LK06, general part)

When the pupil does not or cannot have dividend from the regular teaching the pupil is entitled to an individual education plan, IEP. The document “On the right track, quality and diversity in the public School,” (White paper no. 20, 2012-2013) states that the educational system should be a reflection of the society that we want and that by providing everybody with a good educational program is a key to combating social inequity and to a just society.

In Norway, school and workplace health is addressed by the working Environment Act and in the Education Act. The Education Act chapter five (Opplæringsloven, Utdanningsdirektoratet) regulates the various decisions of the IEP such as the right to customized teaching and the parents right to have the school examine if the child need customized teaching and more. The school owner, the municipality, cannot choose whether to

provide special education or not if an expert decision has concluded that the pupil “do not or cannot benefit satisfactorily from ordinary tuition”. This means that economical resources or the lack of them do not determine customized teaching. Also in assessing customized teaching the potential diagnosis of a pupil do not determine if granted an IEP, the pupils *needs* will decide.

The parent’s rights in preparation of an IEP are several. They can require expert assessment §5-4, also when the school has conducted their surveys §5-3. Before an expert assessment is done the parents must be notified and give consent (§5-4). Also the parents are entitled to obtain alternative assessment, from other experts than those used by the municipality, which must be taken into consideration too, before the preparing of the individual decisions. The parents are entitled to have access to all documents regarding the pupil. An annual report on the IEP is performed by the school and sent to the parents. (Opplæringsloven, Utdanningsdirektoratet)

The extent of special needs education was about 6% in primary school until the introduction of Kunnskapsløftet in 2006. It then increased and stabilized in 2011 at about 8.6%. There has been an increase in all grades, but especially at the 5th-7th grades. It increases by the grades with 5.6% of the pupils in 1st – 4th grades being granted an IEP versus 9.8% for the 5th-7th

grades in 20012-2013. The highest rate is in the secondary schools, which was at 11% (White paper no. 20, 2012-2013). When the child has been granted an IEP, the plan will be the school's working tool. The home school collaboration is important to conduct at all ages, but an early start is beneficial as numbers above suggests. The school has not yet recognised the parents' significant role and potential for the pupils learning and development (Davies, 1999).

4. Research design and methods

4.1 Study design

This study was conducted by using a phenomenological qualitative research strategy; the method may be complicated in regards of the inexperienced researcher that have limited depth of use, but it is the strategy that best classifies the study. Phenomenological research identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon described by participants - The collaboration between the school and home regarding children with special needs. The process implies that the researcher sets aside own experiences in order to understand the participants (Cresswell, 2009). The qualitative studies are according to Malterud (2003) suitable to describe and analyse distinctive characteristics of various phenomenon. There are several characteristics of qualitative research, for instance the natural setting, possible use of multiple data: the documents, observation and interview

(Creswell, 2009). The qualitative researchers may collect data themselves through interviewing participants (Ibid). As for this study the researcher was the key instrument in the process, collecting and analysing data. In search for an in-depth knowledge about facilitating and inhibiting factors in the collaboration, applying a qualitative strategy seemed necessary, as the aim is an understanding, rather than an explanation. The key idea of a qualitative research is to learn about a problem or issue from participants and to obtain that information (Cressman 2009 p. 176). A distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is framed in the terms of using words rather than numbers (Ibid p. 3). However Malterud (2003) notes that no research method can produce evidence, that at best one can likely do something.

4.2 Interview

The questionnaire guide developed for this study was used in a face-to-face interview. This was the main method to study the collaboration from the perspectives of the principals, teachers and parents. The study's objective is to further develop established knowledge on the home-school collaboration, by setting focus on how the IEP, influence the collaboration between the parties. When one seeks to understand the worldview of the participants the research interview is a suited method (Creswell, 2009). An interview may bring out the participants understanding and experience on the issue being

studied (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Nine interviews were conducted all together from the headmasters, teachers and parents. Three participants from each of the groups were interviewed. Two pilot interviews were performed, all in all establishing a sample representing nine different schools. Although the interview guide was tested during the pilot interviews, the guide was slightly changed due to new knowledge learned from the participants. However, main themes discussed in this research were still answered by all participants. The flexibility, through the semi-structured interview allowed the possibility for the principals, teachers and parents to bring in new perspectives and meanings. In semi-structured interviews the researcher can probe the questions to get a deeper understanding of the issue. This was done in this study since the participants shared unanticipated views on factors that influence the collaboration.

A briefing prior and debriefing after the interview is recommended (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The briefing prior to the interview was done along with information on confidentiality, and served as an introduction to the interview. However, the debriefing did not take place, as seven out of nine interviews were extended in time (set time was 45 minutes). Instead a dialogic validation was used through the interviews. The participants

voluntarily consented to the prolonged interviews. The interviews all but two took place in an office or the like. Two of them were held in private houses, but during work hours, and such allowing privacy. The interviews were conducted from October 2013 to January 2014. The timespan was prolonged due to visitations at several schools appointed in the participant's own time.

4.3 Participants

In qualitative work the sample size for an interview study depends on the aims (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher identifies the essence of human experience described by the participants. By having a purposeful selection of participants it will increase chances of understanding the issue being studied (Creswell, 2009). The recruitment of the participants was done by visitation to various primary schools. At each school the principle was sought for permission to inform about the study. They were positive. This resulted in contact with several teachers, which expressed their views by giving informal comments about the home-school collaboration. The school visits revealed quite busy days, which led to the initial plan of recruiting three participants (principal, teacher and parent) from each school to be changed. The participants were thus recruited from eight different primary schools. The inclusion criteria were the teachers that collaborated

with parents that had children with an IEP.

The teachers were quite helpful in distributing information to parents that had children with an IEP. The information was given to the pupil in a closed envelope addressed to the parents. This however did not recruit any parents. The teachers described some of the parents as “disadvantaged”. They did not want to participate in the study. Instead the recruitment was done through the researchers network of former colleagues that aided this process. The parents that participated can be described as resourceful mothers, in terms of their socioeconomic situation. This could represent a bias to the study, however as this research addresses the collaboration when an IEP is present, their specific experience is still valuable. Having only females representing the parents view, also reflect the predominance of mothers’ in the collaboration with the school by 73.5% (Nordahl, 2000).

The teachers: had several years of teaching and substantial experience in working with Individual Education Plan (IEP). They were educated from both university-college and university. The teachers presented in this study are two males and a female. They were all class-teachers, responsible for IEP-children and collaborating with the parents. This included IEP for both

behaviour and for learning disabilities. They all worked at quite large schools with several hundred pupils.

The parents: presented here were mothers only. They all lived with their husbands and had support from them, but the mothers had the directing role in the follow-up of their children in school. It can be quite demanding to have children in school that require extra care and attention in different ways. This became apparent during the interviews where two of the mothers got quite emotional. The length of the interviews reflected this too as it was quite extended in time for two of the mothers. (*“I could have written a book about this theme!”*)

The principals: had started their school careers as teachers, educated both from university-college and the university. They had also continuing education in pedagogical and administrative subjects. The size of the schools in which they worked differed from a small school to rather big schools. The bigger schools both department Managers, which are in some schools referred to as inspectors. They along with the principals constitute the management at school. The presented principals in this study are two females and a male.

During the interviews a tape recorder was used and all of the participants

consented to be recorded. That helped the researcher to interact with the participants, and to keep focus on the interview situation. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) it is also a demand to employ such in order to transcribe and capture the information from the interviewee precisely.

4.4. Transcription

The transformation of the interview from conversation to written text is called transcription. The tape recorder provided good quality sound, which was helpful in the process of transcribing. Every transcription was done before conducting a new interview, usually the following day. The tape was listened to several times, as this was necessary to capture it all. The interviews were done in Norwegian, and written in the language variant bokmål, not revealing the participants dialects. This later had to be translated into English when expressing the quotes. The supervisor assisted to ensure the quality of both interviews and quotes in translation.

4.5. Thematic network analysis

When the interview had been transcribed, the researcher had several read trough's. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) claim that the analysing process starts when the transcription process is on as this lead to the structure of the material. The logbook, which was used during the interviews helped to sort reflections and observations experienced during the interview, such as

emotions expressed, interruptions during the interview and questions that “popped up” and so on. Then analysis of the text started.

The process was guided by the thematic network analysis, which are web illustrations that summarize the themes constituting a piece of text (Attride-Stirling, 2001 p. 385). The text was sorted in basic themes, like “neglecting school-matters” and “complaints from parents”. The basic themes in context with other basic themes represented the organizing themes like “organization of pupils”. This was a process that was worked on back and forth as the basic themes could many times suit the various organizing themes. The researcher employed post-it notes as this provided an orderly overview. Then the text was organized in three different groups. The third group was the global theme, which encompassed the organizing themes, like “relationship”. An example from the parents below:

Global theme	Organizing theme	Basic theme
Relationship	Chemistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk the same language • Understand each other

4.6. Validity

According to Green and Thorogood (2009), validity refers to the “truth” of the findings. Kvale and Brinkman, (2009) points out that validity is also if

the methodology chosen is accurate to measure what it is suppose to measure. The researcher sought to answer the research questions by employing semi-structured interview to illuminate the collaborating perspectives from the principal, teacher and parents. Validity is also to which extent the findings from the study can be transferred to or relevancy to other research settings. The entire research study, is as pointed out by Kvale and Brinkman (2009) a process of validity.

The researcher tried the best to put effort in having a facilitative atmosphere when conducting the interview, by entering the situation expressing an open-minded, humble and grateful attitude towards the participants.

Sometimes cultural differences like language or environment will have a say in the interviews. In this study the participants and the researcher shared the same language and same culture.

Creswell (2009) states that qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. He also states the validity to *be one of the strengths* in qualitative research, based on whether the findings are found accurate by the researcher, the participant or the reader. Further Creswell (2009) recommends a *peer debriefing*. This means having someone who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study, which will help to resonate with people other than the researcher. The supervisor aided this purpose and also discussions

with fellow student colleagues have been helpful.

4.7. Reliability

Green and Thorogood (2009) describe reliability as accuracy of reporting, consistency of coding and thoroughness of analysis. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) reliability refers to the answers given by the participant from the research interview, “would the participant change the answers if asked by another researcher?” Although a high level of reliability is wanted the same authors also claim that this can interfere with creativity and variation.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) pay attention to the interview situation, they points to leading questions as a threat to reliability. The interview guide was constituted of open-ended questions, trying to avoid leading questions. The participants were given time to elaborate on issues important to themselves, led by main themes from the questionnaire. By organizing the interview guide in themes it helped to keep track of the subjects that needed to be presented to all participants.

4.8. Generalizability

According to Green and Thorogood (2009) generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be extended to other settings, populations or topics. A frequently asked question about interview studies is how the findings are generalizable (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Further the same authors claims that in qualitative studies the shift has gone from generalization to focus of the context of where the study was conducted.

Critique to qualitative research's generalizability has been done because of the few numbers of participants. This study had nine participants this is according to critiques a low number in order to generalize the findings. The critique answered by Kvale and Brinkman (2009) is "why generalize?" Since the context is of importance in qualitative studies, one can measure its generalizability by transfer it to other similar contexts. The findings of this study, refers to facilitating and inhibiting factors in collaboration between the school and parents. It is not generalizable in terms of personal collaboration factors found in all teachers, or in all schools, but rather point to factors of importance in collaboration when an IEP is present. Hopefully these are factors that can be helpful to others given a similar context.

4.9. Researchers role

Since in qualitative research the researchers role is an active one, it introduces a range of ethical, strategic and personal issues into the research

process. The reflection upon the researchers pre-understanding and role of the study is important as according to Creswell (2009) this may shape the interpretation of the study. Malterud (2003) claims that it is not a question of *if* the researcher plays a part forming the interpretation and interview, but *how*. Malterud (2003) further suggest that the researcher needs to identify her role, perspective and understanding of the issue being studied both for the reader and for the researcher herself. However the researcher's knowledge about the theme being studied is often what led to the research itself, and therefor plays a great part in motivation for conducting the study. If the researcher is taken by surprise by the findings done in the study, Malterud (2009) then claims that the researcher has managed to gather new information by having an open and systematic approach. Research Ethical Committees (2012) convey that in qualitative studies it is quite common that the researcher has some knowledge about the research topic through a different role.

My pre-understanding and experience of the issue in this study are many-faceted arising from my teacher education and experience in the home-school collaboration from my four boys' school. I am also a mother of a child with special needs, reading theory about the theme and doing work for the association of congenital heart disease. This is also my motivation and what led to this study. I have tried to keep my pre-understanding in mind at all times during the study, allowing for new understanding, which I got. I

was moved by the compassion the teachers showed for the pupils, how they really gave their best so that the pupil felt good at school. Unfortunately the good intentions did not always reach the parents.

As I am familiar with challenges due to collaboration between the school and parents that have a child with special needs, I did keep this in mind throughout the whole process of the research. Also my supervisor helped this process by both challenging and asking questions from my interviews and meeting with the participants. I reflected upon not to prejudice towards the school or the teacher's way of organizing for children if I disagreed with the method chosen. As I am both a parent and a teacher, it means that I can represent both sides.

The Research Ethical Committees (2012) convey that participants during interview may have a need to keep a certain distance to the researcher physically or mentally, and the importance of respecting these boundaries. Further it is not recommended to probe the questions if the participant seems reluctant about a theme. However it can also be the other way around, if the researcher shows great empathy the participant may reveal too much and sometimes have expectation of more conversations (Research Ethical Committees, 2012). I tried to show and create closeness, but also be distant by being reflective. My knowledge to the theme could also create more openness from the teachers as perhaps they felt that there was a shared

understanding of how the collaboration was/could be conducted at their respective schools. Interview with principal were slightly different, as they revealed more of the systems level. However I was positively surprised by how “into” the pupils both teachers and principals were really trying hard to make the most of it and providing so that the pupil would get the needed teaching and care.

4.9. Ethics

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) conveyed that the ethical validation of a study should produce knowledge advantageous for the people. This was the researchers main motivation. The researcher hopes to contribute to the existing knowledge on collaboration, and enlighten factors presented in collaboration to aim for an optimal educational situation. Ethical academic guidelines can provide the researcher with a context of reflections, which will help to make decisions during an interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Studies in Norway follow the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. In the form of guidelines which have been compiled to help researchers with ethical views and attitudes raising awareness of conflicting standards, promoting good judgment and enhancing the ability to make well-founded decisions in the face of conflicting considerations (National Committee for Research Ethics

in Norway, 2006 p.5).

The participants were informed of the right to refuse to answer a question and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants volunteered to participate and were presented a consent form and information about the study. No names and specific information that could have revealed the participants identity were collected. It was also conveyed how the researcher would handle confidentiality and anonymity. To take care of confidentiality is about not publishing any data, which can identify the participant (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) suggest that qualitative researchers need to cultivate their ability to perceive and use their *phronesis*, (prudence) to make use of their ethical competence. That involved contextual thinking. The researcher tried to concretely describe a complex situation, without overseeing matters of importance.

Access to the data and recordings from the interview was secured and protected at all times. Information stored at the researchers pc was secured by a password only known to the researcher. Anonymity was provided to the participants by giving new names in the text. As ethical considerations were needed throughout the whole study the researcher has tried to implement considerations of that in other parts of the study too.

This study was anonymous. That means, no names and information that could reveal the identity of the participants were recorded on tape. Also it was not written down identifiable information in the transcript. In addition, the researcher cautiously omitted information about events that in the worst case could have revealed one informant's identity for those who were closest. . In consultation with the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services (NSD) it was decided that this anonymity was adequate protection for the participants

http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/en/notification_duty/faq.html?id=

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5. Results

This chapter introduces the interview results reflecting the facilitative and inhibiting factors in the collaboration orderly expressed by the teachers, parents and principals. The findings are presented in four global themes for each of the groups: **The Mission, Relationships, Channels of communication, and Structures**. The mission is the overall perspective of the collaboration.

5.1.1 The mission – Teachers’ Perspectives

Global theme	Organizing theme
The mission	Communication Mutual responsibility Teachers professional role Lack of time Preparing of an IEP

The teachers all pointed out the satisfaction of a pupil academic - or social progress, stating that as the purport behind collaboration with parents.

When I asked the teachers about their views and expectations for collaborating with the parents, they all agreed on *communication*, stating good communication as a prerequisite for collaboration. This was emphasised differently, one of them pointed that communication and collaboration with parents also means the teachers communication with the principal or others in the management. This was due to the support the

teacher could need in communicating with the parents, when there was a “problematic pupil” or a difficult case.

“The management has the overall responsibility to help the teacher both in communication to parents, and to support the teacher so that the teacher can do the tasks”.

One of the other teachers pointed to problematic collaboration, saying one had to be good at reading people. Sometimes it was hard not knowing how much to demand from the parents suggesting that special needs education also implies the parents. Sometimes the parents in lack of competence do not or cannot help out with the homework. It was important to meet the parents in a respectful manner, but not expect and demand the same from all parents. The third teacher stressed that it was necessary to make the parents understand how important it was for them to have a good collaboration with the school stating that the parents too had a part in creating a good classroom- and learning environment. This was usually informed to the parents at the formal parents meeting.

The teachers conveyed that it was a *mutual responsibility* to educate the child, and that mutual respect between the parties was necessary to do so. One of the teachers was in favour of having a ring to the parents once a week for an update. A positive aspect of this was that it sharpened the teacher to observe how things were. One of the teachers however did not share this view, saying that communication with parents was done only

when needed. This was especially for pupils with an IEP for behaviour, where *different kinds of difficulties are not unusual*. It was argued that in many cases the pupil would not have dividend from that home-school contact. This teacher stated that what had happened at school was dealt with and finished, and better for the pupil to move on without informing the parents on a daily or weekly basis.

The teacher's professional roles were expressed by all as important, both in terms of their integrity and topics of collaboration. They did not like when the parents interfered in what they saw as their remit, such as interference in the educational programs, didactics or even having personal invitations to private parent-gatherings. The teachers expressed expectations from the parents on the social part, like having the parents bake a cake, arrange a gathering for pupils at home or to help at social gatherings at school. For the academic part the collaboration was mostly in assisting the pupil with homework, attend formal parent meetings or other tasks that the teachers found necessary.

“We can not expect the parents to teach them (pupils) something academic at home, so the collaboration is mostly on the social part”.
“Collaboration is mostly on the social part, it has to do with the profession”

Lack of time, was pointed to by all the teachers as a frustration in their everyday work. One of the teachers expressed how important it was to

prepare a good IEP, and then equally important to actually implement the plan. That was a pledge to the principal. Many times facilitated teaching were taken away from the pupil, due to vicar hours elsewhere that the principal set the teacher to do. The teacher was very upset about this, and advised the parents to ask their children: “*did you receive extra teaching today?*” There was not a system to check if the pupil had gotten facilitated teaching. The teacher had written a report, stating the matter, but the principal had read it and commanded it removed. However one of the schools had a negotiation process about meetings set to control if the pupil got what they were entitled to. If the pupil was cut short of the teaching, the teacher would have to fulfil this. In order to do so other teachers would have to teach in bigger classes. It was a conflicted issue at that school, in how to find the best solution to make sure the pupil got the fulfilment of the IEP. If it was decided in an IEP that a pupil had been provided with five lessons for example, the school would have to provide this without getting any extra resources.

“It is a big conflict here at school, to have enough time to the IEP-children”

The preparing of an IEP was conveyed by one of the teachers to be the parent responsibility. Stating on the matter “it has not yet happened that the parents themselves have prepared the individual educational plan. They do not have the prerequisite to do so”. The preparing was supposed to be based

on the expert assessment done by the educational psychology service.

However the teacher prepared the IEP and had it sent to the parents, which would sign it. The responsibility of this work was different for the teachers as one of them had it done by the principal. *The purpose of having an IEP* was utterly important to reflect upon, as one of the teachers stressed that sometimes the plan would be more for the school than the child.

“Very often comprehensive plans are made that we think are great. But they are adapted to us and not the pupil. A boy in fourth grade had a plan for three years, and 50% of the teaching was spent in the hallway, or him wandering about, or in the classroom where he cried like a wolf. The tactics through these years has been to give praise. Praise praise praise... and reward reward reward. Reward for expected behaviour!! Three years they been doing that, and three years the boy has had the same behaviour. No progress and still the program is so good because it is in special education plan.”

The teacher firmly insisted the necessity of reflecting and in collaboration evaluate the pupil progress, as this was the purpose of an IEP. Sometimes it was necessary to see the pupil with “new eyes” and teachers and parents could view a case very differently. Progress was by this teacher viewed as a good indicator for the content in an IEP and in a functional collaboration.

5.1.2 The mission – Parents’ Perspectives

Global theme	Organizing Themes
The mission	Communication with school Many vicars Statutory rights Mutual understanding and responsibility Lack of time

	Sorrow Teachers professional role Preparing the IEP
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All of the parents had more than one child, and had experience in the home-school collaboration. They also had expectations both in what to expect from the school and their own effort and part in it. Their children needed facilitated teaching and one of them also had some physical disability in addition, which needed attention. The parents had expectations of a good *communication with the school*. However, only one of the parents had a good collaboration with the teacher and school. She expressed how grateful she was for the teacher. The teacher would always take care of things, and there was also good relation between him and her child. He was described as a good leader in the classroom, making the pupil thrive. This parent was always informed and consulted in matters regarding her child. If needed she could always contact the school. However a good relationship was not something she took for granted, as previous experiences had taught her otherwise. It depended on the teacher, as the school system did not ensure a good home-school collaboration.

“We are so fortunate to have this teacher, my child changed class and it’s been very good because of his teacher. It was not good in his previous class where they switched the teacher three times”

The other parents had also experienced change of teacher and periods of *many vicars*, marking this as very unstable and resulting in turmoil for the

children as all of the children needed to attach to an adult to feel safe for learning. The frequent change of teachers was not appreciated. Not only because they had to relate to different people, but also because the transfer of information was not ensured. Thus adequate facilitation would lack. Also they would not always be informed of a long-term change of the teacher, which in turn led to lack of action on their behalf.

“We thought the transfer of information was automatically done at school as that’s where all the information is”
“How much do I need to explain the new person? And how many times do I need to explain? The school should have called us, told us about the new teacher and that she was informed”

One of the parents thought it was difficult to figure out the *statutory rights* she had for her child. She marked this a hard job, in which she would actively use her network. One of the other parent had done just so, figured it all out with the help of her network and also contacted professionals. However the relationship with the school did not better from this. They both described the process as tiresome and draining *“I must fight so hard for what we already are entitled too”*. Main problem was achieving a *mutual understanding and responsibility* of all the challenges that the pupil had.

“The teacher would always say: “Ole is a nice child”, but there was never a plan, a teaching program that would help him with the challenges. We just talked past one another”

The parents stated how much they wanted a good collaboration with their children’s teacher and school. Two of them felt the communication was a one-way thing on their behalf, when they contacted the teacher or school

except the formal meetings. They also felt that the teacher was not interested in what they had to say and did not handle their worries seriously. *Lack of time* would determine the relationship to a great extent, as time set for the collaboration was not enough to create a mutual understanding of the pupils' challenges.

"I get half an hour to give all the information and make sure they understand"

The *sorrow* of having children with special needs where expressed in their relationship with the teacher and school. They questioned if it was room for being different, that every child do not fit the same template. *"At school everybody must be the same, there is no room for individual adaptations"*.

They both expressed sadness about that, stressing that having a partnership and work in a team would lead to a mutual responsibility. Only then the challenges could be dealt with. The teacher would have to engage in the parent and see their views of the situation. It was painful for the parents to see that their children felt different from the rest. Also how the children put effort in disguising that from the fellow classmates. One of the parents wanted an assistant for the child, but had worries as to how obvious her child being different would be.

"She gives it all in school, terrified to stand out. When she gets home she is all exhausted and must rest the afternoon. It affects the homework too"

Sometimes the collaboration was complicated when the teachers could not make independent decisions. The parents questioned the *teacher professional role*, as they would always have to check with the principal for instance altering the homework. This was time-consuming and sometimes issues were not addressed at all, which in turn led to what was perceived as “nagging” from the parent. *“I must always contact them, nag, ask, dig... It is very difficult”*. One example is when a Speech Therapist was to be engaged agreed upon at a meeting and three months later nothing was done. Or even a simple thing as providing a facilitated book for the child to read, or a change in the teaching program. The parents felt insecure on when it was appropriate to contact the school, as they would not be seen upon as a problem. One of them suggested how having a coordinator would have been a great help. They conveyed the balance of demanding and being aware of their statutory rights but not going into “dislike”.

In preparing the IEP only one of the parents was involved. The IEP was based on expert reports and given the parent for a perusal. This parent changed a few things on the plan, which was taken into account. It was also agreed to have meetings every three months to evaluate the pupil progress. The parent was very pleased with the arrangement, as the previous teacher had not provided her child with an IEP. The parent expressed on the matter; *“years go by so fast, we must act while we can!”* The other parents were

not included in the preparing of the plan. One of them was very dissatisfied with the employed methodology. The child was taken out of the classroom to have a one-to-one teaching in all the lessons in a subject. This was not appreciated neither by the child nor the parents.

“I told them several times “don’t take him out of the classroom for teaching” but they had to, and I knew too little then... is very sad”

The other parent had expert reports stating what measures to be initiated. This however was not done, as the school “handled it” their way. This was not satisfactory for the parents. They did not think their child got adequate facilitated teaching. The parent thought the internal problems at school had a cause in this. There was also a problem with the principal, and the teachers had no faith in him. The parents too regarded him as a problem at school. It was the “talk of the school” and also known by the pupils.

5.1.3 The mission – Principals’ Perspectives

Global Theme	Organizing Themes
The mission	Communication with parents Same team Partnership Principals professionalism Preparing of the IEP

The Principals opinionated firmly that *communication with the parents* was a great part of their job - that the parents had to be on the *same team* as the school and achieving this by convincing them that their children would be

safeguarded at school. This would be ensured by the school system, which had attention to both the academic and social part. It was important for the principals to convey that the school had a holistic view of the pupil and to communicate this to the parents. As *“the children are the dearests they have”*.

“It is such an important system. And if we have happy parents then we have happy kids! Then we have a good school running!”

“We tell them when they start at school that this is a collaborative project, we must do it together to provide the best of competence for the child both socially and academic. This is the start of 13 years of school, so it is a huge project we start”

The collaboration with the parents had to be in *partnership*, which brought focus to the equality in collaboration. One of the principals stated on the matter how partnership invites and commits to something and also that partnership is based on equity. However it seemed that the understanding of equity were not always shared amongst the parties as this could conflict with the *principals’ professionalism*. The principals would set the agenda for which issues to collaborate about and invite the parents. Sometimes the parents would have opinions about the curriculum and homework and if not invited to this, it was seen upon as interference. *“To have a good relation with the parents does not always mean that they will get it their way. We will listen to them, but we are the professionals.”*

The profession of both the school as an institute and the teacher's role were frequently discussed. The principals enhanced this as a safeguard in doing a good job marking the point of a good home-school collaboration as listening to the parents. The teachers however were professionally responsible and knew the systems of structure. The parents did not and were not provided the knowledge of the whole setting, like the professional secrecy to other children. The principals reflected about how this might confuse the parents regarding collaborative issues. One of them stated on the matter:

“Maybe we should be better at explaining them why it turned out as it did. And that we have listened, assessed and concluded...”

The collaboration was on the bigger part about social issues as a consequence of the profession and also in assisting with the pupil's homework. When asked about negative experiences in collaborating with the parents they had had quite mutual experiences, like when the parents had a low priority for the school, or when they did not keep their appointments or agreements done with the school. Another example was when the parents did not believe the principals in various matters.

The school has a social mandate to take care and educate the children. The principals conveyed the importance of being evident about the parent role in the system. This could lead to a better collaboration and meet the parents' demand for information from school. The *preparing of an individual educational plan* was done differently. This too was connected to the

collaboration with the parents. Stated by one of the principals *“The IEP can have a massive influence on the collaboration”*.

One of the principals conveyed how the parents were a part in the preparing of the IEP and that the role in it was clarified. Further that ideally the parties would meet before the writing of the plan. There would also be written a report. The parent’s role in it was important because they would do the job at home with the child, and their input of the plan was taken into consideration. This would ease the understanding both of the parent’s task and the pupil’s progress. The other principals agreed that the parent’s role in assisting the pupil was evident. However they did not take the parent into consideration in the preparing of the plan. This was due to new regulations. The parents had no formal right to approve of the plan. The preparing of the IEP was done either by the school management and the teacher, or the principal and the teacher. One of the issues that created conflicts between the school management and the parents was how they perceived the pupil’s level.

- “The challenge is often that the parents have too high ambitions for their children”

- “It depends what understanding the parents have concerning their child, and how they accept their child’s level. The parents need to accept the child’s challenges”

The report that was written for the IEP was the base for the dialogue between the parents and the school, and progress was discussed. The

principals enhanced several mapping-tools, which would give a clear picture of the pupil's progress and status. This was seen along with the profession and marking of the IEP as the teachers working-tool. Still it could be a conflicted area as the parents often viewed it differently. One of the principals expressed how the parents wanted an IEP for the child, and at the same time also wanted the child to follow the class-program. Also the status report, which was sent once a year to the parents, was wanted more often. However the new regulations had set this to be a annual report. This was explained due to progress. That pupil's that were granted an IEP did not progress quickly. If so they would follow the class-program.

“When the IEP is prepared, it is sent to the inspector, which has a read through. He checks the formal and that it is understandable. If we don't understand it, I'm sure the parents wouldn't either”.

Resources were also a discussed issue amongst the parents and school. *“For some people it is never enough”*. The principals complemented this by referring to resources as also competence and the organization of the classes.

“It is so easy to say: “they must get more lessons”, but it also has to do with the organization of the class levels and how the special teaching is planned”

One of the principals enhanced how a teacher could be a great resource. The effort a teacher sometimes gives in assisting a single pupil could be great and expand beyond regular working hours. *“She has not been paid for all the extra work she has chosen to do, other than admiration and praise”*. In

the end it was the principals mandate to decide what to grant the pupil. This would always include a financial assessment. However they all made clear that the financial issue was never the parent’s problem. *“They must be let to feel guilty because they their child has special needs”*

One of the principals questioned if and when an IEP is the best for a child. Granting an IEP also means an admittance of not having dividend from regular teaching. It could be that some pupils could have had customized teaching. This principal stressed that there was an increase in IEP because the new regulation had different measures. The pupils are evaluated in relation to specific common standard measures, which are legally required. It used to be evaluation according to the pupils prerequisites, which was done by the teachers. That meant that now the pupils are evaluated according to the objectives in the curriculum. This was according to the principal problematic as within the normal range of achievement there is a big gap. A lot of pupils, who before would fit in in the normal range would now be provided with an IEP. When the plan was to tighten the use of IEP, it had according to the principal gone in the opposite direction.

5.2.1 Relationship – Teachers’ Perspectives

Global Theme	Organizing Themes
The relationship	Chemistry Good and less good news Same team

	Mutual understanding Schools reputation Purpose of having contact Relationship between teacher and principal Clear and humble Listen to the parents Heterogeneous group
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In relations to positive experiences in collaboration the teachers described *chemistry* between the parties as an asset. Being a teacher today demands a lot in terms of collaboration between many parties, and having a good chemistry with the parents helped a lot on that part.

“Chemistry! When we talk the “same” language”

One of the teachers stressed the important balance to convey both *good and less good news* to the parents. In fact this teacher phoned the parents just to tell good news. Marking this an enjoyable part that contributed positively on the relation.

“I attempt to give positive feedback to the parents and rather focus on the positive than the negative. If you focus on solely on the negative then you build a bad relationship”

Other factors leading to positive relations were when the parents were responsive to the teachers and had faith in them, that the teachers were doing their best for the pupil. It was also pointed that being on the *same team*, in regards of attitude towards the pupil. Such as having the parents talk nicely about the school to their children, and conveying interest in the pupils homework and school in general. It was appreciated when the parents

showed gratitude towards the teacher's job. A *mutual understanding* of the pupil situation was important. Some of the difficulties that the pupil faced could be quite challenging, and difficulties rose when parents did not acknowledge that the child had challenges. This led to potential disputes between the parties, like disagreement in which measures to initiate or frequency the home-school contact. Sometimes being honest about deficiency on the teacher's part was needed, and this was generally well responded to by the parents.

Bad conscience was also shared amongst the teachers, for not having enough time to do what they felt was needed for the pupil. Hence one of the teachers was quite specific about time consuming activities, like imposed contact with the parents. Sometimes this was viewed as having contact just for the sake of it, just to nurture the *schools reputation*. The teacher would rather spend that time on a one-to-one with the pupil.

"I had to contact the parents only because the school worried about the schools reputation. Even though I had cleared it with the parents, my way of working, no news is good news!"

They all agreed that collaboration with parents was a part of their teacher role and was enjoyed by all except one. Who meant it would have been better without having to collaborate with parents, and just concentrate on the work. This was due to difficulties in collaborating with the parents. The

teacher tried not to have too much expectations of a good collaboration with all parents, because of bad experience pointing to that sometimes pupils had great difficulties at home, and some problem was hard for the school to do something about. Although the pupil would be affected from the conditions of the home, the teacher firmly believed that providing the best of care for the pupil at school was the best way of dealing with the situation. This resulted in not having great expectations for the collaboration with the parents especially those parents of children provided with an IEP, saying that those children often experiences difficulties on a larger scale.

“ Why should I continue a bad weekend for a child? A divorce child that we care a lot about, and this weekend he stayed with his father. Oh my God that pee stink! I can do nothing about that! So I must make sure to do the best at school. If I express with all of me “poor thing you have stayed with your father” then I enhance the problem... A problem I can do nothing about. Because I do not collaborate with that father! You can't change the parents, but you can change what you have here”

The purpose of having contact was not rooted in a mutual understanding, neither amongst the teachers, nor between home and school. One of the teachers expressed frustration in “unrealistic demands” from parents, who wanted report every day. Telling them:

“ I will not write a report about your son every single day, that is not interesting! But if he mutilates the face of another pupil I will let you know!”

This teacher stressed how just reporting back and forth would not lead to a positive change for the pupil, but rather the opposite as it would be a vicious

cycle for the pupil. This was for an IEP for behaviour, whereas the same teacher provided a daily fill-in-form agreement with the parents of a pupil that had an IEP for learning disabilities. Different approach was employed for behaviour and learning disabilities. Also the relationship between the parents could be problematic for the teachers. One of the teachers had to have two pupil-development meetings for the same pupil because the parents were divorced. This led to extra meetings and stressed the pupil, who at first had to attend both meetings. Sometimes the teachers felt they were in the middle of private matters from the pupil's home, not dealing with school related work.

When the *relationship between the teachers and principal or management* at school, was problematic it also affected the relationship between teachers and parents. This was due to the management responsibility for the development of an IEP. The management had to attend IEP-meetings as they were handling the decisions. According to the teacher the IEP was usually made towards special education and sometimes one-to-one teaching based on the expert report. The teachers would conduct the teaching that was in the IEP. However the teachers expressed how they were always in arrears.

“The principal needs to be informed about every IEP- child because he has the overall responsibility. I will not say just how much the management emphasizes that...”

Two of the teachers had experienced poor handling in cases where they needed support. They had also experienced quite conflicted relationships with the management saying that the relationship with management in general was not beneficial for them in doing their work.

“To be honest I could have done without them (management), there is no support what so ever”

This was difficult for the teachers as they wished for support, empathy and understanding, saying that would have been a great help in their everyday work. They had both experienced that before from a different management. One of the teachers described the support to be more *authoritarian than authoritative*. This teacher was annoyed with the management way of support stating that they (management) should be *“heavy on support, and have little judgement in support”*.

When asked about giving advice about having good relations and collaboration that would benefit the pupil, they expressed the following: it was important to be *clear and humble* towards the parents. Humble in the sense of admitting when wrong and clear in telling the parents what they could expect from the teacher. The why's and how's in didactics and frequency of contact included this. Further it was advice to *listen to the parents*, ask and show interest in what they had to say and to see the child from the perspectives of the parents.

The teachers had opinions about the other parties and themselves.

Themselves in the sense of how they thought others viewed them. They had a say “*I’m just a human being*” when reflecting on the load of work that they do, or describing how a pedagogical way of facilitating for the pupil is hard to alter.

“We are just human beings like everybody, we engage in a pattern and that is the way you handle the child. Then after three years you have either done something good or bad. And we do! We do damage to the child!”

The teachers all commented on how they had to adapt to the parents whom they collaborated with and how they were a *heterogeneous group*.

Resources in parents differed to a great extent and that would often determine what expectations the teachers had for the parents. One of them pointed to how the teachers should serve as a role model for the parents.

This was when the parents did not provide adequate support for the child.

They stated on the matter that trust was utterly important so they would not withhold any information. Because “*the parents are a necessary piece, whether we like it or not*”. On demanding parents that interfered with the teachers work a message was sent:

“I have my education and I use it in my job, you have your education, and I trust you do the right thing in your job”

However the teachers wanted more parent involvement in general. Not just for the homework, but also to make sure the pupil brought training gear for gymnastics or clothing for a field trip.

5.2.2 Relationship – Parents’ Perspectives

Global theme	Organizing Theme
The relationship	Chemistry Transfer-meeting Clarity Partnership with the school Attitude

When the parents were asked about their positive experience in collaborating with the teachers, they stressed *chemistry* as an asset. Chemistry lead to trust and the teacher would listen to them. This was said in a manner of “*that the teacher believe what we are telling about our child*” expressed as a prerequisite to collaborate about optimizing facilitation for the child. It was also expected that agreements done in school-meetings were kept. Unfortunately this was not the case for two of the parents. One of them pointed to how own efforts at home justified the right to demand efforts in return from the school.

“It would have been another case if I did not do an effort at home, then I would not have demanded anything from the school, but we do so much...”

Many times children that are provided with an IEP also have challenges in early years. This was the case for the children whose parents were

interviewed. Two of them were sorry that there had not been a *transfer-meeting*, between the kindergarten and school, as they presumed this process could have saved them a lot of worries and the time consuming of “*having to start all over again at school*”. One of them expressed how the school nurse should have been involved, but what the mother knew now she did not know then, stating: “*It is a very big job. It’s like a wall you have to cut through*”

Clarity on what the school expected from the parents in collaboration was wanted. Only one of the parents had per se a beneficial collaboration with the school. Although this was the case the parent commented how important it was to be “online” meaning not being laidback thinking everything was taken care of. Two of the parents commented on the importance of distinguishing between the person and case. Disagreement could occur between the parties, and was not a critique of the teacher. One of the parent felt that she had to excuse herself to the teacher “*It’s not you as a person, it’s the teaching program*”.

Clarity on how to perform and help out with some of the homework was also wanted by the parents. As the children had various learning disabilities discussion on didactics would be helpful. The parents wanted that the school initiated contact, that the school was the active part. This was for several

reasons. The teacher determined the *partnership with the school*. They would set the agenda, thus it created insecurity when there was lack of initiative. The parents got frustrated when they had to be the active part as they felt they were being stigmatised. They felt insecure as to how often contact was acceptable to initiate. One of the parents described how she felt the school perceived her: *“I nag, demand and expect! Then I must withdraw for a while, lay low, because I feel how they look at me”*. The other one expressed how she became the problem in school frowned upon, dreading to make contact while worrying for her child.

The partnership with the school did not benefit from knowledgeable parents. In the effort of providing adequate teaching for the children the parents acquired knowledge. Sometimes proposed measures would conflict with the school-budget and was rejected. Two of the parents provided an expert report, but only one of them was granted measures: *“I must also be the lawyer of my child”*. Two of the schools had the budget as main reason for not providing the recommended expert decisions. In discussions between the parent and principal, the budget would always be the matter. The parents marked discussions like that as *“no point, you get nowhere!”* However one of the parents stated how everything did not have to do with the budget only, but more so with the *attitude*. This parent had given specific advice on how to handle the child at the outdoor-day in school in fact given three

specific suggestions, but none of these were taken into consideration and no suggestions were made from the school. This both saddened and frustrated the parent as this could have made a better day for the child. Attitude was a present perception in the collaboration, how the parents were looked upon. One of the parents stating “*I want us to be WE, I think WE*”, *that would be a dream-situation!*”

”I need to toughen up... why should I lay low and be nice to them (school) when it is my daughter who pay the prize?”

5.2.3 Relationship – Principals’ perspectives

Global theme	Organizing themes
Relationship	Chemistry A Good start Demanding parents Same team

The principals viewed the relationship in general with the parents to be good. Similar to the parents and teachers they also pointed to *chemistry*. That if the teachers had *a good start* with the parents then basis was made for a good relationship, helped by chemistry. One of the principals had a change of people if the relation was bad. This was a method employed in long lasting conflicts between the parents and the school. Parents that had children with special needs were by two of the principals described as more likely to have disagreements with the school. This was explained due to the parents’ sorrow and that they had a higher frequency of meetings with the

school. It would depend on how far the parents had come in accepting their child's disability.

“They were highly educated parents and they got a child that was different. It needed to sink in... but how far shall we go? We must also safeguard the parents”

Sometimes the parents disagreed between themselves, concerning the child's progress. The father could put attention to the academic progress whereas the mother could focus on the child's social part or other disagreements. The principals expressed how the parents wanted the best for their children, but this could conflict with the schools way of doing things explaining how they had told the parents to come to school *before* they got very upset. It was better to handle issues while the parents were still wondering about issues than when they had gone mad. Sometimes the parents had opinions about the schools methodology and wanted to evaluate this together with the school or which assistant to have. This however was not wanted issues to collaborate about as it conflicted with the profession.

“The parent shall not rule our teaching methodology, that is the teacher's profession”.

One of the principals expressed dislike when the parents oriented themselves at various webpages and wanted discussions based on the findings saying the parents was not provided with the “whole picture”. It was pointed to by two of the principals that parents of children with extensive difficulties would often be *demanding parents*. This was

explained that the parents were used to fight for the children, and that they had met the tough system before. One of the principals expressed on the subject *“I am not sure they do right to their children as they are wearing them out... The ones who works...”*

The principals stressed the importance of being on the *same team* as the parents. How important it was that the parents talked positively about the school to their children. Sometimes the parents said a lot of bad stuff to the teacher in presence of the child. This could be at the pupil-development meeting. It was pointed to be a bad setting for such as this would complicate how the child would handle this further with the teacher. The principals also stated that it was important that the parents thought they did a good job and had trust in them. Also reputation building and to have a “business view” of how the school presented itself was enhanced as important. Because the more of the parents that were satisfied with the schools work the more it would be reinforced. One of the principals commented how it was easy to forget to bring on good news only.

“We need to build relations in “peace time”, it is good to have something when it’s get tough”

More parent involvement was generally wanted from the principals.

“When it comes to selecting class contacts it gets awfully quiet and they look out the window. I have told them sometimes that it is embarrassing: “you emphasizes how your children are the most important, and then you will not participate in the collaboration?””

5.3.1 Communication – Teachers’ perspectives

Global theme	Organizing themes
Communication	Class – meeting Pupil-development meeting Extra meetings-IEP Different forms of contact

The *class-meetings* were organized differently at the respective schools for the teachers. Two of the teachers had only one parent-meeting a year, as low attendance from the parents had resulted in that arrangement. *The pupil-development meeting* were the same for all teachers, twice a year. It was commented by the teachers how this meeting was a monolog as apposed to a dialog.

“What’s problematic about the pupil-development meeting is that everything needs to be documented. So the good dialogue do not exist, because we sit there and I just read aloud. A monologue”

The teachers had various meetings at school for staff, they commonly expressed it to be time consuming and not so useful.

“It is not efficient to just sit and discuss issues, again and again without moving on”

These were in addition to the *extra meetings* that are associated with an IEP. They assumed the extra meetings for an IEP- Behaviour to be about 10-12 -, and the IEP- Learning Disabilities to be four in addition.

Different forms of contact were used, such as meeting face-to-face, telephone, mail, and text message. The teachers agreed in phoning the parents as opposed to mail was most efficient. They pointed to low threshold in terms of frequency of having to give or receive a ring. When phoning the parents one of the teachers would always ask if the parents had “five minutes”, if they did, the conversation would not last longer. This was confirmed by one of the other teachers too. They informed at meetings that the parents could call them, at set hours, and estimated about four to six calls a week. The teachers agreed that making a phone call was better than receiving and writing mail. “*We need to listen, so therefore stop mailing*”. They had also experienced frustration as *reading between the lines* often conveyed different messages. Misunderstandings in language could occur both ways. Also the time aspect was pointed to, as it was most time consuming to write and convey a message in a good way. One of the teachers had in agreement with colleagues removed the mail address from the schools formal information-leaflet.

5.3.2 Communication – Parents’ Perspectives

Global theme	Organizing themes
Communication	Class-meeting Pupil-development meeting

The *class-meetings* and the *pupil-development* meeting were common for the parents twice a year. They attended both meetings every fall and spring. One of the parents had used the class-meetings to inform the other parents about her sons' challenges, an effort in preventing bullying as her son had had some of that. That had been a positive decision for the son, the mother however felt that she was stigmatised by some people. However she was expressing that it could not be taken into account, as long as it benefitted the son.

The extra meetings, which are associated with the IEP, had different arrangements for the parents. Only one of the parents had an agreement with the teacher, a meeting every three months. That meeting was specifically focused on the pupil's progress. If this parent wanted contact with the school except that, she could just call. She was very pleased with the arrangement, emphasizing how the school was responsive. A positive issue too was how the teacher would emphasize the pupil's asset, like the pupil's resources and coping. That added to a good meeting and collaboration.

As the other parents did not have set meetings, they would have to call or mail the school. Both of the parents would call the principal direct because the teacher would always refer with him. In doing this it saved them the waiting. However this was not the preferred way, they wanted to have set

meetings and agreed contact forms with the teacher. One of the parents had a particular difficult collaboration with the school, describing it a non-relationship. This was due to instabilities there was a lot of sick leave and temporary arrangements that led to frequent change of people.

5.3.3 Communication – Principals’ Perspectives

Global theme	Organizing theme
Communication	Class- meeting IEP- meeting Collaboration-meeting Mail from parents

The schools had various channels for contact with the parents. Except for the *class-* and the *IEP meetings*, they would get phone-calls and mail. Sometimes they would attend a pupil-development meeting. This was when there had been tension in the collaboration between the teacher and the parent, and the teacher needed support. The teacher could also bring along a co-teacher. One of the principals commented on the subject that conducting a pupil-development meeting had set frames that governed the conversation. The parents were encouraged to propose issues to discuss before the meeting. However the meeting should also be a conversation between the attendees, a dialogue.

“It has to do with experience and learning. Some are good at it, some will be good at it, and some will never be good!”

The IEP meetings were conducted with several attendees: Educational Psychology Service, Social-Teacher and Speech Therapist, and sometimes the Principal. One of the principals had cut down in the number of IEP meetings. This was due to “*having the same talk over and over again*”. Also the number of IEP children had expanded. The principal would rather call in for a meeting when needed, instead of having set meetings.

The class - meeting was conducted differently for the principals. One of them had in consultation with the parents’ committees cancelled class – meetings in springtime.

“We ought to have it...we tried and experienced that it was good at the fall, but when spring came... the participation was too low. We call for meetings when needed. If there is a field trip or something...”

One of the principals had taken the consequence of collaboration into the class - meeting. As collaboration is a partnership the class - meeting were turned into *collaboration - meeting*.

“We call them collaboration meetings, because they are about collaboration. They (parents) must experience that it is a partnership, they are not only set to bake buns and such”

The meeting itself was too characterized by the name change. The parents would be presented with a collaboration-task or discuss a subject. This was sometimes governed from the schools management and sometimes from the teachers, set to ensure learning and participation for the parents on topics

like how to do the homework in reading. The school conducted an evaluation once a year on how it was perceived by the parents. They had focused the content to be about learning as opposed to information meeting. The principal expressed the following referring to a regular class - meeting:

“Just referring from the curriculum is very dull, and forgotten by most when they leave from here”

The schools website's was also used to communicate information. This was only used by two of the schools as the third did not find time to update the website. The principals commented that sometimes the parents would not get the information although it had been informed many times. It expressed a need for information being spread at different channels, but also that the parents were quite busy. However it was also questioned if the information was evident enough. If this would occur several times one of the principals would consult with the schools council's and the parents' committees, to check if adjustment was needed.

“We need to be very clear on the schools expectations for the collaboration”

One of the issues that the principals had to deal with was *mail from parents*. This was sometimes viewed as being very time consuming. It would usually represent a complaint or dissatisfaction of some sort. Like dissatisfaction in the child's homework, like why read page six instead of page four? This was commented on by the principals as time consuming and

nonsensical. Some of the mails however were described as a mishmash of issues. This could sometimes lead to meetings with the schools management. One of the principals had taken this into consideration by informing the parents of the first grade pupils.

“I have told the parents that all mail are official documents. When they send something to the school it is better not to send it while they are frustrated or mad. They should think about that because this will stay with us as an official document. And if they ask us to do something then the Education Act, the Public Administration Act comes into force and there is a §9 case. Then it’s action. It is not to intimidate them, but that’s how the system works according to the Education Act”

This had been a clever thing to do as the text and message in the mail had become more moderated and factual. The principals conveyed that they wanted the school to be regarded as a serious school. They commonly conveyed that the school message for collaboration also was apparent in the various plans, such as the practical plans as the social curriculum and social objectives on the pupils lesson-plan.

5.4.1 Structures – Teachers’ Perspectives

Global theme	Organizing themes
Structures	Pupil groups Professional secrecy More guidance in school

For two of the teachers the *pupils were organized in groups/classes* that were frequently changed around into new groups/classes. This way of

arranging the pupils created some disagreements between the teachers and some parents, as they would complain about this for various reasons. It could sometimes result in extra meetings with the principal. One of the teacher commented that pupils provided with an IEP did not benefit from this kind of organizing, as there were too many different adults teaching and relating to them. This led to turmoil and disrupt in the follow-up of the pupil.

The professional secrecy also led to problematic situations and the teachers questioned whom it benefitted? Sometimes more information than given was required to facilitate for the pupil. The Child Welfare however could not provide this.

“Professional secrecy to benefit the mother or the child?”

Sometimes the Physician called to ask about a pupil, this was too a one-way information. Also amongst the fellow colleagues at school the professional secrecy was challenging. A change in the school culture was pointed to. It used to be that fellow colleagues could discuss pupils, but that had changed.

“A pupil had a lot of challenges in his break-time, the other teachers would not tell why, in concern for the professional secrecy”.

Further it was commented that were difficulties of handling the pupil in a correct manner according to the challenges. All the teachers wanted *more guidance in school*, saying it is too little of that. One of the schools had sent a teacher on a course, but time was not provided to pass this on to the rest.

However it was seldom they were offered courses at all. All the teachers also wanted time for both individual and shared reflection of their own teaching. The teachers were sorry about having too little time to facilitate for the pupils in a good way.

5.4.2. Structures – Parents’ Perspective

Global theme	Organizing themes
Structures	Pupil groups

When the *pupils were organized in groups* that were frequently changed, it created a complex and chaotic situation for the parent. Negative cases of this had been communicated in media, parents expressing their dissatisfaction with this arrangement. A high degree of sick leave from school-staff also affected both pupils and parents in a negative way. One of the parents experienced quite a lot of difficulties about this, as to who is the teacher? When the parent wanted to talk to the teacher, she would call the secretary and ask who the teacher was by stating her child’s name. Sometimes even the secretary would not know.

“When I call the school I have to ask who the teacher is... They started with classes A, B, C, then it turned into yellow and green and then sometimes it is zebra and lions on Tuesdays. It is mishmash... it changes day-to-day. Half of the week they may be zebras, then the next part they turn it together. I think it’s embarrassing to call when I don’t know who to talk to. It isn’t easy to be a parent at that school! Sometimes we (parents) laugh about it, it’s such a bad situation no one gets anything of the arrangement”

The school's reputation suffered because of this, and it was a common subject for the parents to discuss. This parent considered change to another school. It was however a difficult decision as she worried about how her child would socially integrate in a new school.

5.4.3 Structures – Principal's Perspective

Global theme	Organizing themes
Structures	Organization of pupils An open door Professional secrecy

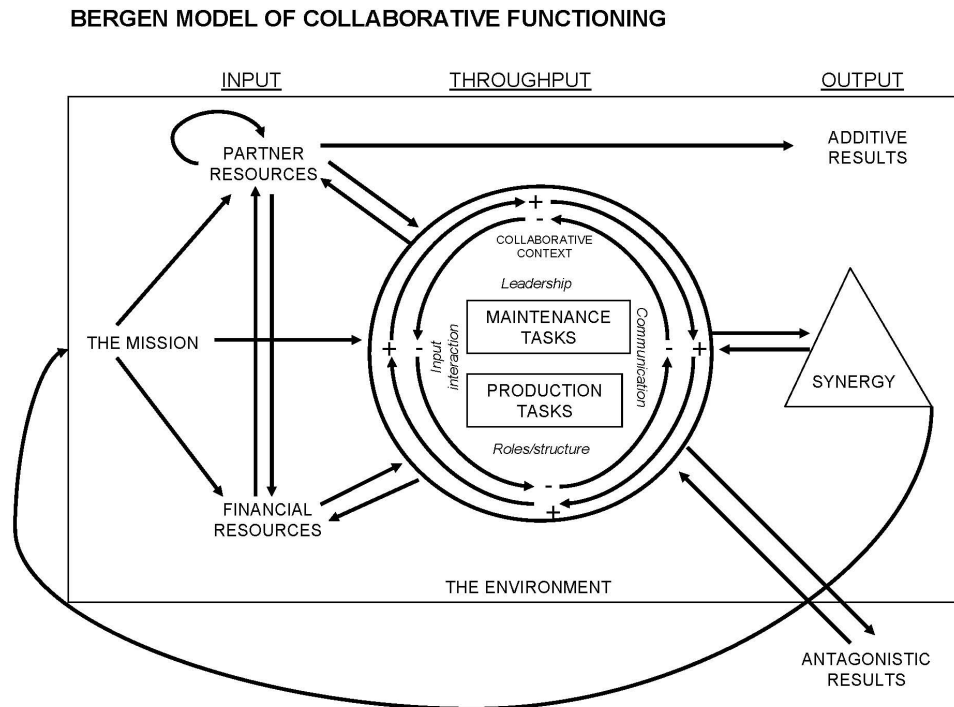
The *organization of the pupils*, were reflected upon due to early intervention. One of the Principals had a system of organizing the pupils into small groups, about 15 pupils for each teacher. This would help to a holistic focus on the pupil, as the teachers' job is to communicate with the parents and the social-pedagogical follow-up, described as a health promoting way. One of the principals supplemented this "*We keep a very close follow-up at the teachers, that have a strong focus on how the child experiences itself socially*"

All of the principals emphasized how they kept *an open door* to the teachers and were available for them. The schools management was too informed about the teachers' situation in the classroom. The management should know what was happening in the classes, and know a lot about the pupils,

like who needed special attention. The principals governed the system so that they could be ahead of *a situation*. When a pupil had an IEP it meant extra work for the teacher. Sometimes there would be several IEP's in a class, or it could be a combination of an IEP-pupil and pupils with special needs. Sometimes the *professional secrecy* came in the way of providing for the pupil. This was the professional secrecy connected to the Child Welfare in particular.

“It's a challenge sometimes not to have the information... so we discuss it in a special-education team and a team from the Child Welfare. We discuss it anonymously and we talk of person X”

6. Discussion



The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning (figure above, described in chapter 2.4) guides this chapter. The interview findings are organized by sections of the teacher, parents and principal. Each of the three groups is reported accordingly to input and throughput followed by the output, where the three groups are reported together. The parts of the model have been underlined throughout the text. The mission represents the reason for collaboration, which unifies the partners, the facilitated teaching for the pupil. Input describes the factors entering the collaboration – the partner resources, the mission and financial resources. Throughput is the

collaboration and the complex interaction of - leadership, communication, roles, structure and the environment. This creates production and maintenance activities that results in outputs. They can be additive ($2 + 2 = 4$), synergistic ($2 + 2 = 5$ or more) and antagonistic ($2 + 2 = 3$ or less), or a mix of these.

The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning was developed to organize, describe and report the findings of an empirical study in health promotion collaboration (Corwin et al, 2012). Previously use of this model has been as research framework in organisations or health promotion projects. This study has utilised the model to illuminate facilitating and inhibiting factors in collaboration from the perspectives of teachers, parents and principals. This means that previous studies have examined the process of actors collaborating within *an* organisation unified by *a* mission. However this study has examined actors aiming towards the same goal, but not united by the process, as they are all connected to various schools. Thus this study represents the perspectives from the teachers, parents and principles, not including their co-workers view on the same issue. However focus to the study is as stated above, and knowledge to the process of collaboration could help partners to avoid antagonistic outputs and increase chances for synergy (Huxham, 2003). It is to the researchers knowledge the first time

this model was used to investigate functioning of private- public health promotion partnership.

6.1 Teachers' – Input

Collaboration in school between the teachers, parents and principals brings together people from all walks of life. The imposed collaboration can be looked upon very differently from the parties' different perspectives. They represent different religions, values and interests and so fourth. The principal and teacher are employees, positioned by their skills and competence. The parents are not selected by this, but united to the collaboration by the pupil. Thus it is very important to have a mutual understanding of the *reason and the common goal* for the collaboration (Corwin et al, 2012). The parties are not purposefully selected partners, but the collaboration is regulated through the statutory laws.

A unifying aspect of partner resources emerged from the teachers – their clear compassion for the pupil. They were committed to the mission and to make sure that the pupil got what s/he was entitled to by the IEP. Although the teachers recognized the collaboration with the parents as a great part of their job they also reflected on the purpose for the collaboration. For instance whether or not it was beneficial for the pupil. Some parents were not regarded equal partners. The teachers had to advice and serve as role

model for some of the parents. Their first priority was focusing on the pupil, leaving the partnership with the parents secondary. This suggests that not having a mutual understanding of the mission the partners may have less fruitful collaboration (Nordahl & Drugli, 2007) It also leaves the collaboration less unifying, when there is a lack of common goal between the partners. Financial resources, or rather the lack of them became evident in the collaboration in terms of not providing sufficient teaching for the pupil. Although pupils were granted an IEP ensuring them customized teaching, the schools financial resources could interfere with this. This affected the teachers' relationship with the principals that set the economical frames. It also affected the parents both indirectly and directly. When encouraged to ask their children if they had received extra teaching they were entitled to, it implied distrust towards the schools system.

6.2 Teachers – Throughput

The leadership. The principal was found not supportive by two of the three teachers. That had a severe impact on the relationship between the teachers and principals, which was tepid at best. This affected the collaboration negatively as support from leader was wanted and needed. The overload of work, having to document and perform tasks not related to teaching, lead to bad conscience for not providing sufficiently for the pupils. The teachers would rather confide and seek support from fellow teachers than the

principal. It created negative cycles of interaction. This may result in the creation of subcultures (Bang, 1988) and having a workplace that is not resourceful for the teacher (Hetland & Hetland).

The teachers emphasized the *good* communication as a prerequisite for collaboration. Face-to-face contact was regarded optimal, but this was not always practical for the back and fourth reporting. Then the preference was the telephone contact versus mail, because reading between the lines could create misunderstandings, and because of the time consuming aspect.

Literature supports the positivity of face-to face meetings (Corbin & Mittelmark, 2007), as this allows for attitude, atmosphere and empathy to add to the relationship (Einarsen & Skogstad, 2010). Positive cycles of collaboration were deliberately created through the balance of conveying good and less good news. Also conveying good news only and having regularly contact led to good collaboration. These were the maintenance tasks adding positively to the foundation of collaboration. Good foundation was sometimes needed if the parents would interfere in what the teachers regarded as their remit. The teachers' professional role, did not allow for interference in didactics and methodology. This confirms how having a mutual understanding of reaching common goals and clear roles could have prevented this (Nordahl, 2007). Teachers' role in preparing the IEP was found unclear by the teachers, despite unambiguous regulations (Ministry of

education, 2013). This finding justifies questioning of the clarity of work-description and relationship to the principal. If teachers feel “overloaded” by work and additionally need to perform tasks that are not theirs, it may lead to stress and loss of mastery (Hetland & Hetland, 2011). One of the teachers believed that the parents were responsible for completing the IEP (schools responsibility), consequently this affected the teacher’s attitude towards the parents, as the teacher “helped and conducted the parents job”. The disadvantaged parents would, in teachers view not add to the preparing of the IEP. Awareness of schools’ attitude towards parents of low education is useful, as there is a systematic difference of lower results for the children of these parents (Bakken & Elstad, 2012). Not having clarity in structure and roles at school lead by the principal is affecting the schools’ culture and leads to negative cycles of interaction.

6.3 Parents’ – input

Love of children unites the parents’ partner resources to the mission. The mothers in the study were all resourceful and skilled. They had good knowledge of their children’s challenges and measures that would better the school day. This had been presented to the school- both their own knowledge and the expert-assessment that they had provided (parents’ right by the Education Act § 5-4). They were also experienced in the home-school collaboration by their other children. Importantly they *wanted* to

partner up and spend time needed to achieve the best learning and thriving for the child. However they experienced that their resource was not wanted in school. This suggests that the school has not yet recognised the parents' significant role in school (Davies, 1999). The Financial resources should not be parents' concern, as this is a school matter. However two of the three parents had the school's budget as explanation for not implementing measures. Thus the lack of finance affected the relationship to the principals, but also the teachers, as they did not have an independent role in this. The teachers would always have to refer with the principals. A clear understanding and knowledge of the teachers' role and responsibility would have avoided these obstacles (Ministry of Education, 2013). This created negative cycles of interaction.

6.4 Parents' – throughput

The three parents described the leaders differently. One of them stated the principal to be fantastic, always being supportive, and taking care of things before they grew big. This of course affected the partnership positively to the teacher too, who was also described similarly. They would listen to the parent and take her opinions into consideration. She was well informed about the school issues regarding her child. Their relationship was characterized by mutual respect. The teacher had a good relationship with her child too – he was a good leader in the classroom and focused on the

child's assets and mastery. Thriving, academic progress in her child and a good relationship with the school led to positive cycles of interaction. This collaboration has the traits of what is considered as good communication (Haukedal, 2014).

The principals, who collaborated with the two other parents, were described as “coward” and the “supreme”, reflecting the parents’ view of the collaboration too. These parents had been refused the recommended (obtained from expert decision) measures for the children (Education Act §5-4). There had been telephone calls, meetings and letters with no result. It had been time consuming and explained by bad economy. A complaint was sent by one of the parents to the County Governor. That led to measures for the child. Although the child was taken care of and provided with the measures, the collaboration was still influenced by the negative cycles of interaction. The lack of respect, loss of control of the child's wellbeing at school, not having ones opinions taken into consideration, lack of support and clarity of parents role and more leads to dysfunctional relationships (Hetland & Hetland, 2011).

For the other parent nothing was done, not even no-cost measures suggested by the parent were initiated. The parent expressed sorrow as her child struggled, naming the relationship with the school as “no-relation”.

Communication was left to the obligatory twice a year - the pupil-development meeting. This was not enough to achieve a mutual understanding and responsibility for the child's further development and learning. This points to that not having the same understanding of what and how to collaborate, will complicate the process when frequent contact is needed, as is for children with special needs (Huxham, 2003).

The school's structure, by organizing the pupil's in frequently changed groups created "mishmash" for the parents. On top of this, the many vicars due to sick-leaves led to chaos, "a mess". This was evident when parents tried to get in touch with the teacher at school; not knowing whom the teacher was, as the parents were not informed of new people/vicars. The professional role of the teacher was thus unclear, and "normal" expectations of teachers professional role was questioned.

When the parents' acquired skills and knowledge of their statutory rights, it created dislike at school, the parents felt frowned upon, having to "lay low" not being visible for a while. One of the parents requested not to have her child taken out on a one-to-one teaching as this was happening every day. Her request was not taken into consideration. All of the above created negative cycles of interaction. It is also evident that children, that are frequently removed from classroom teaching gets lonelier in their leisure

time (Wendelborg, 2010). Not being heard and not feeling respected adds to the negative cycles of interaction. Two of the parents were sorry there had been no transfer meetings between the school and kindergarten, as they assumed it would ease the process. While disagreements must be seen as normal, collaboration is about problem solving and consensus building (Straus 2002).

6.5 Principals' - input

The principals' partner resources expressed a professional approach to the mission, with a focus on enhancing their social mandate, their and the teachers' professional role and the school as an institution. This was important to convey to the parents to safeguard them that they ran a "serious" school and that their children would be taken care of. The principals recognized their mission as the start of a 13 years collaborating project with the parents to ensure the pupils' social and academic learning and development. The principals' had expectations from the parents too, and this had been conveyed, as partnership commits. The financial resources were clearly stated not to be the parents matter, as they should not feel guilty for having a child with special needs. However financial resources was also pointed to be the schools system and structure, such as the teachers competence and organizing the pupils in smaller groups for better

attendance. The clarity of their profession and school's mandate and role was seen to set a good foundation for collaboration (Huxham, 2003).

6.6 Principals' - throughput

The leadership was evident in the principals' communication with the parents. They set the agenda, meetings were done at school and expectations to the parents were conveyed. This also put attention to the schools' power as an institution, which indicates how it is important to reflect upon equality between the home and school (Nordahl, 2007). One of the principals had done so, by naming the class-meeting, the *collaboration-meeting*, attempting to convey the message to the parents of equality. The principals also expressed how their responsibility was to be informed of the environment in class and pupils' needs, having a clear structure that would ensure this.

Communication with parents had various channels. The principals or others from the schools management would attend the IEP-meetings that could be numerous. One of the principals had cut down from meetings on a regularly basis, to be conducted only when needed. A mutual understanding and information between home and school is necessary, if both parties should consider this to be a good solution, as special needs education presupposes collaboration between parents and school (Ekeberg & Holmberg, 2000) The

awareness of the school's power is important in this regard. The school received a lot of mail, some regarded nonsensical, as content interfered with the professional role, such as suggestions to altering the homework, or teachers' methodology. Also complaints from parents, sometimes using not-appropriate wording were sent to the principals. One of the principals consequently informed the parents that all such mails are official documents thus content was taken seriously. If parents failed a complaint to the school, the school was obliged by law (Education Act § 9) to act upon the complaint. The statutory rights of the psychosocial environment §9 would be initiated. After this the text and message in mails had become more factual and moderated. Although this could intimidate some parents the principal informed them, and also put clarity to roles and expectations of collaboration and the schools culture (Bang, 1988).

The principals unanimously agreed that collaboration with parents of children with special needs could be challenging. The number of meetings would increase, and they had to deal with the parents sorrow. Two of the principals expressed that the parents of children with special needs were more demanding. In facilitating for the pupils, the principals took into account a lot of things that parents did not have an overview of. All of the above confirms the importance of clarity in roles and knowledge of processes that creates positive cycles of interaction.

The principals were aware of what created negative cycles of interaction; low priority of school from parents, not keeping appointments and when the parents did not believe in the principals. The principals also expressed that the parents should help out with homework and social issues, and contribute to friendship amongst the pupils. This all indicates good intentions both from school and home, the question is how well schools expectations of the collaboration is communicated to the parents. This of course operates the other way around as well; do the parents having a say in this? The school shall initiate collaboration with parents, thus responsibility is clearly with the school to develop functional systems to make this work.

6.7 Teachers', parents' and principals' – output

For the teachers, parents and principals the output of the mission is to which extent the partners achieved the desired results - the best learning and development for the pupil to achieve results that are only possible by collaborating. The collaboration outlined in this chapter shows that all of the three outputs are present. The positive and negative cycles of interaction leads to the various outputs. Sometimes they are all present at the same time, as when one of the teachers encourages the parent to ask if the child had received extra teaching that day. This reveals compassion for the mission and pupil, and possibly a close relationship with the parent, being

synergetic for the two of them. It did however reveal distrust to the school, - the principal, which points to antagonistic results. When the synergistic outcome is dependent on a specific person versus the insurances of the schools system, it shows that the school system has failed to achieve the mission. This in turn could create insecurity with the parent, pointing to additive and/or antagonistic results.

However as stated in the introduction of this chapter the focus has been to illuminate the facilitating and inhibiting factors in collaboration between home and school, to locate dis/functional processes of collaboration in school. The actors presented aim towards the same goal, but not united by the process, as they are all connected to various schools. Thus focus of this study is on the input and throughput as they reveal the facilitating and inhibiting factors of collaboration.

6.8 Health Promotion

There are many factors leading to a successful learning other than merely high intelligence (Scarr, ref. Einarsen & Skogstad, 2010). Pupils that are provided with an IEP has not dividend from the regular curriculum, but this does not reflect a sign of lower intelligence with the child. Other factors that must be taken into consideration are environmental and influential factors. Such as motivation, good health and support from family and friends plays a

vital role (Wormnes & Manger, 2005; Ibid). *“Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love”* (WHO, Glossary, 1998) points to both a functional collaboration between home and school, and the schools culture. It also applies to the conditions within the school, the prerequisites of schools’ staff basal psychological needs. Health also includes good mental health. To achieve learning and development the pupil needs motivation, and not the feeling of being different as can be for children of special needs.

“Health is created by caring for oneself and others, by being able to take decisions and have control over one’s life circumstances”(WHO, Glossary 1998) thus empowering the pupil by providing adequate teaching. Although it applies to all parties in the collaboration, the parents are special in not representing a professional part. By having a clear role in the collaboration it would help to empower the parents. *“And by ensuring that the society one lives in creates conditions that allow the attainment of health by all its members”* (WHO, 1986). Creating a supportive environment at school and allowing for the pupils successful learning, adds on the following; strategies of learning, emotional stability, acceptance and trust (Scarr, ref. Einarsen & Skogstad, 2010, p. 76). This can be achieved through collaboration between home and school that has a synergetic output.

6.9 Implications for practise

The aim of this study was to illuminate facilitating and inhibiting factors from the perspectives of teachers, parents and principles in collaboration between home and school regarding children with special needs. To aid this the Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning was employed to locate these factors present in the collaboration.

Parents have major rights in collaboration with school, stated in laws and curriculum and aimed to work in partnership. Both positive and negative cycles of interaction have been identified. Negative cycles and inhibiting factors from the parents' perspective revealed most importantly unclear structures and roles. Simply stating in the curriculum that there should be a partnership between home and school is not enough to ensure a functional partnership. Most important facilitating factors were found to be the parents desire to be a partner in the collaboration with the school to make the pupil thrive and develop at school.

- The parents are not systematically enlightened of their rights and role in school, or what to expect from the school.
- It depends on schools culture and teacher what support parents get for their child's need for special teaching, not systematically ensured by the schools system.
- The school does not systematically ensure IEP- meetings.

Satisfactory conditions found by one of the parents confirms conclusion above as all of these lacking parts were present and facilitated the collaboration.

From the perspectives of teachers important facilitating factors were found to be their dedication for pupil's thriving and development, however inhibiting factors of time and structure often lead to not satisfactory teaching.

- Teachers did not create a platform of collaborating foundation with parents; instead it was based on "how it always had been". This created unclear roles in the collaboration.
- Lack of support from principal or management led to poorer customized teaching, thus affecting collaboration with parents negatively.
- Lack of finances led to poorer customized teaching for the child. Collaboration to parents affected both negatively and "positively", as teacher-parent could be on "the same team", nevertheless revealing distrust to school.
- Vague structure and roles would conflict with teachers' professional role.
- Required documentation steals time, and at pupil development meeting not allowing for dialogue.

- Not clarity in roles and tasks concerning the preparing of the IEP. Wrongly led to attitude towards and the misconception of “helping the parents”.

Facilitating factors from the principals that contribute into collaboration with parents are their knowledge of the schools system, and desire to provide their best for the pupil. The principals as leaders, confirmed how influential their doing affect the schools culture.

- Renaming class-meeting into collaboration-meeting, signal that collaboration with parents is important and valued.
- Altering regular IEP-meetings to “only when needed” do not ensure consistency of the pupils’ teaching and development.
- Exit one of the two obligatory class-meeting - this sends negative signal of schools priority for collaboration with parents.
- Information to parents of their role in school needs clarity.
- Principals confirms increased potential conflicts with parents, when IEP present. Blurry roles, sorrow needs focus as IEP are increasing in numbers.
- Good intensions and interventions from school need to be communicated to parents, as they are not always visible.

The collaboration between home and school would benefit on clarity in rules and roles, and better communication by having a clear mission.

6.10 Recommendations for future research

The increase in the social inequities of the learning outcomes for pupils calls on knowledge to systematic collaboration that has synergetic output. The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning was proved useful in identifying facilitative and inhibiting factors of the collaboration. More research is needed to add on the understanding and processes of the partnership functioning in school.

6.11 Limitations

Resourceful mothers represent the parents' perspective in this study. The school aims to promote equal opportunities to all pupil's, but pupils of parents with low education has lower results at school (Bakken & Elstad, 2012). To have the perspective of parents with low socioeconomic background would be interesting, but would also represent an ethical discussion. As to recruitment, the purposeful selection would have been difficult to conduct. The teachers helpfully tried to recruit parents that they described as "disadvantaged", however there was no response. Also how would the researcher set the criteria? Does it mean that mothers that do not have a high education themselves cannot provide beneficially for their

children? Could it be that altering the schools collaboration with parents would have been beneficial for the pupils? Also the resourceful mothers met major obstacles in their collaboration with school, this suggests that the schools system do not adequately offer clarity in parents' role in the collaboration. There is a great chance that this would have been the case too, with less resourceful parents represented in this study. The silent voice of the pupil also adds to the ethical consideration. No children were interviewed in this study. It would have been difficult to get the perspectives of a younger child on collaboration between the parents and school. However as IEP are increasing with the age of the children it could have been useful to interview older children.

6.12 Conclusions

This study provides new insight on collaboration between home and school when an IEP is present. Existing research and the schools' staff of this study confirms that collaboration with parents that have children with special needs complicates the process. This particular collaboration may bring in emotions and sorrow. The meetings or the need for meetings between home and school often intensifies when an IEP is present. The lack of roles, structure and poor communication may result in good intentions from school not being conveyed to the parents. This study suggests that the school still does not see parents as a resource. The statement of partnership

in the curriculum is not enough, attention and priority to collaborating processes is needed. The increase of IEP's in school, and more pupils not getting a complete diploma needs attention, so that the school can fulfil its intension of equal opportunities for all. A functional collaboration between home and school that has a synergetic output will help to achieve this.

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Appendix:

Vedlegg 1 Informasjon til skolen ved rektor Informasjon om forsknings-studiet

Mitt navn er Janne Walden og jeg er mastergradsstudent ved Hemil-senteret, Psykologisk Fakultet ved Universitetet i Bergen. Jeg holder på med den avsluttende masteroppgaven i helsefremmende arbeid, og jeg skriver om samarbeidet hjem-skole der en tilrettelegger for barn med spesielle behov. I denne sammenheng er spesielle behov definert ved elevers bruk av individuell opplæringsplan (IOP). Formålet med oppgaven er å belyse hva rektor, lærere og foreldre fremhever som viktige faktorer for samarbeid mellom hjem-skole når eleven har spesielle behov.

For å undersøke dette ønsker jeg å intervju rektorer, lærere og foreldre som har barn med IOP. På din skole er jeg interessert i å intervju deg som rektor, én lærer og én foresatt, (mor eller far) til barn med IOP. Intervjuet vil ta omtrent 45 minutter, og jeg vil benytte diktafon for å kvalitetssikre at jeg får med det som blir sagt. Jeg som forsker er underlagt taushetsplikt og intervjuene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Ingen personidentifiserende opplysninger vil bli samlet inn. Lydfil vil bli slettet så snart intervjuet er skrevet ut i tekstform. Prosjektet er ferdigstilt senest august 2014. Det vil ikke være mulig å gjenkjenne enkelt personer eller enkeltskoler i den ferdige oppgaven.

Jeg håper med dette at du vil samarbeide med meg og at du hjelper meg å finne én lærer og én foresatt til intervju, som oppfyller kriteriet om bruk av IOP. Lærer og foresatt trenger ikke være knyttet til samme elev. Jeg ønsker også å få intervjuet deg som rektor for å belyse skoleleders erfaring på hjem-skole samarbeid.

Du kan når som helst trekke deg fra studien uten å oppgi grunn. Dersom du har anledning til å delta, må du signere den vedlagte samtykkeerklæringen.

Jeg håper også på å få benytte et av skolens rom for selve intervjuet, og at dette kan finne sted i skoletiden. Foresatte kan selv velge tid og sted for intervju, dette trenger ikke foregå på skolen.

Dersom du har noen spørsmål ta gjerne kontakt med meg:

Jwa088@student.uib.no,
mobil nummer 988 939 95

Eller kontakt veileder førsteamanuensis Torill Bull
Torill.Bull@iuh.uib.no, telefon 55 58 28 29,

Håper på positivt svar, på forhånd takk for samarbeidet

Med vennlig hilsen

Janne Walden

Vedlegg 2 Informasjon til lærer

Informasjon om forsknings-studiet

Mitt navn er Janne Walden og jeg er mastergradsstudent ved Hemil-senteret, Det Psykologisk Fakultet ved Universitetet i Bergen. Jeg holder på med den avsluttende masteroppgaven i helsefremmende arbeid og skriver om samarbeidet hjem-skole der en tilrettelegger for barn med spesielle behov. I denne sammenheng er spesielle behov definert ved elevers bruk av individuell opplæringsplan (IOP). Formålet med oppgaven er å belyse hva rektor, lærere og foreldre fremhever som viktige faktorer for samarbeid mellom hjem-skole når eleven har spesielle behov.

I den forbindelse skal jeg foreta ni intervju med rektorer, lærere og foreldre ved tre ulike skoler fra 2-7 klassetrinn. Dersom du har anledning til å delta vil intervjuet ta omtrent 45 minutter. Som kvalitetssikring vil jeg benytte diktafon under intervjuet. Du kan når som helst trekke deg fra studien, uten å oppgi grunn. Navnet ditt vil ikke bli benyttet, det blir ikke mulig å spore opp hvem som har deltatt i studien. Lydfilen vil bli slettet når informasjonen er blitt skrevet ut i tekstform.

Dersom du har anledning til å delta, ber jeg om at du leser samtykkeerklæringen og signere denne.

Dersom du har noen spørsmål ta gjerne kontakt med meg:

Jwa088@student.uib.no,
mobil nummer 988 939 95

Eller kontakt veileder for oppgaven, førsteamanuensis Torill Bull
Torill.Bull@iuh.uib.no, telefon 55 58 28 29,

Håper på positivt svar, på forhånd takk for samarbeidet

Med vennlig hilsen

Janne Walden

Vedlegg 3 Informasjon til foresatt

Informasjon om forsknings-studiet

Mitt navn er Janne Walden og jeg er mastergradsstudent ved Hemil-senteret, Det Psykologisk Fakultet ved Universitetet i Bergen. Jeg holder på med den avsluttende masteroppgaven i helsefremmende arbeid, og skriver om samarbeidet hjem-skole der en tilrettelegger for barn med spesielle behov. I denne sammenheng er spesielle behov definert ved elevers bruk av individuell opplæringsplan (IOP). Formålet med oppgaven er å belyse hva rektor, lærere og foreldre fremhever som viktige faktorer for samarbeid mellom hjem-skole når eleven har spesielle behov.

I den forbindelse skal jeg foreta ni intervju med rektorer, lærere og foreldre ved tre ulike skoler fra 2-7 klassetrinn. Dersom du har anledning for å dele erfaringer som forelder/foresatt, vil intervjuet ta omtrent 45 minutter. Som kvalitetssikring vil jeg benytte diktafon under intervjuet. Du kan når som helst trekke deg fra studien, uten å oppgi grunn, og det vil ikke få noen konsekvenser for samarbeidet med skolen for ditt barn. Navnet ditt vil ikke bli benyttet, og det blir ikke mulig å spore opp hvem som har deltatt i studien. Lydfilen vil bli slettet når informasjonen er blitt skrevet ut i tekstform. Dersom du ønsker å delta, ber jeg om at du lese samtykkeerklæringen og signere denne.

Dersom du har noen spørsmål ta gjerne kontakt med meg:

Jwa088@student.uib.no,
mobil nummer 988 939 95

Eller kontakt veileder for oppgaven, førsteamanuensis Torill Bull
Torill.Bull@iuh.uib.no telefon 55 58 28 29

Håper på positivt svar, på forhånd takk for samarbeidet

Med vennlig hilsen

Janne Walden

Vedlegg 4

Intervjuguide

Informasjon til informant:

- presentasjon av meg selv og forskningsprosjektet som skal resultere i en masteroppgave.
- Forespørsel og hensikt med diktafonbruk, et hjelpemiddel som gjør det mulig å konsentrere seg om selve intervjuet, samt en kvalitetssikring av intervjuet.
- Transkriberingsprosessen; intervjuet skrives ut på bakgrunn av lydopptaket og notater gjort under selve intervjuet. Opptaket slettes når oppgaven er ferdigstilt.
- Informere om at deltakelsen er frivillig og at informanten når som helst kan trekke seg fra intervjuet.
- Konfidensialitet og anonymisering av materialet.
- Samtykkeerklæring.

Spørsmål til lærer

Bakgrunnsinformasjon:

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet som lærer?
- Hvor utdannet du deg til lærer? (høgskole eller universitet)?
- Hvor lenge har du jobbet ved denne skolen?
- Er du kontaktlærer?
- Hvilke fag underviser du her på skolen?

Hjem-skole samarbeid

- På hvilken måte har lærerutdanningen bidratt til samarbeid med foresatte?
- På hvilken måte har din nåværende arbeidsplass bidratt til hjem-skole samarbeid?
- Hva legger du i begrepet hjem-skole samarbeid?
- Hvilke forventninger har du til samarbeidet med de foresatte?

Individuell opplæringsplan (IOP)

- Hva er et vanlig antall samarbeidsmøter med foresatte gjennom et skoleår?

- Dersom eleven har IOP eller IP, forandrer antall samarbeidsmøter seg da?
- Oppfølging: hvorfor det? Ikke?
- Hva tenker du er viktig i samarbeidet mellom deg og den foresatte?
- Hvordan vurderer du om du har nok kunnskap om barnets behov, slik at du kan tilrettelegge?
- Hvor viktige er de foresatte i den prosessen?
- Fikk du opplæring i å håndtere barnets behov?
- Oppfølging: dersom nei, hvordan stiller du deg til det?
- Kan du beskrive en negativ erfaring om samarbeid med foresatte?
- Oppfølging: hva er det som gjorde at situasjonen ble vanskelig for deg?
- Kan du beskrive en positiv erfaring i samarbeid med foresatte?
- Oppfølging: hva var det som gjorde at det ble en god situasjon?
- På hvilken måte kan rektor være en ressurs for ditt samarbeid med foresatte?
- Opplever du at skoleleder støtter deg i samarbeid med foresatte? På hvilken måte?
- Hvordan opplever du at foresatte følger opp eventuelle avtaler dere har gjort omkring eleven?
- Hvilket råd vil du gi til andre lærere/rektorer/foresatte om samarbeidet hjem-skole nå du tilrettelegger for IOP?
- Er det noe som hadde gjort samarbeidet skole-hjem enklere for deg? Hvordan ser du på denne delen (samarbeid skole-hjem) av lærerjobben din? Trives du med foreldrekontakten?
- Er det ellers noe du vil tilføye som vi ikke har kommet innpå i løpet av samtalen?
- Hvordan opplevde du intervjusituasjonen?

Spørsmål til foresatt

Bakgrunnsinformasjon:

- Hvilket klassetrinn går din sønn/datter?
- Har din sønn/datter individuell opplæringsplan?
- Har du flere barn ved denne skolen?
- Har du selv høyere utdanning?

- Familiesammensetning, bor barnet med begge foreldre?
- Har barnet en diagnose?

Hjem-skole samarbeid

- Hva legger du i begrepet hjem-skole samarbeid?
- Hvilke forventninger hadde du til samarbeidet med læreren/skolen?
- Samarbeider du med andre instanser enn skolen?
- Oppfølging: dersom ja, fortell litt om samarbeidet, hva er du fornøyd med?, ikke fornøyd med?
- Når tok samarbeidet omkring IOP til?
- Hvem initierte dette? Var det tidsnok?
- Hvor ofte møter du lærer/skolen for dialog? Er dette nok? Hvorfor?
- Synes du skolen har nok kunnskap om ditt barn, slik at adekvat tilrettelegging kan foretas? Oppfølging: hvordan?
- På hvilken måte føler du deg hørt/ikke hørt i møte med lærer/skolen?
- Har rektor spilt noen rolle i ditt samarbeid med skolen?
- Kan du beskrive en negativ erfaring du har i samarbeid med lærer/skolen?
- Kan du beskrive en positiv erfaring du har i samarbeid med lærer/skolen?
- Hvordan opplever du at lærer/skolen følger opp eventuelle avtaler dere har gjort omkring eleven?
- Føler du deg trygg på at barnet er godt ivaretatt på skolen?
- Hva kan være utfordrende ved samarbeidet med lærer/skolen?
- Er det noe som hadde gjort samarbeidet skole-hjem enklere for deg?
- Når man samarbeider med andre påvirkes samarbeidet av ulike faktorer. Hva er det første du tenker på som kan påvirke samarbeidet mellom deg og lærer/skolen?
- Hva tenker du er viktig i samarbeidet mellom deg og lærer/skolen når dere samarbeider om barnets tilrettelegging?
- Hva vil du si kan gjøres for å etablere et godt samarbeid mellom deg og lærer/skolen? På hvilken måte kan du bidra? På hvilken måte kan lærer/skolen bidra?

- Er det noen råd du ville gitt til andre om å få til et godt samarbeid når en trenger å tilrettelegge for eleven?
- Er det ellers noe du vil tilføye som vi ikke har kommet innpå i løpet av samtalen?
- Hvordan opplevde du intervjusituasjonen?

Spørsmål til rektor

Bakgrunnsinformasjon:

- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet som rektor?
- Hvor lenge har du arbeidet ved denne skolen?
- Hvor utdannet du deg til lærer? Har du tatt noe etterutdanning?
- Underviser du i tillegg til rektorstillingen?

Hjem-skole samarbeid

- Hva legger du i begrepet hjem-skole samarbeid?
- Hvor viktig er det med et fungerende samarbeid? Hvorfor?
- På hvilken måte er du til støtte for dine ansatte i hjem-skole samarbeidet?
- Legger skoleeier føringer i forhold til hjem-skole samarbeid? På hvilken måte?
- På hvilken måte formidler du viktigheten av hjem-skole samarbeidet til lærer? Til foresatte?
- Hvor stor del av jobben din vil du si går med til arbeid knyttet hjem-skole?
- På hvilken måte er du lydhør i forhold til foresattes ønsker og innspill omkring eleven?
- Når en elev har IOP hva kan da endre seg i hjem-skole samarbeidet?
- På hvilken måte signaliserer du til foresatte at skolen er åpen og inkluderende for innspill? Tror du foresatte har samme oppfatning om at skolen er åpen og inkluderende for innspill? Lærer?
- På hvilken måte er du til støtte for dine ansatte i hjem-skole samarbeidet?

- Kan du fortelle om en negativ erfaring du har knyttet til hjem-skole samarbeid med lærer? Foresatt? Hvilke faktorer spiller inn?
- Kan du fortelle om en positiv erfaring knyttet til hjem-skole samarbeid med lærer? Foresatt? Hvilke faktorer spiller inn?
- Er det ellers noe du vil tilføye som vi ikke har kommet innpå i løpet av samtalen?
- Hvordan opplevde du intervjusituasjonen?

Spørsmålsguide – rektor

1. På hvilken måte kommer hjem-skole samarbeidet fram i skolens virksomhetsplaner?
2. Hvordan blir samarbeidet påvirket mellom deg og lærer når eleven har IOP?
3. Fra kunnskapsløftet skal skolen i partnerskap med foreldre samarbeide omkring eleven. På hvilken måte skaper du partnerskap med foresatte?
4. På hvilken måte er skole-hjem samarbeidet synliggjort gjennom skolekulturen?
5. I en FAFO rapport gjort for utdanningsforbundet som beskriver lærers arbeidssituasjon om tidstvene går det fram at; (det brukes for mye tid på fellesmøter og lokale læreplaner). Og for liten tid til individuell og felles tid til refleksjon av egen praksis. Elever med IOP kan ha ulike utfordringer. På hvilken måte veiledes lærerne her?
6. Hvilke oppgaver gjør lærerne i dag som før var knyttet PPT?
(lærerne skriver IOP, men kan mangle sosial-pedagogisk kompetanse)
7. Hva skal det samarbeides om i et hjem-skole samarbeid? (hvor går grensene mellom profesjon og foresatt?)
8. En av rektors oppgaver er å bidra til å utjevne sosiale forskjeller. Hvordan bidrar du til dette?
9. På hvilken måte er skolen organisert slik at den er helsefremmende for elevene?

