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# Implementing inclusive education policies – the challenges of organizational change in a Danish municipality

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## ABSTRACT

In 2012 the Danish Parliament passed legislation mandating that 96% of all students in compulsory public education attend regular classes. This target generally led to severe strains within local education authorities in Denmark. Civil servants, school principals, and teachers experienced inclusive education as a challenge rather than as an opportunity. In 2015 a municipality in Northern Jutland even decided to increase the target to 97% of all students. This article analyses the process and challenges of how inclusive education policies in this particular municipality were implemented and enacted between 2015 and 2019. Drawing on qualitative data, the article maps the discourse surrounding inclusive education and the organizational interactions between three levels of the local education authority: the political level, the civil servant level, and the local school level. The concluding discussion reports the findings and sheds light on the local challenges of organizational change in terms of inclusive education policies.

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## Introduction

Since 1994, when many countries ratified the renowned UNESCO Salamanca Statement on social and educational inclusion, efforts have been made to include all children in school systems and thus reduce mechanisms of exclusion and the prominent role formerly ascribed to special needs education. This inclusive effort can be seen as linked to values of democracy and equality in society (Slee, 2011). As opposed to the globalized marketization of education, the Salamanca Statement represents a piece of universalism, stating international standards of social justice for all individuals.

The statement is in close connection with and in continuity of the United Nation's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for Lifelong Learning for All (World Education Forum, 2015), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (Smith, 2018; Unterhalter, 2019)

However, regardless of the great value often attributed to inclusion in education policies, inclusion remains an extremely complex goal and often finds itself sidelined, compared to other priorities (Engsig

& Johnstone, 2015; Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Morton, Higgins, MacArthur, & Phillips, 2013). On the same note, Slee has argued that inclusive education is 'inaudible when located amid more strident educational discourses' (cited in Smith, 2018, p. 89).

To gain insight into the complex realization of inclusive education, this article zooms in on the very workings of how political ambitions, in terms of inclusion, are carried into practice, using a municipal context. Starting from the assumption that education systems, from ministries to classrooms, are complex social assemblages, we heed the call of Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) to conduct policy research that can capture the complexities of education policy, including 'the jumbled, messy, contested creative and mundane social interactions' (p. 2); we want to explore 'how schools 'do' policy, specifically about how policies become 'live' and get enacted (or not) in schools' (p. 2). Offering ample opportunity for pursuing our research ambition, we have identified Denmark as a relevant context through purposive sampling (Grandy, 2010).

## The Danish context of inclusive education

As a member of the Nordic welfare state family, Denmark has long pursued a path of increased comprehensive schooling with fewer educational streams and an increasing focus on quality compulsory

education for all during the course of the 20th century (Ydesen & Buchardt, 2020). Nevertheless, Denmark did not abandon the overall practice of sorting students into special education, although the 1993 education act introduced the concept of ‘differentiation of teaching’ as opposed to the differentiation of students.

According to Hamre (2018), inclusion as an inescapable political priority did not enter the Danish education scene until the 2000 s, and in 2012 the Danish Parliament passed legislation requiring 96% of all students in compulsory public education to attend regular classes (Engsig & Johnstone, 2015). Later, the 2014 school reform in Denmark took on inclusion as one of its main themes. Today, inclusion remains a widely discussed and disputed issue of national relevance to the Danish public comprehensive school model, or *Folkeskole* (Rasmussen & Moos, 2014). In their analysis of the Danish case, Engsig and Johnstone (2015) argue that Danish inclusion policies are constituted by ‘a continuum that ranges from Salamanca-inspired, equity-focused inclusion to accountability-focused inclusion’ (p. 470).

In relation to the policy enactment approach stated above, it is noteworthy that Engsig and Johnstone (2015) emphasize the transformative nature of inclusive education, meaning that inclusive education is understood differently around the world, and even in different national and local contexts. Their argument could be viewed in light of a general point made by geographer Livingstone (2003), who emphasizes that meaning is always constructed locally. This means that new ideas, knowledge, and practices simply must make sense in the receiving context to become viable. The point also connects with the work of Ball et al. (2012, p. 138), who emphasize that, ‘Teachers are “meaning makers”; they bring creativity and commitment, their enthusiasm, to policy enactment, but this creativity and commitment involve working on themselves, their colleagues and their students in order to “do” policy and to do it well.’

From these initial observations, it is our ambition to unravel how Danish inclusion policies are implemented and enacted in a concrete municipal context.

### **Introducing the municipality case study**

The case study municipality is relatively small (about 65,000 citizens) and situated in a peripheral area with mainly rural and small towns. The main town has about 26,000 citizens and is located in one of the smallest regions (in terms of population) in Denmark. In terms of education, the municipality has undergone a very significant centralization process. In 2011 the number of school districts was reduced from 27 to 10 (closing seven schools), and in 2015 the number of school districts reduced to six (closing an additional five schools). In the same school

year, the number of schools in the municipality reached six, with a total of 14 branches (Koch, 2017).

In 2015 the municipality met the national inclusion rate of 96% of all students attending regular education. However, the municipality decided to increase its own target rate to 97%.<sup>1</sup> Already during the 2016/17 school year, the national objective was revoked by the government following the recommendations of a government expert group, but the municipality held to its 97% target.

In the 2017/18 school year, a special inclusion team working with all schools in the municipality was established by the Children, Youth and Education Committee (*Børne- Fritids- og Undervisningsudvalget*). The inclusion team was tasked with supporting schools in developing inclusive learning environments. In June 2018, following a quality report from the inclusion team, the municipal council decided to revoke the numeric objective of 97% of all students attending regularly provided education. Instead, the focus shifted to the establishment of so-called inclusive learning environments, as the inclusion team’s task had been defined. In the quality report, the inclusion team concluded,

*The ambition should not be a question of quantitative targets for the proportion of students attending regular education, but instead qualitative goals regarding strengthening the inclusive learning environments of public school to the benefit of all students and the goal of all students developing academically and socially.<sup>2</sup>*

The shift from a quantitative to a qualitative target for inclusive education provides an initial indication that something fundamental changed within the municipal organization.

According to the municipality’s Child, Youth and Family Policy (CYFP) of 2015, the goal of inclusion was to include 97% of all children and young people in general elementary school by 2016. Although the document does not offer a definition of inclusion, the description of community states,

*Communities have room for diversity, and everyone can be included, regardless of physical, mental, and social challenges. When children, young people, and families participate in diverse communities, they have the opportunity to experience diversity, thereby gaining an understanding of themselves and others so that they will be able to show interest and concern for others.*

The CYFP of 2016, however, does not explicitly state the goal of inclusion, but instead defines inclusion as ‘all children and young people experience themselves as an important part of a community with opportunity and academic and personal development’.

More specifically, the document indicates the presence of three dimensions associated with inclusive education. First, culture is highlighted as something that is, ‘created between people and is always changing.

*Culture is what we do in our way of organizing, interpreting, and understanding of the world*. Second, a human perspective is outlined as *'all people have an inherent potential for interaction, development, and learning. People are motivated, committed, and willing to take responsibility when they have positive expectations. People's needs and skills are constantly changing'*. Third, community plays a role as the place *'where we belong. To belong in a community is a basic human need, and it is a prerequisite for the experience of being in an inclusive learning environment'*.

The purpose of this article, then, is to investigate the discourses and narratives about inclusion in evidence at the three relevant organizational levels of the municipality: the political decision-making level, the civil servant policy elaboration and coordination level, and, finally, the school practice and enactment level. Such an investigation can throw light on 1) whether political goals about inclusive education are translated from the political level to the school level, which is supposed to carry out the political goals and ambitions, and 2) the interactions within the organization. In this respect, the article analyses the process and challenges of implementing and enacting inclusive education policies in the municipality.

### Methodology and theoretical underpinnings

Methodologically, the article is based on a case study approach inspired by Flyvbjerg (2010) and Stake (1995), following an inductive interpretative approach to the construction of the empirical data. The data consist of six interviews with eight agents representing the three levels of the municipality's inclusive education organization.

The political decision-making level is represented by the chairperson of the Children, Youth and Education Committee and the head of the School and Day Care Area (*Skole- og Dagtilbudssområdet*). The former is a Social Democratic politician who heads the committee consisting of nine elected politicians of various political affiliations. The latter is a high-level civil servant in the municipal organization who works closely with the politicians on the committee. The two agents at this level were interviewed individually.

The civil servant policy elaboration and coordination level is represented by the municipal inclusion team, which consists of two social educators and one teacher who work in special education. Based at City Hall, these mid-level civil servants are educated at the BA level and have all attended in-service training in the field of inclusion. Their task is to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of policies at municipal schools and act as sparring partners with local school inclusion supervisors. The three agents at this level were interviewed as a group.

The school practice and enactment level is covered by a school principal, an inclusion supervisor, and a

teacher who serves in the school's so-called behaviour, well-being, and contact team. The teacher has been in charge of the special education class at the school since it was established in 2017. All of these agents are trained as teachers at the BA level. The school leader has attended a managerial course and the inclusion supervisor has had some in-service training in the field of inclusion. The three agents at this level were interviewed individually.

The purpose of selecting agents from different organization levels within the municipal school structure is to create an analytical lens that can capture the complexities of policy implementation and enactment. In addition, the article draws on the key policy documents presented above (see figure 1).

To understand the interactions and meaning-making operations of the different organizational levels, we draw on British professor of comparative education Robert Cowen's three analytical concepts to address the problematic process of interplay between transfer and context (Cowen, 2006, p. 566):

- a. *Transfer is the movement of an educational idea or practice in supra-national or trans-national or inter-national space: the 'space-gate' moment, with its politics of attraction and so on;*
- b. *Translation is the shape-shifting of educational institutions or the re-interpretation of educational ideas which routinely occurs with the transfer in space: 'the chameleon process'; and*
- c. *Transformations are the metamorphoses which the compression of social and economic power into education in the new context imposes on the initial translation: that is, a range of transformations which cover both the indigenization and the extinction of the translated form.*

Although these conceptual definitions were developed to capture globalization processes, we believe they can serve as our analytical lenses in our dealings with the data collected and provide us with the tools we need to analyse the process and challenges of implementing and enacting inclusive education policies in the case municipality.

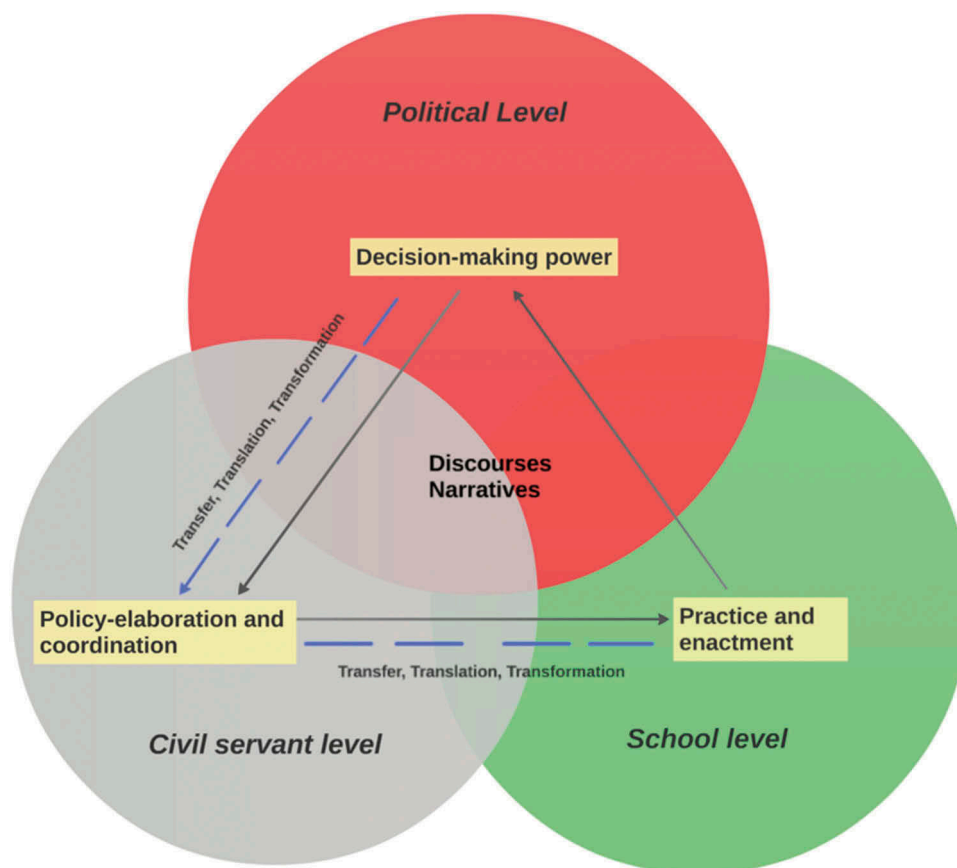
### Mapping the discursive landscape of the organization

In line with the inductive interpretative approach, we first elucidate the dominant discourses and narratives surrounding inclusive education in evidence at the three organizational levels.

#### The political level

At the political level, our analysis indicates a consensus that the goal of inclusion is to include as many





**Figure 1.** The organizational assemblage.

students as possible in the general education of schools. For instance, the chair of the Children, Youth and Education Committee (a politician) points out that, ‘It is still a basic ambition to include as many students as possible in regular education, so that you, as a child, are a part of a community where children can recognize themselves’. The head of the School and Day Care Area (a top civil servant) concurs when stating, ‘After all, that’s what the goal of inclusion is, that the vast majority of children can stay in their regular class.’

The goal of inclusion at the political level therefore becomes a matter of how large a proportion of students can be included in regular education. However, the interviews reveal the presence of other priorities, as well as some contrasts when we ask about what it takes to achieve successful inclusive education. Reflecting upon the process undergone by the municipality since 2015, the politician points out that, ‘Being included doesn’t always end up with the child being happy, because one can feel excluded in a community, right?’ The quote indicates the position that inclusion should not happen at any cost.

The top civil servant, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of providing regular education for all students:

*We know from research that where pupils are performing best, socially, psychologically, it is if they can*

*experience being part of a regular class and a regular school. After all, there is not much research to support that getting in a special school makes students more competent socially or academically.*

According to him, the key to successful inclusion is the establishment of interdisciplinary teacher teams in the schools:

*If we look at this purely in the school context, the interdisciplinary teams can do something. The intention is that they should give some advice and professional back-and-forth with the relevant teacher and the educator, where the basic aim is to equip our teachers and pedagogists at the practice level. In the long run, this is what will help us move forward.*

Although the two interviewees seem to arrive at different conclusions in terms of how far inclusion should be taken, the common denominator here is a shared idea about the importance of students’ experiences of inclusion, combined with a focus on the number of students attending regular education.

### **The civil servant level**

Analysing the interview responses from the municipal inclusion team demonstrates a clear focus and emphasis on the ability of schools’ regular education to include student individuality, in terms of both behaviour and their mental processes. One of the

inclusion consultants describes the team's task as making sure that all students 'become included in the community and not excluded'. The consultant's colleague supplements this statement by saying, 'It's the feeling of being a part of the community. It's not just about being in a class – it's also about feeling like you're a part of it'.

The inclusion consultants describe their primary method in their collaboration with school practitioners as co-teaching. They repeatedly emphasize the practice termed station teaching<sup>3</sup> as being particularly significant in their understanding of inclusion. Through the social actions of co-teaching and station teaching, multidisciplinary collaboration is highlighted, as well as changes in how teaching is carried out by the teachers and pedagogists at the schools. One of the inclusion consultants points out that

*It is a matter of qualifying the teaching to such an extent that more professional skills can be involved in the teaching. We can include all children through teaching. We can implement station teaching, which considers children with a specific challenge. Then you can see it and you can feel that this is actually considered in the teaching, not only for one child, but also all the other children – that we keep them more within the community. Rather than remove them from it and make individual efforts, we do it as a community.*

In the interviews, the inclusion consultants mention several examples that show how and why they use social methods and underline the importance of removing the focus on the student as the problem in the understanding of inclusion and focusing instead on how the students' context can be changed and how to work with the whole class as a community:

*We have emphasized our view of children a lot. We do not see the child as the problem, we see a challenge as a challenge, and we do not have that individual perspective all the time and blame the child. When we start working with the community and start really incorporating that thought, then we also look at the group in a different way. We not only look at the child, but also can see what working with the community does to this individual student. And then we can begin to see the inclusion of these children, who have been largely excluded sometimes. We work with the community.*

The consultant's colleague adds,

*We create a structure for the individual child, and also bring knowledge, so you can include tiny Carl, who cannot be in an unstructured class framework. Then you might have to tighten up the framework there and do something differently, because children are different.*

Our analysis clearly indicates that the members of the municipal inclusion team, in their understanding of inclusion, emphasize changing the students' context

and working with the practitioners who define the learning environment. The goal of inclusive education is that the students feel part of the community, while a change in the students' mental and behavioural processes becomes less significant, because, according to the inclusion team, the processes will change when the context changes.

### **The school level**

The following quote from the principal provides a good description of how inclusion is experienced by the practitioners at the school level:

*I think we think of inclusion as something where you can see it from one perspective, that you can see it from the individual student who has some challenges and then say that, now, on any account, you have to integrate the student in some community. My feeling is that there is ambiguity.*

The ambiguity mentioned by the school principal also comes to the fore empirically in the interviews, because the three school-level agents diverge in terms of what is highlighted as significant in their understanding of inclusion.

Generally, the analysis shows that the goal of inclusion, according to the school principal, is for the students' mental and behavioural processes benefit the school community: 'Inclusion is successful when it benefits the community, because there are students who are better off getting another education opportunity. So, it's not like we have to include all students in our community, at all costs'.

The principal's quote can be viewed in relation to quotes from the inclusion supervisor, who points out that

*The child should feel included in all subjects, as much as possible. One cannot feel academically included 100%, there will always be challenges. But you have to do your best as a teacher to make the students feel heard, seen, and understood.*

Here the child takes centre stage, and not the community. However, the ambiguity is also present for the inclusion supervisor. Later in the interview, she emphasizes the importance of the community:

*You are also required to work on the communities, that the communities of the children are cared for and trained and that you make time to take care of the communities. Not all teachers think it is their problem, but it is what they are committed to. After all, you cannot expect the children to participate if they are filled with distractions, for example, a huge conflict they cannot resolve. Then there is no learning.*

The teacher heading the special education class serves as a gatekeeper between regular and special education, describing his task as determining whether students can return to regular class or whether they

should go to the education psychologist to be diagnosed. When asked about the purpose of the special education class, the teacher makes it clear that the main aim is to prepare the students to return to their regular class: *There might be some cases where we can see that their return is not beneficial ... then they go to be diagnosed and they decide where they fit*. The teacher emphasizes success stories in her transitional work:

*When you walk down the aisle and meet your colleagues and they tell you that the child came back to class and now it's going really well, whereas it didn't before, or someone who wouldn't read aloud in class and suddenly the child has his/her hand up all the time. All the victories and success stories – it's just amazing.*

In this sense, this teacher's description of the goal of inclusion hinges on the school principal's understanding, where the goal is the students' mental and behavioural processes benefitting the school.

An interesting finding is that the inclusion supervisor shifts the focus from the significance of the student to that of the practitioners dealing with the students' teaching, where the practitioners, according to the inclusion supervisor, are those responsible for inclusion. The different perspectives on inclusion arise again in the analysis, when the agents in the interviews discuss how they work with inclusion at school. The school principal describes how the school has formed a behaviour, well-being, and contact team (i.e. the special education class) to provide support for the students:

*You work with what you have in the classes. And the students are always primarily associated with their own classroom and spend most of their hours there. So, it's not like we pull them out of their classroom and put them in another one. They are in their classroom, but this is a supplement. And the goal is that you get some tools so you can get better in your own classroom.*

Again, here, what is significant is the students' mental and behavioural processes and some tools the students must have added so that they can function in their own classrooms.

Thus, a picture emerges of the school principal and teacher's discourse on education. Their understanding of inclusion considers the students' mental and behavioural processes as significant and the students' need to fit in with the community. If they do not, the students can obtain help and tools from the special education class. The analysis shows that the students' context becomes less significant or insignificant in the school principal's and teacher's understanding of inclusion: in the interviews, the principal only mentions the context once, using the word *maybe* in terms of changing the student's context, and the teacher does not mention context at all.

What the inclusion supervisors' discourse on education construes as significant for inclusion in the students' context here is both physical inclusion and inclusion in terms of learning. Both aspects need to be changed if the student does not feel included. These observations are reflected in the following quote, where the inclusion supervisor again clearly shifts the focus away from the student:

*If you look at inclusion separate from the child, it is to create opportunities so that the child feels included. It is the most important task for the adult: it is that you adapt to the child in the best possible way, so that the child is included in the learning that takes place at school and that is both social and professional learning. So, the idea of inclusion is that it is us who are responsible for creating it for the child. It may be that we are working on it, but if it does not help in the child's perception of him- or herself, then it's wrong and then we must do something other than what we have planned.*

To sum up, the analysis shows two different perspectives at the school level from which inclusion can be understood. Where the school principal and teacher emphasize a change in the students' mental and behavioural processes as significant to inclusion, the inclusion supervisor highlights change in the students' context.

### **Policy enactment: transfer, translation, and transformation between the organizational levels**

Having identified the diverse – and parallel – understandings of inclusive education associated with different agents across the organizational setup of the municipality, we now zoom in on the implications in terms of policy enactment. We analyse how the policy discourse is enacted at the three organizational levels using the concepts of transfer, translation, and transformation as our analytical lenses.

#### **The political level**

Our first analytical operation showed that the agents at this organizational level emphasize that the goal of inclusion is to include the vast majority of students – or as many as possible – in regular education or regular classes. When comparing what the agents construct as significant for the goal of inclusion using the goals of the CYFM from 2015 and 2016, it is evident that the descriptions of both the politician and the top civil servant contain a translation of the goals of the 2015 version of the CYFP, where 97% of all students should be included in regular education by 2016. The fact that this is a translation of the old version is striking, since both the politician and the top civil servant contradict the 2015 policy version's



goal of inclusion in the interviews, agreeing that removing the percentage target was a positive thing. The politician describes the situation as follows: 'As the national goal disappeared, I think it lost its legitimacy. So, we also removed the goal, while our work and talk really revolved around whether it was always best to be included, whether it was at all costs'. The top civil servant concurs with the statement, 'The most important setting for the politicians, after all, was to discuss and decide whether or not to pursue the quantitative goal .... And it was a really good thing to have removed'.

Therefore, although the agents counter the percentage-based political goal of the 2015 version of the CYFP, it is striking that, for both the politician and the top civil servant, an understanding of the goal in our first analytical operation turns out to be a translation of the goal from the 2015 policy. According to Cowen's analytical concepts, we can interpret this as camouflaging the adjustment of the goal by the fact that the percentage part in the agents' formulations is no longer used. This is how the agents' discursive contradictions in terms of the target have become a new, camouflaged idea gathering importance in terms of how the goal of inclusion is understood in the municipality.

In our first analytical operation, it became clear that, in the interview, the politician makes discursive contradictions, referring to the 2015 version of the CYFP when talking about the goal of inclusion, but using a translation of the 2016 version when discussing the students' mental processes regarding feeling part of a community: 'There needs to be more focus on the foundation rather than the output. Then we will probably get a good output if we create a good foundation for the children'.

The fact that the politician says there should be a greater focus on the foundation than on the output can be interpreted as a proposal for discursive change. At the same time, the chairperson's descriptions and examples that primarily address political ambitions in the municipality and the goal of inclusion from the 2015 version of the CYFP's political goals can be interpreted as an expression of the chairperson's organizational position, which involves no direct work with school districts. The politician is strictly responsible for the formulation of policy objectives.

In our first analytical operation, we highlighted that the top civil servant understands the work of inclusion as being intimately tied to the students' environment and their feelings of inclusion. In this respect, he places greater significance on the process than on the goal of inclusion, since the goal is only explicitly stated once in the interview. As in the case of the politician, this observation could also be explained by the organizational position of the top civil servant, since he is tasked with

ensuring close cooperation with the school districts. That which gains significance for inclusion in the discourse on education is translated and transferred to the top civil servant.

### **The civil servant level**

Our first analytical operation showed that, in achieving the goal of inclusion, the agents at the civil servant level of the organization note the students' experience of being part of the class or community. When comparing the agents' understanding of inclusion with the 2015 and 2016 versions of the CYFP, we find a translation of both the 2015 and 2016 version's political goals. The translation is based on the agents' discourse on education, which includes a transfer of the 2015 version of the political goals, because the proportion of students is included. At the same time, however, the agents emphasize the students' mental processes of feeling included, which connects with the 2016 version of the CYFP. It is interesting that we find a translation from both the 2015 and 2016 versions of the policy goals, because one of the agents contradicts the percentage-focused 2015 policy goal, although the agents agree that all students should be part of the community or class:

*Because, in the municipality there, for many, many years, we had a policy that stated that 97% should go in the general area. But children are not just a percentage ... inclusion is a feeling; it is a human view that underlies it and you do not just change it. You have to feel and think that.*

The fact that the agent makes discursive contradictions about the percentage goal, even though the inclusion teams agents agree that the students should be part of the community or class, can be seen in relation to the way the 2015 version of the CYFP goal is formulated and the human perspective the agent describes in the previous quote. The human perspective is the trace of the 2016 CYFP that has also been translated, where the first analytical operation showed that the agents' discourse had shifted focus from the individual student to the students' context. Therefore, the agents' understanding of a human perspective contradicts the 2016 version of the CYFP, where the focal point is the inherent potential of human beings, with a focus on the individual and not the context. In this light, the discursive contradictions highlighted against both the 2015 and 2016 versions of the political goals could be interpreted as the inclusion team's transformation of the discursive contradictions into a new way of viewing the work of inclusion. Such a transformation would better serve to underpin the inclusion team's social practice, where they provide consulting services by collaborating with the agents involved in the students' teaching in the schools, thereby creating opportunities for inclusion.

### The school level

At the school level, as our first analytical operation showed, discursive contradictions exist among the agents regarding the goal of inclusion and what is important in social practice. The discursive contradictions are interesting, since none of the agents reveals any transfer or translation from the 2015 version of the CYFP. For instance, the school principal explains,

*We are not looking at the 97%. If we have a child that we think will do best being included here, that's what we're working on. If we have a child whose interest is best served by being in a special class, well, that's what we're working for.*

The inclusion supervisor concurs by saying, 'But I think this [i.e. the 97% target] is a bad solution, because you have decided it is pedagogically possible to include these children from special provision'.

What the agents at the school level emphasize in terms of the successful realization of inclusion is in alignment with the 2016 version of the CYFP. However, there are internal discursive contradictions in social practice regarding what is important in the policy objectives of inclusion, which are therefore translated differently by the agents. The first analytical operation showed that the school principal and the teacher emphasize that the students' mental and behavioural processes are aligned with the community or class. This means that students who are not aligned with the community or class are given the opportunity to become part of the community through a change in their mental and behavioural processes. The idea is to provide students an opportunity for personal, social, and professional development in both their classes and in the special class. This indicates a translation of the political goal from the 2016 CYFP through a transfer process to the agents' positions in social practice. The goal can thus be adapted to the school's work with student development in different contexts, meant here as the classes and the school's special class, where the focus is on the individual student's development.

However, our first analytical operation also showed that the inclusion supervisor emphasizes the students' physical, mental, and social well-being in being included, which, throughout the interview, is constantly connected with the students' context in the form of teaching and their classes. We therefore interpret a translation of the 2016 edition of the CYFP objectives on inclusion, where the inclusion supervisor describes the importance of the students feeling seen, heard, and understood and a significant part of the community. The achievement of these objectives is the responsibility of the practitioner. We also consider the translation as a reflection of the inclusion supervisor's position in social practice. The inclusion supervisor serves as both

inclusion supervisor and general teacher, and therefore the supervisor works with inclusion in the class, and not in the school's special class. This point is reflected in the interview with the inclusion supervisor, who states, 'I'm trying to create a different perception of these kids at the school, who may be a little challenged'.

This statement could be interpreted as a proposal for discursive change in relation to inclusion in the school's discourse on education. The diverging approaches to inclusive education among the three agents at the school level could be understood as a reflection of the 2016 version of the CYFP, emphasizing dimensions of culture, a human perspective, and community. In the interview, the school principal explains why they even formed the school's special class, 'So, we've had a grey zone of students for whom we had nothing to offer. Therefore, we have created this offer, where the students can go for a different number of hours'.

This quote could be interpreted as the attempt to create a new culture, where the school has organized itself in relation to the social practice reflected in the 2016 CYFP's political goals. In this sense, it could be reasonable to speak of a transformation of the school's culture based on the school principal's contradictions in the description of the community and the goal of inclusion in the 2015 CYFP's political goals. At the same time, the principal understands the work of inclusion as involving a change in the students' mental and behavioural processes. Calling for this change can be understood as a translation of the political goal about a human perspective, which focuses on the inherent potential of human beings, with which the school makes a new suggestion about how political goals can be translated into social practice.

In contrast to the school principal and the teacher of the special class, the inclusion supervisor attributes more significance to change in the students' context than to the students' inherent potential. We therefore find the discursive contradictions at the school level to be a translation of the systemic perspective from the 2016 issue of the CYFP. This perspective has been translated differently by the school principal and the teacher of the school's special class. Both attach greater significance to changing the students' mental and behavioural processes through a different inclusive learning environment, while the supervisor attaches more significance to the practitioners involved with the students' teaching, where they should create opportunities for an inclusive learning environment in the classroom in which students feel included.

### Concluding discussion

The findings of this article revolve around the complexities of organizational change when implementing

inclusive education policies, including translation into practice across organizational levels, different types of meaning making at different organizational levels, and asynchrony in terms of visions, policies, and practices. The article has revealed the presence of salient discursive contradictions in terms of inclusive schooling connected with different positions within the municipal organization. For instance, the municipal inclusion team views the goal of inclusion as students feeling to be part of the community. The key condition is that practitioners at the school level create appropriate opportunities to achieve that goal. At the school level, however, practitioners have varied perspectives on what the goal of inclusion is, since there are discursive contradictions about the goal in terms of whether the students' mental processes should be adapted through inclusion or whether it is the practitioners who must create opportunities for the students to be within the community and to feel included therein.

At the political level, the goal of inclusion is to include as many students as possible in regular education. However, the percentage goal of the 2015 version of the CYFP persists. It is worth noting that the politician repeatedly discusses the goal of inclusion through descriptions of the municipality's political ambitions, whereas the top civil servant primarily discusses the necessity of interdisciplinary cooperation and changes within the student environment.

All the social practices have elements of both the new and old versions of the CYFP that have been translated to suit the educational context. The descriptions by both the politician and the top civil servant contain traces from a translation of the goals of the 2015 version of the policy, stating that 97% of all students should be included in general school by 2016. The fact that it is a translation of the old version of the policy is striking, since, in the interviews, both the politician and the top civil servant contradict the 2015 version's goal of inclusion, agreeing that removing the percentage target was a positive thing.

These contradictions bear witness to an uneven enactment of policy, where the inertia of past points of orientation proves difficult to eliminate from the organization.

At the same time, the very understanding of inclusive schooling differs across the organization, apparently connected with the organizational and professional outlooks of the agents. In the social practice discourse on education, the perspective on the significance of inclusion and whether the political goals are translated varies. Different levels emphasize different aspects. Broadly speaking, a picture can be drawn of the higher echelons being occupied with practitioners at the school level providing the right framework for the realization of inclusion – that is, a nurturing perspective – whereas the lower echelons tend to emphasize the students'

mental and behavioural processes as significant – that is, a nature perspective.

What seems to be lacking is for the key stakeholders across the organization to be brought into one reflexive space where the different aspects of inclusive schooling can be openly discussed. The argument is that the diverging meaning-making operations across the organization hamper the development and enactment of adequate policies due to a lack of cross-organizational stakeholder involvement. In this sense, the continuum of Danish inclusion policies pointed out by Engsig and Johnstone (2015) seem to be very much alive in the municipality.

## Notes

1. According to the minutes of the Children, Youth and Education Committee, dated 25 June 2018, between the school years 2007/2008 and 2011/2012, the number of students in special education increased from 325 (4.8%) to 437 (6%). Between 2011/2012 and 2018/2019 (at the beginning of the school year), the number decreased to 255 (4.3%). The municipality was never able to achieve the target rate of 97% of students attending regular education.
2. Minutes of the Children, Youth and Education Committee, dated 25 June 2018 (all translations from Danish are by the authors, unless stated otherwise).
3. According to the inclusion consultants, station teaching involves the teacher and assistant teachers setting up stations at different tables using varied teaching approaches. Students then work in small groups at these stations. The teacher and the student identify the station best suited to the individual student. The inclusion consultants emphasize the benefits as, 'all children being covered, they learn more, and there are more students who become engaged'.

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