

Co-Creating the “In” of Inclusion

How Primary School Communities Collectively Build Inclusive Education through Shared Occupational Situations

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Abstract

Despite global commitments to inclusive education as a human right, understanding of how inclusive education functions as a contextual, situated process within everyday school settings remains limited. Drawing on human rights frameworks, occupational science perspectives, and Dewey's transactional philosophy, this study examined how two Swiss primary school communities collectively created inclusive education through shared occupational situations.

The study employed a two-phase, sequential design. Phase one began with an international scoping review to answer the research question: "How is inclusive education in mainstream education at primary school level created?" Analysis of 26 studies from 14 countries, revealed that inclusive education unfolds through shared occupational situations, with emphasis on the extent to which these situations can be changed (their changeability) and the ways the social context shapes children's experiences of inclusive schooling. The findings suggest the need to shift to a more nuanced understanding of inclusive practices, while acknowledging the diversity of such practices within specific cultural contexts internationally.

Phase two sought to answer the question: "How is inclusive education created in mainstream schools in Switzerland for children aged between 8 and 12 years?" This phase comprised embedded case studies of two Swiss primary school classes, guided by Stake's case study methodology and Dewey's transactional theory. Multiple stakeholder perspectives were explored, including children, teachers, parents, assistants, therapists, and school leaders, through participant observations, interviews, and document analysis. Data were analysed using Stake's strategies of direct interpretation and categorical aggregation, with findings synthesised into case-specific assertions. Representation of all stakeholders' actions and experiences from both the Oak and Village School cases provided nuanced, holistic, situated, and contextualised understanding of two distinct communities.

The findings revealed that inclusive education develops through collective co-creation of shared occupational situations where all stakeholders engage in 'doing together'. Children themselves identified doing together as essential to their school experience. Multiple perspectives illuminated how inclusion unfolded differently across contexts: intentional structuring of collaborative and individualising occupations, through sustained teaching partnerships generating creative freedom, allocation of resources to classes rather than individuals, and democratic leadership cultivating inclusive cultures.

The findings call for a paradigm shift in inclusive education. The concept of individualising class communities bridges the individual-collective dichotomy, demonstrating how social collective aspects and academic individualised learning

integrate to address needs of 'all' children rather than 'some' with special needs. Critically, tensions function as generative forces when engaged through reflective dialogue, while therapists' external positioning creates paradoxes requiring examination. This study demonstrates that the 'in' of inclusion lies not in placement within given systems, but in collective co-creation of spaces where all engage in 'doing together'. This study provides epistemological foundations and empirical evidence for transforming inclusive education practice, research methodologies, and policy frameworks.

Keywords: human rights, Dewey, inclusive education, student perspective, occupation, collective, co-creation

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning

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10.12.2025

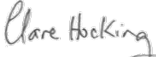
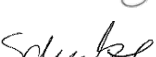
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STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR APPROVALS

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Creative connection is the use of creativity to access and feel connection and get yourself and those with you in the moment into a more connected space – Kae Tempest 2020

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This study was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on April 26th. Approval Number 22/21

Use of AI tools: Claude (Anthropic, Claude Sonnet 4.5): Used as a writing assistant for grammar and language editing to improve clarity and academic writing style. DeepL (DeepL SE): Used for translation assistance between German and English, particularly for accurately conveying participant quotes. Grammarly (Grammarly Inc.): Used for grammar checking, spelling correction, and sentence structure suggestions to enhance writing clarity. All substantive intellectual content, including research design, theoretical framework, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and argumentation, is entirely the author's own work.

This research followed the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) guidelines (O'Brien et al., 2014) to ensure transparency and methodological rigour (see Appendix A for the completed SRQR checklist).

Conflict of Interest

I declare I have no conflicts of interest in relation to this thesis.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Inclusive education is globally acknowledged as both a human right and educational obligation; however, the gap between guiding principles and classroom realities reveals the complex, contextual nature of creating truly inclusive learning environments. This study examined inclusive education practices through two distinct approaches. First, an international scoping review explored current evidence and practice from multiple perspectives. Second, case studies were used to investigate the voices and experiences of children, families, and educational professionals in Swiss primary schools. This introduction presents current international developments and concerns regarding inclusive education, followed by the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings informing this Swiss-based study.

International Development of Inclusive Education

Within inclusive schools, children learn skills for mutual engagement and doing together across classroom and playground environments, transcending differences related to ability, gender, and other characteristics. (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994a). The global transformation towards inclusive education was sparked by the United Nations (UN) World Conference in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. The resulting Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action established inclusive education as a right, asserting that inclusive schools are “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society” (UNESCO, 1994b, No 2). This declaration marked a paradigm shift towards how systems must transform to accommodate all learners, catalysing policy and practice reforms worldwide.

Some countries, however, had enacted legislative frameworks years before this global initiative. In 1975, the United States passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) (Frolek Clark, 2013); and in Aotearoa New Zealand, the government enacted a special education legislative framework in 1989 (Simmons Carlsson et al., 2007; Thomson, 2013), upon which the country continues to develop increasingly inclusive schools, mandating the right of all students to attend their local school and learn alongside their peers, regardless of impairment or disability.

A Human Rights-Based Framework for Inclusive Education

This study focus lies on the inclusion of disabled children, which points towards two key international frameworks—the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(UNCRPD; 2006) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; 1989)—being particularly relevant in providing guidance and principles to ensure the rights of children with disabilities in education and society. Beyond Salamanca (UNESCO 1994a, b), the UNCRPD and the UNCRC represent global commitments towards education without discrimination of any kind, including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, social class, religion, or any other status. Furthermore, by moving away from solely adult perspectives on inclusive education, education systems are increasingly opening towards experiences of children as established by the UNCRC Article 12, which states that “every child has the right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously”. Additionally, the UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 emphasises the development of inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, n.d.).

Understanding the facilitators and barriers of inclusive education for children with disabilities may provide broader insights transferable to other marginalised groups. Based on the UN convention, schools must ensure that education is accessible, available, and adaptable to all learners. Accessible means that learning facilities and curricula are tailored for diverse learning approaches. Availability means that attending school is affordable and schools are within the reach of children’s families. Furthermore, inclusive settings are skilled in adapting curricular content and pedagogy, ensuring that the learning needs of diverse children can be met (Alderson, 2018). The human rights approach to education acknowledges that every learner has a fundamental right to access educational opportunities, while recognising that various socio-political, historical, and cultural factors can either facilitate or hinder an individual’s access to these rights in practice (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2019).

Exclusive special education systems are based on excluding social groups that differ from the dominant ideological worldviews (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2019). Historically, specific categorisations and labelling of children with disabilities were intended to inform pedagogy and services to meet their particular learning needs. However, the underlying notion remains ‘norm-driven’ (J. Hollenweger, 2014). The unresolved ambiguity surrounding inclusive education has led education systems worldwide to face challenges in transitioning from a model that focuses on including children with specific disabilities to embracing diversity.

Disability and Other Diversity Dimensions as a Foundation for Inclusive Practice

In a school class, diversity occurs naturally and can be categorised under dimensions such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, social class, religion, or any other status, as

well as combinations of these dimensions. Diversity in the classroom is an essential aspect of the educational experience, as it enriches the social interactions that occur. The basis of this claim is Dewey's (1938/2015) view of schools as a place of 'associated living', a term encompassing social spaces, collaborative practices, and communication. Learner-centred classrooms are thus social institutions where diverse students and classroom staff learn, problem-solve, work on projects, and act cooperatively as a community (Williams, 2017). Emphasised by the Salamanca framework (UNESCO, 1994a), wherein schools are places for all children to do things and learn together, considering diverse abilities, Dewey's understanding of education stresses that diversity in a classroom is an essential aspect of educational experience (Glassman, 2001). From this perspective, inclusive education is created through the interactions of diverse participants rather than through solely accommodating difference.

Multiple Perspectives on Inclusive Education

Inclusive education cannot be implemented as a universal, one-size-fits-all model because it must respond to the complex interplay of socio-political, cultural, and geographical factors that shape educational contexts. This need for contextualisation stems from several critical considerations (F. Felder, 2022; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). Across the world, proponents of inclusive education understand children as socially embedded within school communities, moving away from biomedical views of deficits, impairment, or disabilities (J. Hollenweger, 2014). At the same time, there is growing awareness that inclusive education must center on human rights principles and be co-created in specific situations by children, teachers, other staff, and parents. These situations are shaped by ongoing interactions between stakeholders and are positioned within situated systemic structures that vary through diverse socio-historical, cultural, geographical, and political contexts (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Slee, 2013). An inclusive class at a local school brings together multiple contributors with diverse perspectives and experiences, shaped by individuals' backgrounds and socialisation, as well as their knowledge and experiences.

Multiple stakeholder perspectives shape how inclusive education unfolds in practice and contextualised inclusive education is built on a shared understanding of inclusive practice as an ongoing collaborative process, involving an understanding of where people are at, and recognising their different skills and experiences (Anaby et al., 2019; Echsel et al., 2019; Missiuna et al., 2012; Mooney & Lashewicz, 2015). Teachers' understanding of inclusive education, for example, ranges from viewing inclusive education as students with disabilities being educated alongside students without disabilities through to delivering education that supports and welcomes diversity among *all* learners with a range of individual differences (Miller et al., 2020; Mooney &

Lashewicz, 2015). Understanding students' learning differences and appreciating their skills and strengths is reported to be facilitated by getting to know individual students (Miller et al., 2020). This is extended through involvement in, and communication about, inclusive education with family and community members. Through this extended collaboration, teachers and other staff members can access knowledge, expert experience, and resources. Collaborating with and building bridges to families, experts, and other people relevant to a child has been identified as a key factor in achieving inclusive education in social, educational, and health literature (Echsell et al., 2019; MacArtney & Morton, 2013; Miller et al., 2020). What is less clear is how teachers, children and their families, therapists, and other professionals can collaborate to include all children at school.

Current research reveals significant gaps in understanding these collaborative processes. Literature suggests principles that can support the implementation of inclusive education but also reveals gaps in knowledge. A comprehensive review of 65 grey and scientific articles on organising interdisciplinary, school-based support services (Anaby et al., 2019) suggested that most services targeted students with disabilities in mainstream settings. Services focused on specific diagnostic groups, rather than the entire spectrum of children, risk overlooking some children and failing to recognise diversity. Collaborative interventions targeted the needs of students, educators, and staff. Anaby et al.'s review (2019) revealed that majority of implementations (91%) were based at class, group, and individual levels at school rather than reaching out to families and communities.

Another limitation of the known research is that outcome evaluations of services at school have generally been restricted to single stakeholder perspectives, such as the school's perspective, or focused on outcomes for children with medical diagnoses, rather than examining outcomes for all members of the school community (J. Hollenweger, 2014). Anaby et al. (2019), however, identified a need for more comprehensive evaluation of service outcomes, including the perspectives of families and children as service users as well as teacher- and family-related outcomes. In summary, interdisciplinary, school-based support services enabling inclusive education tend to focus on educational achievement (Berryman & Eley, 2019). Context-related understandings of how diverse stakeholders, such as classroom staff, children, parents, and others, collaborate to create inclusive experiences for all children have not been addressed. There appears to be a lack of insight into how diverse children learn skills to engage with each other and do things together in inclusive education settings.

Children's own perspectives reveal important dimensions of inclusive education that are often overlooked. Recognising children's perspectives about inclusion has become more pertinent. Dimitrellou and Male (2020) investigated experiences of school

belonging among pupils with mild learning disabilities and social emotional mental health issues, and more typically developing pupils. Concerning interactions with their peers, typically developing students expressed predominantly positive sentiments, stating that they had trusting friendships at school and found it easy to form new connections. In contrast, most students with social emotional mental health and mild learning disabilities reported negative perceptions of peer relations, including experiences of severe bullying due to their learning difficulties and challenges in forming relationships. However, some pupils with mild learning disabilities did report that developing new friendships was easy for them (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020).

Overall, evidence suggests that experiencing inclusion or exclusion depends on contextual variables. Existing research predominantly comprises small-scale qualitative studies with limited systematic synthesis across contexts. Some factors identified as key for increased participation are overall flexibility in adapting learning situations and asking students for their solutions for adapting activities to do and be together with their peers (Asbjørnslett et al., 2015; Asbjørnslett & Hemmingsson, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010; Woodgate et al., 2020). However, a coherent understanding of how these highly contextual variables transact in conceptualising inclusive education and the processes through which diverse stakeholders collaborate to create inclusive situations has not been achieved despite interest within social, education, and health sciences.

Philosophical Underpinnings and Epistemology

The philosophical foundation for the study drew on John Dewey's (1938/2015) pragmatist work on experience, education, and democracy; specifically his proposal that effective education primarily evolves through social engagement. Dewey's pragmatist view holds truth as provisional, expressed in general rules of behaviour that are always open to revision and bound by factors such as interest, habit, and context (Hickman et al., 2009). This understanding of knowledge as constructed through social interaction provided the foundation for examining how inclusive education is created by diverse stakeholders. Dewey's idea of social interaction as a form of associated living in a class or local school will be described next.

Dewey's Conceptualisation a Class and School as 'Associated Living'

Central to understanding how human rights-based approaches to inclusive education and lived diversity can be translated into children's lived experiences and doing together in a class is Dewey's idea of classes as 'associated living' units, a term encompassing social spaces, collaborative practices, and communication centred around children. Dewey (1916/2008) saw education as an agent of societal transmission of civilisation and humanity. By communicating habits of doing, thinking, and feeling, ways of interacting socially are passed on from older to younger generations. The significance of

education in promoting social change contributes to democracy, encompassing all its meanings and implementations across cultural, economic, religious, and political aspects, thereby continually transforming society (Dewey, 1938/2015). Regarding this study, social change is linked to the inclusion of all children in education, particularly focusing on disabled children as a well-documented excluded group with institutionalised separative measures (Hess-Klein & Scheibler, 2022; UNCRPD, 2022; UNESCO, 2020), thereby building diverse and more inclusive societies (UN, 2009).

Diversity in a classroom, emphasised by the Salamanca framework (UNESCO, 1994a, b), is an essential aspect of the educational experience because it enriches social interactions (Glassman, 2001). Learner-centred classrooms are thus social institutions where diverse students and classroom staff learn and problem-solve, do projects, and act cooperatively as a community (Williams, 2017). From Dewey's (1916/2008) perspective, learner-centred, educational experience supports democracy by encompassing not just academic but also social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth of the whole child. When children are separated into different educational settings, all children miss important opportunities for associated living and are deprived of experiences in doing and learning together with and from each other. In a "world characterised by pluralisation and heterogeneity" (Felder, 2022, p. 144), building a class community in the sense of Dewey's understanding can strengthen children's sense of community building beyond school into neighbourhoods and the world (F. Felder, 2022; Sen, 2007).

Experience and Context in Dewey's Philosophy

Dewey's (1956) understanding of experience emphasises its contextual nature. In a primary sense, experience is conditionally related to specific contexts in everyday life and is understood as "things interacting in certain ways with one another," which Dewey described as being "experience; they are what is experienced" (p. 4a). Experience, in its breadth and depth, is part of human nature. Crucially, Dewey argued that environmental traits and human experience must be seen as an 'unanalysed totality' rather than separated into subject and object components.

For investigating education in associated living situations, this means the experiences of children and classroom staff doing and learning together are viewed as shaped by context and vice versa. Context includes the physical and social environment of classrooms, as well as the culture, values, and political framework of the community (Dewey, 1956). Dewey's theories of experience related to scientific inquiry argue that only empirical methods can do justice to the complex nature of experience in its integrated unity. Consistent with his understanding of the changing nature of society, Dewey viewed human knowledge as "provisional, incomplete and probabilistic" (Boisvert, 1998, p. 16) rather than as a means of obtaining certainty (Dewey, 1956). In

this study, the experiences of all participants in an associated living unit, children, classroom staff, and other stakeholders were studied while simultaneously examining the specific contexts to “enable a grasp of understanding” (Dewey, 1956, p. 5).

Contemporary scholars of inclusive education recognise Dewey’s contribution across philosophical underpinnings and practical application as transforming “ideals into dynamic criteria, hypotheses and questions, thus bringing together the level of theory, empirical investigation and practical application” (Felder, 2022, p. 26). This integration of theory and practice provided the epistemological foundation for examining how inclusive education is created and experienced within specific contextual realities.

An Occupational-Transactional Lens for Inclusive Education Research

Alongside a human rights perspective, this study was informed by an occupational perspective concerned with what people do together, where it happens, and the personal, social, and cultural meanings attributed to these activities. This perspective also examines socio-cultural, political, economic, geographical, and historical contexts that promote or inhibit such actions (Hocking, 2009).

Before exploring meanings and transactional perspectives, it is essential to define what occupational scientists mean by ‘occupation’. Occupations are everyday activities people engage in, both individually and/or collectively, that occupy their time and attention and hold personal, social, or cultural meanings (Clark et al., 1991; Wilcock & Hocking, 2024). Occupations cover diverse aspects of daily life such as play, work, self-care, sports, arts, and many other activities. The type of occupation will determine which physical, cognitive, or spiritual dimensions are required, and how it is shaped by the contexts in which it occurs. For example, the occupation of ‘singing’ can hold different meanings when considering parents singing a lullaby to their child, athletes singing the national anthem before a sports event, a professional singing as an opera singer, or someone singing a spiritual mantra, as the required skills and the cultural and societal context alter the meaning and outcome of singing as an occupation. In educational settings, occupations include learning together, playground interactions, participating in class discussions, and engaging in school rituals, all of which become sites where inclusion is experienced.

Understanding Occupation and Meaning

Occupational scientists internationally have published their views and critical reflections of current understandings on the meaning of occupation and the contextual situatedness of what and how people do things, alone or together (Cutchin et al., 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2013; Laliberte Rudman & Huot, 2013; Lee Bunting, 2016; Reed & Hocking,

2013). Reed and Hocking's (2013) investigation of meaning from an occupational lens differentiates aspects related to value, identification, belonging, and self-identity from meaning connected to culture. The value placed on an occupation is embedded in organisational structures and codes of conduct. Citing Magnus (2001), Reed and Hocking concluded that meanings of occupation are connected to the culture to which a person belongs and others of the same culture, attributing an identity to a person's occupational engagement. How occupations form identity, roles, and habits is always related to context and situated in time, social space, and physical environment, as human doings transact with the context (Reed & Hocking, 2013; Taylor et al., 2024).

Transactional Perspectives of Occupation

Transactional perspectives of occupation draw on Dewey's concepts of embodiment, growth, and occupation, conceptualising transaction as the ways in which people's occupations "connect to elements of their wider situation" (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2013, p. 21). Building on Dewey and Bentley's (1946) vision of transaction, this study examined how inclusive education is created through ongoing exchanges between children, teachers, parents, therapists, and principals situated within specific educational contexts. Rather than studying these stakeholders as separate entities, a transactional approach reveals how inclusive experiences are co-created through shared occupational engagement in environments shaped by socio-cultural, political, economic, geographical, and historical factors.

Lee Bunting (2016) argued that positioning occupation in a transactional perspective provides "an understanding of occupation for all persons, groups or populations, across countless contexts" (p. 331) as lived in various educational contexts, including school playgrounds, classrooms, school excursions, or the principal's office. However, Lee Bunting cautioned occupational scientists to use this lens to "achieve a state of harmony between constructs" (p. 334), especially when investigating people's occupational marginalisation.

Power and Context in Transactional Relations

Other scholars share Lee Bunting's (2016) caution. Educational systems are culturally and politically situated in society, shaped by political positions and values, requiring researchers to "consider power when examining transactional relations of contexts of people" (Laliberte Rudman & Huot, 2013, p. 52). Laliberte Rudman and Hout (2013) drew on Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus, illuminating how power relations become embodied in the dispositions and practices that participants bring to occupational transactions, potentially privileging certain forms of cultural knowledge while marginalising others. This embodied dimension of power requires careful attention in inclusive education research, as it involves contexts where exclusion is practised based

on the unconscious reproduction of dominant cultural norms or other motives (Slee, 2014). These philosophical and occupational-transactional perspectives are particularly relevant in the Swiss context, where inclusive education is still evolving and faces unique challenges related to its federalist structure and historical separation of education and health systems.

Inclusive Education in Switzerland

In Switzerland, where this study was situated, inclusive education was introduced in most cantons in 2011 (Eidgenössische Konferenz der Erziehungsdirektoren EDK, 2014). The Swiss education system emphasises cantonal autonomy while maintaining coordination through intercantonal agreements and federal oversight, ensuring both local adaptation and national coherence in educational provision (Konferenz der schweizerischen Erziehungsdirektorinnen und, n.d.).

While other nations are in the process of establishing inclusive education, Switzerland has adopted an integrative approach towards providing education for children in mainstream education 'as far as possible'. Statistics reveal, however, that segregation based on disability is still a significant issue (Bundesamt für Statistik [BFS], 2025). In the school year 2023/24, 3.3% (n = 33,550) of the approximately 1,024,200 students in compulsory education received enhanced special education measures such as individual or group support, both in- and outside the regular classrooms, while 59.5% (n = 19,975) of all children with special education needs attended specialised schools segregated from their peers (BFS, 2025). Compared to 2019, this number increased 12.5% from 47% (n = 19,787) (BFS, 2019a).

The implementation of integrative education practices in Switzerland officially started in 2011. Schools and school curricula are still planned and organised for physically independent children who have age-appropriate cognitive and social skills. The UNCRC (UN District General, 2019) called on Switzerland to develop and implement an overall national strategy for implementation of the conventions to intensify efforts to ensure nationwide inclusive education (No 20a), and to provide clear guidance to cantons that still apply a segregated approach. More specifically, regarding children with disabilities, the UNCRC demanded that children are treated with dignity and children with disabilities are prevented from being placed in psychiatric units (No 20d). The Committee called for the collection of data on the number of children with disabilities living with their families and in institutional care, in inclusive education and in separate schools (No 23a, b, c, d) (UN District General, 2019).

Three years later, the UNCRPD (2022) noted that these issues remained largely unresolved and intensified its recommendations, calling on Switzerland to introduce a constitutional right to inclusive education and develop a comprehensive strategy for

implementing high-quality inclusive education. This strategy should encompass all children with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial disabilities, and autism, supported by concrete targets, designated timelines, allocated budgets, resource reallocation from segregated settings, and requirements for inclusive curricula and teaching qualifications at both federal and cantonal levels. They further called on Swiss federal and cantonal authorities to guarantee that implementation of the intercantonal special education agreement and cantonal policies do not lead to the segregation of children with disabilities into separate educational settings, thereby protecting their right to inclusive education (UNCRPD, 2022, No 34a, 34b).

Evaluation reports by Inclusion Handicap, the umbrella organisation of Swiss organisations for people with disabilities, have documented ongoing concerns about inclusive education implementation. In 2017, the organisation claimed that reasons for the high rate of separately schooled children reflected a lack of teacher training on facilitating learning for children with various disabilities and teachers' lack of support from professionals such as specialised teachers and therapists. Additionally, Inclusion Handicap (2017) noted that parents often needed to advocate strongly for their children with disabilities to attend regular schools alongside their non-disabled siblings in their communities. Parents found that children with disabilities were structurally excluded from decision processes about where they wanted to go to school (Inclusion Handicap, 2017).

Five years later, Inclusion Handicap's updated Shadow Report (Hess-Klein & Scheibler, 2022) revealed that these issues had not only persisted but, in some respects, worsened. The report documented a regressive trend in how appeals bodies and courts handled complaints against segregated schooling, with the Federal Court repeatedly asserting that inclusive education under Article 24 of the UNCRPD does not go beyond federal legal guarantees and does not grant disabled students' absolute right to inclusive schooling. Switzerland's response to calls for a strategy for an inclusive education system merely referenced existing legal frameworks, without addressing the reform mandate of Article 24 UNCRPD. In most regular schools, resource and staff shortages prevailed, with several cantons having discontinued integration-promoting measures for cost-saving purposes (Hess-Klein & Scheibler, 2022).

The 2022 Inclusion Handicap report further highlighted that in the 2017/2018 school year, nearly half of primary school students with enhanced special education measures were taught separately nationwide, with Canton Bern reporting that only 20% of students 'with special education needs' were taught integratively in 2020, and that the remaining 80% were taught separately. Students with disabilities in mainstream schools received three times less intensive support than those in special schools, and there was an average of only one full-time position in school-based special education per 150 students. The organisation's critiques were the lack of specialist knowledge and, in some

cases, commitment among school staff, particularly school leaders; as well as a lack of universal design in spatial design, teaching methods, communication approaches, teaching materials, and assistive technologies and aids (Hess-Klein & Scheibler, 2022). In summary, these findings highlight the persistent and systemic importance of the need for collaboration among the various agencies and individuals involved in learning situations to support the transformation of inclusive environments, allowing children to acquire skills that enable them to engage with one another and do things together, regardless of their diverse abilities and differences.

Inclusive educational practice may be further hampered in Switzerland due to the structural division of education and health systems, making it more difficult for teachers, therapists, parents, and children to collaborate and support each other (Hutterli & Kronenberger, 2013). With an increase in medical labelling, a biomedical, deficit-oriented perspective manifests, so that problems are attributed to the individual child and are examined outside their social context, disregarding resources and opportunities for inclusion within (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Thomson, 2013). Therefore, Hollenweger (2014) posed the question, “When is disability something individuals bring to school or when something schools create?” (p. 264).

Research in Switzerland on integrating children at school is evolving and tends to focus on teachers, and children with specific diagnoses. For example, one research project at the University of Applied Sciences for Special Needs Education (HfH) in Zurich recruited 213 teachers from the German-speaking part of Switzerland working in either integrative settings (59.9%) or segregated settings (40.1%), primarily in special needs education. Teachers completed an online questionnaire about challenges in their everyday school life with pupils with autism (ASS) (Canonica et al., 2018). While students’ displays of aggressive behaviour were a major challenge reported by both educational settings, problematic behaviour such as running away and stereotypical behaviour were higher in segregated settings. This was attributed to children with ASS being denied access to regular classes with a more diverse group of children, limiting their opportunities to practise their interaction and communication skills. The authors concluded that opportunities to develop these skills was also constrained by the context, including particular structural and personnel conditions such as the teacher-student ratio, support for teachers, teaching experience, and the number of other pupils in class (Canonica et al., 2018).

This claim suggests the need for a more holistic research approach that examines the structural, environmental, and personnel circumstances, as well as experiences, needs, and contributions of all children, teachers, and others involved in the classroom. The need for a more holistic approach to researching inclusive practice was also highlighted in a study commissioned by the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, which

focused on children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This Swiss study similarly noted the importance of environmental factors in promoting change in these children's behaviour and attention in class (Neuenschwander et al., 2016). Specific teacher training resulted in a higher level of attention and social inclusion, as well as some effect on these children's hyperactivity. However, the effects of the implemented strategies on all other children and the changed interactions in class that contributed to improved social inclusion lacked monitoring.

Research conducted in Switzerland in recent years has focused on teachers' skills and views in teaching children with a particular diagnosis. The lack of opportunities for children to report their experiences or express their perspectives has been a significant concern for both Swiss organisations monitoring children's rights and disability rights in Switzerland (Inclusion Handicap, 2017; Netzwerk Kinderrechte Schweiz, 2021). A more inclusive research approach, where schools and classes are viewed as associated living units (Dewey, 1916/2008), in which interactions among children, parents, classroom staff, school leaders, and therapists and are contextualised within the school with structural, environmental, and cultural components, is currently lacking. Overall, there are only fragmented views on the specific inclusive situation at school in Switzerland. The gap in understanding how inclusion is practised in associated living units, such as classes at school, to achieve inclusive education has been highlighted by scientists worldwide (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Frigerio Sayilir, 2012; Hedderich et al., 2016; Morton et al., 2023). This study addresses this knowledge gap in two phases.

Study Perspectives, Knowledge Gap, and Guiding Research

Questions

International efforts to promote inclusive education are increasingly focusing on children within their social context at school. However, research shows that developing a shared understanding of inclusive practice is an ongoing process, involving the collaboration of diverse stakeholders at school and recognising their different skills and experiences (Anaby et al., 2019; Echsel et al., 2019; Missiuna et al., 2012; Mooney & Lashewicz, 2015; Morton et al., 2023). Despite global commitments to inclusive education as a human right, alongside growing recognition of the importance of occupational perspectives that examine what people do together in context, there remains insufficient understanding of how inclusive education functions as a collaborative, contextual process within what Dewey conceptualised as associated living units, the everyday social spaces where diverse children, families, and professionals interact to create inclusive experiences.

This gap is also evident in Switzerland where integrative education is relatively new, and research has focused primarily on teachers' skills with children who have

specific diagnoses rather than holistic, multi-stakeholder processes that enable inclusive practice considering diversity. This study aimed for a more holistic approach to research, wherein schools were viewed as associated living units, where interactions among children, parents, classroom staff, school leaders and therapists were contextualised within schools that incorporate structural, environmental, and cultural components.

While human rights frameworks establish the normative foundation for inclusive education, and occupational science provides a lens for understanding participation through shared doing, it is Dewey's transactional philosophy that offered a framework for examining how inclusive practice is created through the dynamic interplay between people and their environments, where children, teachers, families, and environments continuously shape and are shaped by one another in ongoing transactions (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). For this study, inclusion was defined from an occupational-transactional lens as a concern with what people do together, where it happens, and the personal, social and cultural meanings, as well as socio-cultural, political, economic, geographical, and historical contexts that promote or inhibit such actions (Cutchin et al., 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2013; Hocking, 2009; Laliberte Rudman & Huot, 2013; Lee Bunting, 2016; Reed & Hocking, 2013).

This study was designed in two phases. Phase 1 investigated the scope of international literature guided by the research question: How is inclusive education in mainstream education at primary school level created? Phase 2 examined the Swiss context, answering the research question: How is inclusive education created in mainstream schools in Switzerland for children aged between 8 and 12 years?

Definition of Key Terms

The terms related to the research questions are defined next.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education refers to schools where children develop skills for engaging with one another and learn how to take part together in activities in class, at play, and in other contexts, regardless of their differences. (BFS, 2019b; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014; UNESCO, 1994).

Mainstream Education in Switzerland

Mainstream education refers to the regular public school system where majority of children are educated together in local, community-based schools. In Switzerland, mainstream public school system spans a total of 11 years of compulsory education, comprising kindergartens (for children aged 4-6 years), primary school (for children aged 6-12 years), and lower secondary schools (for children aged 12-16 years). In Switzerland, most children attend mainstream, public, local schools run by local

municipalities. Classroom teachers are typically responsible for up to 25 children per class unit and are supported by a special needs education (SNE) teacher, who is present in the class for specific, allocated support lessons. SNE teachers address the identified educational needs of children with specific difficulties. Education-based therapy services (speech-language therapy and psychomotor therapy) are provided on-site, while health-related services (occupational and physical therapy) are provided off-site. Education is obligatory for every child and free of charge.

Children

Under the UNCRC (1989), a child means every human being below the age of 18 years. Children's physical, mental, and social capacities develop from birth to adolescence, requiring safeguarding, care, guidance, education, appropriate direction, and legal protection consistent with the child's stage of development.

To Create

In general usage, to create means to bring something into existence or to cause something to happen (*Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.). It involves generating something original, yet contextually appropriate and useful within particular personal or social circumstances (Oven & Lobe, 2019). From an occupational science perspective, creating inclusive practice is understood as occurring through what people do, how, when, where, and with whom occupations occur (Hocking, 2017; Whiteford & Pereira, 2011). This understanding emphasises creation as an ongoing, situated process that happens through human doing in particular contexts (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2013). As Frank (2022) articulated, occupational inquiry addresses "how, when, and why doing and doing together work to solve problems, what kinds of problems, in what situations or contexts, and with what outcomes" (p. 466). Thus, from a transactional-occupational perspective, creation unfolds through the dynamic interplay of people, activities, and contexts within specific social and physical environments, such as schools (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Fritz & Cutchin, 2017).

Study Design and Methodology Overview

This study involved a two-phase design that enabled both breadth (international perspectives) and depth (local understanding), contributing to knowledge about how inclusive education can be contextually created while maintaining core principles of participation, collaboration, and shared learning.

Phase 1: Scoping Review of International Literature

Phase 1 drew on international literature to gain a deeper, more coherent understanding of how inclusive education is created in various international contexts. Based on Dewey's understanding of a school as associated living, the review captured the multiple

perspectives involved in creating inclusive schools. To capture the scope and breadth of current research literature, a scoping review (Lockwood et al., 2019) was chosen and is presented in Chapter 2.

Based on the research question: How is inclusive education in mainstream education at primary school level created?, the review systematically examined international research literature to identify key factors, processes, and stakeholder perspectives involved in creating inclusive educational environments. It captured multiple perspectives—children, educators, families, and support professionals—to develop a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education practices across diverse contexts. This phase provided the theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding inclusive education as a collaborative, contextual process rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach (F. Felder, 2022).

Phase 2: Stake’s Case Study Methodology Investigating Two Swiss School Classes

Based on the research question: How is inclusive education created in Swiss primary school classes for children aged between 8 and 12 years? this phase employed Stake’s (2006) case study (CS) methodology to investigate two Swiss primary school classes. Nilholm (2021) claimed that CS methodology is particularly appropriate for investigating inclusive education, as it enables in-depth examination of the complex interactions and contextual factors that shape educational practice and is well suited for developing theories that can serve as practical tools for creating more inclusive schools. Stake’s method shares Dewey’s understanding of the interconnectedness of human doings and how, when, and where they are done. To understand complex, inclusive school settings, scientific inquiry based on Dewey’s theories and Stake’s CS method requires the researcher to capture the voices and experiences of all children, teachers, and all those engaged in education within a specific context. Both Dewey (1956) and Stake acknowledged the experience of the study participants and the experience or specific view of the researchers.

Extending the occupational science lens, human occupation in its complexity encompasses many aspects (Hocking, 2009), as evident in Dewey’s (1956) work on experience (Fritz & Cutchin, 2017). Common to occupational science and pragmatist philosophy are concerns with what people do (together); where it happens; and the personal, social, and cultural meanings; as well as the socio-cultural, political, economic, geographical, and historical contexts that promote or inhibit such actions. Different scientific disciplines agree that groups consisting of diverse children learning, playing, and doing things together at school are vital in achieving social change towards inclusive societies (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Morton et al., 2013; R. B. Pereira & Whiteford, 2013; Pérez-Ibáñez, 2018) though they adopt different ontological frameworks in their

understanding of inclusive education (Schuelka et al., 2019). In addition to the philosophical underpinnings based on Dewey's philosophy, Stake (2010) suggested the importance of recognising the researcher's specific view, described next.

My Experience and Positionality in Relation to the Study

Aligning with Dewey's (1938/2015) pragmatist philosophy on experience and education, which emphasises knowledge as constructed through active engagement with the world, Stake (1995) emphasised that knowledge is always a human construction shaped by three realities. The first, external reality, independent of human perception, provides stimuli for experiences. The second, experiential reality, begins with sensory experiences of external stimuli, which are interpreted and given meaning based on previous knowledge and beliefs. The third, rational reality, Stake called a "universe of integrated interpretations" (p. 100), emphasising that all knowledge is constructed through the interaction of these realities, reinforcing the idea that research should consider both individual perspectives and the broader social and contextual influences on meaning-making. Stake's constructivist stance, which shares Dewey's pragmatist emphasis on knowledge being actively constructed through experience, underpinned this case study approach. In addition to constructivism, Stake asserted that the principle of relativity plays a significant role in case studies. Each researcher brings their unique perspective to the study of a case, just as each reader interprets the findings based on their own context and experiences. Consistent with Stake's constructivist perspective, I acknowledge that my experiences, perspectives, and evolving understanding have been woven throughout this study.

My positionality has been shaped by multiple, intersecting professional and personal experiences across different educational systems and roles. Professionally, I have worked as a primary school teacher in both special and mainstream settings in Switzerland, where I gained firsthand experience of the challenges and possibilities of inclusive practice. As a teaching assistant in a specialised setting for severely hearing and visually impaired children in Zurich, I learned alternative communication methods and witnessed the intensive, individualised support these children required. This experience revealed both the deep expertise available in specialised settings and the potential isolation from typical peer interactions.

Transitioning to mainstream primary education in a small Swiss rural school, I gained an understanding of everyday school life, parent-teacher collaboration, and team dynamics within regular classroom contexts. However, moving to Aotearoa New Zealand exposed me to a different paradigm where children with disabilities attended the same schools as their peers, challenging my assumptions about what inclusive education could

look like. This experience highlighted how educational approaches are culturally and systemically shaped.

My subsequent education and practice as an occupational therapist deepened my understanding of interdisciplinary collaboration and family-centred approaches. Working in early intervention in the United States, I experienced how interprofessional teams could function cohesively to support children and families within educational settings. Returning to Switzerland as a private occupational therapy practitioner, I observed the emerging integrative movement while witnessing how inclusive practice often depended on individual advocacy and institutional willingness rather than systematic support.

These experiences culminated in my master's thesis research on occupational therapy in Swiss mainstream schools, which revealed three key themes: the importance of understanding context, reflecting on one's own perspective to focus on children's participation with others, and the critical nature of collaboration (see Figure 1). Additionally, as a parent of two children in Swiss primary schools, I have experienced the system from a family perspective, observing both the possibilities and limitations of current inclusive practices.

Figure 1.

Themes of "Together on the Way"



Echsel et al. (2019). "Together on the way": Occupational therapy in mainstream education. A narrative study of emerging practice in Switzerland. Reprinted with permission.

This multifaceted background positions me as both an insider and an outsider to various aspects of Swiss inclusive education. My teaching experience provides an understanding of classroom realities and educational challenges, while my therapy background offers insights into interprofessional collaboration and individual needs. My international exposure allows me to see Swiss practices within a broader context, while my parental experience grounds me in the lived reality of families navigating the system.

I acknowledge that these experiences create both opportunities and potential biases. My professional background may lead me to focus more readily on systemic and collaborative aspects, while my position as a white, educated, able-bodied researcher

from a middle-class background may limit my understanding of other forms of marginalisation. Throughout this research, I remained committed to reflexive practice guided by a human rights approach, recognising that my interpretations are shaped by these experiences while striving to centre the voices and experiences of all participants in creating inclusive educational communities.

The Study's Contribution

This study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge on understanding inclusive education in several ways. First, it is intended to advance theoretical knowledge by integrating human rights frameworks, occupational science perspectives, and Deweyan transactional philosophy to examine inclusive education as created in associated living units. This integration will offer a novel, analytical lens illuminating how inclusion is brought into action through the dynamic interplay of people, occupations, and environments.

Second, the study addressed a critical, methodological gap by employing a multi-perspective approach that honours the voices of all stakeholders—children, families, classroom staff, assistants, therapists and principals—as equally valid contributors to understanding inclusive practice. Third, the two-phase design contributed both breadth and depth: the international scoping review identified key factors and processes across diverse contexts, while the Swiss case studies provided rich, contextualised understanding of how inclusive education unfolds in practice within a federal system characterised by cantonal autonomy. This dual focus enabled examination of how international principles translate into locally situated practice.

Fourth, the study provided empirical evidence about Swiss inclusive education at a critical juncture. With ongoing debates about inclusion versus segregation, increasing segregation rates despite policy commitments, and recent intensified recommendations from the UN's (2022) monitoring bodies, understanding how inclusion can be successfully created in Swiss classrooms will inform policy development, teacher education, and school-based practice.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. *Chapter 1: Introduction* has established the global and Swiss context for inclusive education; presented the philosophical and theoretical foundations drawing on Deweyan pragmatism, occupational science, and transactional theory; identified research gaps; and introduced the two-phase research design. It concluded with a reflexive account of my positionality and outlined the study's contribution.

Chapter 2: Phase 1: Scoping Review systematically examines international research literature on how inclusive education is created in mainstream primary schools. This chapter presents the scoping review methodology; findings regarding key factors, processes, and stakeholder perspectives; and develops the concept of ‘shared occupational situations’ that frames Phase 2.

Chapter 3: Case Study Methodology for the two separate Swiss cases provides detailed justification and description of the research approach for Phase 2, including Stake’s CS approach, its alignment with constructivist and pragmatist epistemology, and the theoretical basis for multi-perspective data collection and analysis. This chapter also covers the research methods, describing the procedures and implementation of Phase 2, including case selection and participant recruitment; detailed description of data collection methods (observations, interviews, focus groups, documents, photographs); ethical considerations and approvals; and step-by-step analytical procedures drawing on Stake’s strategies of direct interpretation and categorical aggregation within a reflexive thematic analysis approach.

Chapter 4: Description of the Common Context offers a contextual description of the two cases—Oak School and Village School—within Switzerland’s political and structural systems at federal levels. Next, the first CS, Oak School is presented, beginning with its specific, contextual cantonal and municipal levels. A detailed description of a shared occupational situation, the class council (CC), illustrates how inclusive education was created in everyday practice. Findings are organised by participant perspectives (classroom staff, children, parents, assistants, therapists, principal) on the situation and the broader classroom context, concluding with case assertions about how inclusive education is created in the Oak School context.

Chapter 5: The Village School Case presents the second CS, beginning with contextual description at cantonal and municipal levels. A detailed description of a shared occupational situation, the gymnastics lesson, then illustrates how inclusive education was created in this context. Findings are organised by participant perspectives (classroom staff, children, parents, assistants, therapist, principal) on this situation and the broader classroom context, concluding with case assertions about how inclusive education is created in the Village School context.

Finally, *Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion* synthesises findings across both phases, examining how international perspectives relate to Swiss practice examples and discussing implications in relation to current literature and theoretical frameworks. This chapter explores how inclusive education is co-created through shared occupational situations within associated living units. It concludes by summarising key contributions to theory, practice, and methodology; discussing implications for policy, teacher education, and school-based practice; acknowledging study limitations; and proposing

directions for future research into situated, contextualised, collective approaches to inclusive education.

Having established the philosophical foundations, research gaps, and my positionality as a researcher, the following chapter presents Phase 1 of the study, a scoping review of international research literature examining how inclusive education is created in mainstream primary schools.

Chapter 2: Scoping Review

This chapter presents Phase 1 of the study, a scoping review examining how inclusive education is created in mainstream primary schools internationally. The review has been published as: Echsel, A., Hocking, C., Jones, M., & Schulze, C. (2025). An international scoping review on inclusive education from multiple perspectives: Co-creating inclusive experiences in shared occupational situations. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2025.2558991>

The article is reproduced here under open access terms Article Publishing Charge (APC) (Taylor & Francis Online, n.d.). Given that Chapter 1 established the theoretical and contextual foundations for this study, the article's introduction has been moved to Appendix B omitted to avoid duplication. The chapter begins directly with the methods section and proceeds through the published findings and discussion. Formatting has been adjusted to align with thesis style. The chapter concludes with a transitional section bridging the international findings to the examination of inclusive education in Swiss primary schools in Phase 2.

Abstract

A human rights approach to inclusive education acknowledges that every learner has a fundamental right to access educational opportunities. For this scoping review, inclusion is defined from an occupational perspective as a concern with what people do together. The purpose of the scoping review was to investigate the ways people can act to influence inclusion from the viewpoint of children, parents, classroom and therapy staff and others. Children was defined as all children under the age of 18. Twenty-six studies representing 14 countries met the inclusion criteria. The findings focus on shared occupational situations, the extent to which these situations can be changed (their changeability), and the ways the social context shapes children's experiences of more inclusive schooling. The findings suggest the need to shift to a more nuanced understanding of inclusive practices, while acknowledging the diversity of such practices within specific cultural contexts internationally.

Keywords: human rights, Dewey, inclusive education, student perspective, occupation

Introduction

The introduction of the scoping review mainly draws on the introduction presented in this thesis, Chapter 1, which established the global context for inclusive education, the philosophical foundations of the review drawing on Dewey's pragmatism and occupational science, and the identified research gaps. Building on these foundations,

the scoping review addresses the central research question: How is inclusive education in mainstream education at primary school level created?

Methods

Scoping studies aim to explore the state of research activity (Colquhoun et al., 2017) in order to “summarise findings from a body of knowledge that is heterogeneous in methods or discipline” and “identify gaps in the literature to aid the planning and commissioning of future research” (Tricco et al., 2018, p. 467). A scoping review was appropriate to answering the research question, as bringing an occupational perspective to the literature was a novel approach. The review process was conducted methodically within a review team of three experienced researchers and the first investigator. Covidence (Veritas Health Innovation, 2021), a Cochrane Collaboration tool that supports administration, was used to manage the data and review process, including a record of decisions about literature in- or excluded. The procedure was sequenced according to the six stages outlined by Levac et al. (2010). Stage one, establishing the research question, was outlined in the Introduction. The scoping review protocol has been published on the Open Science Framework OSF <https://osf.io/yz2ek/>.

Identifying Relevant Studies

Our intention to canvas perspectives on inclusive education generated by diverse research disciplines required searches across education and social sciences-oriented databases (Eric, Sage, and Scopus) along with health-oriented databases (PsycInfo, MEDLINE, and CINAHL). The diverse conceptualisations of inclusive education apparent within different research disciplines suggested that different ontological frameworks and research foci needed to be taken into account, which demanded multiple search terms (Schuelka et al., 2019). To establish a search string representing different experiences, pilot searches were conducted from October 2021 to January 2022. The development of search strings was discussed with and supported by the supervision team, librarians from Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), and two PhD student peers.

Abstracts, titles, keywords, and full-text excerpts were scanned from several articles to generate initial search terms and to understand and describe the underlying concepts. Subsequently, pilot searches on all databases and identification of relevant papers further supported the iterative development of search terms and concepts, resulting in identification of five overarching concepts, represented by specific search terms and related terms as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1.*Search concepts and search terms*

Concept	Search term*	Related terms*
Representation of context	school	education
Specification of context	inclusive	Special, diverse
Focus on children at school	children	pupil, student, learner
Specification of children	disability	impairment, handicap
Representation of perspectives	perspective	perception, experience, meaning, voice, view, meaning

* Boolean operators were applied for search terms in all databases

To represent different perspectives, two separate searches were conducted. One included the term ‘teacher perspectives’ and a second search used terms for other perspectives (i.e., parents, therapists, principals, assistants). Both searches were conducted across all databases. Children’s perspectives were represented in the concept ‘focus on children at school’, centred on primary school-aged children. Primary schools provide a more inclusive setting where children learn most subjects together in one class. At the secondary level, some national school systems separate students into different tracks based on their learning abilities (Strello et al., 2022). The search was limited to peer reviewed publications. The pilot searches revealed a high discrepancy between the number of articles published in the two sections, with far fewer publications representing the perspective of children, parents, school leaders, therapists, and others. To balance this discrepancy, different time limits were set for each section with a narrower range representing teachers’ perspective (2016 to 2022) than was applied to parents, therapists, and others (2010 to 2022).

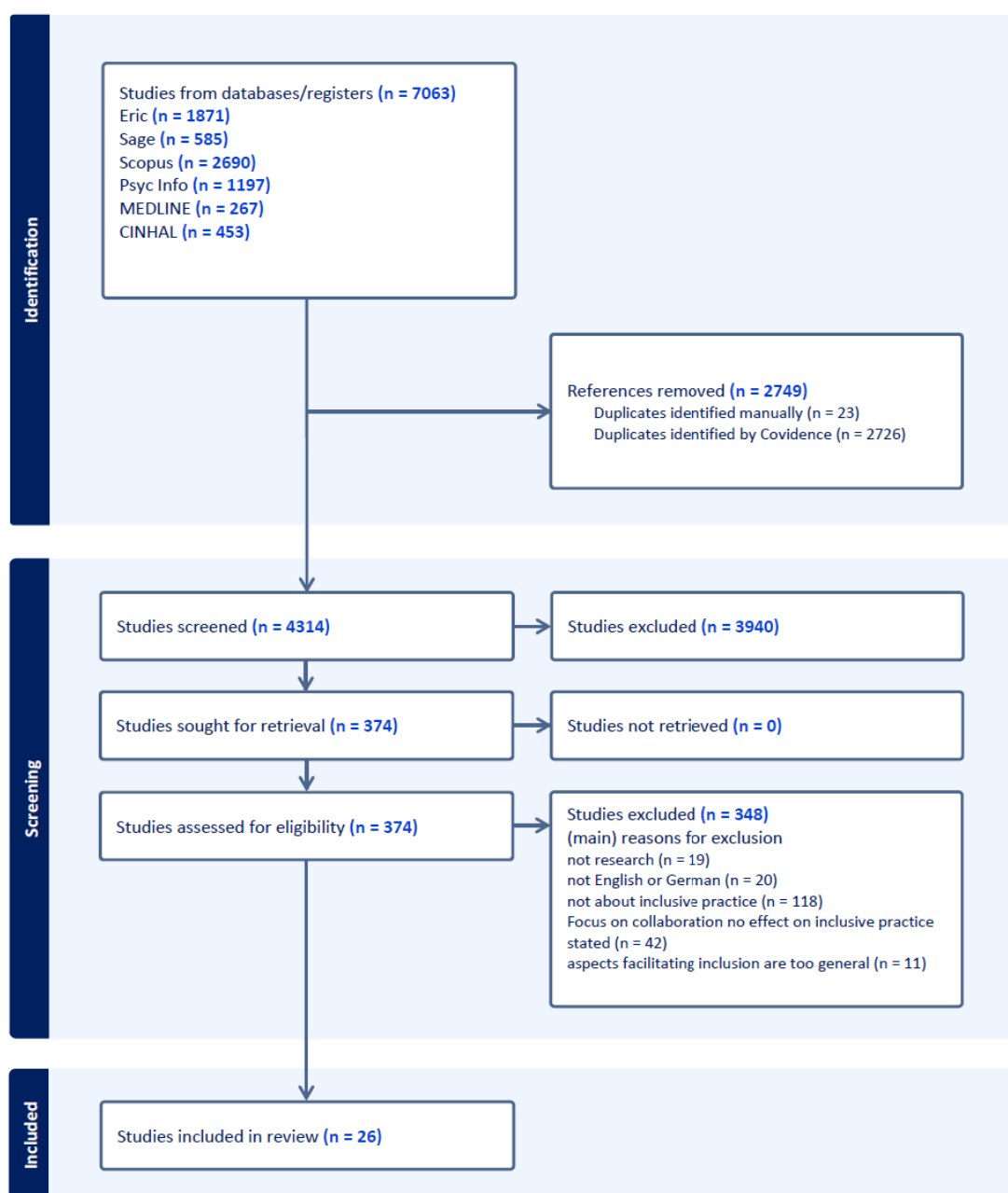
Study Selection

A total of 7,063 study titles and abstracts were imported into Covidence, owing to the broad scope of the literature. After removing 2,749 duplicates (Figure 2), the research team screened the abstracts and titles of the remaining studies in a two-step approach. In step 1, two members of the review team (AE and CS) independently screened approximately 760 article titles and abstracts against the in- and exclusion criteria. Conflicts were resolved by a third reviewer (MJ). With more clarity regarding the in- and exclusion criteria, and calibration of two of the review team, in step 2 AE and CS continued screening, requiring a single vote for each study. All included studies from step 2 were reimported for a second screen. The team (AE, CS) continued to screen in pairs to further refine in- and exclusion criteria for full text reviews, resulting in 374 articles for

full text review. In- and exclusion criteria regarding context and understanding of inclusion and disability perspectives were further refined during conflict resolution and discussed with the whole team, eliminating a further 348 articles. Twenty-six studies met all inclusion criteria.

Figure 2.

PRISMA Flowchart



The following criteria (see Table 2) were finally established.

Table 2. *In- and exclusion criteria representing context A, inclusion B, children C, disability D, perspectives E*

A) In- and exclusion criteria context school

Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies in regular or mainstream primary schools. In some countries, primary school includes kindergarten	Studies in special education settings separate from regular schools
Studies at schools that are financially accessible to all children of the community (public schools)	Studies at private schools that are not accessible to all children
Diversity aspects	Studies at high schools
Broader settings including, family, health and education, need to specifically mention inclusive practice at school	Studies with university students
	Studies in early intervention contexts
	On-line teaching
Studies researching both separative and mainstream settings, if the mainstream setting is clearly visible	Inclusive education theories not related to specific classroom strategies.
	Specific group of children without transfer to all children
	Single focus in policy
	School transitions
Articles written in English or German	Articles written in languages other than English or German

B) In- and exclusion criteria specification on inclusion

Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies in schools open to diverse children	Studies using the term "inclusion" in separative settings
Described classroom strategies addressing all children	Validation studies (psychometric properties of an instrument)
Specific subject teachings such as physical education, music education when targeting inclusion, doing together and co-occupation or to the benefit of all students	Focus on academic achievements
Attitudes of teachers are included when enhanced inclusive practice is mentioned	
Student involvement in adapting teaching strategies	

C) In- and exclusion criteria focus on children at school

Inclusion	Exclusion
Articles focusing on diverse children	Articles with a primary focus on school politics
Collaboration for inclusion among classroom staff, therapists, parents, children, and others to enact inclusive practice (there can be only part of the group, such as parent and classroom staff)	Studies focusing primarily on academic achievements of children
Doings together/co-occupation among children, children and classroom staff at school (in class and on the school ground)	
Children aged between 4 and 13 years (with or without disability)	Younger than kindergarten (toddler, early intervention), older than primary school
Wider age group: results must show specified group aged between 4 and 13 years	

D) Specification of children: disability

Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies with children with and without a disability being at school together	Articles with a primary focus on gender, religion, or ethnic groups
Studies describing collaboration to enact inclusive situations at school	Studies focusing on COVID-19
Intervention studies focusing on social interaction and participation	Intervention studies focusing on functional aspects
Inclusive teaching strategies are evident	Separative teaching strategies are evident
Diverse diagnoses with a focus on participation and social interaction	Diverse diagnoses with a focus on enhancing individual functional skills

E) In- and exclusion criteria: perspectives

Inclusion	Exclusion
Single or multiple perspectives/views/experiences/ perceptions of parents, children with and without disabilities, teacher, therapists, classroom assistants or principal or other in class about inclusive education and towards including a child with a disability	Other stakeholders: politicians
Retrospective experience of adults with a disability (back to primary school-age)	

Data Charting and Analysis

The process of data extraction (charting) and analysis occurred in two distinct phases (Levac et al., 2010). During the initial phase, study characteristics were extracted by AE into a Microsoft Excel sheet. The categories in the spreadsheet were tested using three

studies and approved by the review team, ensuring the significance and comprehensiveness of the extracted characteristics.

The nature of the research question suggested thematic analysis, in which scientists typically search for patterns of meaning across the data set (Braun et al., 2019). Therefore, the second phase addressed the analysis of the findings and discussion in each of the 26 included articles in a process-oriented way. The analysis adhered to the systematic steps outlined by Terry and Hayfield (2021) and Braun et al. (2019) entailing: familiarisation, coding, grouping, initial theme generation, developing and reviewing themes, and naming and defining themes. The review team (AE, CS, and MJ) collaborated to code an article, refining the coding process. Atlas.ti was utilised for data organisation, coding, and code grouping. After the initial coding, the codes were grouped, and preliminary themes were developed by AE and then reviewed iteratively with the team (CH, CS, MJ). This process ultimately led to the naming and defining of the themes collectively.

Description of the Included Studies

Of the included studies, 25 were qualitative; the 26th used a mixed methods approach (Schwab et al., 2019). An overview of all articles including authors; year of publication; place of data gathering; discipline (social, health, education); method and methodology; participant sample; and perspective represented is presented in Appendix C. Most studies were conducted in Europe (n = 13) followed by the United States/Canada (n = 6), Australasia (n = 4), Africa (n = 2), and Asia/China (n = 1) (see Appendix C for specific countries).

Among the articles analysed, 15 focused on a single perspective (children n = 7, teacher n = 6, parent n = 2); three covered two perspectives (children-teacher n = 2, teacher-SNE coordinator n = 1); four encompassed three perspectives (children-teacher-assistant n = 1, children-parent-personal support worker n = 1, teacher-SNE coordinator-assistant n = 1, children-teacher-assistant n = 1); and three considered four perspectives (parent-teacher-therapist-SNE coordinator n = 1, parent-teacher-principal-SNE coordinator n = 1, children-parent-teacher-assistant n = 1). Only one study provided a comprehensive view with perspectives from children, parents, teachers, principals, and therapists (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018). As detailed in Table 3, the majority of the studies focused on a single perspective, a smaller number included two, three and four perspectives. Only, one study provided a comprehensive view with perspectives from children, parents, teachers, principals, and therapists (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018).

Table 3.*Perspectives Represented in Studies Included in the Review*

Perspectives reported in each article	Number	Total (n)
Single perspective		
Children	7	
Parents	6	
Teachers	2	15
Two perspectives		
Children-teacher	2	
Teacher-SNE coordinator	1	3
Three perspectives		
Children-teacher-assistant	1	
Children-parent-personal support worker	1	
Teacher-SNE coordinator-assistant	1	
Children-teacher-assistant	1	4
Four perspectives		
Parent-teacher-therapist-SNE coordinator	1	
Parent-teacher-principal-SNE coordinator	1	
Children-parent-teacher-assistant	1	3
Five perspectives		
Children-parents-teachers-principals-therapists	1	1

An adult perspective was more prevalent ($n = 36$), primarily the teachers, compared to the views of children aged 5 to 17 ($n = 13$). See Table 2 and study overviews in Appendix C representing all studies.

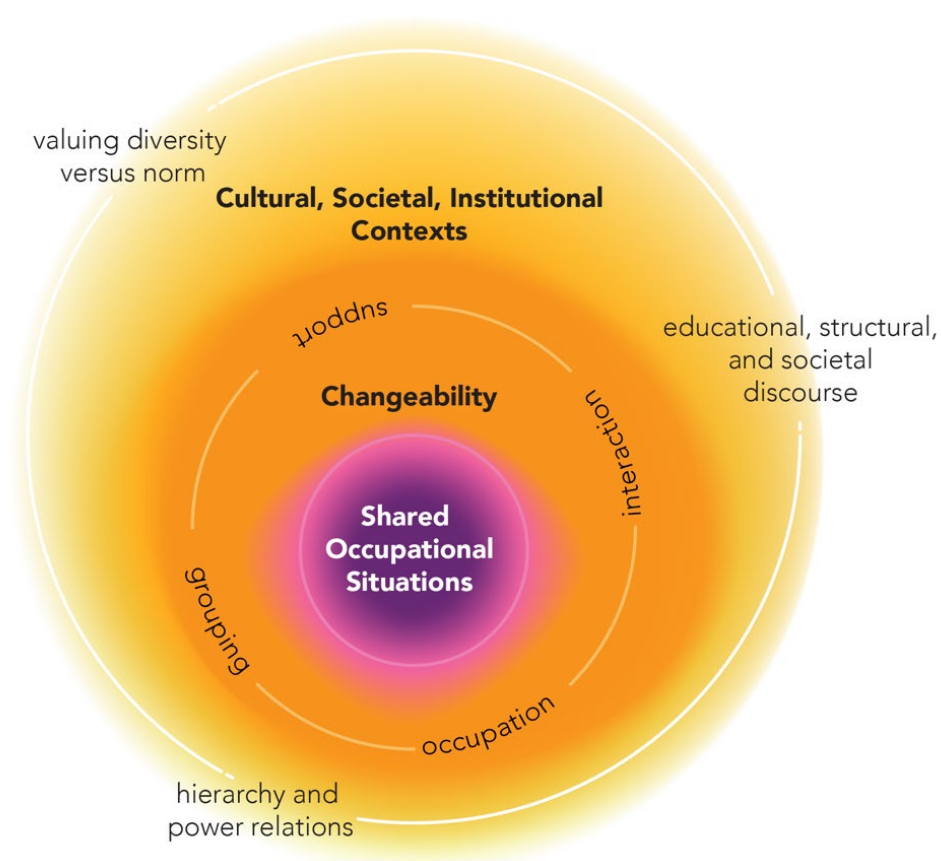
Of the 14 studies reporting children's views, five listened to children with and without disabilities, whereas nine investigated children with disabilities including autism; cognitive, sensory, and speech and language impairments; physical disabilities; and social-emotional, seizure, genetic, and unspecified SNE disorders (see Appendix C for details). One study took a retrospective approach with adult students reflecting on their school experiences (Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018).

Findings from the Qualitative Analysis

The actions that promote inclusive experiences take place in- and outside the classroom where children do things with each other (engage in occupations) in different group constellations, with and without adults. The findings revealed that 'doing together' at school involves doing different things; occurs at different times and places, and in different groups; and requires different skills, with these various strands coming together in the concept of 'shared occupational situations' (Theme 1). Those situations can be changed through actions that facilitate inclusive experience, either deliberately (planned) or as spontaneous actions that shift some aspects of a situation (unplanned) (Theme 2). Further, societal contexts shape the actions that occur in shared occupational situations in educational settings, all leading to experiences of inclusion or exclusion (Theme 3), see Figure 3 for a visual representation of the three themes.

Figure 3.

Visual representation of the Three Complementing, Fluid and Interdependent Themes and Subthemes



Theme 1: Shared Occupational Situations

A shared occupational situation is one in which two or more people are doing something together, such as working on a group project (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019) or participating in team sport (Casserly et al., 2019; Harrington, 2011; Maher, 2017; Morrison & Gleddie 2021). In schools, the number of people engaged in a shared occupation ranges from two; for example a student withdrawn from the class by a remedial teacher (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019; Tiernan et al., 2020), to all children engaged in the same lesson (Casserly et al., 2019). Shared occupational situations come together in diverse ways. The findings within this theme are sequenced from more outcome-oriented, teacher-centred, and competitive situations, with more rules and structures, towards outcome-open, child-centred, collaborative, less structured situations that are more inclusive.

Outcome-oriented situations are exemplified by teachers delivering a lesson to children grouped at tables according to their academic abilities (Dimitrellou & Male 2020; Maher, 2017; Majoko, 2016), in the belief that those seated at the “less able table” would “quickly work out where the pecking order is” and aspire “to move up”, thus creating a situation that excludes children with special educational needs who cannot “work at the same pace” (Efthymou & Kington, 2017, p. 14) or perform at the required level (Dimitrellou & Male 2020; Maher, 2017). Equally, lessons that are “mainly non-interactive/non-dialogic” with the intent of supporting academic rather than social learning can result in students with special education needs “not socially interact[ing] with their teacher or peers” (Efthymou & Kington, 2017, p. 16).

Similarly, when occupational situations such as basketball games (Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Thoren et al., 2021), which divide children into teams, are run as high-performance, competitive activities, only the players whose skills and efforts contribute to winning are rewarded (Dimitrellou & Male 2020; Harrington, 2011; Maher, 2017). Players who are less able or whose actions impede team success do not receive comparable rewards (Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Thoren et al., 2021). Children who are unable to learn or perform the requisite skills engage less in competitive situations (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Maher, 2017; Thoren et al., 2021), although it is unclear whether they are actively excluded by others or self-exclude (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Majoko, 2016; Pereira et al., 2010; Schwab et al., 2019; Wang & Florian, 2019; Zitomer, 2016). Self-exclusion likely relates to getting “laughed at, because they cannot perform a physical task during a team game as well as their age-peers” (Maher, 2017, p. 10). However, children with disabilities also report feeling involved in competitive situations when observing their peers (Pereira et al., 2010), which might be interpreted as inclusion.

Illustrating a more inclusive outcome, Dimitrellou and Male (2020) described a situation where students chose the topic for their group assignment. Collaboration was supported by prepared materials with structured steps that aligned with their interests and learning preferences, an approach supported by Efthymiou and Kington (2017), Mukhopadhyay et al. (2019), and Zitomer (2016). Students valued that this type of child-centered group work “gives them more ideas”, expressed joy in “giving ideas to others”, and “like help[ing] each other out” (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020, p. 6), enabling diverse contributions, positive peer relations, and inclusive experiences (Gaffney, 2020).

Engaging in even less structured shared occupational situations, such as a school dance, free sport time, or arts and crafts, offers opportunities for children to interact more freely. Examples include child-facilitated recreational activities such as “playing cards together” (Gaffney, 2020) and “being around each other and joking” (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018). Such situations are facilitated by the nature of the

occupation children choose to do and the opportunities afforded by the environment (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Majoko, 2016; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al., 2010; Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018). Pereira et al. (2010) stressed that children with disabilities being supported by friends during playtime can experience inclusion by “watching others play football”, “knowing what they did”, and “supporting their best friend” (p. 602).

However, within open, less structured child-centred shared occupational situations, children can face challenges. They can “find nobody to play with at recess” (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012, p. 6) or be exposed to bullying and exclusion (Harrington, 2011), often by children unacquainted with them (Majoko, 2016; E. Pereira et al., 2010). Children also recounted “their peers engaged in both implicit and explicit forms of social exclusion (verbal and physical bullying)” (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012, p. 105). Implicit social exclusion also occurs due to lack of opportunities to interact socially, such as “kids not having a lot of time to talk to me or me to them” because of differences in their bus schedules (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012, p. 105).

Across the articles, four components of shared occupational situations are apparent: what is being done (the lesson, sports game, playing); the way the situation is organised (child-centred, structured, outcome-oriented, competitive); who is participating (mixed ability groups of children, team members, spectators, friends, teacher aids); and how their actions (helping, giving ideas, watching, answering, bullying) support or hinder inclusive experiences. Framing shared occupations as situations brings both the human and non-human context into view, with attention given to the interaction of the human actors, transactions in spaces, resources, and actions the context affords. Theme two highlights how these shared occupational situations can be changed in ways that facilitate inclusive experiences.

Theme 2: Changeability of Shared Occupational Situations

The changeability of shared occupational situations refers to the extent to which aspects of a situation can be modified and the ease with which changes can be implemented. The concept of changeability emphasises the potential for transforming and adapting various elements within a given context, reflecting the capacity of a situation to undergo change and acknowledging that different factors within a situation can be shaped, influenced, adjusted, and restructured to enhance inclusive experiences.

Referring to theme one, some shared occupational situations, such as playground play, grant children the freedom to choose how they interact, what they do, and where they engage within designated playtimes. Conversely, certain situations are more regulated, like taking an exam with predetermined start and end times, along with specific tasks to engage in. Both situations can be changed to facilitate inclusive experiences. Various approaches to bring about these changes were reported in the

literature. Fifteen articles outlined that changes may be planned (deliberate) actions, perhaps with resources prepared in advance (Casserly et al., 2019; Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Lowrey et al., 2017; Maher, 2017; Majoko, 2016; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al., 2010; Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019; E. Pereira et al., 2010; Petrie et al., 2018; Tiernan et al., 2020; Zitomer 2016). Alternately, changes may happen more spontaneously, in response to something that happens in the moment (e.g., a child “gets lost” and cannot continue the set task), as described in nine articles (Casserly et al., 2019; Gaffney, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Lowrey et al., 2017; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al., 2010; Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010; Schwab et al., 2019; Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018), or because of some feature of the context (e.g., mixed grade classrooms providing more options in how children are grouped), as emphasised by Casserly et al. (2019). These approaches to changing things to promote inclusion are organised in four clusters: occupation, grouping, support, and interaction. Again, the changeability is diverse, therefore support is not limited to children with diagnosed disabilities. Rather, it extends to various actors involved in the school setting, including classroom staff, parents, and non-disabled children as conveyed by a number of authors (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Harrington, 2011; Hodges et al., 2020b; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Mortier, Van Hove & De Schauwer, 2010; E. Pereira et al., 2010; Petrie et al., 2018).

Ways in which changing the occupation facilitates in- or exclusion: The changeability of occupations is threefold: adapting occupations or equipment (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018; Maher, 2017; E. Pereira et al., 2010; Petrie et al., 2018; Thoren et al., 2021); focusing on different roles (E. Pereira et al., 2010); and thinking differently about occupation (Petrie et al., 2018). Adapting occupations might mean adapting the speed of movement (walking instead of running) (Maher, 2017; Petrie et al., 2018), equipment, such as a different ball (Thoren et al., 2021), or the provision of communication aids, to strengthen children’s engagement (Hodges et al., 2020; E. Pereira et al., 2010). Teachers described that “creativity and time [were] required to plan and collaborate with others” or to “modify activities, for a student with CP” (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018, p. 160). Shared occupational situations are changeable when allocating roles to children according to their diverse skills. For example, soccer games provide skilled roles as a player, goalkeeper, coach, referee, observer, water person. Children contribute according to their abilities: “The teacher calls me and asks me to be the referee in the game. I have to concentrate very hard... I like to be the referee” (E. Pereira et al., 2010, p. 602).

Petrie and colleagues (2018) proposed a fundamentally different approach, moving away from common characterisation of Physical Education (PE) as competitive

and requiring specific skills such as running fast or jumping high, by taking the stance of people being active. This mindset opened

students' awareness of the scope of being active, facilitating their sensitivity to diversity. ...that by doing it this way they would start to see how TPM skills (thinking, people and movement) cross over into many different activities, ...having transferable skills to making connections with familiar skills, for example, students who recognised that bowling, cricket, and fishing all were linked to including principles relating to aiming and being accurate. (Petrie et al., 2018, p. 351)

Further, students individually self-directed their skill acquisition to activities they chose to learn. This brought a shift towards learning and improving skills required for an activity, thus "reducing the anxiety associated with demonstrating their ability, or lack of, in front of the entire class" (Petrie et al., 2018, p. 353). The three dimensions of the changeability of occupations demonstrate that, through deliberate reflections, shared occupational situations can be transformed to promote inclusive experiences.

How grouping can facilitate experiences of in- or exclusion: One common educational strategy groups children by academic ability, putting lower-performing children together (Casserly et al., 2019; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017). Placing less able children at separate tables or having them leave the classroom with a special education teacher or assistant can hamper interactions with other students, stigmatizing and marginalising them (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017). However, in some situations, children with disabilities experience success working at their competence level in ability groups (Casserly et al., 2019), highlighting diverse preferences among students.

Mixed-ability groups are more often used for more creative shared occupational situations, such as art and drama (Casserly et al., 2019; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019; Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018; Zitomer, 2016), but less in science (Gaffney, 2020). Situations in multi-grade classrooms naturally incorporate diverse abilities within a single classroom setting, providing classroom-staff greater flexibility to organise shared occupational situations to meet children's needs effectively, benefiting them academically and socially. Casserly et al. (2019) illustrated this, recounting "having a younger child who can work with an older group ... or an older child working with a younger group ability wise, but it's [differences are] not so noticeable" (p. 624). In general, employing flexible and intentional grouping capitalises on the heterogeneity in a classroom, supporting inclusion (Casserly et al., 2019; Tiernan et al., 2020).

How support can facilitate experiences of in- or exclusion: Support is a highly flexible way of modifying shared occupational situations (all articles). However, before support is provided, children want others to gain a profound understanding of their challenges and strengths (Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al.,

2010; Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010). Adequate support is characterized by the amount and nature of support given and how it is tailored to meet children's differences in specific learning situations (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018; Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010). Support can also be provided through collaborations among teachers, assistants, children, parents, therapists, and other experts. That implies "people having to know what's going on ... also there's the expertise of being able to go to someone like Cerebral Palsy Education Centre and say, 'Look, we're having difficulties. What do you reckon?'" (Bourke & Taylor et al., 2018, p. 161).

Providing the right level and kind of support requires collaboration, pooling resources, and leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Lowrey et al., 2017; Maher, 2017; Scorgie, 2015; Thoren et al., 2021). Collaboration among all those engaged in school activities engenders a more comprehensive understanding of children's individual learning, enabling knowledge sharing, strategies, and resources to more effectively address diverse learning. In addition, children experience situations as more inclusive when receiving support from their peers (Gaffney, 2020; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; E. Pereira et al., 2010), "in the playground I can do everything ... or almost everything, but my friends help me with the things I can't do" (E. Pereira et al., 2010, p. 60).

Consistent, accountable, and equitable classroom staff attending to the needs of all children promotes inclusion (Casserly et al., 2019; Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Harrington, 2011; Hodges et al., 2020; Schwab et al., 2019; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019), suggesting that specific types of support are particularly effective in fostering inclusive experiences. Further, children generally wish to contribute to finding solutions (E. Pereira et al., 2010), developing strategies (Lowrey et al., 2017) in keeping with their competences.

How interaction can facilitate experiences of in- or exclusion: Positive changes occur when teachers, children, and others recognise a child's struggle to showcase their full potential and draw on their tacit knowledge and creative improvisation (Lowrey et al., 2017; Mortier, Hunt, et al., 2010; Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010; Schwab et al., 2019; Zitomer, 2016). Inclusive outcomes are enhanced by remaining attentive and alert to seizing opportunities to adapt and negotiate shared occupational situations in the moment, such as a teacher "whispering" the solution in the ear of a memory-impaired child (Gaffney, 2020, p. 470), thus respecting the child's dignity while providing the necessary support for the child to engage in the situation.

Having diverse children in a class supports acquisition of competencies contributing to inclusive practices (De Schauwer et al., 2009; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al., 2010; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019; Petrie et al., 2018; Zitomer 2016). For instance, in a

classroom with a hearing-impaired child, peers stepped in to use sign language with a non-signing teacher, thus playing a significant role in promoting inclusive experiences for both their classmate and the teacher. Further, children were observed to spontaneously adapt “the rules of the game to include their peers with physical limitations” (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019, p. 11). These examples show that children and classroom staff make on-the-spot decisions to act in ways that facilitate inclusion.

Teachers can also invite children to be active partners in creating inclusive situations through collaborative problem-solving, learning how to think as a class, and engaging all students (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al., 2010; Mortier, Van Hove, & De Schauwer, 2010; Petrie et al., 2018; Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018; Zitomer 2016). For example, teachers might shift from “always had to have something ready and the students with disabilities were off to the side, ‘here’s an activity for them, they are going to be here, and here’s a box for them’” to “children in class being involved in the activities and in the right way. So, I think modifying less but allowing the kids [in the class] to adapt it for them” (Morrison et al., 2021, p. 452).

Classroom staff often feel inadequately prepared for the diversity of children and their associated diagnoses (Hodges et al., 2020; Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021), with uncertainty about children’s competencies and potential undermining their confidence in responding to barriers (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Hodges et al., 2020b; Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Lowrey et al., 2017; Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019; Petrie et al., 2018; Wang & Florian, 2019). Further, classroom staff feeling sorry for children lowers expectations of their performance (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Schwab et al., 2019). Children desire equal treatment (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Schwab et al., 2019) but suffer when pushed beyond their capabilities (Hodges et al., 2020). Disrespecting their abilities and laughing at mistakes fosters bullying and experiences of exclusion (Gaffney, 2020; Maher, 2017; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019).

Theme 3: Aspects of Societal Contexts Shaping Shared Occupational Situations

This theme captures the beliefs, attitudes, practices, rules, policies, legislation, and so on that influence shared occupational situations. For example, shared occupational situations are directly influenced by how children and classroom staff interact (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Mortier, Hunt, Leroy et al., 2010), or having children with mixed abilities in the same class (Casserly et al., 2019). These aspects reflect a situation where, from a societal perspective, individual academic achievement is valued over collaboration and where the notion of “winners and losers” is normalised (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017, p. 14).

Valuing diversity versus norms: Normative standards and approaches in teaching can result in subtle forms of exclusion and othering in the classroom, with children with disabilities perceived as different from the majority of children and expected to adjust to their peers' levels of performance (Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Maher, 2017; Majoko, 2016). This can create significant challenges, with children with disabilities experiencing "a lot of pressure", and reporting "it is kind of too hard" (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019, p. 10) to keep up with the speed, quality, or amount of work others produce. Conformity to normative standards discourages children with disabilities from contributing to shared occupational situations when their efforts are diminished (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Hodges et al., 2020; Lindsay & McPherson, 2012; Scorgie, 2015; Tiernan et al., 2020). In addition, "skills-driven, success-oriented" and competitive values in teaching hinder "participation-oriented, co-operative learning" where children can "learn leadership" (Morrison & Gleddie, 2021, p. 452), and develop a supportive peer culture to facilitate inclusive experiences in shared occupational situations (Morrison & Gleddie, 2021; Petrie et al., 2018). In contrast, by fostering collaboration, schools can create environments or situations that require diverse contributions, encouraging students to collaborate and support each other (Casserly et al., 2019; Gaffney 2020), thus promoting inclusive experiences for all learners (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019; Wang & Florian, 2019; Zitomer, 2016).

Hierarchy and power relations: The act of categorising children based on their disabilities creates divisions among learners (Schwab et al., 2019) and reinforces hierarchies, leading to stigmatisation and marginalisation of specific individuals or groups (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Scorgie, 2015). School cultures underpinned by concepts of superiority and inferiority give some children a greater status than others, increasing the risk of patronising behaviours (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Maher, 2017; Scorgie, 2015). This happens subtly, when classroom staff focus on high achievers while singling out children who are less capable. Children with disabilities have reported feeling nervous and upset in situations where peers think they are better than them (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020).

Perceptions of superiority and inferiority also apply to adults. For instance, children perceive hierarchy among classroom staff and attribute classroom teachers more power than special education teachers or class assistants (Maher, 2017; Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). Hodges et al (2020) found that parents, too, were aware of a school culture being a social construct, as parents of typically developing students had negative attitudes towards students with disabilities, including concerns that their children were being negatively influenced or were receiving less support from teachers. They have been found to oppose implementing whole class strategies unless their child directly

benefits, adding pressure to rationalise curriculum adjustments (Hodges et al., 2020). Further, placing conditions on a child's participation reinforces a sense of hierarchy, where certain individuals are considered more deserving or suitable for inclusion. The resultant conditionality of attendance in regular classes makes children with disabilities and their families vulnerable to exclusion (Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018).

In contrast, schools promoting diversity can create inclusive and supportive environments where all are welcomed, respected, and valued (Hodges et al., 2020; Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021), by designing education for learner variability "to hit all children in every way", although that "can be tricky to navigate" (Lowrey et al., 2017, p. 230). Flexible organisation has been found to facilitate awareness of diversity amongst classroom staff (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017), so they work with variability in instructing and teaching to support all children's learning (Lowrey et al., 2017; Petrie et al., 2018). Efthymiou and Kington (2017) and Petrie et al. (2018) have shown that student-centred approaches that address diverse children's learning abilities can facilitate safe and non-discriminatory school environments.

Educational structures and societal discourse: Structurally, education systems often have curricula and instructional materials designed for typically developing children and lack accommodations supporting the educational progress of all children (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018; Casserly et al., 2019; Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Gaffney, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Lowrey et al., 2017; Maher, 2017; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019). Consequently, "access to the curriculum remains out of reach" for many learners (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019, p. 13), creating a mismatch between the requirements of the curriculum and meeting all children's abilities. Additionally, standardised national or provincial exams may not adequately accommodate the diverse abilities of learners (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017; Hodges et al., 2020a; Lowrey et al., 2017; Petrie et al., 2018). They often fail to consider the unique needs and strengths of children with disabilities, resulting in unfair evaluations and further marginalisation. Characteristics such as disability, gender, and ethnicity make segregation and marginalisation more likely (Scorgie, 2015).

Resolving these barriers means challenging preconceived notions and assumptions about disabilities, actively promoting equal opportunities, and recognising and valuing all children's contributions (Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018). This debate is framed as: "full participation does not seem a matter of individual responsibility, but it is linked to the structures and discourses in society" (Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018, p. 974). Such an open discourse in society supports diversity being visible, "incorporate[s] democratic thinking," and emphasises human-centred values "supporting academic, social and personal advancement of students" (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017, p. 18).

Children and adults co-create experiences of inclusion by engaging in shared occupational situations situated in temporal, cultural, sociopolitical, and institutional contexts. Ways of children engaging with each other in shared occupational situations (theme one) and the changeability of situations to facilitate inclusive experiences (theme two) are agents in promoting inclusive experiences. However, as schools are part of society, societal influences on learning and the way these influences shape experiences of inclusion have been described in theme three. The three themes complement each other and are fluid and interdependent.

Discussion

This scoping review investigated inclusive education from an occupational perspective, including the views of children, classroom staff, parents, and others (e.g., principals, therapists). It found that despite the abundance of research worldwide addressing inclusive practice, researchers often overlook the dynamic nature of learning situations (theme 1) and how they might be changed to transform shared occupational situations (theme 2) into more inclusive experiences for diverse learners (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014; J. Hollenweger, 2018; Naraian, 2016). However, drawing on international literature representing diverse viewpoints (Appendix C), disabilities, and ways of doing together at schools, the findings suggest a shift from a dualistic inclusion/exclusion perspective to a more nuanced understanding of inclusive and exclusive experiences. In emphasising that human doing is always shaped by the societal environment over time (theme 3), the findings align with Dewey's (1916/2008) pragmatic philosophy, in which people are understood to engage in shared occupational situations, reciprocally transacting with the environment to shape each other's experiences, the environment, and our world.

Theme one elucidated the notion of shared occupational situations and how they create in- or exclusive experiences through the occupations themselves, how they are organised, who participates, and people's actions. Theme two, the concept of changeability, underscores the capacity to reshape, influence, adapt, and restructure shared occupational situations to enhance inclusive experiences for diverse learners. The third theme captures the impact of beliefs, attitudes, practices, rules, guidelines, policies, and legal frameworks represented in societal factors on shared occupational situations. This can encompass educational practices, schools' approaches to embracing diverse children or adhering to particular norms for admissions, or the integration of rights-based principles (UNCRPD, UNCRC) aimed at building inclusive societies and lived diversity in communities and schools.

Considering shared occupational situations in terms of what activities are chosen, how they are organised, who engages, where and when they happen, and how they can be changed provides opportunities to purposefully design inclusive experiences in

education settings. This shift transitions from mere theory to the realm of tangible opportunities to create inclusive practices that, as Dewey (1916/2008) proposed, embrace diversity and involve children and adults doing things together in order to learn with and from each other. That aligns with current global and educational developments towards inclusion, which require schools to embrace all diversity dimensions, inclusive of disability or special educational needs, giftedness, culture, nationality, migrant status, gender, sexual orientation and so on, of both children and adults, within a single classroom (Cerna et al., 2021; Messiou et al., 2022).

The recommendations of the European Agency for Special Needs Education (n.d.) align with the notion of shared occupational situations by proposing “spaces” providing “opportunities for learners to discover talents in a range of areas beyond academic learning” (p. 13). However, the recommendations lack clarity on the practical doing and interactions within these spaces, as well as how the organisation of educational activities could be tailored to accommodate children’s varying learning capacities (J. Hollenweger, 2018). The findings of this review also align with Loreman et al.’s (2014) assessment framework, derived from international literature, for effective inclusive education. It differentiates inputs, processes, and outcomes. Their classroom and school practices and “experiences of inclusion” closely relate to shared occupational situations and aspects identified as changeable, including teaching methods and approaches, classroom resources, “collaboration and shared responsibility” and “support to individuals” (Loreman et al., 2014, p. 175).

Research worldwide is resourceful in presenting strategies towards inclusive practice for specific diagnoses and groups, progressing to meet multi-dimensions of diversity. However, these strategies often overlook the dynamic nature of learning situations and their changeability in transforming shared occupational situations in facilitating inclusive experiences for diverse learners. By starting with the needs and interests of all learners, more learner-led approaches will evolve (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014; J. Hollenweger, 2018; Naraian, 2016).

Conclusion

Inclusive education is commonly recognised as a process of promoting reform in educational culture, policy, and practice in order to eliminate barriers to education for all children (Bacon, 2019). The complexity of that endeavour prompted F. Felder (2022) to characterise “inclusion as an objective that can never be fully achieved, with the result that it always remains an open-ended, context-bound, and contingent state or process” (p. 155). What is clear from the literature is that inclusive education is co-created in specific situations by children, parents, teachers, and other staff.

This study embraced robust democratic principles derived from Dewey’s educational vision, whereby children’s experience of inclusive education is one of

“learning to live with one another” (Barton, 1997, p. 234; Young, 2000). By incorporating the various perspectives of children, parents, classroom staff, therapists, and school leaders, the study revealed tangible possibilities for co-creating inclusive practice in diverse social and educational contexts. Those possibilities are encompassed within the key concepts generated from analysis of the literature; fostering inclusion by capitalising on the changeability of the shared occupational situations that teachers, parents, children, and others co-create inclusive experiences in regular schools.

Drawing from international literature, this scoping review revealed three key themes that illuminate how inclusive education can be co-created: the dynamic nature of shared occupational situations, the changeability of these situations to facilitate inclusive experiences, and the influence of societal factors, including beliefs, attitudes, practices, policies and legal frameworks. Together, these themes demonstrate that inclusive education unfolds through the ongoing transactions between people, activities and contexts within associated living units, as conceptualised by Aldrich (2018) and Dewey (1916/2008). The concept of shared occupational situations provides a frame to investigate and understand inclusive practice. Shared occupational situations shift attention to opportunities for co-creating inclusive experiences through everyday doing and being together at school. However, as the review’s conclusion emphasised, inclusive education remains “an open-ended, context-bound, and contingent state or process” (F. Felder, 2022, p. 155), necessitating examination of how these international insights manifest within specific local contexts.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

The understandings gained from the scoping review directly informed the design of Phase 2 of the study. The findings of shared occupational situations as central to inclusive education, emphasis on changeability, and recognition of multiple stakeholder perspectives shaped the formulated research question, methodological approach, and data collection strategies employed in the Swiss case studies. Additional recent literature published since this review was conducted is presented in the discussion chapter (Chapter 6), where it informs consideration of the study findings incorporating evolving international scholarship on inclusive education and occupational science.

Phase 2 of the current study investigated how inclusive education is created in two Swiss primary school classes. Switzerland presents a particularly relevant context for several reasons. First, as established in Chapter 1, Swiss inclusive education is relatively recent, with ongoing tensions between inclusion and segregation evidenced by increasing segregation rates despite policy commitments. Second, Switzerland’s federalist structure, with cantonal autonomy in education, exemplifies the situated and contextualised nature of inclusive practice. Third, calls from UN monitoring bodies (UNCRPD, 2022; UN District General, 2019) and Swiss advocacy organisations (Hess-

Klein & Scheibler, 2022; Inclusion Handicap, 2017) have emphasised the need for research that includes children's voices alongside multiple stakeholder perspectives, aligning directly with the multi-perspective approach employed in both phases of the study.

Phase 2 employed Stake's CS methodology to examine two mainstream classes in detail. By examining each class from an occupational perspective and from multiple participant perspectives, Phase 2 sought to understand what supports and hinders inclusion, and how the dynamic, changeable nature of shared occupational situations can be leveraged to co-create more inclusive experiences for all children. Chapter 3 details the methodological justification and describes the research methods.

Chapter 3. Case Study Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology employed to investigate how inclusive education is created in Swiss mainstream schools. Building on the scoping review findings presented in Chapter 2, this study adopted a CS approach to examine two Swiss primary school classes where inclusive education was practised. The research question guiding this study was: How is inclusive education created in Swiss primary school classes for children aged between 8 and 12 years?

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations underpinning the research design, describes the specific CS approach employed, and details the data collection and analysis procedures. Ethical considerations and measures taken are addressed throughout and summarised in the section ‘ethical considerations’ (p. 52).

Philosophical Foundations and Methodology Selection

Theoretical Framework

The methodology selection was guided by John Dewey’s philosophical understanding that schools are transactional places embedded in society (Dewey, 1938/2015; Fritz & Cutchin, 2017). In these transactional environments, meaningful change emerges through the dynamic interactions of diverse individuals and their contexts, supporting transformative actions such as building inclusive experiences within schools. In this way, Dewey believed that experience is shaped through occupation and creating contexts where learning is integrated into students’ lived experiences (Boisvert, 1998; Dewey, 1938/2015). Through inclusive practice, children learn how to do things together with diverse peers, navigating different needs and resources (Boisvert, 1998).

The scoping review findings supported the understanding that situations and context can become more inclusive by purposefully choosing occupations that support inclusion and considering the way children are grouped, how support is rendered, and how classroom staff and peers respond in situations to facilitate inclusion. Consequently, the chosen methodology needed to align with these understandings, capturing the particularities of how schools can create an environment that is responsive to diverse children and adults as they engage in occupation together in shared real-world situations.

Methodological Rationale

CS methodology is particularly suited for research examining complex, contextualised real-world situations where human actions, behaviour, and social interactions are central to understanding (Harrison et al., 2017) —as is the case of a class in an inclusive school setting. Leading proponents describe CS as having a “holistic and real-world

perspective” (Yin, 2018, p. 5). By examining the particularity and complexity of cases and coming to understand their activities within important circumstances shaped by diverse contextual aspects, case studies are useful for studying “how things work” (Stake, 2010, p. 11).

This methodology aligns with the study focus on understanding how multiple stakeholders, including children, classroom staff, parents, therapists, and principals, create inclusive education through their interactions within complex policy, cultural, and practice environments (Dewey, 1938/2015). Corresponding with Dewey’s transactional philosophy, CS methodology recognises that individuals and environments are not discrete entities but exist in continuous interaction with one another (Dewey & Bentley, 1946). CS can, therefore, provide an in-depth understanding of how these interconnected elements transact by investigating how children and classroom staff act together to create inclusive experiences.

The value of CS methodology extends beyond describing current practice; it offers potential for theory development in inclusive education. Nilholm (2021) argued that while various theories of inclusion exist, “there seems to be a lack of theories that have empirically been shown to be successful tools in the development of more inclusive school systems, schools and classrooms” (p. 358). He contended that CS methodology is particularly well-suited for developing such theories because it requires researchers to integrate multiple levels of analysis, account for contextual complexity, and empirically explore whether theoretical propositions hold in practice. The current study sought to contribute to this theory-building agenda by examining how inclusive education is created and experienced in two Swiss primary school classrooms, generating empirically grounded insights about the processes and conditions through which inclusion is achieved.

Over the past decades, CS approaches have evolved from naturalistic inquiry to methods focused on understanding complex social situations influenced by political and institutional contexts. Scholars in social, educational, and health sciences, such as Stake, Yin, Merriam, MacDonald, and Walker, have since further developed rigorous CS methodologies with different emphases depending on the field of investigation (Forrest-Lawrence, 2019; Simons, 2009).

Stake’s Case Study Approach

Epistemological Foundations

This study adopted education scientist Robert E. Stake’s approach to CS due to its alignment with the philosophical underpinnings of the study and its correspondence to the research question and study context. The specifics of Stake’s approach and its

epistemology in relation to this study of inclusive education in the Swiss context are explained and justified in more detail in the following sections.

Contemporary qualitative research proposes that new knowledge can 'be constructed' rather than 'discovered' (Yazan & De Vasconcelos, 2016). While Stake's (1995) approach to case studies has been categorised in diverse ways by different authors, the notion of constructing knowledge is central. For example, Harris et al. (2009) described Stake as a constructivist/interpretivist, whereas Yazan and De Vasconcelos (2016) situated Stake in constructivism and existentialism. Both perspectives recognise Stake's constructivist stance which is based on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is subjective and 'co-constructed' between the researcher and participants. This stance aligns with Dewey's pragmatist tenets, particularly the idea that knowledge is co-constructed through individuals acting within and participating in shared situations (Hickman et al., 2009).

Emphasising understanding rather than explaining, Stake (2006) also claimed that people with specific experiences "understand some things better than people with formal research training" (p. 57). However, to find out how things work, it is the researcher's task to scientifically construct a deeper understanding of the particular situation from the multiple realities involved (Stake, 2006). For the present study, to develop an understanding of inclusive situations, two Swiss primary school classes (detailed in Chapters 4 and 5), and the actions and experiences of the various people involved, needed to be captured in relation to the environments with which they were connected, complemented by contextualised observations.

The Relationship Between Particular and General Knowledge

A distinctive feature of Stake's approach is his epistemological position on the relationship between particular and general knowledge. Stake (2010) differentiated between individual experiences (the particular) and collective knowledge (the situation), bringing these parts together in his methodology. He acknowledged that both have legitimacy but maintained that "both realities exist, but with some degree of separation" (Stake, 2010, p. 18). Stake further asserted that the primary aim of CS methodology is to build understanding of the particular, rather than generate generalisations, noting that "we can come to understand the particular and thus comprehend a little more the general, but not much" (p. 18). This epistemological stance differentiates Stake's approach from research designs primarily concerned with producing generalisable findings. In Stake's CS (1995) research, the value lies in developing a rich, contextualised understanding of specific cases in their uniqueness.

For this study, the primary goal was to understand how inclusive education is created within two specific Swiss primary school classrooms, each shaped by its particular contextual features of people, occupations, approaches to practices,

collaborations, and relationships, physical environments, policies, and histories. It was envisioned that insights into these particularities could be gained through multiple sources: asking children, classroom staff, parents, therapists, and school leaders about their experiences; observing actions and interactions in classrooms and other school spaces; and examining the contextual factors that shape these experiences (e.g., school organisation, leadership approaches, class composition, staffing arrangements, and physical environments).

Readers, whether practitioners, policymakers, or researchers, may recognise resonances with their own contexts and draw what Stake (1995) termed 'naturalistic generalisations', making connections between the cases studied and their own situations. However, such connections are made by readers based on their experiential knowledge rather than through formal statistical or analytical generalisation by the researcher. By developing rich understanding of how inclusive education operates within specific contexts, this study may contribute to wider conversations about inclusive education practice. However, following Stake's epistemological position, claims remain modest; the study illuminates how inclusive education works in these particular classrooms, offering insights that may inform practice in other settings.

Cultural Sensitivity and Applicability

Stake (1995, 2006) specifically applied his methodology in educational settings, exploring complex situations occurring in classes within specific schools. In recent years, occupational science scholars have advocated for culturally sensitive research methodologies (Akrofi et al., 2025; Hocking, 2012; Wijekoon et al., 2023) that embrace multicultural, inclusive, class-, gender-, and disability-aware world views. When studying the 'real-world', it is the nature of case studies to include diverse participants. Specifically, Stake (2006) applied his CS methodology, originally developed in the United States, in countries with diverse and contrasting political and educational systems, such as Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine. In these contexts, he examined topics ranging from inclusive education programmes (Ukraine) to teacher development (Slovakia), providing concrete examples that demonstrate that his methodology is well-suited to different cultural settings, including Switzerland.

Philosophical Alignment

Stake's philosophical orientation, and his emphasis and experience applying case studies in the real-world education setting (Forrest-Lawrence, 2019; Stake, 2006), correlate with Dewey's (1958) theories of experience as related to scientific inquiry. Dewey argued that only empirical inquiry methods do justice to the complex nature of experience in its integrated unity. Both Stake and Dewey share an understanding that

knowledge is contextual, situational, and constructed through engagement with real-world events rather than detached observation or acontextual experimentation.

Stake's (2006) CS methodology shares Dewey's understanding of the interconnectedness of human doings and how, when, and where they are done. To understand complex, inclusive school settings, scientific inquiry based on Dewey's theories and Stake's CS method requires the researcher to capture the voices and experiences of all those engaged in education within a specific context. Both scholars acknowledge that the experience of the study participants, along with the experience and view of the researchers, are involved (Dewey, 1956; Stake, 2006) when co-constructing understanding.

Central to this philosophical alignment is the recognition of interconnectedness, what Dewey termed 'transaction'. Dewey and Bentley (1949) conceptualised transaction as the reciprocal relationship between organisms and their environments, arguing that neither can be understood in isolation. Stake's (2006) CS methodology embodies this transactional understanding, examining how human actions are inseparable from the contexts in which they occur. Understanding complex educational settings requires attention to the dynamic relationships between people and their environments—the what, how, when, where, and with whom of situated actions.

Both Dewey and Stake also acknowledged the role of the researcher's experience and perspective in constructing knowledge. For Dewey (1956), inquiry is not a detached process but one in which the inquirer participates, bringing their own experiences to bear on understanding. Similarly, Stake (2006) recognised that researchers co-construct understanding with participants rather than simply extracting objective data. Knowledge is constructed through the transaction between researcher and case.

A third layer of knowledge construction emerges when readers bring their own perspectives, informed by their experiences and prior knowledge, to the research findings. Stake (1995) acknowledged that both researchers and readers often adjust their previous generalisations as a result of encountering a new case. He described this process as an "interactive communication, first between a single researcher and the case, and later with the reader" (Stake, 1995, p. 136). Such understandings are congruent with Dewey's understandings about transaction, which involves exchanges amongst those involved in a given situation (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Fritz & Cutchin, 2017).

The philosophical alignment between Deweyan pragmatism and Stake's CS methodology provides a coherent foundation for investigating how inclusive education is created. Both approaches emphasise understanding phenomena as they unfold in real-world contexts, acknowledge the situational and provisional nature of knowledge, and

recognise that understanding emerges through transaction, between participants and researchers, cases and readers, and individuals and their environments (Dewey, 1938/2015; Stake, 2006).

Research Method

First, I will explain the use of a conceptual structure within this CS, which involved building the study's foundation by drawing on theoretical understandings about the topic, research question, and my experience. Second, justification and practical application of the methods used in the study will be detailed, explaining case selection, sampling techniques, participant recruitment, and data sources. Additionally, I discuss informed consent, data collection methods, and the approach to data analysis. Finally, strategies employed to ensure rigour are examined, along with relevant ethical considerations.

Conceptual Structure

A CS's conceptual structure clarifies the researcher's theoretical and practical perspectives in relation to the research questions. It serves to organise ideas, bridge existing knowledge with new insights emerging from the case, and provides a structured approach for data collection (Leadley et al., 2023; Stake, 1995). By setting boundaries, the conceptual structure specifies the scope of the case and helps ensure the research project stays manageable.

Four components are employed to establish the conceptual structure and provide a research focus for the study. First, defining the main concepts within the research question. The concepts within the research questions were defined in Chapter 1 (definition of Terms, pp. 13-14). Second, deriving issue statements (pp. 48-49) that relate to the question from existing and reviewed literature or experience (Stake, 1995, 2006). Stake (1995) described issues as multifaceted, reflecting the tensions, challenges, and diverse perspectives within a given case.

The third component involves clearly defining the case and establishing its boundaries. Setting boundaries helps differentiate between factors relevant to the case and those that fall outside its scope. These boundaries might include educational settings, age of children, geographical, political social structures and institutional settings in a specific country (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

The fourth component consists of developing topical questions that help guide the inquiry by framing what aspects of the case will be explored and identifying specific data sources suited to answering the research question. Topical questions focus on describing the case and provide insight into its key characteristics, context, and underlying issues. They differ from the overarching research question as they are more descriptive and exploratory, supporting relevant data gathering. These questions, along with the issue statements, guide the selection of data gathering methods, which need to

be consistent with the participants' abilities and knowledge (Jones & Hocking, 2015; Stake, 1995) and meet ethical guidelines. The details of the four components of the conceptual structure used for the study are described in the next sections.

Definitions of Terms

The key terms within the research question "How is inclusive education created in Swiss primary school classes for children aged between 8 and 12 years?", were defined in Chapter 1 (see pp. 13-14). These definitions, particularly the conceptualisations of 'inclusive education', 'child', 'mainstream school', and 'to create', provided the foundation for developing the conceptual structure for the study.

Issue Statements

Stake (2010) defined an issue as a "problematic theme, having tension and advocacy" (p. 219). Issue statements define the central problem, challenge, or phenomenon being investigated (Stake, 2010). They provide a focused explanation of the study's key concerns, guiding the research process and ensuring relevance to the broader field of study. For this study, issue statements were derived from the research question, literature about the context, the scoping review, and information drawing from the researcher's experience and knowledge of the context. The issue statements are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4.

Issue Statements Derived from the Research Question and Literature Review

No.	Issue Statement	Source
1	Children's, teachers', parents', principals' and others' experience of diversity facilitates their ability creating and enacting inclusive education.	Booth & Ainscow, 2016
2	Teachers who have a depth of understanding or knowledge and perceptions about children's range of abilities are equipped to create inclusive education by adapting their teaching.	Asbjørnslett et al., 2015
3	Children have a more significant inclusion experience when contributing to solutions to support their learning and doings with others.	Asbjørnslett & Hemmingsson, 2008
4	Teachers who provide a range of learning and play occupations that are meaningful and flexible for use with diverse children help to create inclusive education.	Hollenweger, 2018
5	Children, teaching staff, and other people at school use skills to enable participation, thereby facilitating inclusive education.	Jones et al., 2017
6	Inclusive education is facilitated when families play an active role in the school community.	Booth & Ainscow, 2016
7	Schools that work collaboratively and effectively with a range of support staff from different organisations and disciplines are better equipped to create inclusive schools.	Ebersold et al., 2019
8	School leaders who hold a clear commitment to including all children contribute to creating inclusive schools.	Attwell, 2007

No.	Issue Statement	Source
9	Solution-focused attitudes, rather than problem-focused attitudes in staff and parents, build a sense of inclusion.	Echsel et al., 2019
10	The curriculum used by the school may be adapted to the learning needs of all children to support their experience of inclusion.	Tiernan et al., 2020
11	Schools that have policies and processes in place that demonstrate inclusive attitudes and values contribute to inclusive practice.	Kinsella, 2020
12	Written and verbal communication may demonstrate the school's inclusive values and attitudes.	Bourke-Taylor et al., 2018

Bounding the Case

Bounding the case involved defining clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to subsequently inform case selection (Leadley et al., 2023; Stake, 2006). Mainstream schools were included if they actively collaborated with support staff, such as therapists, class assistants, and other professionals, to implement inclusive education and had a class of children aged 8-12 years with at least one child with a diagnosed disability. Schools outside mainstream education, including private and specialised schools, were excluded.

Following Dewey's (1916/2008) concept of classes as associated living highlights how collaborative actions and social interactions serve as agents of social change, particularly in fostering inclusion of all children. This idea informed the decision to bound the case to a classroom setting. However, an inclusive approach to the research was adopted, viewing schools as associated living within a community, where interactions amongst children, parents, classroom staff, school leaders, and therapists were contextualised within a broader school environment shaped by contextual aspects. Consequently, the case boundaries for a class included all stakeholders associated with that class, as well as the historical, cultural, political, social, economic, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions that influence the case (Stake, 2006).

Topical Questions Related to Issue Statements

Table 5 presents the topical questions used in the study. The questions encompass the various aspects of the issue statements requiring exploration and indicate the corresponding data sources. They helped to structure the project by aligning key topics with relevant data sources and data collection methods. By mapping the issue statements to specific sources, Table 5 provides a clear framework for data collection, ensuring a comprehensive and logical exploration of the case. The identified sources included children, classroom staff, parents, principals, and other stakeholders involved in the school environment, as well as observations, documents, and other relevant materials.

Table 5.

Topics Derived from Issue Statements and Identified Sources for Data Gathering

Topical Questions	Issue Number	Data Sources and Data Collection Methods									
		Children: Classroom and playground observations, focus group interview	Classroom staff: Interviews, classroom observations	Parents: Interviews	Principal: Interviews	School assistants: Interview	Therapists: Interviews	Classroom and playground observations	Documents and webpages	Group approach to data gathering	Photographs
What is the experience of diversity?	1/3/10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
How is inclusive education enacted?	1/2/4/5/6/7/8/9/11/12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
What is teachers' knowledge and perception about children's range of abilities?	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
How is teaching adapted?	2	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	✓				
What is children's experience of inclusion	3	✓	✓	✓						✓	
In what ways do children contribute to solutions?	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
How are situations of doings and learning with others created?	3	✓	✓					✓		✓	
In what ways do families actively contribute to the school community?	4		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
How can a range of learning and play occupations be designed for flexible use?*	5/2	✓	✓	(✓)		(✓)		✓			✓
What occupations at school facilitate or hinder inclusive experiences?	5/2	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)		✓		✓	
How do children's and adults' participation enabling skills contribute to inclusive practice?	2/3/6/9		✓	✓	✓			✓			
In what ways do collaborations with support staff from different organisations contribute to inclusive practice?	7		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
How is the commitment to including all children enacted?	8		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

Topical Questions	Issue Number	Data Sources and Data Collection Methods								
In what way can the curriculum be used flexibly to meet all children's capacities?	10	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
In what ways do educational concepts contribute to enacting inclusive practice?	11				✓	✓	✓			
In what ways do school processes contribute to enacting inclusive practice?	11	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓
How does verbal communication reflect inclusive practice?	12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
How does written communication reflect inclusive practice?	12			✓						✓

*Note: "Designed for flexible use" refers to how learning and play activities are structured to accommodate diverse learners with varying abilities, needs, learning styles, and participation preferences, allowing children to engage in the same occupation in different way.

Specific Research Methods

This section discusses the ethical dimensions that needed to be addressed, then explains and further justifies the specific methods employed in the study. It details the processes of case selection, gaining access, participant recruitment, obtaining informed consent, and data collection methods.

Ethical Considerations

Entering complex systems, such as a school in Switzerland, requires specific ethical considerations ensuring participants' safety, well-being, and rights. In recent years, the child rights approach has transformed ethical practices in research involving children, recognising children as social actors with agency and rights (Alderson, 2018; Lundy, 2017). Children are positioned as citizens whose perspectives and experiences merit investigation in their own right, not merely as adjuncts to adult concerns. As Chamberlain and Hodgetts (2018) argued, children are "active in the construction and determination of their own lives, of the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live" (p. 5). However, research methods need to be adapted to children's developmental and expression level, especially when children with disabilities are involved. Under these premises, the following sections outline case selection and access, sampling strategies, recruitment, and data gathering and analysis. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring the safety of all throughout the process, are outlined at each step.

Prior to commencing fieldwork, ethics approval was obtained from Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC, Approval No. 22/21; see Appendix D). In Switzerland, the Cantonal Ethics Committee Zürich (Appendix E) confirmed that the research project did not fall within the scope of the Human Research Act; therefore, ethical approval was not required from a Swiss ethics committee. Nonetheless, the study adhered to Swiss data protection regulations and institutional protocols for all participating schools.

Case Selection

Case selection was guided by the case boundaries and case inclusion/exclusion criteria. For case studies, Stake (1995) also identified “maximising what we can learn” as a key criterion for case selection (p. 4). Given the specific research question, the Swiss school system, Dewey’s philosophical understanding, and the results from the scoping review, I planned to examine two classes in municipalities from two different cantons in Switzerland. The decision to select two different cantons was based on the fact that Switzerland has a cantonal, rather than national, approach to education. The distinct political and educational frameworks, school development strategies, and special needs education policies in each canton shaped the two cases, thereby maximising the learning. Considering language competencies and school system familiarity, when selecting cases, I studied one class from each of two different schools in the German-speaking part of Switzerland as the study locations. The Oak School and Village School cases met these criteria and were selected for in-depth study. All information related to locations, schools, individuals, policies, and the special education framework has been anonymised to protect confidentiality.

For the class studied within each school, I invited all children in the class (with and without disabilities), the class teachers, special education teachers, class assistants, therapists, the principal working with the children, and the parents of the children to participate. The inclusion criteria for a class and participants associated with a school class were:

- a) The school was located in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, providing linguistic consistency for the researcher and cultural-educational coherence across cases. Switzerland’s cantonal education systems vary across linguistic regions and cantons.
- b) Children attending the class were aged between 8 and 12 years. The age range was chosen because children in middle childhood have typically developed the reflective and communicative capacities to share their experiences as research participants (Alderson & Morrow, 2012), and have sustained experience within their classroom context to provide meaningful insights.

- c) The class included at least one child with a disability or learning difficulty. Inclusive education encompasses all children's participation and learning (Booth & Ainscow, 2016); however, the presence of children with identified disabilities provides a critical lens for examining how classrooms accommodate diversity and adapt practices to support varied requirements (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).
- d) The school was advanced in enacting inclusive education. Schools were identified as 'advanced' through multiple indicators: recognition for welcoming all children with and without disabilities; established collaborative structures involving special education teachers, therapists, and support staff; and sustained inclusive practice over several years.
- e) the principal and classroom teacher expressed willingness to participate in the study. The decision to include multiple stakeholder groups, children (with and without disabilities), class teachers, special education teachers, assistants, therapists, parents, and principals, was based on the issue statements developed for the study (see pp. 48-49). It further reflects the understanding that inclusive education is created through the participation of diverse actors (Dewey, 1938/2015). Each stakeholder group contributes distinct perspectives and experiences and capturing these multiple perspectives enabled holistic understanding of how inclusive practice happens through the interconnected actions and experiences of all those involved in creating the classroom environment (Stake, 2006).

Case Selection Process

Locating the Cases and Gaining Access

The process for case selection necessitated systematically identifying, contacting, and gaining approval to involve two schools and classes. In Switzerland, Cantonal SNE Agencies oversee schools and classes that include children with special educational needs who qualify for intensified support measures. Children diagnosed with a disability requiring additional support from a SNE teacher or other staff, such as class assistants, qualify for extra support hours (see Chapter 4 and 5 for case descriptions). It was reasoned that SNE agencies would have good knowledge of schools with inclusive practices. Therefore, I sought to involve schools via SNE agencies, which nominated schools with classes that met the case inclusion criteria. This case selection processes were approved by AUTEK. However, at the time, a severe shortage of teaching staff and SNE teachers placed additional stress on many schools. Fifteen SNE agencies were contacted; some did not respond, while others explored the possibility of supporting the study but ultimately declined due to time and resource constraints. The Village School case eventually became involved according to the initial approval process.

Due to the challenges with locating and involving ‘cases’, the process was amended, with AUTC approval (Appendix F), to incorporate additional strategies for involving schools through my professional network. To avoid coercion, professionals offering support in this way were not asked to volunteer as study participants.

The Oak School case was accessed via my personal network using the amended process. A teacher friend pointed me towards a class that included a boy with autism. From there, the original path of accessing a case was resumed, which started with the principal’s agreement to participate. The original research application foresaw children aged between 9 to 12 years. The second grade Oak School case children were slightly younger, which required a second ethics amendment to include children aged 8 years (approved by AUTC, Appendix G). Figure 4 outlines the processes for the access and participation agreement to involve each of the two schools and classes from the point of contact with the principal.

Gaining Access and Gaining Informed Consent

This section describes the systematic process for gaining access to research sites and obtaining informed consent from multiple stakeholder groups. As seen in Figure 4, the access and consent process followed a carefully sequenced approach designed to respect institutional hierarchies while avoiding coercion of participants.

Stage 1: Initial Gatekeeping and Key Stakeholder Agreement: Access to each school began with the principal, who was provided with study information and invited to participate. Once the principal agreed, they informed the classroom teaching staff and parents of children with disabilities via email or phone call, inviting them to receive written study information. These key stakeholders, the principal (Appendix H), classroom staff (Appendix I), and parents of children with disabilities (Appendix J), reviewed the study information and indicated their willingness to participate before the process proceeded further.

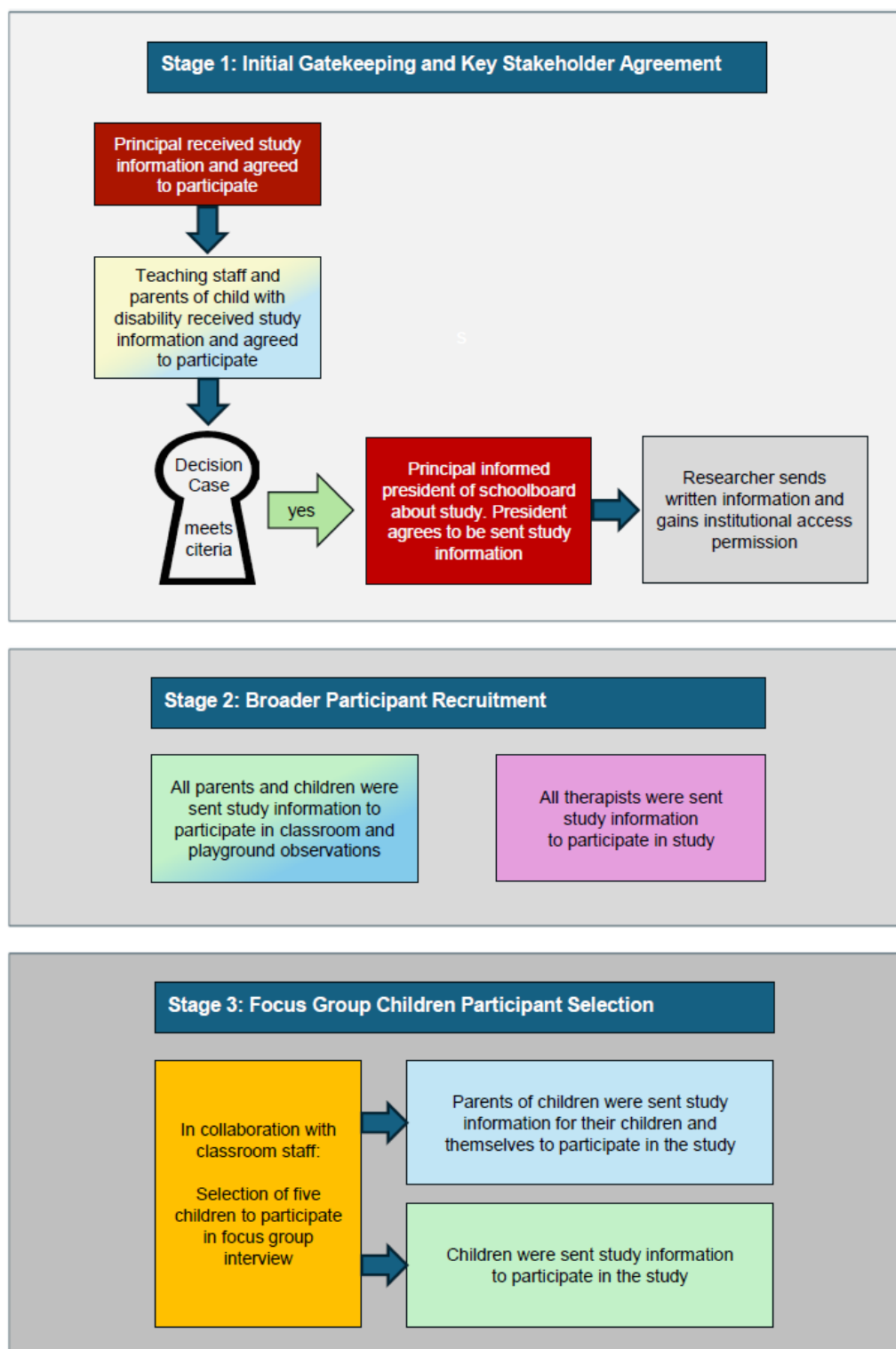
After the three groups agreed to participate, the principal informed the president of the school board (Schulpflegepraesident/in) of their agreement. The researcher then sent written information (Appendix K) to the head of the school board requesting permission to access school buildings and grounds. This institutional access permission, distinct from individual informed consent, authorised the researcher to conduct research activities on school premises.

Stage 2: Broader Participant Recruitment: Following institutional access approval, recruitment expanded to include all families and additional staff. To avoid coercion, all study materials were distributed by the school administration office. A study flyer (Appendix L) and participant information sheets (PIS; Appendix M) were sent to all parents in each class, inviting their children to participate in classroom and playground observations. Children also received age-appropriate flyers (Appendix N) and

information sheets explaining the study (Appendix O). Therapists working with children in the class were sent PIS (Appendix P) inviting their participation in interviews. School assistants (Appendix Q) and the special education teacher (Appendix I) were also provided with study information and invited to participate.

Figure 4.

Flowchart: Access to the School and Class; Participant Recruitment Process



Stage 3: Focus Group Child Participant Selection: Five children from each class were invited to participate in focus group discussions. These children were identified through consultation between the researcher and classroom staff, based on two criteria: (a) ability to communicate their experiences verbally, and (b) willingness to participate in group discussion. Staff were asked to suggest children who demonstrated leading roles in class activities and the ability to express their perspectives. The selection aimed to include diverse perspectives within groups while maintaining sizes to allow meaningful discussion, sparking children's thoughts (5 children per group). Once potential focus group participants were identified, children (Appendix Q flyer and Appendix R PIS) and their parents received a study flyer (Appendix S) and PIS (Appendix T) explaining the focus group including the research purpose, what participation would involve, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Parents of the five children were also invited to participate in individual interviews using a combined flyer (Appendix S) and a separate information sheet (Appendix U).

In Case 2 (Village School), classroom staff advised that the child with a disability might find group discussion challenging due to communication needs and unfamiliarity with the researcher. Following consultation with staff and the child's parent, the decision was made not to invite this child to participate in the focus group, respecting the principle that participation should not cause distress. Instead, this child's perspective was captured through classroom observations and an interview with her mother. Her mother was invited to participate in an individual interview, resulting in six parent interviews in Case 2 rather than five. This decision raised important ethical questions about inclusion and voice in research, discussed further in the section 'involving all children in research'.

Informed Consent and Assent Procedures: Following distribution of information materials and expressions of interest from participants, formal written informed consent was obtained from all participant groups before data collection commenced. Different consent procedures were implemented for different participant groups and data collection methods.

Consent for Observations: All parents received information about classroom and playground observations and were asked to provide written consent for their child to participate (Appendix V, consent form for parents). Parents who did not consent were assured their child would remain part of the natural classroom group during observations but would not be a focal point of observation or identified in fieldnotes. Children whose parents provided consent were informed about observations through age-appropriate explanations (flyer and PIS) and given opportunities to ask questions. These children provided written assent for observations (Appendix W), and I remained attentive to any signs of discomfort or withdrawal of assent during observation periods.

Consent for Individual Interviews: Adult participants invited for individual interviews, including parents (Appendix X), classroom staff (Appendix Y), therapists (Appendix Z), and principals (Appendix AA), provided written informed consent prior to data collection. Consent forms specific to each role outlined what participation would involve, time commitments, confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw. In both cases, classroom teaching teams (two co-teachers in each class) consented to paired interviews. Special education teachers, therapists, assistants, and principals consented to individual interviews using participant-appropriate consent forms (Appendices X-AA).

Consent and Assent for Focus Groups: A two-stage consent and assent process was implemented for child focus group participants. First, parents of the five selected children provided written informed consent for their child's participation (Appendix AB). Second, children themselves received child-friendly information materials and were invited to provide written assent (Appendix AC). All children invited to participate in focus groups provided assent, with emphasis placed on their ongoing right to withdraw even if parents had consented.

Several ethical safeguards were integrated throughout the consent process. Avoiding coercion: All study materials were distributed by the school administration rather than teachers or the researcher to minimise perceived pressure to participate. Time to consider: Participants were given up to 6 weeks between receiving information and being asked for consent. Voluntary participation: All materials emphasised the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Adapted materials for children: PIS and assent forms for children used age-appropriate language and visual elements to ensure understanding. Attention to vulnerability: Care was taken when considering children with disabilities or communication differences, with decisions made in consultation with families and staff to avoid distress. Ongoing consent: Participants were informed that consent was ongoing, and I remained alert to verbal and non-verbal cues suggesting discomfort or withdrawal throughout data collection. This systematic approach to access and informed consent ensured attention to ethical considerations, while respecting institutional structures and individual autonomy (Alderson & Morrow, 2020; Zwozdiak-Myers, 2025).

Data Collection

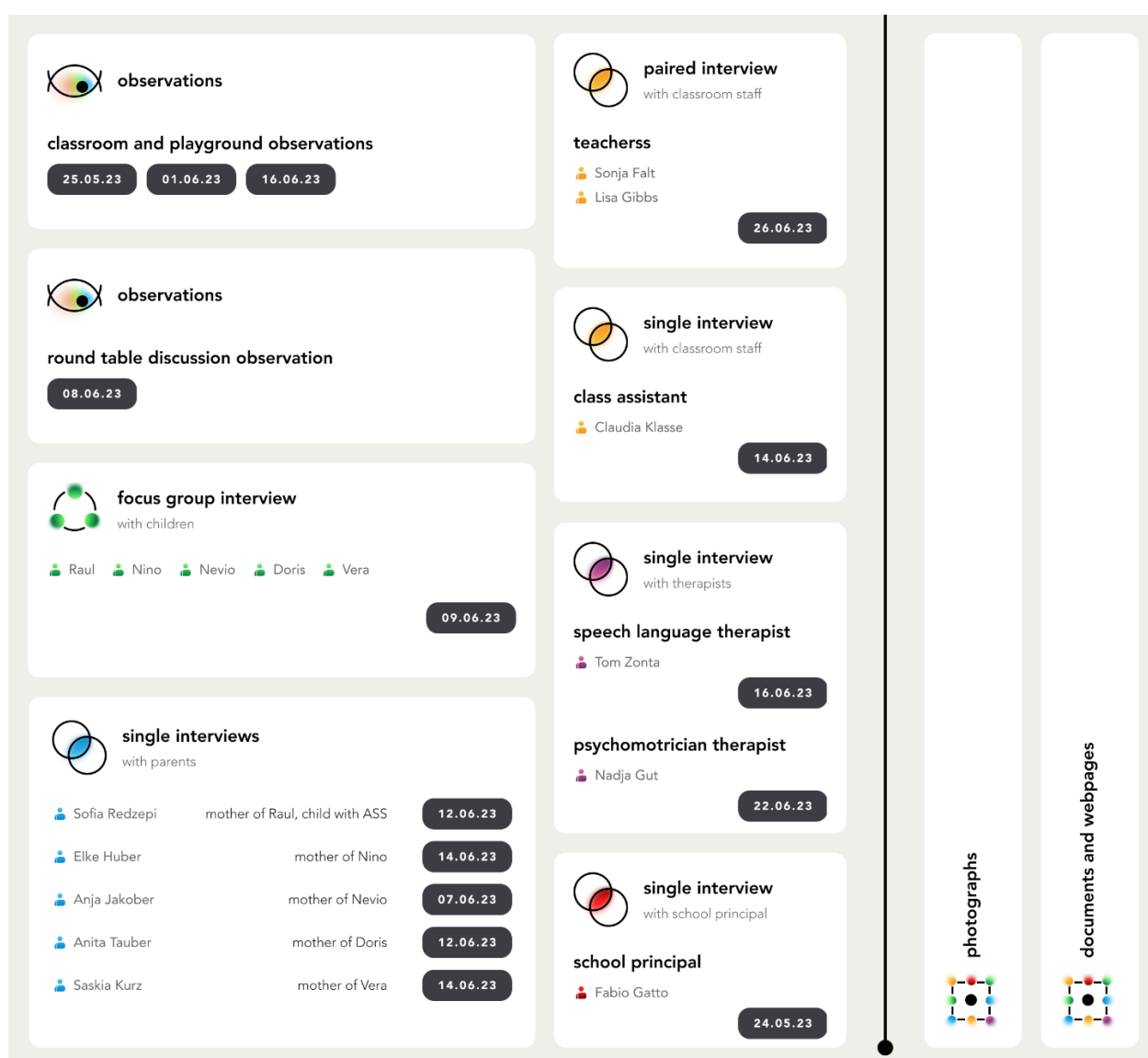
Since case studies aim to understand both the particular and the whole, investigating how things work within a given context, they typically rely on multiple data sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis (Stake, 1995, 2006). As outlined in Chapter "Conceptual Structure", the data collection process was structured based on the research question, definition of key concepts such as inclusive education, the issue statements (Table 3, pp. 48-49), and, as shown in Table 5 (pp. 50-51) the topical

questions derived from the issue statements, along with the identified sources for data gathering. For both cases, data sources included photographs, classroom and playground observations, single and paired interviews, and a focus group interview with five children. To protect participant confidentiality, all names of people, schools, and locations have been anonymised throughout the thesis.

Additional data sources included cantonal and municipal webpages and school websites, which provided access to cantonal education policy papers, SNE frameworks, and each school's guiding principles, curriculum guidelines, and teaching concepts. The data collection process for each case is outlined in Figure 5 (Oak School) and Figure 6 (Village School).

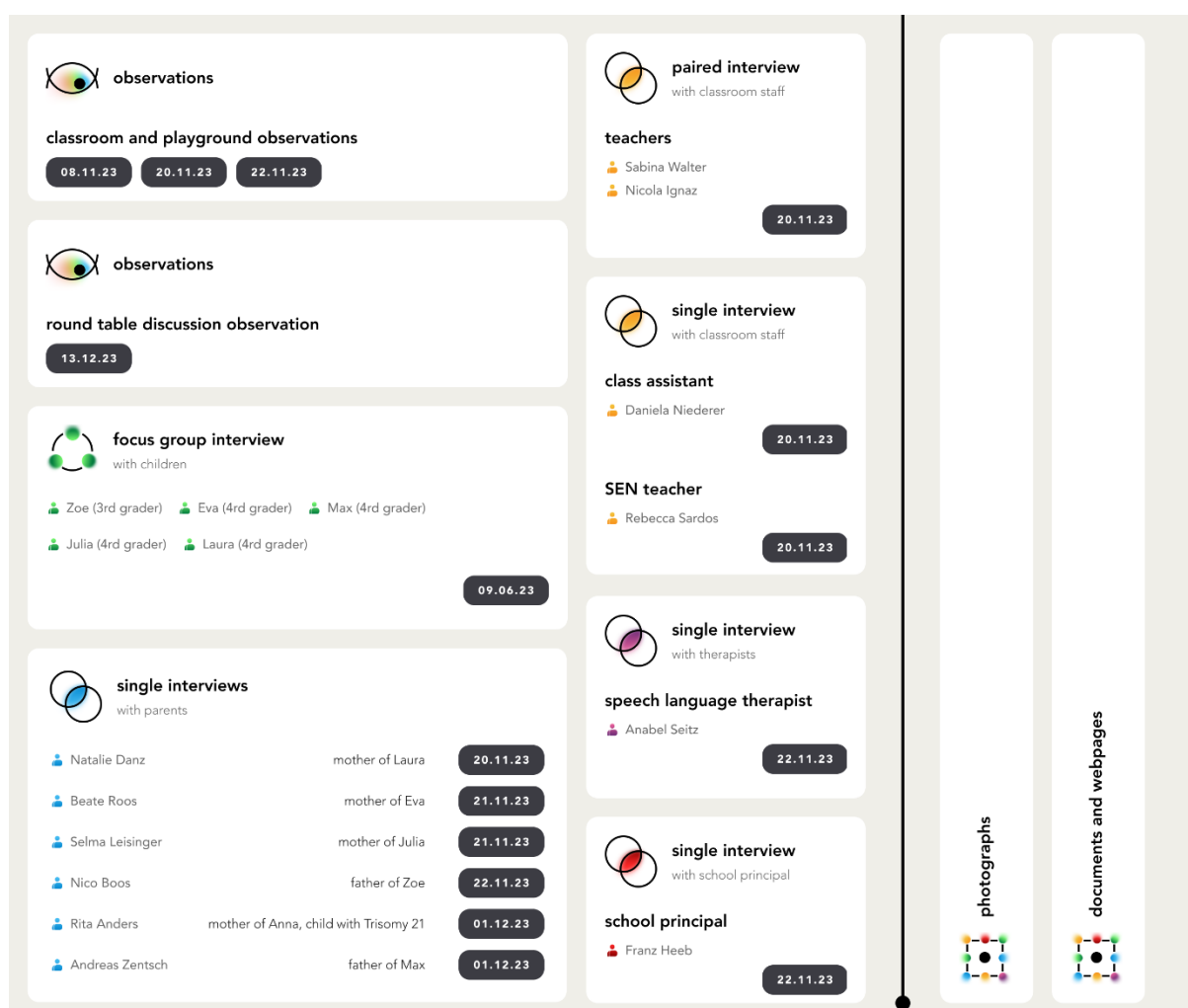
Figure 5.

Data Collection Process for the Oak School Case



Note: Classroom and playground observations conducted on the same day are shown as single dates in this figure. Participant names are pseudonyms.

Figure 6.
Data Collection Process for the Village School



Note: Classroom and playground observations conducted on the same day are shown as single dates in this figure. Participant names are pseudonyms.

The following sections provide a brief description of each data collection method as applied in each case. While the overall process remained the same, differences in school contexts and characteristics of participating children and adults led to variations. Both cases started with observations prior to interviews, providing an understanding of the specific contexts, including how, where, when, with what and for how long, in which shared occupational situations facilitated inclusion. Observed situations informed interviews to facilitate data generation and deepen the understanding of the participants' experiences of specific situations. The extensive data gathering process reflects the study's commitment to a comprehensive understanding of each case, with approximately 35 hours of direct data collection across both sites, see Table 6 for an overview.

Table 6.*Time Spent in Data Gathering*

Data Collection Activity	Oak School (approx.)	Village School (approx.)
Classroom/playground observations	320 min	420 min
Round Table Discussion observation	75 min	90 min
Teacher interviews	120 min (paired)	75 min (paired), 60 min (SNE)
Class assistant interview	45 min	60 min
Parent interviews	225 min (5 interviews)	260 min (6 interviews)
Therapist interviews	120 min (2 interviews)	75 min (SLT)
Principal interview	75 min	75 min
Total per case	~ 980 min (16.3 hrs)	~1,115 min (18.6 hrs)

Note. All times are approximate. Combined data collection time across both cases was approximately 2,095 minutes (nearly 35 hours).

The next section describes each data collection method and its application in both cases.

Observations

Observations allow researchers to directly witness “who, what, where, when and why... and particularly relating them to the story or the assertions forthcoming—that is to the research question” (Stake, 2010, p. 90). Furthermore, observations provide rich contextual insights on the “how”, contributing to understanding how things work in a specific context that may not be captured through other methods (Stake, 2010). An observation guide (Appendices AD, AE, AF) was developed to ensure the observations answered the research question and, specifically, the topical questions derived from the issue statements (Table 5).

Observations were conducted in the classroom (Appendix AD), playground (Appendix AE), and at a Round Table Discussion (RDT) (Appendix AF) for each case setting to gain holistic understanding of inclusion as it unfolded across different school environments. The decision to include playground observations was based on the recognition that inclusive practices are not confined to classroom settings; rather, they extend into informal social spaces where children negotiate what to play and how to engage together. Observing both contexts allowed for richer understanding of how inclusion was co-constructed among children and staff throughout the school day. Classroom situations were selected in collaboration with classroom staff to capture a variety of instructional approaches and collaborative practices between children and staff, reflecting diverse ways of doing and being together in shared occupational situations.

For this study, a participant observation role was chosen to allow me to interact with children and adults more naturally, gaining wider and deeper insights into participants' actions, and the reasons for their actions (Gustafsson, 2019; Leadley et al., 2023). Observations can yield specific illustrations of situations that, when referred to in interviews, help deepen the understanding of the 'why' behind the actions.

During observations, I took brief fieldnotes in a notebook, focusing on key interactions, contextual features, and emerging occupational situations. These notes served as prompts for writing detailed observation narratives immediately after each session. This approach allowed for the preservation of rich, descriptive accounts while maintaining the flow and integrity of the observed events. The combination of fieldnotes and post-observation narratives provided a flexible and context-sensitive method for capturing complex social dynamics in shared situations.

Classroom and playground observations focused on the naturally occurring interactions and doings of children in the entire class, participating teaching and support staff, or groups of children in the playground. The focus was not solely on children with disabilities or the strategies used to support them. Instead, emphasis was on the strategies employed among the wider group of children and contextual aspects that facilitated one another's inclusion in shared occupational situations.

Observations of the RTD meetings were undertaken to understand how collaborative planning processes among professionals, families, and sometimes children contributed to inclusive practice. RTD are used in schools in Switzerland to either collaboratively plan individual education programmes for children with disabilities or plan and discuss transitions, which was the case for both settings. The observations varied in each case in terms of topics addressed and participants involved and are outlined next.

Oak School: The first and second classroom observations involved actions and situations of subject teaching such as Mathematics and German, interactions during group and individual work, singing together, small break interactions, and individual support of children through classroom staff and children supporting each other's learning. The third classroom observation focused on understanding the process of the class council, which is described and illustrates a shared occupational situation in the findings section. The playground observation centred on Raul (child with autism) and other children engaging in play situations following Stake's (2010), who, what, where, when and why, emphasising an occupational focus on how things were done and how situations came about.

During the Oak School case's RDT, the teaching staff, both parents, and Raul were present. Lisa, the SEN teacher, had gathered information from therapists and assistants before the meeting. The main topic was Raul's transition to the next grade,

which would involve a change of classroom staff, a different school-building, and reconfiguration of the class.

Village School: Observations began with a PE class, detailed in the findings chapter and illustrating a shared occupational situation. Classroom observations in the mixed-level third and fourth level class included German and English language lessons, Mathematics, small break games, and singing. These observations captured various approaches to group and individual work across different activities. The playground observation focused on Ann, the child with a disability and other children engaging in play situations.

The RTD in the Village School case included seven participants: Anna's mother, three classroom staff members, the speech and language therapist, the principal, and a representative from the canton's support and consultation agency. The discussion centred on Anna's future educational path, evaluating both regular and specialised schooling options.

Single and Paired Interviews

Interviews provide rich, detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Stake, 2010). For this study, semi-structured interviews were employed as they allow flexibility to explore emerging themes while maintaining focus on key research questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This approach was particularly appropriate for investigating the complex, context-dependent nature of inclusive practices, enabling participants to share experiences in their own words while ensuring coverage of core topics derived from the issue statements (Table 3).

Both individual and paired interviews were conducted. Paired interviews were used when participants shared close collaborative responsibilities, such as co-teaching staff who jointly planned and delivered lessons (Polak & Green, 2016). This format captured the relational and shared aspects of their inclusive practices, which might have been less accessible through individual interviews alone.

Initial interview questions and prompts (Appendices AG, AH, AI, AJ) explored topical questions from the issue statements, with additional questions informed by classroom-playground and RTD observations to deepen understanding of observed practices. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private room within the school building to ensure confidentiality and participant comfort (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2025).

Oak School: One paired (co-teaching classroom staff- the classroom and SNE teachers) and nine single interviews lasting between 35 and 90 minutes, including classroom staff, classroom assistant, parents, two therapists and the principal (outlined in Table 5). Village School: One paired interview with classroom staff and 10 single interviews lasting between 35 and 65 minutes (outlined in Table 5), including classroom staff, SNE teacher, classroom assistant, parents, one therapist, and the principal.

Most participants spoke Swiss German dialect. While dialects lack standardised written forms, formal German is Switzerland's official language in German-speaking cantons. Being fluent in both Swiss German and formal German, I conducted interviews in participants' preferred language, predominantly Swiss German dialect, except for a parent Mr Boos, a bilingual Tamil speaker, who preferred formal German.

Focus Group Interviews

A focus group is a qualitative data collection method where a small group of participants discuss a particular topic, guided by a researcher. Focus groups with children can provide valuable insights into their experiences, thoughts, and feelings related to the topical questions (Alderson & Morrow, 2012; Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2018; Montreuil et al., 2021). Children may feel safer expressing views in a group setting, and one participant's response may trigger contributions from others (Montreuil et al., 2021). For this study, focus groups explored children's experiences in shared occupational situations and interactions facilitating participation. However, since not all children participated, the represented voices are limited to the participants in each of these specific groups.

Prior to data collection at Oak School, a pilot focus group (17 May 2023) was conducted with five children with Christina Schulze (Swiss-based supervisor) present. This piloting informed refinements to the interview guide (Appendix AK), setting arrangements, and facilitation techniques. Key adjustments included using warm-up activities and visual prompts to build rapport, starting with easier, concrete questions before progressing to more reflective ones, and employing turn-taking strategies to ensure all children, including less confident participants, had opportunities to contribute (Alderson & Morrow, 2020).

The focus group interview guide was structured around three sections: (1) opening activities to establish familiarity with the setting and researcher, (2) exploration of everyday classroom activities and participation, and (3) deepening questions. Questions began with concrete, experience-based prompts (e.g., Can you tell me the things you do at school?) before moving to deepening questions (e.g., Are there things that make it easier to do things together?). The guide was informed by participatory research principles with children (Alderson & Morrow, 2012; Montreuil et al., 2021).

Ethical considerations specific to focus groups were addressed throughout. Prior to the interview children were reminded of confidentiality expectations, that what was shared should remain within the group, while acknowledging that I could not guarantee absolute confidentiality (Montreuil et al., 2021). Children were informed they could choose not to answer questions.

Oak School: The focus group consisted of five children, three boys and two girls, who had been in the same class for nearly 2 years at the time of the interview. The group

represented diversity in gender, disability, cultural background, and personal preferences in what they enjoyed doing and how they learn. The children were interviewed in a private group room familiar to them, sitting at a large group table, on a Friday morning after the morning break. The interview lasted 75 minutes. Village School case: The focus group consisted of five children from a mixed-level class: one 3rd-grade girl and four 4th graders (4 girls and 1 boy). This group had been together for the past 3 to 4 months, while the four 4th graders had been in the same group with Anna for over 15 months. The five children were interviewed in their familiar English classroom, with the tables arranged to facilitate a group conversation. The interview was scheduled on a Wednesday morning after the morning break and lasted 85 minutes.

Photographs

Stake (2006) argued that “the place influences how things work” (p. 58), claiming that contextual variables play an essential role in the creation of a situation. In this study, to gather contextual information, I took photographs on the school grounds, play areas, and in the classroom to document aspects of the physical school environment; or specific school material and visual structures designed for orientation, such as a large timetable that influenced children’s inclusion in shared activities. In both cases, photos were used to capture key locations (classroom, playground, gymnastic hall), materials used, the arrangement of school furniture, and visual structuring elements such as timetables, adding context information (topical questions, Table 5).

All photographs documented the physical environment only; no people were included. Ethical approval for photographing school premises was obtained from the president of the school board. Photographs were stored securely and used solely for research analysis, where relevant, to provide visual context during data analysis and to support readers’ vicarious experiences of the cases (Stake, 1995) when reporting the findings.

Documents and Webpage Information

Publicly available documents, including, cantonal and municipal educational guidelines and legislation, and the school’s mission statements, were reviewed and analysed as part of the study. Included documents needed to be linked to political, structural, and practical aspects impacting the school’s approach to inclusive education. These documents provided contextual information relating to the conceptual structure, specifically addressing contextual factors shaping occupational situations and participation opportunities. Documents were selected if they informed understanding of legislative and policy frameworks governing inclusive education practices, organisational structures and resource allocation affecting classroom arrangements and support provision, and stated values and aims underpinning each school’s approach to inclusion.

This documentary data situated the case studies within their broader policy and institutional contexts, illustrating how macro level factors influenced the micro level practices observed in classrooms.

Data Recording and Management

All interviews were audiotaped, and a reflective journal kept throughout the data gathering processes. The recordings were transcribed verbatim using the F4 program (Audiotranscription F4, n.d.). Transcribers signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix AL). All recordings, audio and observation transcriptions, and other documents and photos are stored on a password secured ZHAW data pool. All recordings were deleted from the recording devices immediately after safe storage occurred. Participants' assent and consent forms, and the transcriber's confidentiality agreement, are stored in a locked cabinet at the ZHAW research department, ensuring confidentiality and safety of all data and participant and school information.

Data Analysis

Analytic strategies in CS methodology describe the general process of taking apart (analysis) and putting things together (synthesis) to understand the case (Stake, 1995, 2010). Immersed in this process, the aim was to write a report for each case separately to convey a deeper understanding and answer the research question on how inclusive education is created in two classes, in two schools, in two cantons in Switzerland.

For quality analysis in case studies, Yin (2018) called on researchers to attend to all the evidence. Interpretations must, therefore, account for the evidence; besides, plausible rival interpretations require further investigation of the data. These iterative processes address the most significant aspects of the cases bound to the initial research question (Stake, 1995, 2006, 2010; Yin, 2018). Pertinent to this study was giving equal weight to the multiple views represented in the data, reflecting Stake's (1995, 2010) relativist stance that recognises multiple, equally valid perspectives on reality. This aligns with Dewey's transactional theory, which views knowledge as developing through contextualised observation and interaction between individuals and their environments, emphasising that understanding requires attending to diverse experiences within specific contexts (Dewey & Bentley, 1946).

Stake outlined several key strategies for analysing case study data, recognising that the analytical approach must be tailored to the specific characteristics of each case. His primary strategies include direct interpretation, where researchers examine individual instances and episodes to draw meaning directly from single observations, as occurred in shared occupational situations; and categorical aggregation, which involves collecting instances until patterns can be constructed that warrant broader assertions about the case (Stake, 1995, 2006). Additionally, pattern recognition seeks

correspondence between different data sources to strengthen interpretations. Stake (1995, 2006) emphasised the importance of rich narrative description to provide readers with sufficient experiential and contextual detail, enabling them to recognise similarities to their own experiences and contexts, supporting what he termed naturalistic generalisation.

Stake (1995) highlighted that these analytical strategies are not prescriptive; rather, the choice and combination of approaches should vary according to the nature of the data collected, the complexity and context of the case, and the researcher's interpretive stance. This flexibility reflects Stake's (2010) constructivist epistemology, acknowledging that understanding develops through the interaction between the researcher, the case, the collected data and the analytical process itself. Attention to contextual influences remained central throughout the analysis (Stake, 2006, 2010).

Individual Case Analysis

As each case had distinct features, I decided to view, analyse, and present each case separately. This decision recognised Stake's (1995) value of understanding the particulars and uniqueness of single cases, with each case standing in its own right as a holistic entity. Cross-case comparison would have fragmented this contextual integrity. Additionally, given the high volume and diverse types of data, separate management of each case ensured that the various perspectives remained distinct. Interviews for each participant group were analysed individually, while observations, photographs, documents, and web pages contributed to multiple perspectives. However, even when perspectives were analysed separately, valuable cross-connections became visible; for instance, insights from parents helped contextualise children's perspectives or classroom staff practices. These overlapping insights were essential for understanding the complexities of inclusive situations, as emphasised by Stake (2010). Additionally, field notes and reflective observations, recorded in research diaries for each case, supported the analytical process.

Development of the Analytic Strategy

The analytical strategy for this CS was developed through careful consideration of Stake's (1995, 2006, 2010) flexible approach to CS analysis, recognising that the choice of analytical methods must align with the research question, data characteristics, and case context. The concept of shared occupational situations, derived from the scoping review, alongside the importance of representing all perspectives equally, while providing detailed case context, guided the development of both the analysis strategy and the representation of findings (case report).

Following Stake's (1995, 2006) analytical approaches, analysis proceeded through iterative cycles of direct interpretation and categorical aggregation. Individual

instances from observations, interviews, and documentary sources were examined to draw meaning about how inclusive education was created within specific shared occupational situations. Simultaneously, patterns were constructed across multiple instances within and between data sources, leading to broader assertions about each case. Throughout this process, attention was paid to contextual influences, what Stake (2010) termed “surrounding conditions” (p. 10), that shaped the creation of inclusive education in each setting.

Analytical Methods

Consistent with Stake’s (1995, 2006, 2010) emphasis on methodological flexibility, multiple analytical strategies were employed depending on the nature of the data. For all interview data and observation reports, reflexive thematic analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, n.d., 2021; Terry & Hayfield, 2021) was chosen as it emphasises researchers’ active role in constructing meaning and interpretations from the data, aligning with the overall constructivist CS research design. This approach acknowledges that researchers’ theoretical lens and experience are integral to identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in the data and shaping the findings (Braun & Clarke, n.d., 2021; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). For documents, webpage information, and photographs, narrative description and direct interpretation in relation to the research question and topical information questions (Stake, 1995) allowed for immediate understanding of specific instances and episodes without the need for categorical aggregation. This combination of analytical strategies reflects Stake’s (1995, 2006, 2010) assertion that the methods used should vary according to the data, case characteristics, and researcher’s interpretive stance, enabling the construction of assertions that capture the complexity and particularity of inclusive education within each Swiss school context.

For each case, participant data were analysed separately to maintain the integrity of individual perspectives, honouring each case’s distinctive characteristics and the unique contributions of each group of participants. Consequently, assertions were developed separately for the Oak School and Village School cases.

Analysis Procedures for Interviews and Observations

This study employed RTA as articulated by Braun and Clarke (2021, 2023; Braun et al., 2019; Terry & Hayfield, 2021), an approach that aligns with the constructivist and pragmatist philosophical underpinnings of this research. In RTA, themes are conceptualised as meaning-based patterns constructed through analytical work by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2020). This positions the researcher as an active, reflective interpreter, engaged in meaning-making through their theoretical knowledge, social positioning, and scholarly understanding (Terry & Hayfield, 2021).

RTA was chosen for several reasons: First, it acknowledges researchers' subjectivity as a resource. Second, its iterative analytical process, where codes are developed and change throughout analysis, mirrors the transactional view of knowledge construction emphasised in Dewey's pragmatism (Dewey & Bentley, 1946). Third, RTA's commitment to providing coherent, data-driven interpretations supports this study's aim to represent multiple participant perspectives equally while developing deeper understanding of how inclusive education is created in specific contexts.

The analysis procedure for interviews and observation reports followed Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase RTA framework: 1. familiarisation with the dataset; 2. coding; 3. generating initial themes; 4. developing and reviewing themes; 5. refining, defining, and naming themes (pp. 852-858). In RTA, a theme is a meaningful pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept or idea that captures something significant about the data in relation to the research question (Braun et al., 2019; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). The final phase 6 involves developing the written analysis, bringing together rich data examples to answer the research question. Despite the sequential presentation of phases where each depends on earlier work, analysis unfolds iteratively with continual shifts back and forth across phases. (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Terry & Hayfield, 2021; Braun & Clarke, n.d.)

The approach was characterised as initially inductive, where coding, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes were constructed directly from the data 'bottom up' without imposing pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Braun et al., 2019; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). This allowed participants' actions and experiences to drive the analytical process, ensuring themes remained grounded in the data. Analysis became progressively more abductive, involving iterative cycles of theme generation, developing and reviewing themes and generating plausible explanations for observed patterns, and returning to examine the data through these constructed interpretive lenses (Braun et al., 2019). This allowed consideration of the scoping review's theoretical insights while remaining anchored in the data. Iteration was central to the analytical process; refining codes and themes offered deeper insights, increased density, and ensured coherence (Braun & Clarke, n.d. 2021; Braun et al., 2021; Terry & Hayfield, 2021; Braun & Clarke, n.d., *Thematic Analysis | Online Resources*, n.d.). Each revision contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the cases.

Creating Miro boards (*Boards in Gesundheit Team - Miro*, n.d.) for each case supported the iteration and analysis process. The boards allowed for deepening and visualisation reflections, recognising patterns, capturing new interpretation ideas across all data sets and supported effective discussion with the supervising team throughout analysis:

- Miro Board Oak School case: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVMogT0kU=

- Miro Board Village School case: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVK3dJoyU=

Examples of Miro board analysis visualisations are provided in Appendix AM. Next, specific analysis procedures for both cases will be presented.

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data began through data collection, engaging directly with contexts and participants. Familiarisation deepened through reading transcripts and observation reports, listening to original audio recordings, and referring to reflective journal notes.

Phase 2: Coding was supported by the Analysis software MAXQDA (MAXQDA Software, n.d.). A specific challenge for this phase of the study was addressing language-related issues. Interview and focus group data were collected in Swiss German. Observation reports were written in German. To facilitate supervision discussion during coding and following phases, I translated excerpts of the interviews into English, supported by the AI-based tool DeepL (DeepL SE, n.d.). Christina Schulze, a bilingual supervisor with expertise in the Swiss educational contexts and processes, reviewed the translated excerpts for accuracy. The supervisory team coded these excerpts separately, opening alternative views and interpretations. The discussion and exchange during this early analysis phase ensured adoption of an occupational lens and focusing on answering the research question from different angles (participant perspectives), addressing what various people do to create inclusive situations.

Phases 3, 4, and 5: generating initial themes; developing and reviewing themes; and refining, defining, and naming themes were characterised by openness and flexibility towards new and alternative ways to group codes, constantly seeking alternative interpretations for evolving themes. Code groups were drawn from various data sources, providing rich alternatives for possible interpretations, which led to generating tentative themes and descriptions. Iterative processes were further facilitated by the strategy of analysing and presenting each participant group separately, allowing comparison, contrast, specification, and nuancing of themes and interpretations. Throughout this process, supervisors with diverse expertise provided critical feedback, enhancing interpretations. Thoughts and reflections on evolving assertions and discussion points were captured on the Miro boards. To finalise the findings, I evaluated how specific findings contributed to answering the research question.

Phase 6: Writing up represented the final stage of refinement, where analytical insights were further developed and synthesised through the process of crafting coherent themes from the multiple perspectives within each case. The final case reports are presented in Chapters 4 (Oak School) and 5 (Village School).

Development of Assertions

In Stake's (1995, 2006, 2010) approach, assertions are interpretive knowledge claims that represent researchers' understanding of how things work within the case. Assertions

are propositional statements that explain patterns, relationships, and meanings across the data, grounded in evidence from multiple sources and contextually bounded to the specific case. They are constructed through the iterative process of moving between direct interpretation of specific incidents and categorical aggregation of similar instances (Stake, 2006). Stake (1995) described assertions as summary statements or “generalisations” (p. 7) that represent researchers’ constructed understanding of what a case reveals, supported by multiple data sources and analytical strategies. Building beyond the original issue statements, these assertions are not definitive conclusions; rather, provisional understandings that capture the complexity and particularity of the case while offering insights that may resonate with other contexts (Stake, 1995).

Assertions were formed separately for each of the two cases, recognising their uniqueness. For each case, the assertions reflect and unite participants’ perspectives and represent people’s actions in specific situations when creating inclusive situations. Ideas for assertions began to be developed early on by attending to Steps 1 to 3 of the analysis process (familiarising with the dataset, coding, generating initial themes). Reflection about the data and developing patterns indicating first ideas were noted on the Miro board or in a reflective notebook. During the progression of analysis, ideas manifested and became concretised assertions. Finalising the findings and assertions was a parallel process, including testing out assertions across data sources, adding new assertions, or combining and clarifying existing assertions.

In summary, the constructivist epistemology underlying both Stake’s CS methodology and RTA acknowledges that understanding is developed through the dynamic interaction between data, researcher interpretation and reflection, and theoretical insight (Braun & Clarke, n.d., 2021; Braun et al., 2019; Terry & Hayfield, 2021; *Thematic Analysis | Online Resources*, n.d.). The presentations of the findings provide this understanding of how children and adults interact in situations represented as ‘shared occupational situations’, by representing all perspectives in a class at school and how diverse stakeholders contribute to creating inclusive education.

Rigour and Trustworthiness in CS Research

According to Stake (1995, 2006), rigour and trustworthiness in CS research are achieved through ‘validation’, a process of ensuring that interpretations are credible, dependable, and authentic to the case being studied. Stake emphasised that trustworthiness develops through triangulation of data sources, member checking, prolonged engagement with the case, and the findings’ thick and concise description that allows readers to assess their credibility. He argued that rigour is demonstrated through the researcher’s systematic approach to understanding the case’s complexity, while acknowledging that multiple realities exist and that the researcher’s interpretation is one of many possible

understandings (Stake, 2006). Rather than seeking generalisability, Stake's approach to trustworthiness focuses on a case's authenticity, ensuring that the CS captures the lived experiences and perspectives of participants set in a specific context and time, in ways that resonate with their realities.

Further Leadley et al. (2023) argued rigorous and methodologically sound case studies to be "rich in detail to support vicarious experience" (p. 119), leading to assertions that can be related back to the findings and data. To ensure rigour and trustworthiness in this study, various techniques were applied (Salminen et al., 2006; Seale & Silverman, 1997). Triangulation strategies, thoroughness, accuracy, and methodological soundness were key aspects to building rigour and trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Nazar et al., 2022; Stake, 1995).

Triangulation Strategies

Combining data from various sources offers more profound understanding from different perspectives about a phenomenon; however, there is a risk that not all data are included equally in the analysis (Yin, 2018). For this study, multiple forms of triangulation were employed to confirm findings across all data sources, including data source, investigator, theory, and methodology triangulation, while considering alternative theoretical perspectives and the development of rival propositions (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018).

Data source triangulation (Stake, 1995a, 2006) was achieved through gathering evidence from multiple participant groups (classroom staff, children, parents, assistants, therapists, principals), alongside observations, documents, photographs and webpage information. This enabled corroboration and comparison of perspectives on how inclusive education was created in each case.

Investigator triangulation was achieved through ongoing supervision discussions where each supervisor's specific research focus, theoretical background, and broad experience offered alternative interpretations of the data, ensuring multiple analytical lenses were applied to the findings (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018), and prompting further reflection and interpretation on my part before settling on my understandings.

Theory triangulation began during the scoping review, where theoretical aspects and the concept of shared occupational situations, their changeability and contextualisation were developed and continuously refined through engagement with diverse theoretical frameworks. Keeping an occupational perspective and human rights-based approach to the study helped inform the conceptual framework guiding the case studies.

Methodological triangulation was necessary given the volume and complexity of data, requiring careful attention to methodological soundness, thoroughness, and accuracy as outlined in the data collection and analysis sections. Following Stake's (1995) value on gathering multiple types of data, including interviews, observations, and

documents, this study employed interviews with multiple stakeholder groups (capturing actions and experiences of teachers, children, parents, therapists, principals, and assistants); observations of classrooms, playgrounds, and RTD (across multiple situations); photographs of learning environments; and document analysis of policies and websites (providing contextual information). This multi-method approach enabled cross-verification of findings with convergent evidence (when different data sources pointed to the same interpretation) strengthening interpretations, and divergent evidence (when different data sources offered different interpretations) revealing variations in actions, experiences, or contexts. The supervisors' expert knowledge and experience in case studies stimulated ongoing discussion and reflection about analytical decisions, with continuous documentation and reflection of the rationale for methodological choices and data interpretations.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Contemporary qualitative research has been critiqued as being subjective (Seale & Silverman, 1997). Today's qualitative researchers acknowledge their specific position and stance, recognising that qualitative analysis is naturally "filtered through the researcher's lens" (Nayar & Stanley, 2015, p.12). By making their position explicit in carefully conducted studies, readers can perceive the researcher's stance and make their own judgements about the value of the study and its findings (Nayar & Stanley, 2015). My position has been described in Chapter 1 (pp.16-18), ensuring transparency about theoretical commitments, experiential background, and potential influences on data interpretation.

Engagement with the Case and Detailed Description

Consistent with Stake's (2010) emphasis on understanding a case in its complexity and 'how things work', this study employed prolonged engagement (Table 6, p. 60) with each case site, allowing for comprehensive observation of shared occupational situations and multiple interactions with diverse stakeholders. All interviews were held in the immediate context and by me. Detailed descriptions of case contexts, participant perspectives, and situational dynamics provide readers with sufficient detail to assess the credibility and transferability of findings to their own contexts, supporting what Stake (1995) termed "naturalistic generalisation" (p. 85). This multi-faceted approach to rigour and trustworthiness ensures that the study's findings authentically represent the complexity of each case, while acknowledging the constructed nature of my interpretations.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the CS methodology employed to investigate how inclusive education is created in Swiss primary schools. The selection of Stake's (1995, 2010) CS

approach, and overall guidance from Dewey's transactional philosophy (Dewey, 1938/2015; Fritz & Cutchin, 2017), provided an appropriate framework for examining the complex interactions among diverse stakeholders in specific educational contexts. Further, the data analysis process was documented, leading to case reports and the development of assertions for each case.

Comprehensive data collection procedures, incorporating multiple perspectives and data sources, support the construction of rich, contextual understandings of inclusive practices. The analytical approach, emphasising both particular and general knowledge, enabled the development of assertions that capture the complexity of inclusive education while offering insights that are potentially transferable to other contexts. Additionally, I discussed the measures taken to ensure rigour and trustworthiness for the CS research process (Leadley et al., 2023; Seale & Silverman, 1997; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018)

The next two chapters present the findings and assertions from the Oak School and Village School cases. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Oak School case begins with an overview of the Swiss education system applicable to both cases, followed by each case's specific cantonal legislation, frameworks for special needs education, and school structure. For each case I then present a shared occupational situation, the Class Council (CC) at Oak School and the PE lesson at Village School, illustrating how the interaction between environment, activities, and people creates inclusive experiences. In alignment with Dewey's (1938/2015) transactional philosophy, the findings attend to the research question through multiple participant perspectives, demonstrating how doing together in shared occupational situations can facilitate inclusive experiences for all children.

Chapter 4. A Common Context and the ‘Oak School’ Case

This research includes the findings from two case studies conducted in Swiss primary schools: Oak School and Village School (pseudonyms). To provide a nuanced understanding of how educational environments impact the creation of inclusive education in Swiss schools, this chapter begins by describing the common contextual elements shared by both cases. These include relevant Swiss sociopolitical, geographical, cultural, and physical contexts. Following the common contextual overview in this chapter, each case’s cantonal and municipal structures that shape practices at the school district, school, and classroom levels are described in their respective chapters. Understanding these contextual layers is essential for interpreting how inclusive education is created in each setting. The findings are then presented, starting with one illustrative, shared occupational situation per case. At Oak School (Chapter 4), the Friday morning CC demonstrates how this particular setting organises inclusive practices and how classroom staff and children engage within this structure. At Village School (Chapter 5), a PE lesson serves as the illustrative example. These situations provide concrete examples of how inclusive experiences are co-created through the interactions and contributions of all participants in each classroom context.

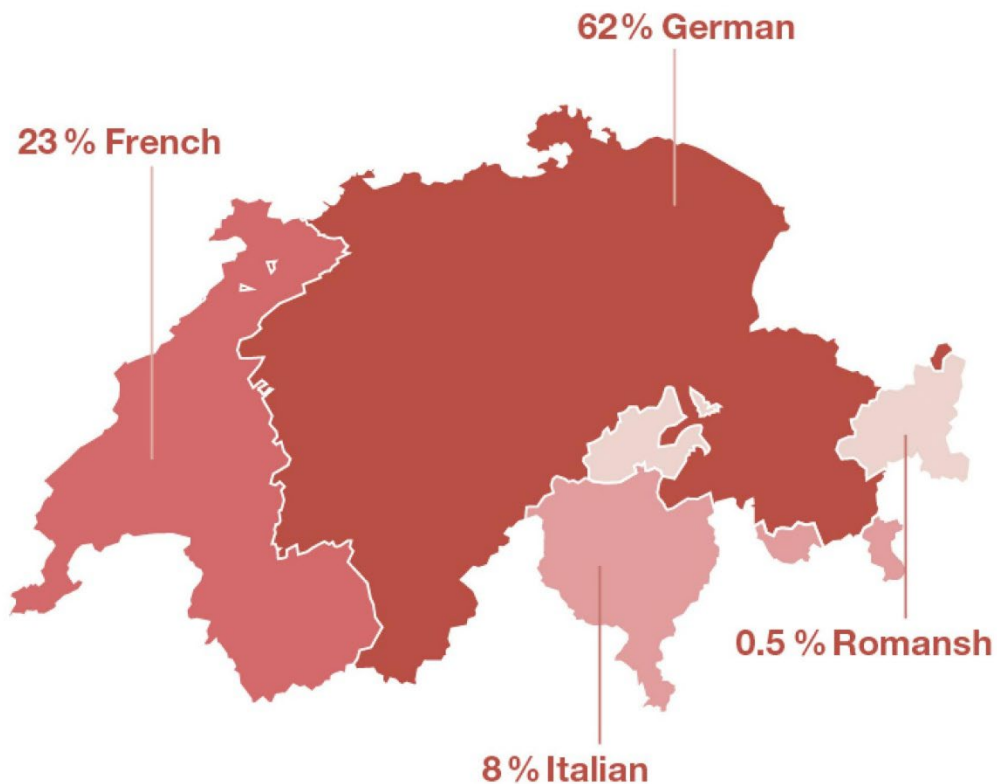
Following each shared occupational situation, detailed findings examine the actions and experiences of classroom staff, children, parents, classroom assistants, therapists, and principals. Chapters 4 (Oak School Case) and 5 (Village School Case) introduce the individuals involved in each case and explore their participation in shared occupational situations, highlighting the collaborative and interactive processes through which inclusive education is created in these two Swiss primary school contexts.

Switzerland

In 2023, Switzerland had an estimated population of approximately 8,960,800 people distributed across four language regions: German, French, Italian, and Romansh (see Figure 7). Both Oak School and Village School are situated in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, where educational practices and policies are shaped by both national coordination efforts and cantonal autonomy.

Figure 7.

Swiss Language Regions



Note: Reproduced with Permission from Bundeskanzlei Switzerland.

Educational responsibilities in Switzerland are decentralised across 26 cantons (see Figure 8), each with its own Minister of Education. These cantonal ministers work together through the Eidgenössische Konferenz der Erziehungsdirektoren [EDK], (2007), known in English as the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education. The EDK serves as the highest educational decision-making body, coordinating national efforts while respecting cantonal autonomy. Its aim is to ensure “high quality, equity, permeability and mobility within the Swiss education system” (EDK, 2007). Through the EDK, cantons work to harmonise their education systems, making it easier for families to relocate between cantons while maintaining educational continuity for their children (Kanton Zurich Bildungsdirektion, 2017). The population size of cantons varies significantly, ranging from around 16,000 (Canton Appenzell Innerrhoden) to approximately 1.5 million people (Canton Zurich). These demographic differences influence how cantons organise their educational structures and resources which, in turn, shapes how schools like Oak School and Village School implement inclusive education at the local level.

Figure 8.

Map of Switzerland Showing the 26 Cantons and Capital City Bern



Note: Reproduced with permission from Bundeskanzlei Switzerland.

The study includes consideration of children with a range of needs and backgrounds in mainstream schools. In Switzerland, the population of children with disabilities aged 0 to 14 years is estimated as 52,000, with 8,000 severely affected (BFS, 2019b). Consistent with the broader human-rights perspective of the study, the current global situation is also recognised as affecting classroom composition. Families migrating to Switzerland as refugees, due to conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, contribute to the sociocultural diversity of Swiss classrooms and may experience marginalisation (BFS, n.d.; Staatssekretariat Polizeidepartement Ejpd & und Migration, 2024). In 2022, 39.9% of the Swiss population had a migration background, comprising 31.7% first-generation and 8.2% second-generation migrants (Bundesstatistik, n.d.). This percentage has continued to increase as people seek refuge from ongoing conflicts.

Both Oak School and Village School reflected this sociocultural diversity. Each classroom included children with disabilities as well as children from migrant backgrounds, creating contexts in which inclusive education needed to address multiple forms of diversity and potential marginalisation.

The following section presents the Oak School case findings, beginning with contextual description at the cantonal, municipal, school, and classroom levels, followed by a description of a shared occupational situation (Friday morning CC) which illustrates how inclusive practices were co-created in this setting. The chapter then examines the actions and experiences of classroom staff, children, parents, therapists, and the principal, contributing to a holistic understanding. Chapter 5 presents the Village School case findings using the same structure.

The Oak School Case

Context Description: Canton, Municipality, and Oak School Case

Canton

The Oak School case is situated in a canton with approximately 40,000 inhabitants, one of the smallest cantons in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Specific cantonal data on children with disabilities are not publicly available. Around 75% of the population are either Swiss citizens or have acquired Swiss nationality through naturalisation. The remaining 25% have migrated to Switzerland (according to the cantonal website). Children with refugee status are not represented in any specific statistical category. This demographic composition was reflected in the Oak School classroom, which included both Swiss children and children from migrant backgrounds.

To preserve confidentiality, specific information sources that could identify the schools are not cited. For example, rather than providing direct links to school websites or naming specific cantonal documents, sources are referenced generically (e.g., “the school’s website” or “cantonal SNE framework”) to indicate where information was obtained while protecting school anonymity.

The cantonal Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs oversees five administrative offices, including the Office for Public Schools and Sport, which is further divided into various Divisions (see Figure 9). According to the official website, the department is responsible for “supervising the public schools” which includes Oak School. While the department’s mandate does not explicitly mention inclusion in its supervisory role, a cantonal SNE framework does exist to guide school- and classroom-level practices. How this framework was interpreted and enacted at Oak School is explored throughout this chapter.

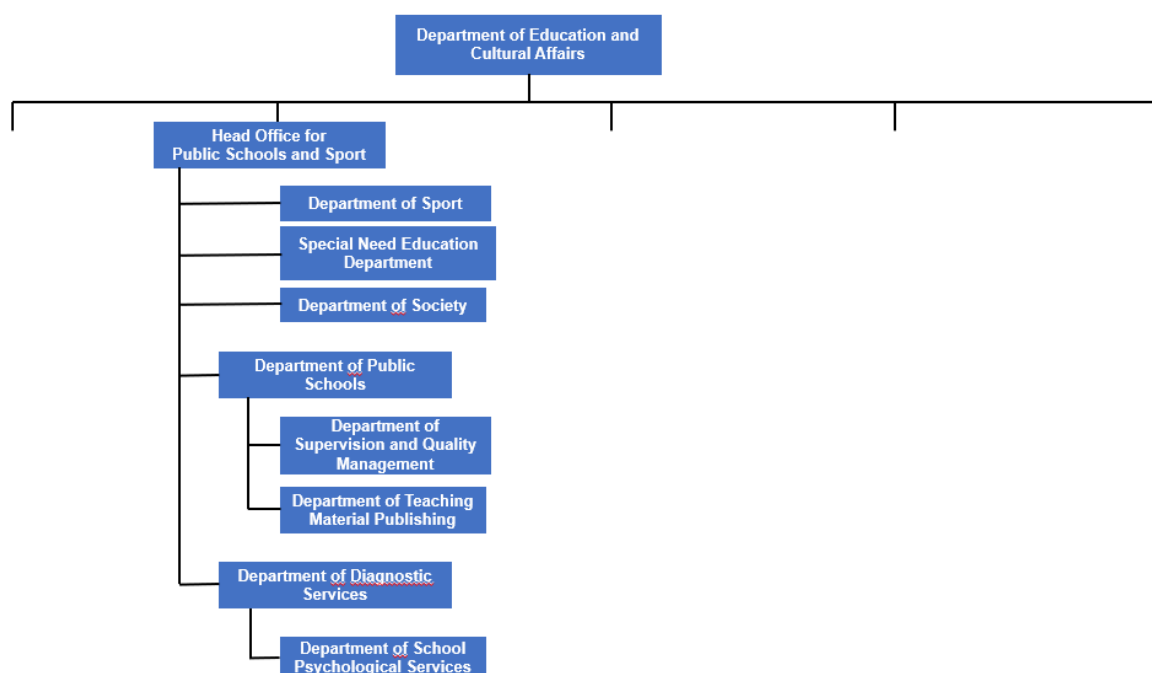
The canton’s education system comprises 11 mandatory years of education: 2 years of kindergarten (ISCED¹ 020), 6 years of primary school (ISCED 1), and 3 years of secondary education (ISCED 2). This study focuses on ISCED 1, with Oak School

¹ International Standard Level of Education (ISCED)

comprising primary school children aged between 6 and 12 years. Like other Swiss primary schools, the timetable divides the day into four morning lessons (8:00am to 11:35am) and two afternoon lessons (1:30pm to 3:15pm). Wednesday afternoons are non-teaching time for all students, with lower grades having an additional afternoon off during the week. The Oak School second graders have 24 school lessons per week. During the 2-hour lunch break, most children return home for a cooked lunch, often shared with their parents, who return from work for the meal. While this structure reflects Swiss cultural norms around family mealtimes, it can create additional burden for families with disabled children with additional transport home, meal preparation, and possibly feeding support required within this timeframe.

Figure 9.

Oak School: Organisation of the Office for 'Public Schools and Sport'



Note: Adapted and published with the cantonal authority's copyright permission. For confidentiality, this figure is not in the reference list.

Cantonal Special Need Education

To move Switzerland towards inclusive education, the public school system is expected to provide support measures for children with diverse needs (EDK, 2007). However, in the publicly available organisation diagram of the Department of Education and Culture, SNE services are administratively separated from other educational services. While special needs services (including diagnostic services and school psychology) appear within the organisational structure (Figure 9), they are not integrated with public school

services at the departmental level. This organisational separation may hamper a holistic, coordinated approach to developing inclusive practice in public schools.

The cantonal SNE framework describes two levels of support. First, 'basic support measures' are implemented when classroom staff identify children requiring additional learning support. If in-class measures prove ineffective (showing no increase in the child's learning success), caregivers are invited to a RTD to further evaluate and discuss support needs (Cantonal SNE framework). Basic measures are funded through the school community budget (the local municipal budget allocated for the school) and fall within the principal's responsibilities.

Second, 'intensified support measures' are initiated when the principal refers children to the Cantonal School Psychology Service (SPD) for a 'Standardised Assessment Process'. If needed, the SPD requests educational and funding support from the canton's SNE department under the cantonal SNE framework. Caregivers are mentioned in a concluding sentence of the framework: "In the event of disagreement, the legal guardians shall be granted the right to be heard" (Cantonal SNE framework, p. 29). This reactive approach to parent involvement shaped how families experienced their participation in creating inclusive education.

Municipality

In the Swiss education system, educational responsibilities are divided between cantons and municipalities. While the canton sets the overall education framework and funds 'intensified support measures', these are organised by the municipalities which also fund and organise 'basic support measures' and daily school operations (Cantonal SNE framework). This division of responsibilities meant that how inclusive education was created at Oak School depended on both cantonal policy and municipal resource allocation and organisational decisions.

The municipality for the Oak School case oversees five geographically organised districts encompassing 16 school sites and 168 teaching staff for 1,299 children across the 11 mandatory years of education (municipality website, not cited for confidentiality). Typically, each district is overseen by one principal, except for the secondary level, which involves shared responsibility between two principals. Each district includes one to five school sites (locations that may comprise multiple buildings), housing primarily age-specific kindergartens (10 facilities), primary schools (9 facilities), and a single secondary school. Under cantonal school law, municipalities appoint the principal (BG 84), who is responsible for managing educational and direct staff and organising school operations (School law of the Canton). Therefore, the principal, appointed by and accountable to the municipality, plays a key role in enacting inclusive education within the cantonal framework.

The municipality provides and funds after-school care where children can attend for lunch or before and after school. Families pay fees directly for this service (school website, timetable class). Therapy support was also funded by the municipality in the form of Psychomotrician Therapy (PMT) and Speech-Language Therapy (SLT), ensuring these services were available to children without direct cost to families. Municipal funding of therapy services removed potential financial barriers to accessing support, contributing to more equitable inclusive education within the school.

In Oak School, the principal's responsibilities extended across two kindergartens and three primary school locations, leading 54 teaching staff and 21 classes across four school sites (publicly accessible school website). Therefore, the principal's influence in shaping inclusive practices had wide reach geographically and across children's learning trajectory from kindergarten through primary school.

The principal, Fabio, introduced Haim Omer's (2011) concept of New Authority (NA) as a guiding framework for the school community. Omer developed this concept from his earlier work on nonviolent resistance, adapting it for pluralistic societies by stressing self-control, persistence, and taking mutual responsibility for situations, as well as nonviolent resistance and transparency. This concept contrasts with a hierarchical understanding of authority, which relies on controlling children based on power positions (Omer, 2011). Fabio presented this concept to his school team, focusing on its seven pillars: presence, self-control, support systems, nonviolent resistance, reconciliation, transparency, and reparation (Omer, 2011); further elaborated in the section 'Principal actions and experiences'. This philosophical approach influenced how inclusive education was understood and practised across Oak School.

The class studied in the Oak School case was located in one of the three primary school buildings that accommodates two parallel classes in grades one through six. Each class is typically led by one or two primary school teachers, with incoming SNE teachers attending to children with additional support needs. Distinctive to the investigated class was a collaborative teaching model: the classroom teacher and SNE teacher shared class responsibilities as co-teachers, working with all children rather than the SNE teacher focusing solely on children with identified needs. There were additional subject teachers in Arts and Crafts, Sports, and Music. Some children in the class also received PMT and/or SLT funded by the municipality, and the municipality employed a part-time school social worker (publicly accessible school website).

Overview of Oak School Participants

Various data sources contributed to the construction of the findings (Stake, 2006). In the following findings sections, the sources are referenced using the abbreviations (detailed in chapter 'overview of data gathering' Table 6), with the number following the abbreviation indicating the corresponding text section. Participants and contextual

situations (classroom, PE, etc.) within the Oak School class community were visualised on Miro Boards for analysis (Appendix AN). Tables 7 to 9 introduce the case participants and data sources abbreviations.

Table 7.

Oak School: Participants Representing Education Professionals

Participants Education context	Pseudonym	Age	Years of experience
Classroom staff (role)			
Classroom teacher (Class lead)	Sonja Falt	63	30
Classroom teacher (SNE teacher)	Lisa Gibbs	59	30
Class assistant	Claudia Roberts	53	3
Principal			
	Fabio Gatto	43	8
Therapists			
Psychomotrician ²	Nadja Gut	48	10
Speech Language	Tom Zonta	56	29

Table 8. *Oak School: All Children in the Class*

Girls	Age	Boys	Age
Anja	9	Chris	10
Cathy	9	Luca	10
Doris*	8	Mario	9
Frieda	9	Nevio*	9
Maria F	9	Nino*	9
Maria G	9	Sandro	10
Neva	9	Raul**	10
Sophie	8		
Vera*	8		
2 not participating			

*Children who participated in focus group (FG); **child with ASD participating in FG

Table 9. *Oak School: Parents and Associated Child, Participating in the Focus Group*

Parent Pseudonym	Parent of
Redzepi Sofia and Faroush (parents)	Raul
Elke Huber (foster mother)	Nino
Anja Jakober (mother)	Nevio
Anita Tauber (mother)	Doris
Saskia Kurz (mother)	Vera

Overview of Data Gathering Methods and Abbreviations

To develop a holistic understanding of how inclusive education was created in each classroom, multiple data gathering methods were employed with diverse stakeholder groups. Data collection in each case included: classroom and playground observations to capture everyday activities and interactions; a RTD observation; a focus group interview with five children to access children's perspectives; paired or individual interviews with classroom teachers, special education teachers, and assistants to

² Psychomotrician therapists support children with motor, emotional, and social difficulties by using social-interaction and movement-based therapy to enhance social interaction, self-regulation, and movement skills.

understand staff practices and experiences; individual interviews with parents to capture family perspectives; interviews with therapists to understand specialist support provision; and an interview with the principal to understand institutional leadership and policies. Photographs, documents, and webpages provided contextual information about the physical environment, school policies, and organisational structures.

Table 10 presents a comprehensive overview of all data gathering methods employed in Case 1 (Oak School), including the abbreviations used to reference each data source throughout this thesis. These abbreviations appear in subsequent chapters when presenting findings and identifying the source of specific data excerpts or observations. For example, 'C1 CROB 2' refers to the second classroom observation conducted in Case 1.

Table 10.

Oak School: Overview and Abbreviations for Data Gathering Methods

Data Gathering Method	Abbreviation
Classroom Observation 1	C1 CROB 1
Classroom Observation 2	C1 CROB 2
Classroom Observation 3	C1 CROB 3
Playground Observation	C1 PGOBS
Round Table Discussion Observation	C1 RTD
Focus Group Interview with five children	C1 FOG
Teacher Interview with Lisa and Sonja	C1 TI
Parent Interview 1 Mrs Jakober	C1 PAI 1
Parent Interview 2 Mrs Redzepi	C1 PAI 2
Parent Interview 3 Mrs Tauber	C1 PAI 3
Parent Interview 4 Mrs Huber	C1 PAI 4
Parent Interview 5 Mrs Kurz	C1 PAI 5
Psychomotor Therapist Nadja	C1 PMT
Speech Language Therapist Tom	C1 SLT
Assistant Interview Claudia	C1 AI
Principal Interview Fabio	C1 PRI

Note: C1 (Case 1) representing the Oak School.

All longer direct quotes from data sources are presented first in the English translation, followed by the original German language set in brackets. For easier readability, shorter quotes are in English. The quotes were translated by the author supported by the AI tool DeepL (DeepL SE, n.d.).

Description of the Oak School 2nd Grade Class

Lisa and Sonja, two experienced teachers, co-taught this class of 18 second graders, comprising 10 girls and 8 boys. Data gathering occurred just before the summer break as the class prepared to transition to third grade, when the children would move to different school locations. Among the students, Raul, diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), was the only child eligible for intensified support measures funded by the canton through the SPD assessment process described earlier. Other students, including some diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, received basic

support measures funded by the municipality. Two children participated in PMT funded by the municipality, and one girl attended a weekly afternoon session for gifted learners. This range of support arrangements reflected both the cantonal and municipal structures for creating inclusive education within a single classroom.

Lisa and Sonja divided their responsibilities based on their areas of expertise. Sonja took the lead on classroom management, while Lisa's role and SNE teacher expertise encompassed both basic and intensified support measures and German as a second language instruction (16 lessons per week). Together, they co-taught most subjects, integrating SNE and general classroom instruction throughout the school day. They shared common educational values and functioned as a cohesive, accountable team for both children and their families. This collaborative partnership emphasised the teachers' equal status, ensuring that children receiving SNE support were not singled out or stigmatised, as both teachers worked with all children throughout the day.

Additional subject teachers supported the class for PE, Swimming, Arts and Crafts, and Music. The class was organised into two groups with equal numbers and balanced gender distribution, referred to as the blue and red groups. For 10 out of 24 weekly lessons, the children were taught in their separate groups with only one teacher present, and for the remaining 14 lessons they were together as a whole class with both teachers present.

The school building consisted of two levels, each with three classrooms. Sonja and Lisa's classroom was centrally located on the ground floor. Neighbouring classrooms were occupied by a second- and third-grade class. The classroom had 10 double desks, with two desks having only one child seated at each. At the start of grade one, the seating arrangements had been set by the classroom staff. As the CC evolved and children's participation in decision-making increased, their suggestions had been incorporated into the seating plans (CROB 3, TI). The desks were arranged in two half circles facing the front and the blackboard and the teacher's desk was located at the back of the room, with two additional desks left empty to form a group workspace (see Figures 10 and 11). This arrangement shifted the focus from the teacher to the children seated as a community, prioritising peer interaction favouring inclusion.

Figure 10.

Oak School: Classroom Looking to the Front



Figure 11.

Oak School: Classroom Looking to the Back



Each child's desk included a drinking cup and a box containing materials for specific subjects or tasks, such as a pencil sharpener, glue stick, eraser, and clothespin (Figure 12). Additionally, a set of ear protection was provided at each desk for noise cancellation when needed. The universal provision of ear protection normalised sensory supports as available to all children. Organisation of individual materials at each desk promoted children's self-management and independence, enabling them to access resources without relying on teacher assistance.

Figure 12.

Oak School: Personalised and General Material Box on Each Child's Desk



The children worked individually or in varying group formations: either purposefully arranged by the classroom staff, randomly, or chosen by the children themselves. The classroom and hallway offered flexible working spaces as Sonja and Lisa often kept their classroom door open during lessons. Children used these spaces variably, adapting to the nature and structure of the tasks at hand. In the hallway, children worked together during group and atelier work (CROB 1,2,3) (Figure 13). Flexibility in both grouping arrangements and physical spaces enabled children to collaborate and use space in ways that suited their individual preferences. This approach facilitated the creation of shared occupational situations through multiple ways of engaging with learning tasks and peers.

Figure 13.

Oak School: Shared Hallway to the Classroom with School Bag Storage



Learning materials were structured according to the teaching approach. Atelier work (self-directed learning stations where children work on differentiated tasks at their own pace), for example, is an individualised, self-directed learning format that includes tasks graded according to difficulty. Some tasks were mandatory for all children, while others were voluntary. Certain tasks could be completed in pairs, while others were done individually. The nature of the tasks varied: some were experimental, some involved paper and pen, and others used an iPad (Figure 14). Figure 15 provides an overview of the different tasks, indicating whether they were mandatory or voluntary; the difficulty level of each task was represented by the number of swallows (Figure 16). This transparent system enabled children to select tasks according to their readiness and interests, supporting self-directed and accountable learning. The combination of mandatory and voluntary tasks, varied formats, and visible difficulty levels allowed children to challenge themselves across diverse abilities and learning preferences, while ensuring all children engaged with core learning content.

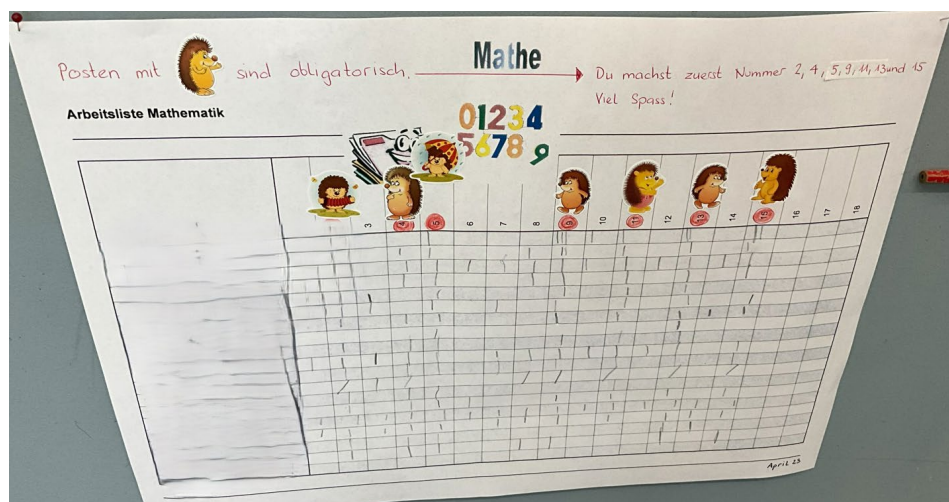
Figure 14.

Oak School: Material Maths Atelier



Figure 15.

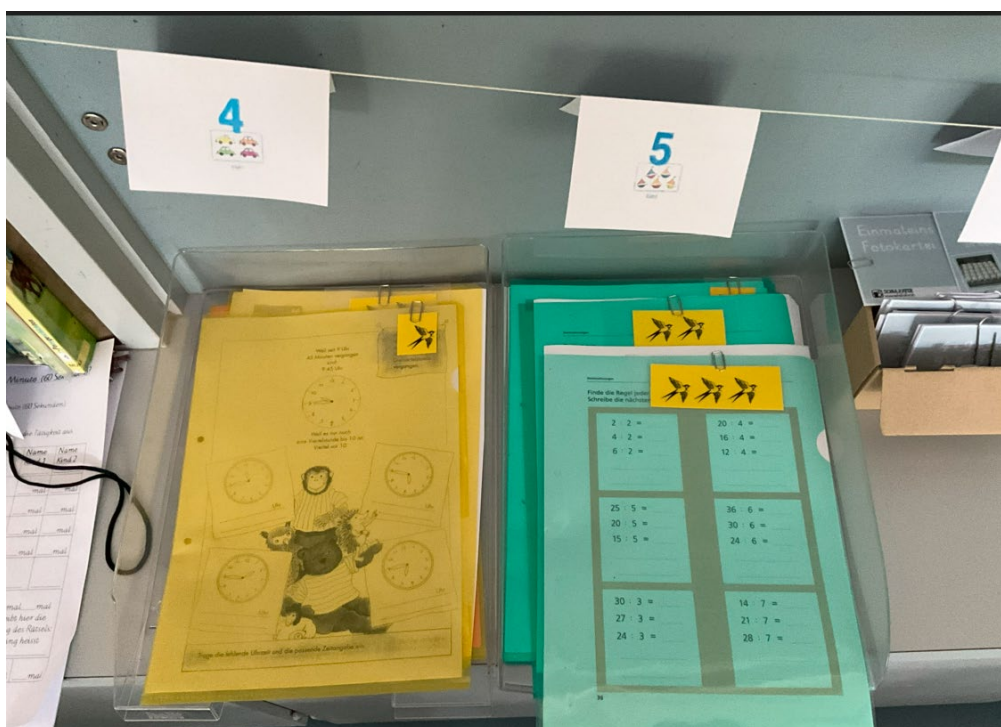
Oak School: Children's List for Maths Atelier Facilitating Individualised Learning



Note. The hedgehog symbol represents mandatory tasks.

Figure 16.

Oak School: Graded Atelier Tasks Promoting Individualised Learning



Description of a Shared Occupational Situation: CC June 2023

The CC is a democratic meeting format used in many Swiss and European primary schools where children and teachers come together regularly to discuss classroom matters, share ideas, and make collective decisions (Council of Europe, 2016). At Oak

School, the CC served as a structured opportunity for all children to participate in classroom life, practice decision-making, and engage with peers and teachers in ways that valued their voices and contributions. This format emerged over time as children developed competencies in communication and democratic skills. This democratic practice supported understanding about how inclusive education was co-created, and specifically, how classroom staff and children contributed to building a class community based on democratic values.

The description of the CC is organised with the understanding of shared occupational situations derived from the scoping review (Chapter 2)—how they can be created by what is done, who participates, and how their interactions either promote or impede inclusive experiences. The description illustrates how the situation was structured, what is done by whom, and what roles are assumed.

How the CC was Structured

Data sources: Classroom Observations C1 (CROB 3), Teacher's Interview (C1 TI), Focus Group Interview (C1 FOG)

The CC took place at the same time every Friday morning during the fourth lesson, symbolised in the weekly timetable by a group of geese gathered. The list below the sign outlined the CC structure, divided into four parts (see Figure 17). First, the teacher read from a storybook for 10 minutes. Second, during the Letterbox session, letters to Lolo and Xerxes, the classroom soft toys, were read. Third, topics submitted by children on sticky notes were discussed with the entire class (FOG 296). Fourth, children presented items they had brought to the CC circle. Afterwards, the children were free to move to the presenters' desks to ask further questions, touch, or play with the items.

A task list displayed the four roles children could assume during the CC (Figure 18). From left to right, the letterbox symbolised a child emptying the letterbox. The chair referred to the chairperson's role in guiding the class through all tasks. The basket symbolised bringing artefacts from home to show to peers. The clock represented the timekeeper's role, ensuring that the teacher read from the class book for the allotted 10 minutes. The use of visual symbols rather than text made the CC structure accessible to all children, supporting their understanding of and participation in the democratic process regardless of reading abilities. The structure provided diverse opportunities for engagement: some tasks were mandatory for all children, while others encouraged participation without being compulsory, enabling children to contribute in ways that matched their interests and readiness.

Figure 17.

Oak School: Notices Communicating the Organisation of the Class Council

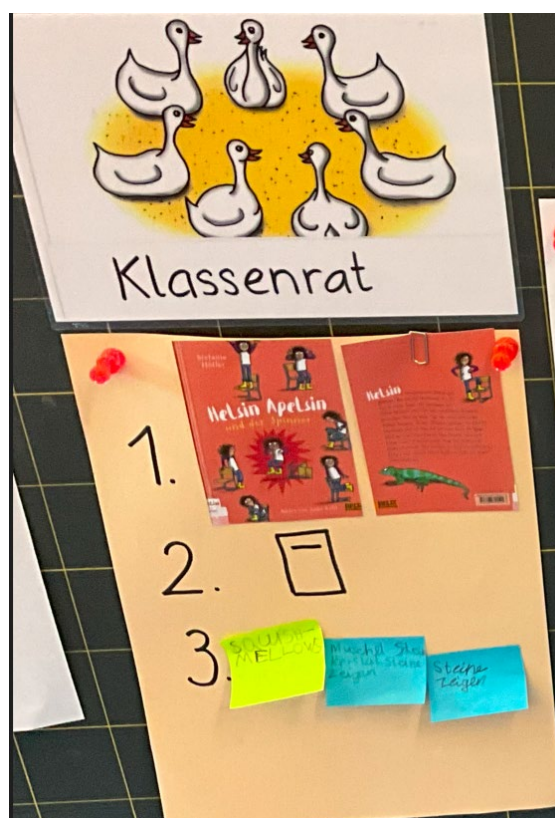
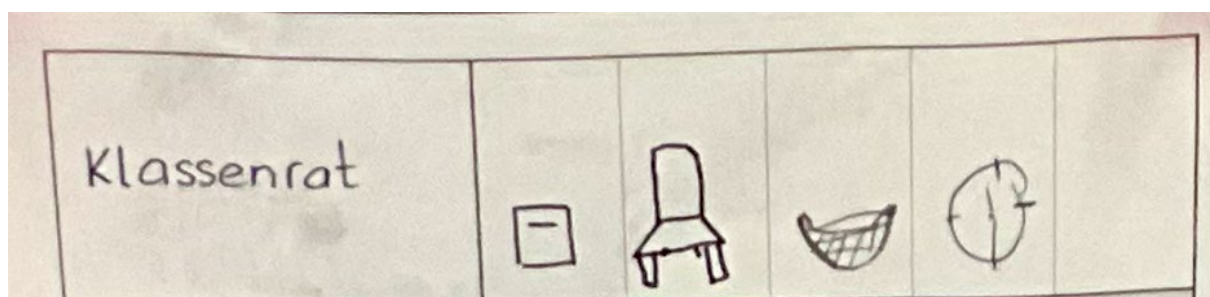


Figure 18.

Oak School: Table supporting the organisation of the CC



Preparation Activities

After class reading (Figure 17, point 1), the letterbox with letters to Lolo and Xerxes was emptied (point 2). At the heart of the CC were the topics to be discussed, written on sticky notes and collected under point three on the CC board (point 3). The CC agenda was set by the children throughout the week based on issues that mattered to them. Teachers supported the process by encouraging children to bring emerging questions to the CC (C1 TI 98). This child-centred approach, combined with supportive structures,

placed children in charge to act together, discussing, and resolving issues democratically, thereby promoting inclusion.

To prepare for the CC, the children arranged the chairs in a circle, ensuring a seat for all. The seating arrangement was flexible, allowing staff and children to mingle. Sonja sat closer to the leading child to offer support. This mingling and the intentional use of space fostered an atmosphere where the stage belonged to the children, while the staff provided unobtrusive support to encourage independence and inclusion.

Sharing a CC Situation

The CC discussion began after a brief opening sequence involving letters from the children addressed to Xerxes and Lolo asking to take them home. Vera, who chaired the CC this week and was familiar with the routines, proceeded with the next agenda item, announcing the topics at hand, written on small blue sticky notes. The first note requested information about which film would be shown at the farewell evening. Sonja clarified that this question was for her to address, stating that she and Lisa had already “pre-selected five films for consideration” and that they would communicate their decision at the next CC (C1 CROB 3 27). Sonja asked Vera for the note so she could place it in the class book for safekeeping and as a reminder about the task (C1 CROB 3 27).

Vera picked up the second note, which asked about free play (C1 CROB 3 28). Anna expressed her wish for the class to have more free play time together. Lisa responded that she and Sonja were considering this during the 3-hour farewell celebration, alongside eating and watching a film together (C1 CROB 3 28). The third sticky note contained a question from Doris regarding the status of a book order (C1 CROB 3 29) from a recent author reading event. Sonja clarified that the order would be sent out once all classes had finalised their orders (C1 CROB 3 31). The three issues, choosing a film, the desire for free play, and checking the status of the book order, exemplified the diversity of children’s concerns. The way the discussion unfolded provided insight into how classroom staff shared responsibilities with the children by structuring it to require minimal support. Decisions and information were communicated clearly, enabling children to understand both the reasoning and the process, while also offering opportunities for their wishes and feedback to be considered, valuing their views throughout the process. This structure and welcoming atmosphere created inclusion as all children participated and contributed to the class activity, assuming different roles.

With all the discussion points resolved, Vera introduced the third segment of the CC, focusing on objects brought by the children from home. Those wishing to present an item had previously placed a sticky note with its name on the CC wall. A presentation space was designated on the floor to the left of the chairperson. Three notes on the floor guided their presentation: 1. Explain what it is. 2. What is unique about it? 3. What do

you do with it? (C1 CROB 3 33-35). After each presentation, the children could ask three questions.

Vera selected the first sticky note and read aloud, “*Cars [Auto]*”. Nino presented two small toy cars he had brought. Sophie wanted to know who gave him the cars, and another child asked how long he had owned them. Nino answered these questions and a follow-up inquiry. Sonja concluded the sequence by saying that those were the three questions, thanking Nino for sharing his great cars (C1 CROB 3 39). Next, Neva and Anja presented together in the same way (C1 CROB 3 41), demonstrating that the format also accommodated collaborative presentations. The third sticky note belonged to Luca, a timid boy. He carefully stepped forward to the presenting space and unfolded his blue Italian football shirt. He explained that it was an original children’s Italian national team shirt. Nino, a football enthusiast (C1 PGOBS), pointed out that blue was a well-known colour for Italy’s national team. Sonja then noted that Maria was also wearing an Italian t-shirt that day, but hers was orange. The children discussed and speculated that perhaps the Italian football team wore an orange jersey when playing outside Italy (C1 CROB 3 42-50). This exchange illustrated how the structured presentation facilitated child-leadership and spontaneous peer-to-peer learning evolved. The discussion demonstrated how the CC valued children’s diverse knowledge and interests, with Nino’s expertise in football being recognised and incorporated into the collective learning experience.

Sonja wrapped up the CC by announcing that all children who presented items from home should return to their desks, while the rest of the class was invited to walk around, observe the items, and ask further questions (C1 CROB 3 56). Vera received applause for her CC chairing (C1 CROB 3 57). As groups of children visited Nino, Neva, and Luca at their desks, they talked and played, engaging more informally with the presented objects and each other. This unstructured phase enabled children to pursue their individual interests and form spontaneous connections with peers beyond the formal circle time.

The children’s actions of bringing items from home, presenting them, and responding to questions facilitated inclusion by giving children the opportunity to share their individual interests or cherished possessions. This practice also supported connections between home and school, offering insights into children’s diverse interests and experiences outside the classroom and facilitating understanding among peers. Peers connected with each other by asking questions or initiating group discussions, demonstrating interest, and valuing each child’s unique contribution. The child-centred approach in both the agenda discussion and presentation segments brought children’s concerns to the fore, allowing them to be discussed and resolved within the class community, and providing a space for children to share their interests. Their contributions

and new topics enriched the everyday curricular work. In both instances, each child was equally valued as a member of and contributor to the community, reflecting the principles of inclusion.

The description of the CC exemplified how a carefully structured shared occupational situation facilitated inclusive experiences. The systematic organisation created opportunities for children to engage in various actions and roles, contributing according to their interests and comfort levels. Child-led agenda-setting, peer-to-peer questioning, and collaborative decision-making, all subtly supported by teachers, shaped the activity into a community space where each child's voice held equal value. Crucially, the flexible yet supportive framework enabled children to assume leadership roles, share personal interests, and engage with diverse perspectives while staff provided unobtrusive scaffolding that promoted independence. This shared occupational situation demonstrated how inclusion was facilitated through the deliberate creation of opportunities for participation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility of the learning community. The CC's success lay in its ability to strike a balance between structure and flexibility, ensuring that every child could participate and contribute to the group experience of their classroom community.

The Classroom Staff's Actions and Experiences

Data: Teacher's Interview (C1 TI), Classrooms Observation (C1 CROB 1,2,3)

Sonja and Lisa had co-taught this second-grade class for nearly 2 years. Through their daily work with the children, they created inclusive practice through three main approaches: doing things together (explored in the first theme), establishing inclusive values (second theme), and collaborating with children, their parents, the classroom assistant, therapists, and subject teachers (third theme).

Doing Together, Being and Becoming One Class

Sonja's statement, "*together, all of us, we are one class [miteinander, alle, sind wir eine Klasse]*" (C1 TI 227) illustrates how the two teachers aimed to lead the children to do things together and connect as a class. Doing together to become one class was an ongoing dynamic process within which Sonja and Lisa emphasised the actions required to embrace the diversity of all 18 children. Leading, listening, and connecting were the main actions and strategies Sonja and Lisa intentionally used to guide the children through becoming one class.

Leading

Leading recognised Sonja and Lisa's actions and main teaching responsibility of connecting the diverse children as a class, where each child had an equal standing.

Sonja used the analogy of the children in a class being a “*pack of young wolves*” (C1 TI 51). Left alone, some move this way, some that way, fighting, establishing, and installing a pecking order and endangering themselves. Sonja and Lisa led the group of children so that each of them had an equal position, and they did not endanger themselves (C1 TI 51). Sonja proposed that a single adult wolf would be overwhelmed, so two to three adults are helpful to guide and lead the 18 diverse children, placing the responsibility on adults “*leading the pack*” and “*looking together*” (C1 TI 51). This metaphor illustrated how the teachers understood their role: actively preventing exclusionary peer hierarchies by maintaining each child’s equal position within the class community.

Leading became evident in situations where teachers actively observed and provided feedback, such as when children contributed to the group or when teachers intervened in children’s conflicts, guiding the children towards resolution. Throughout these scenarios, there was consistent emphasis on the significance of collaboration, discussion, and reflection between the two teachers regarding how to respond to children’s actions in specific situations. Sonja, for example, explicitly valued Mario’s contribution to the group after he put a tricky puzzle back in the box so other children could access it (C1 CROB 2 24). By publicly acknowledging such actions, the teachers reinforced the values of consideration and equal access that supported the class becoming one community.

Sonja emphasised the importance of children experiencing the teachers as fully present and attentive to all children and their actions in class. Both educators acknowledged that maintaining this high level of presence was demanding and “*energy-intensive*” (C1 TI 54), requiring a significant degree of willingness and commitment. The collaborative nature of their teamwork proved to be instrumental in leading the class to become inclusive, particularly during discussions about challenging situations. Shared leadership enabled them to sustain the attentiveness required to see and value every child equally.

Another aspect of their effective leadership was their mutual encouragement to simplify tasks, alleviating stress for both themselves and the children. They placed great importance on the ability to reflect together (C1 TI 69), facilitating changes and adjustments to routines and teaching methods to make things more straightforward and allow them to be fully present (C1 TI 64). This reflective practice enabled them to maintain the consistent, attentive leadership necessary for all children to experience equal standing within the class.

Listening

Alongside leading the class, listening to all children and adults, while learning how to do so, facilitated inclusion and becoming one class. Through listening, Sonja and Lisa guided the children toward feeling like equal members of their class community where

their voices were heard and respected by both peers and adults. They intentionally modelled listening by giving equal attention and consideration to every child, demonstrating that each voice held equal value.

Some listening situations occurred spontaneously. For example, Lisa and Sonja listened to children's suggestions to change occupations and situations in class. The teachers discussed these suggestions and followed them with action. This could involve everyday occupations, such as a boy asking to write his homework tasks from the blackboard first thing in the morning so he wouldn't have to think about it. This request led to a change in routine, which was introduced to all children (C1 TI 127/C1 CROB 1 8). In this way, the boy contributed to co-creating daily routines that supported the entire class. By responding to one child's idea and extending the solution to all, the teachers showed how listening and acting upon an idea could transform individual requests into collective benefits.

Listening situations were also created intentionally. The weekly CC served as a structured meeting for both listening to the children and facilitating listening among the children themselves (C1 TI 91). Within this forum, children put forth their proposals and wishes to the teachers, and experienced being listened to. The process of being and becoming one class was fostered through children learning to listen to one another, and through their further connection as they discussed solutions and acted on the agreed solutions. Situations where classroom staff and children connected to become one class are explored in the next sub-theme.

Connecting

Connecting encompassed how shared experiences and daily activities helped the children build relationships and a sense of community within the classroom. Teacher-led actions occurred when teachers created opportunities for interaction among all children; for example, by encouraging simple actions like singing songs together or shaking hands with classmates they had not greeted before (C1 CROB 1 42). An example of child-initiated connection arose when one child found the swimming lessons challenging because the water was too cold. After stating this problem in a CC session, facilitated by a question from Sonja, other children voiced that they shared this experience. Knowledge of their shared discomfort led the class to connect as a group and collectively seek and implement solutions with the swimming instructor. Sonja saw this as an opportunity to "*practise a sense of community*" (C1 TI 98), highlighting how connecting through shared challenges strengthened the class as one community.

The children learned the skills to connect by participating in the CC (C1 TI 94), which the teaching team had structured to cultivate and enhance the children's abilities to participate and lead. Creating opportunities for children to experience various roles, such as leading the council, scribing, or presenting, fostered equality and enabled

children to appreciate diverse ways of contributing. Through rotating these roles, children gained insight into different participation experiences and learned to respond to peers' varied needs and contributions. As children mastered these roles and increasingly took charge of proceedings, teachers could step back, creating space for peers to connect and lead together with growing independence.

"Together, all of us, we are one class" was created through teachers leading and children learning to take on leadership roles. It involved teachers actively listening and being present. At the same time, children learned the skills of listening and being present, and experienced being listened to and contributing to, as well as changing, situations. The emphasis was on valuing and nurturing a sense of community, ultimately connecting the children in their diversity to become one class, facilitating inclusive experiences for all. Children's and teachers' actions in shared occupational situations were guided by shared values such as lived diversity, accountability for one's own actions and work, and thriving as a class and individually. These values are elaborated upon in the next theme.

Establishing Inclusive Values

Establishing inclusive values involved creating a classroom environment where everyone, children and adults alike, was actively involved and respected. By leading, listening, and connecting all children and adults in shared occupational situations, Sonja and Lisa established inclusive values, ensuring that diverse contributions were equally valued (subtheme 1 - 'Living Diversity'). When conflicts or disruptions arose, they were addressed thoughtfully to maintain respect and fairness. This commitment to equality and respect enabled co-creation and inclusion, a collaborative process in which all participants contributed their unique perspectives and strengths to the learning community. For the class community, Sonja and Lisa established values that shaped how diversity was lived in practice. Children were held accountable for their actions and encouraged to reflect on both their own and others' contributions (subtheme 2 - 'Being Accountable'). Sonja and Lisa remained attentive to each child's development, recognising it as part of classroom diversity and adapting strategies and procedures so the children could thrive individually while connecting as a group, promoting inclusive experiences (subtheme 3 - 'Thriving Individually and as a Class Over Time').

Living Diversity

Living diversity involved recognising all 18 children in the class as individuals who acted with different strengths and vulnerabilities without applying a norm. Responding to this diversity required creating tailored solutions that addressed each child's vulnerabilities and served their specific needs within specific situations. Lisa and Sonja equally appreciated children's varied abilities and skills in a range of activities, whether it involved

excelling in soccer, problem-solving in mathematics, or engaging in academic, sports, artistic, or other endeavours. Lisa stated:

Some of them have a lot of skills that they know of one another ... He plays soccer well ... [Sie haben zum Teil viele Fertigkeiten, welche sie voneinander Wissen ... Er kann gut Fußball spielen.] (C1 TI 92)

To sensitise children to develop skills further, Lisa moved discussions from just 'doing' towards the specifics of 'doing something well', highlighting specific competencies of playing soccer: "*what does it mean to be able to play soccer well? Is that, ...can he hold the ball well? Or is he a great shot?*" (C1 TI 92). Lisa's recognition of specific skills in doing something well illustrated how diverse abilities were valued and supported, actively establishing inclusive values. Appreciation for individual abilities and strengths extended beyond recognition, informing how Sonja and Lisa actively adapted practices to support each child's participation and inclusion.

Responding to diversity also meant addressing vulnerabilities that created barriers to participation. Swimming lessons presented particular challenges for Raul, who became nauseated by the chlorine smell in the swimming pool. His high olfactory sensitivity challenged his participation. Lisa responded by adapting the environment and addressing obstacles related to Raul's neurodiversity, arranging for him to change in a separate room and supporting him to overcome his nausea. When "*changing in the changing room didn't work at all*" (C1 TI 182), Lisa's adaptive response included these separate accommodations while supporting Raul, the swimming instructor, and the class. She carefully reduced barriers, then withdrew once Raul managed the routines and adapted to the sensations and setting, enabling his inclusion. Vulnerabilities and strengths were understood as part of diversity. Sonja and Lisa lived up to the value of all children having equal rights to be guided through obstacles they faced in doing things. This approach created a safe space for diversity:

Yes, there are different children here, so you always have to pay a little attention to them [Ja. Also es hat hier verschiedene Kinder, bei welchen man immer wieder ein wenig darauf achten muss.] (C1 TI 228).

This subtheme demonstrated how living diversity involved both recognising and actively responding to each child's unique strengths and vulnerabilities in everyday situations, establishing inclusion as a lived responsive practice. The next subtheme looks at how all children being accountable contributed to establishing inclusive values.

Being Accountable

Children being accountable for and taking charge of their own learning, and not judging others, promoted inclusion. Being accountable meant that children were held responsible for their actions and expected to contribute to the class. When their actions were disruptive, children were held responsible and had to account for the consequences.

Structured routines provided children with a framework, offering clear expectations regarding the what, how, and when of completing specific tasks. For example, writing down homework assignments in their booklets was a routine established at the beginning of each day. With the guidance of these routines, children could engage in independent and self-directed work. Nevertheless, teachers observed the working habits of children and provided individual feedback to those who may have had delays in starting their work. For instance, Sonja commented to a boy, *“I notice you’re not making much progress; why do you think that is? [Ich sehe, du kommst nicht so vorwaerts; was denkst du, woran das liegt?]”* (C1 CROB 1 23). This approach aimed to hold the child accountable for his tasks.

Sonja and Lisa also held the children accountable for interacting in a way that valued their peers as equals, establishing this as an inclusive value. By addressing conflicts and irritations, they created an atmosphere where children felt safe and open to discussing any concerns they may have had. Sonja stated:

And so, our children have learned that they actually have to take a stand on their behaviour. They have to take responsibility for their behaviour. In a good way. So, we also give a lot of positive feedback. [Und so haben unsere Kinder gelernt, dass sie eigentlich Stellung nehmen müssen zu ihrem Verhalten. Sie müssen die Verantwortung für ihr Verhalten tragen. Im Guten. Also wir geben auch viel positive Rückmeldungen.] (C1 TI 42)

Holding the children accountable for their behaviour was enabled by having two classroom teachers (4 eyes and ears), which meant Lisa and Sonja had the capacity to be more alert to irritations or problems regarding social interaction and resolve them early, which was essential for the respectful atmosphere that prevailed in their classroom. Unresolved problems tended to continue subliminally with the children and the teachers (C1 TI 42). However, Sonja and Lisa proactively tackled tensions among children, reducing problematic situations and creating a safer, inclusive atmosphere.

Emphasising the importance of working together and contributing, children were frequently tasked with assessing the collaboration within their groups by indicating their opinions with thumbs up or down, during various group activities. Sonja observed that the children’s self-evaluations aligned with the teachers’ observations (C1 TI 100).

By structuring learning environments such as ateliers, the classroom staff facilitated opportunities for children to take on teaching or coaching roles. The classroom staff acknowledged the challenge of managing atelier work, which involved handling various tasks and items. They expressed feeling overwhelmed by the task of instructing everything, considering the numerous elements that needed introduction, which led to involving children who had successfully completed the tasks as experts. Sonja encouraged children who were stuck to ask peers who had already completed the task,

for support (C1 TI 75). Contributing to their peers' learning was a competence Sonja and Lisa highlighted. This expectation positioned children as accountable both for their own learning and supporting others. They practised this skill gradually with all children, as explained by Sonja:

But they also had to learn how to help. So not just to say, hey, you have to write 14 there because it is 14. But rather, think about it ... bringing them on the track. And we often practised this in plenary, in specific situations. Who gives a tip? Yes, then what is a helpful hint. [Sie mussten aber auch lernen, wie man helfen kann. Also nicht einfach zu sagen, hey, da musst du 14 hinschreiben, weil es 14 gibt. Sondern, überlege einmal ... auf die Spur bringen. Und das haben wir oft auch im Plenum geübt, in gewissen Situationen. Wer gibt einen Tipp? Ja was ist dann ein hilfreicher Tipp?] (C1 TI 75)

Tasks, such as brainteasers or puzzling tasks, required a lot of perseverance and trial and error. Once a child had managed to solve a challenging task, Sonja informed the class that it was possible to solve it, naming the child who solved the task. Before the announcement, Sonja quietly checked with the child if they were willing to share their knowledge with the class (C1 OBS 1 54). This practice honoured children's agency in deciding whether to take on the accountability of teaching peers. Some children enjoyed sharing, while some declined, which was accepted. Explaining and bringing other children on the right track was challenging. In a dialogic learning approach, the teacher made the child's thinking visible, supported by visualisation and keeping a record, for other children to gain insight. In this way, children who successfully solved problems were positioned as contributors to collective learning, with the teacher mediating this shared accountability (C1 OBS 1 45). This peer teaching structure enabled children to be both learners and contributors, establishing accountability as a reciprocal value that supported inclusive practice. Acting accountably when engaging with other children and contributing to one's own and others' learning enabled inclusive experiences for all children, leading to the next subtheme: thriving individually and as a class.

Thriving Individually and as a Class Over Time

Thriving individually and as a class captures how individual children learned and gradually became more skilled in doing things for themselves, and contributed to the building of the class community, working together with other children. Data collection occurred at the end of their second-grade year. The teachers and students had collaborated for nearly 2 years.

Lisa and Sonja elaborated on the co-creation of shared occupational situations in the class, such as atelier work or the CC, which evolved with this specific group of children. Ideas proposed by the children were actively pursued, and the classroom staff engaged in reflective processes to develop and structure these situations. The careful creation of shared situations, such as the CC, resulted in transformative experiences as

a group for both the class and the individual children involved. Sonja: *"It has developed. This class council has developed"* (C1 TI 97).

At the beginning of the first grade, Lisa and Sonja initiated the process by reflecting on the children's experiences and identifying various emotions during various activities. On Fridays, they introduced a sharing activity, placing small glass nuggets on an "emotion-fish", beginning with four emotions. The children then shared their experiences in activities such as singing, writing, and doing Maths, articulating how they felt, as seen in Sonja's statement: *"I felt happy during reading"* (C1 TI 97). This approach facilitated the children's learning to reflect, share, and actively listen to one another. Sonja continued: *"And that's how it started; they reflected a little and formulated their reflections"* (C1 TI 97).

Within this safe environment, children felt comfortable openly sharing their experiences, recognising the diversity of emotions among their peers. Subsequently, the children were encouraged to document their experiences and express their emotions in writing, sharing these reflections with the class. As a result, the CC evolved, with initial questions emerging that the class began to discuss collectively. Over time, these discussions gained increasing significance and depth (C1 TI 97).

Throughout the week, the teachers identified and addressed various topics, continuing to enhance the CC. Lisa:

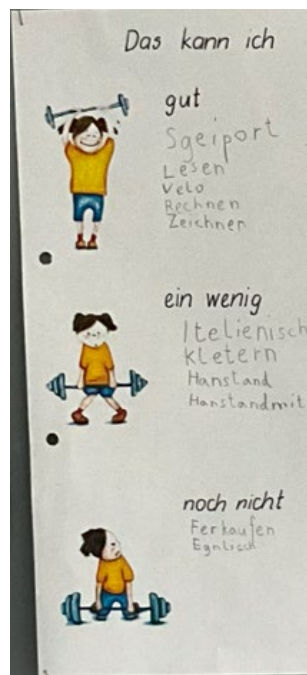
Yes, we had quite a few conversations like that for a while. We often had to pick things up from class and discuss them. And then, we sometimes said: "We'll discuss it in the class council. It just developed that way. [Ja. wir hatten eine Zeit lang recht viele solche Gespräche. Wir haben oft Themen aus dem Unterricht mitgenommen, und sie besprochen. Und dann haben wir manchmal gesagt: „Wir besprechen das im Klassenrat. Das hat sich einfach so entwickelt.]" (C1 TI 94)

The children played a crucial role in introducing topics important to them, and the classroom staff created situations and structures conducive to these discussions, ensuring a safe environment where everyone could express their thoughts. As a result, the class thrived together.

The thriving of the class nurtured individual thriving and vice versa, as students actively reflected and shared their experiences, contributed to solutions, and negotiated with other children and classroom staff. Each child was seen with their specific interests, competences, and potential which Lisa and Sonja also attended to and integrated into the class, enabling an atmosphere of being one class that supported inclusion. To cultivate this atmosphere, they encouraged self-awareness and consideration for others through the use of tools. Initially, children were prompted to reflect on their skills and abilities using the "well, a bit, not yet" tool (Figure 19).

Figure 19.

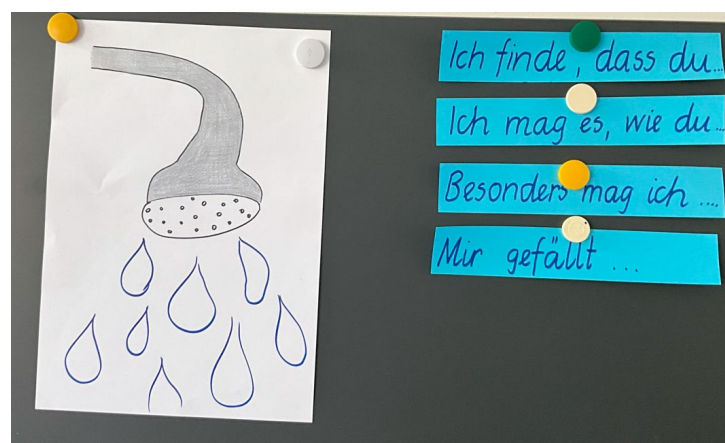
Oaks School: Example of Graphic to I Can Do well, a Bit, Not Yet



Advancing in their approach, they introduced “warm showers” where children utilised “I-messages” to provide each other with feedback, expressing what they appreciated about one another (Figure 20).

Figure 20.

Oak School: Example of Graphic for Warm Shower



Providing initial prompts allowed children to articulate their warm showers for others. Lisa directed the focus towards activities and doings, away from looks. Lisa observed the impact of enacting these procedures in their everyday lives, illustrated by a boy complimenting Sandro after his meltdown:

“Hitting the jackpot” from my point of view, when Mario, who recently complimented Sandro after he had a meltdown and said he thought it was great how he was able to calm down again after the meltdown. And Sandro sits on this chair and says: “Thank you”. ... And that was just the way it was. They all knew he’d snapped. [„Den Vogel abgeschossen“ aus meiner Sicht, hat kürzlich Mario, welcher nach dem Sandro einen Ausflipper hatte, ihm ein Kompliment gemacht hat und gesagt, er habe super gefunden, wie er nach dem Ausraster sich wieder beruhigen konnte. Und Sandro sitzt auf diesem Stuhl und sagt: „Danke.“ ... Und dass war einfach so. Sie haben alle gewusst, er ist ausgerastet.] (C1 TI 92)

Lisa and Sonja co-created inclusive values and practices with the class by acknowledging the children’s diversity, progressively enhancing their competencies, and overcoming challenges in doing together in various situations.

Building Cooperative Networks

Creating inclusive experiences for all children relied on building cooperative networks amongst the various, essential key players within the classroom and the extended school context. In or near the classroom were children, their parents, and Claudia, the classroom assistant. The class ‘mesh’ or network extended to therapists (speech-language and psychomotor) working with individual children, as well as specialised teachers for PE, Music, and Arts and Crafts who worked with the class.

Lisa and Sonja approached network-building as a means to connect with diverse individuals, gain insights into various facets of the children in their class, and coordinate actions that facilitated inclusive experiences for all children. Their cooperative efforts were shaped by their respective roles and competencies. They remained attentive to evolving situations, consistently reflecting on both their in-class and extended teaching for the children. Guided by shared values, Lisa and Sonja coordinated their cooperative actions with various stakeholders. The presentation of their cooperative mesh begins with ‘Establishing Co-Teaching’ (their own collaborative partnership), followed by ‘Establishing Cooperative Relationships with Parents’ and ‘Coordinating with the Class Assistant’, as well as ‘Connecting Threads Across School Life’.

Establishing Co-teaching

Lisa and Sonja established co-teaching as their primary form of collaboration in which two teachers share responsibility for planning, instructing, and assessing the same group of students. Their co-teaching involved shared planning and joint teaching sessions, as well as ongoing reflection on their practice. They engaged in regular dialogue about individual children’s needs; discussed classroom situations as they emerged; and jointly made decisions about routines, structures, and responses to challenges. This consistent collaborative process enabled them to establish a distinctive understanding of their responsibilities, roles, and tasks. Sonja took charge of leading the class, overseeing and

organising parent involvement, including annual meetings and reports, managing required formal processes, and implementing the first- and second-grade curriculum.

Lisa's responsibilities encompassed SNE and support coordination for diagnosed children qualifying for 'intensified and basic support'. Together, they covered the diverse class support options, such as SNE and German as a Second Language, as well as lessons. Their collaborative co-teaching arrangement enhanced their flexibility in organising and structuring lessons and support for their heterogeneous class.

Lisa's former experience as an SNE teacher in varied classrooms with different teachers, class systems, and children highlighted numerous benefits of collaborative co-teaching in their current arrangement. Lisa valued the collaborative co-teaching system she and Sonja had established because:

You can never have the finesse, the spontaneity, that flexibility ... you can't 'handle' it, if you're a SNE teacher jumping around in several classes, that's not possible ... So it's only possible, because we want to work the way we work. [Und dann kannst du niemals die Finessen, die Spontanität, diese Flexibilität ... die kannst du nicht „handeln“, wenn du als SHP in mehreren Klassen umherhüpfst, dann ist das nicht möglich ... Also das geht nur, dank dem wir so arbeiten möchten, wie wir arbeiten.] (C1 TI 209)

This finesse and flexibility were products of their sustained co-teaching based on shared values, which enabled spontaneous adaptations and nuanced responses to children's needs.

Central to their co-teaching was what Lisa and Sonja described as “*creative freedom*” (C1 TI 209) which emerged from their collaborative partnership and enabled them to co-create and adapt shared occupational situations, such as the CC and atelier work, in response to the specific growth and dynamics of their class. Their collaborative creative freedom allowed them to innovate structures and routines that facilitated inclusive experiences for all children. Freedom to create together was both a product of their sustained collaboration and what seemed to be a joyful, effective way to advance inclusive practice.

Before this co-teaching partnership with Lisa, Sonja encountered the situation of highly fluctuating SNE teachers as straining and a real “*wear and tear*”, having to “*keep building new relationships*” with diverse support staff (C1 TI 217). In contrast, her sustained collaboration with Lisa provided the stability necessary for developing their shared approach to inclusive education. Their complementary responsibilities and competencies, coupled with their shared values in addressing the children's diversity, fostered a sustainable relationship built through everyday actions and reflections across various co-teaching situations. This partnership enhanced their teaching enjoyment, supported their well-being, and brought joy to the process of creating together. Moreover, ‘creative freedom’ allowed for flexibility and nuanced adaptations over time, enabling the

creation of responsive learning situations that catered to the class dynamic and individual needs, thereby co-creating inclusive practice.

Co-teaching all children was woven throughout Lisa and Sonja's practice. Rather than dividing responsibility for specific children, Lisa and Sonja shared collective responsibility for teaching every child in the class. Both teachers worked with all children regardless of identified needs, ensuring that no child was assigned to one teacher over the other. As demonstrated in the 'Doing Together, Being and Becoming One Class' theme, Sonja and Lisa collaborated with all children through democratic processes like the CC, peer teaching in ateliers, and co-creating classroom routines based on children's input. Lisa and Sonja engaged all children as collaborators in shaping the classroom environment and resolving challenges, reflecting their understanding that inclusive practice required children's agency to co-create.

Establishing Cooperative Relationships with Parents

In line with their shared responsibilities, Sonja oversaw the formal organisation of parent cooperation, while Lisa engaged with parents in situations where a child needed parental support for specialised home training, such as a 10-minute daily reading practice. Parent cooperation took on two forms: first, inviting all parents to information and class performance events; second, establishing individual contacts to address specific issues related to their child or facilitating parents' visits to the class.

Sonja and Lisa emphasised the significance of parents becoming acquainted with them before their children commenced school in their class. Consequently, they initiated cooperative relationships with all parents before the children started the school year. Sonja:

The children come to us before the holidays so that they get an introduction and the parents do too, and we do this quite deliberately ... and that's simply a valuable encounter. [Die Kinder kommen ja auch schon vor den Ferien zu uns, dass sie eine Vorstellung bekommen und die Eltern eben auch und das machen wir ganz bewusst ... Und das ist einfach eine wertvolle Begegnung.] (C1 TI 145)

In preparation, they sought specific information about the parents so they could provide adaptations, such as arranging an interpreter for those who may not understand or speak German (C1 TI 165); thereby extending inclusive approaches to parents.

Sonja and Lisa organised parent meetings to share experiences and knowledge focused on specific topics important to them and the class, such as 'social media'. To create a safe atmosphere, they randomly grouped parents by drawing tickets, encouraging discussions in smaller groups so that no parent felt exposed. This approach was consistent with their inclusive practice in the classroom, facilitating open sharing among parents and resulting in "creating a relationship of trust" (C1 TI 163), so that all parents could "feel at ease" (C1 TI 164).

Parents could gain insight into their children's school experience through school class visits. With the issuance of "visiting vouchers" (C1 TI 145), parents could visit their child at school, pre-announcing their visit, so the teachers and children knew about visitors. The parents were both welcomed in class and invited to attend special 'class events', such as those organised at the end of the first grade. Involving the music teacher, Lisa and Sonja, along with the class, orchestrated a performance featuring dancing and singing, as well as children's reading in parallel groups, in front of a small audience of parents, siblings, and other relatives. The children chose the literature with their teachers according to their reading competencies. As an inclusive measure, the classroom staff carefully created a safe space to accommodate the diverse reading competencies, avoiding direct comparison among the children. Sonja stated:

That was such a great thing ... that was also the first time we were able to get together again after Corona ... It just took on a different meaning, because it wasn't a taken for granted thing. [Das war so eine tolle Sache ... das war auch das erste Mal, dass wir nach Corona wieder zusammenkommen konnten ... Es bekam einfach, wie noch einmal eine andere Bedeutung, weil es so nicht selbstverständlich gewesen ist.] (C1 TI 161)

Sonja emphasised the importance of reconnecting with parents and re-establishing a sense of class community after the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

In individual contact with parents, both teachers prioritised prompt responses when parents reached out. They proactively initiated contact when they sensed a need for specific support or information "sparked" by a child's needs (Sonja, C1 TI 145). Classroom staff saw cooperating with parents as "pulling in the same direction" (C1 TI 164), which was important for individual children to thrive and be part of the class community. Overall, the teachers reported a high level of parent cooperation and appreciation for their efforts.

In their cooperative partnership with parents, Lisa and Sonja adopted actions and values that mirrored their inclusive approach to working with the class. They led the parent group and listened to and connected the parents during parent meetings. Furthermore, they valued diversity, actively sought parents' involvement and contributions, and created individualised parent cooperation, as indicated by their children's issues. The continuous evolution in shaping parent cooperation was rooted in their shared intention for their children's individual and the class's collective thriving.

Coordinating with the Class Assistant

Claudia served as the class assistant, dedicating seven lessons each week primarily to support Raul. However, during periods when Raul worked independently, Claudia could assist other children in the class. Lisa was responsible for supervising and coordinating Claudia's various tasks. Sonja outlined the weekly plan, and Lisa coordinated Raul's and

Claudia's programmes accordingly, preparing adapted tasks and materials as needed. Given Claudia's non-educational background, Lisa carefully coordinated which activities Claudia could support and which ones required a different approach.

In their aim to provide inclusive experiences for Raul by encouraging interaction with other children, Lisa coached Claudia regarding modulating and negotiating her support, gradually giving Raul "*more space*" (C1 TI 191) to engage with his peers. This relationship enabled the coordination of adaptive support that responded to Raul's changing needs and Claudia's capabilities, ensuring that assistant support enhanced rather than segregated Raul's participation in the class community.

Coordinating Threads Across the School Life

To create inclusive experiences for Raul and all children across various aspects of school life, such as PE, Music, Arts and Crafts, the teaching team emphasised the significance of coordinating with therapists and subject teachers through regular exchanges. Exchanging information with external professionals about the current situations of Raul and other children, as well as coordinating specific arrangements such as adaptations for swimming, were integral aspects of the collaborative efforts, which Sonja described as: "*incredible work behind it*" (C1 TI 184). Lisa added that she had to "*take the initiative*" to stay in contact and coordinate this "*mesh*" of different experts and parents, which required perseverance and dedication (C1 TI 187). Sonja described her colleague's work as contributing to inclusive practice:

All around, you actually keep the whole mesh going, you are actually the centre and connect the threads and coordinate them ... from the child's point of view. [Rundherum, das gesamte Geflecht haltest du am Laufen, du bist eigentlich das Zentrum und verknüpfst die Fäden und koordinierst sie ... aus der Sicht des Kindes.] (C1 TI 188)

Lisa and Sonja combined their competencies and roles as a team by delineating clear responsibilities and establishing ways for collaboration and networking with children, parents, class assistant therapists, and subject teachers. Shared values and ongoing collaborative reflections drove them to continuously develop and adapt their teaching approaches in various settings, both within and outside the classroom, to enable the class and children to thrive together as one class. Lisa and Sonja's collaboration with parents and other stakeholders aims to support the implementation and continuity of inclusive practices within the classroom.

The Children's Actions and Experiences

Data Sources: Focus Group Interview with the five children (C1 FOG), all Classroom observations (C1 CROB 1,2,3), Playground Observation (C1 PGOBS)

Co-Creating Shared Occupational Situations

The children's experiences of participation and inclusion in shared occupational situations varied. Some children chose to do things alone within the larger class setting or outside during recess, while others preferred playing and working with various children, and some favoured the same children. Both adults and children co-created shared occupational situations so children could do things together with all, with some, or alone. However, the degree of their influence differed: play and recess situations were typically shaped by children (sub-theme 1 - 'Children Shaping Shared Occupational Situations'), whereas adults more often directed learning situations in class (sub-theme 2 - 'Adults Shaping Shared Occupational Situations'). Across both contexts, shared occupational situations were shaped by what was done; how, where, and with whom it was done; the materials used; duration; and anticipated outcomes.

Furthermore, the degree to which children and adults created and led situations was fluid. For example, in a child-led soccer game during recess, adults could designate where children could play soccer and for how long. In adult-led situations, children chose from a set of mathematics activities, specifying with whom and where they wanted to work, as well as the sequence of the activities. The shaping of these situations influenced how children engaged with and supported one another or received support from classroom staff, shaping their inclusive experiences. Across these situations, children actively supported one another, contributing to inclusive experiences (sub-theme 3 - 'Supporting Each Other').

Children Shaping Shared Occupational Situations

Children shaping shared occupational situations, emphasised the children's actions and the balance between shared and individual doings. Typically, recess and free play situations provided opportunities for children to shape their own experiences and those of others. For example, Vera usually played with Frieda, engaging in imaginative games involving animal characters (C1 FOG 29). She reflected that during kindergarten, when there was more time for play, she had a wider circle of friends; entering primary school 2 years ago had narrowed her peer group (C1 FOG 25), leaving her with fewer children who shared similar interests in play.

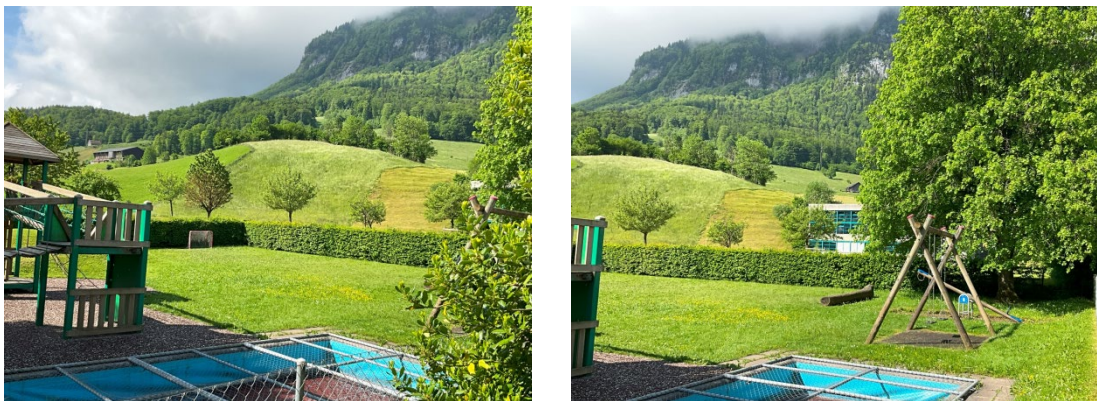
Doris reported a different experience: "*Actually, we don't play*" (C1 FOG 28). She enjoyed break time by sitting or standing with a small group of girls, suggesting that stable peer groups had become increasingly significant for her social interaction. Nevio described his break situation differently: "*Yes, I am mostly a loner*" (C1 FOG 32), simply "*walking around and observing*" (C1 FOG 34). He expressed contentment with this solitary mode of engagement (C1 FOG 36).

Raul's engagement varied, sometimes playing alone and sometimes with other children (C1 FOG 43). When playing soccer on the designated soccer ground with a

group of boys (see Figure 21), his classmate Nino often took a leading role. During these games, second graders from Nino's class (Sandro, Raul, Elia and Nino) and a parallel class formed two teams according to specific rules. Raul participated by remaining close to the goal near Sandro, the goalkeeper (C1 PGOBS 7-9). While he watched excitedly, hopping up and down, his physical engagement was limited; he tended to turn away from the ball, suggesting possible apprehension, while the other boys were highly physically and vocally involved. From a competitive standpoint, Raul did not directly contribute to the game's objective of winning (C1 PGOBS 9); yet none of the players commented on his style of participation (C1 PGOBS 15). Notably, despite his limited competitive engagement, Raul remained part of the soccer group. His inclusion could have been influenced by his classmate Nino who, while rejecting participation requests from non-classmates (C1 PGOBS 13), accepted Raul as part of the team.

Figure 21.

Oak School: Designated Soccer Grounds



Children created opportunities for doing things together and played an active role in engaging one another, shaping how shared experiences unfolded. Nino expressed enjoyment in teaching other children the intricacies of soccer, including providing detailed information about the rules. He described his role as a leader in organising teams, making decisions regarding fouls and their consequences, whether a free kick or a penalty, and determining who was permitted to participate in the game (C1 FOG 203–209; C1 PGOBS 13). These recess observations illustrated how children's peer connections, leadership dynamics, and rules influenced who participated and how, demonstrating that shaping inclusive experiences during child-structured activities could be flexible and was shaped by multiple and subtle social factors.

Adults Shaping Shared Occupational Situations

While children often independently shaped play and social situations, learning situations in class were primarily structured by adults, offering different forms of participation, choice, and support. These situations were shaped depending on subject-related

activities, the presence of classroom staff, and the children's support needs. For Math, the teaching staff organised learning as an atelier, allowing children to choose from various tasks, which offered diverse learning approaches (see "Class Description").

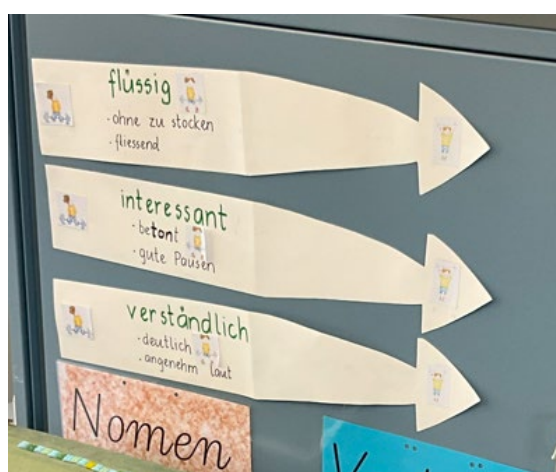
The children described that they mostly worked in groups with varying constellations. In the German language lesson, the classroom staff purposefully grouped the children into teams of three. Nevio described grouping as dependent on "the kind" of work (C1 FOG 108). Vera added:

Sometimes we are allowed to decide who we want to work with. But sometimes it's the teacher who decides. And most of the time we just go with whoever we think is coolest. But sometimes the teachers also say that you can choose who you work with, but sometimes with someone you don't always work with. [Wir dürfen manchmal entscheiden, mit wem wir zusammenarbeiten wollen. Manchmal entscheidet es aber auch die Lehrperson. Und meistens gehen wir halt mit jenen zusammen, welche wir am coolsten finden. Aber manchmal sagen auch die Lehrpersonen, ihr dürft selbst auswählen mit wem ihr zusammenarbeitet, aber mal mit jemandem, mit dem man nicht immer zusammen ist.] (C1 FOG 111)

Doris highlighted an advantage of collaborating, as when "getting stuck" you still have "two other eyes, who can also help" (C1 FOG 585). Additional structural elements supported doing together. For instance, when providing feedback on reading, visual cues, such as three arrows, guided the children to focus on fluency, reading in an interesting way, and comprehensibility (Figure 22).

Figure 22.

Oak School: Visual Cues Representing Reading Competence Criteria



The atelier work structure empowered children to set their own pace, decide whether to work individually or in groups, and choose tasks. Soft meditative music played in the background, allowing for quiet conversations. Sonja adjusted the music volume

when she needed to address the class or initiate a change. If children became too loud, she used the music to gently remind them to lower their voices, allowing the music to be heard while they conversed. This reminder was reinforced by a sign on the blackboard encouraging children to speak in whispers (C1 CROB 1) so all children could work.

Sound also served as a tool for adult-shaped learning situations. To gain attention, Sonja increased the volume of the music and announced a brief drink and toilet break. Established routines helped the children anticipate what was coming next. After the break, they gathered in a circle in front of the orientation board, accompanied by the soft hums of children who were already anticipating the next activity. Sonja invited two children to start the 'Hello, Good Morning' song. The children then shook hands with more classmates until everyone was involved. Sonja encouraged them to shake hands with those they had not yet met, using this simple routine to ensure everyone engaged with each other, thereby facilitating inclusion (C1 CrOB 1 42).

Supporting Each Other

Children expressed their enjoyment in helping one another, with Vera noting, "*I actually really like helping the other children*" (C1 FOG 191). Preferences for offering support varied: some children enjoyed helping with various tasks, while others specialised in specific areas. For example, Nino took pleasure in demonstrating soccer skills, and Vera supported Frieda with Maths homework or Raul with multiplication tasks, guiding him through problems and checking his answers (C1 FOG 117; C1 CROB 2 19).

Classroom staff intentionally facilitated individualised support amongst children. For instance, Sonja encouraged Vera to assist another child struggling with a task she had already completed, suggesting she offered "*a tiny hint or tip*" (C1 FOG 191). Sonja and Lisa actively encouraged children to seek solutions from their peers. When Doris confided in Sonja about difficulty reading a task due to an unfamiliar font, Sonja suggested that Doris consult Maria, who successfully deciphered the word "*Clock [Uhr]*" (C1 CROB 2 47). Similarly, when Sonja observed Mario accomplishing placement of a game with small triangles into a box, she exclaimed loud enough for nearby children to hear that he had "*helped many children*" (C1 CROB 2 24). In both cases, Sonja's attentive observation and response reinforced the importance of peer support and facilitated inclusion.

Situations that promoted inclusive experiences were structured as either adult-led (classroom) or child-led (playground). The flexibility of these situations allowed for adaptation, ensuring that support was provided where needed and facilitating inclusive experiences for all children. The presence and attentiveness of the teaching staff, alongside the children's active participation, nurtured inclusion by responding to the individual needs of all. In the classroom, intentional teacher-led structures regarding what, how, where, when, and with whom guided children in engaging together, whether

with all, some, or alone, while children valued the autonomy of having multiple choices in both settings.

The parents' actions and experiences described in the following section further complement the perspectives of children and classroom staff in creating an inclusive education, bridging the gap between school and family life.

The Parents' Actions and Experiences

Data Sources: Parent Interviews: Mrs Jakober, Nevio's mother (C1 PAI 1) Mrs Redzepi, Raul's mother (C1 PAI 2); Mrs Tauber, Doris' mother (C1 PAI 3); Mrs Huber, Nino's foster mother; (C1 PAI 4) Mrs Kurz, Vera's mother (C1 PAI 5)

Five mothers shared insights into their children's classroom experiences and collaboration with the teaching team. Diverse abilities and needs were represented amongst the children: Raul (Mrs Redzepi's son) had autism and received weekly SLT and PMT outside school; the family's mother tongue was Albanian. Nevio (Mrs Jakober's son) had sensory issues and preferred solitary play. Nino (Mrs Huber's foster son) is highly active and benefits from clear routines. Both Nevio and Nino attended weekly PMT sessions together, addressing different social interaction needs while learning from each other. Doris (Mrs Tauber's daughter) is characterised as independent and requiring minimal support. Vera (Mrs Kurz's daughter) is also independent in schoolwork, assists her friend Frieda with homework, and receives weekly tuition for gifted children.

Three themes were constructed from the analysis of the five parent interviews and other data sources. Building Bridges Between Home and School illustrates how classroom staff and parents cooperated to support children's learning and well-being, creating connections through shared values, communication, and trust that extended inclusive practice beyond the classroom. Valuing Individualising Classroom Practice reveals how parents valued teachers' individualised approaches to each child's unique strengths and vulnerabilities, recognising how staff adapted their methods to support diverse needs. The Class as a Dynamic Entity [Die Klasse als Gefuege³] showcases how parents perceived the class as an evolving community where children engaged together in shared occupational situations, accommodating individual differences while developing as a collective group.

Building Bridges Between Home and School

Building bridges between home and school involved creating connections and fostering cooperation between parents and classroom staff to support children's learning and well-

³ The word 'Gefuege' does not have a definite English translation; therefore, the original word is mentioned for this theme.

being across both contexts. These bridges were built through shared values, open communication, mutual trust, and collaborative problem-solving. By extending inclusive practices beyond the classroom to include families, teachers and parents worked together to ensure continuity of support for children's thriving.

Both parents and teachers played crucial roles in children's development at home and in the classroom. The interviewed parents shared various ways they collaborated with teachers to address specific support issues arising in their children's daily school life. These individualised, collaborative actions were enhanced by shared values between home and school that guided children's actions and behaviour. Furthermore, parents appreciated being invited to school for small-class events, which allowed them to interact with all the children in the class and observe their own children's performances alongside their peers.

The level of cooperation between parents and classroom staff varied, depending on children's situations and resources. Mrs Tauber, Doris' mother, noted that her daughter was quite independent in school-related tasks. Mrs Tauber viewed teachers both as educators and supporters in child-rearing (C1 PAI 3 47). She aligned certain behaviours that the classroom staff would not tolerate with her own values of social interaction (C1 PAI 3 47). Nino's foster mother similarly emphasised the importance of value-based guidelines in both school and parenting, noting they provided Nino with stability: *"I think they support Nino, they give him stability, and simple clear rules"* (C1 PAI 4 15). Mrs. Kurz experienced the classroom staff as both clear and warm-hearted, promoting an atmosphere of welcoming all, in contrast to the stricter, authoritarian approaches of earlier days (C1 PAI 5 54).

Parents experienced that classroom staff actively initiated communication and showed perseverance in following up on diverse school-related issues, guided by their value of children's accountability. For example, when Nino forgot his homework and was asked to retrieve it after school hours, the classroom staff promptly informed Mrs. Huber (C1 PAI 4 17).

However, parents also noticed that expectations were adjusted to accommodate individual family situations. Raul's family needed to provide more intense homework support than other parents, resulting in tension due to Raul's fluctuating daily condition. Mrs. Redzepi appreciated Lisa's understanding when she stated, *"don't do it (homework), if it doesn't work"* (C1 PAI 2 60). Additionally, Lisa bridged school learning and father-son relationships by implementing a daily 10-minute home-reading activity. Initially, Raul resisted working with his father, causing strain. Lisa introduced the daily reading time expecting cooperation from Raul. Establishing this routine took time but ultimately relieved the burden from Mrs. Redzepi and fostered a closer father-son

relationship, illustrating how Lisa understood inclusive practice as extending beyond the classroom to include the family system.

Mrs. Jakober recalled an incident where someone poured a bathing cap filled with hot water over Nevio's head. Nevio was very upset, and the classroom staff called her to pick him up. Witnessing her son's distress, she became upset and agitated (C1 PAI 1 42). However, the teachers reassured her by promising to investigate, sending her and Nevio home to recover. This gesture helped Mrs. Jakober feel supported, allowing her to focus on her son's needs. By acknowledging the mother's distress, classroom staff bridged home and school by addressing Nevio's needs and supporting the family as a whole (C1 PAI 1 42).

Some parents reported that trusting relationships built bridges between parents and teachers in situations where their children required support, with classroom staff extending their support to other family members. Such experiences were more common among parents of more vulnerable children. Mrs. Kurz recounted how her husband attended a class event where children sang and danced together, appreciating the inclusive reading setup where children had designated safe spaces to read based on their skills.

I think that is also inclusion ... in a setting where every child was 100 per cent sure that it would be a success and nothing could go wrong. [Ich glaube, dass ist auch schon Inklusion ... in einem Rahmen, bei welchem jedes Kind, 100 Prozent sicher war, das ist ein Erfolg, da kann nichts schief gehen.] (C1 PAI 5 50)

By valuing each child's strengths and vulnerabilities, while creating safe spaces for demonstrating individual abilities, parents recognised the approach as a highly inclusive practice. Parents and classroom staff bridged the gap between children's occupations at home and in class through a genuine interest in children's actions across both settings, combined with careful relationship-building. This cooperation promoted participation and inclusion by developing an understanding of supportive actions while considering parents' needs across both settings.

Valuing Individualising Classroom Practice

Parents valued how classroom staff individualised their practice to respond to each child's unique strengths and vulnerabilities. Parents recognised their children's particular strengths and challenges, and valued how classroom staff acknowledged and accommodated these individual differences. For some parents, observing how teachers individualised support provided reassurance about their child's place in the class community, while others reflected on the complexities of their children's social participation and sense of belonging

Four of the five parents described their children as being 'different'. Mrs. Redzeqi saw how Raul's ASD and sensory issues affected his interactions, such as participating

in group activities and playing soccer during breaks (C1 PAI 2 50). These challenges also manifested in specific eating habits, leading to Raul not eating on school trips (C1 PAI 2 47). Mrs. Jakober described Nevio as a calm boy with sensory issues who felt hesitant to socialise with the “soccer boys”, feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of their games and preferring to observe from the sidelines (C1 PAI 1 6). Even though Raul and Nevio expressed that they were comfortable having fewer friends, their mothers wished for them to have playmates during breaks.

Parents’ perceptions of their children’s individual characteristics manifested in various actions and contexts. Mrs. Huber perceived her foster son as having a pronounced need for physical activity, which she viewed as hyperactivity (C1 PAI 4 109). Whilst this posed challenges in the classroom, it manifested as a strength on the football field. Mrs. Kurz’s daughter, Vera, demonstrated quick learning abilities and attended the school’s gifted children programme. Mrs. Tauber described her daughter Doris as “*not really noticeable*” (C1 PAI 3 45). Parents valued how teachers recognised these varied personalities and found responsive actions to support each child individually.

Some parents experienced ambiguity regarding their children’s social participation, particularly concerning how others perceived their child, which could potentially hinder inclusion. Mrs. Redzepi believed that other children perceived her son as different and possibly “*demanding*” (C1 PAI 2 40), given that children were at different developmental stages. She sometimes felt sorry for Raul not having playmates after school; however, her son told her “*this is okay*” (C1 PAI 2 40).

Mrs. Huber perceived Nino as challenging for teachers, suspecting his energetic nature sometimes made it difficult for him to excel in school tasks (C1 PAI 4 168). However, she valued how teachers found ways to support his specific needs by providing movement breaks and allowing him and other children to hop up and down the stairs (C1 PAI 4 63). This adaptation demonstrated how the teachers individualised their classroom management strategies to accommodate Nino’s need for movement while supporting all children.

The school’s social setting seemed demanding for Nevio, who attended without enthusiasm and was happier during holidays (C1 PAI 1 6). However, Mrs. Jakober valued how teachers were attentive to each individual child’s needs, accommodating and valuing differences and adapting approaches:

Aha, you’re like this, and then we do it a little like this; and you’re like this ... and that’s special, I don’t know if everyone does that. [Aha, du bist so, und dann machen wir es ein wenig so; und Du bist so ... und das das ist speziell, ich weiss nicht, ob das alle so machen.] (C1 PAI 1 20)

This quote captured how Mrs. Jakober recognised and valued the individualising approach teachers took with each child, seeing this flexibility and responsiveness as central to creating inclusive practice.

Mrs. Kurz valued the personalised approach where children self-assessed their proficiency in tasks as “‘well’, ‘a bit’, or ‘not yet’” (C1 PAI 5 64). She favoured this method over traditional grading systems, as it enabled each child to track individual progress without adhering to standardised measures. She considered this more inclusive because it individualised assessment to each child’s own developmental trajectory rather than comparing children against a single standard (C1 PAI 5 64). She further observed that current inclusive efforts mainly focused on children who struggled, believing that gifted children, like her daughter Vera, should also be “*integrated into inclusion*” (C1 PAI 5 32). Her understanding of inclusion extended to a broader supportive attitude:

That inclusion is lived within the school and class, that it is about helping each other. [Dass Inklusion innerhalb der Schule und der Klasse gelebt wird, dass es darum geht, sich gegenseitig zu helfen.] (C1 PAI 5 32)

and bringing diverse children together, all having an equal stand [alle haben den gleichen Stand.] (C1 PAI 5 84)

Mrs. Kurz’s reflections demonstrated how she valued individualising approaches that recognised the full spectrum of children’s abilities, from those who struggled to those who excelled, emphasising that true inclusion required responsive practice, addressing each child’s individual strengths and vulnerabilities.

The Class as a Dynamic Entity [Die Klasse als Gefuege]

‘Die Klasse als Gefuege’ exemplified the class as a collective of all children and teaching staff, forming a dynamic entity characterised by their diversity. Irritations and disputes in the Gefuege were attended to and resolved, which parents understood as actions ensuring children had equal status. Reflecting on the class becoming this Gefuege, mothers shared various factors that resulted in their children and others becoming part of and contributing to the dynamic entity.

Mrs. Huber and Mrs. Jakober both affirmed that their sons had found their place within the class as part of the Gefuege, just as they were. Mrs. Huber mentioned that it took Nino some time to understand and adjust to the class rules. She believed that Nino’s established relationship with the two teachers played a crucial role in his integration into the Gefuege. Based on this bond, she felt that he was “*at his best*” (C1 PAI 4 166), noting a distinction from subject teachers where Nino seemed less compliant. Mrs. Jakober suspected that the classroom staff led the group to become this Gefuege by resolving disputes among the children, thereby contributing to respectful interaction and ensuring children had equal status in voicing their views, which supported inclusion (C1 PAI 1 20).

Children were guided to work with all the children in their class, and classroom staff employed various strategies to cultivate this Gefuege, such as engaging in group work with various children. Nevio's mother explained that groups were "*diced*" together and varied, so children had opportunities to collaborate with all. Similarly, the seating arrangement changed every few months, resulting in new desk neighbours the children did not choose, though occasionally they could choose. Nevio's mother believed this practice contributed to an underlying attitude of "*all being equal*" and "*good just the way they are*" (C1 PAI 1 26). She suspected that Nevio, who tended to be more of a "*loner*", might have experienced more exclusion and bullying in a class not upholding values of equality and inclusion.

Parents' views and experiences were shaped by their personal values and their own educational experiences within a specific sociocultural, political, and professional context. They bridged how they perceived their children in their families at home and in the dynamic entity of the class, where diverse children acted together in shared situations that supported inclusion. Parents understood inclusive practice as all children being part of the Gefuege. More specifically, Mrs. Jakober observed individualised adaptations for all children, whereas Mrs. Kurz emphasised the significance of all children experiencing success and supporting one another, highlighting different but complementary aspects of inclusive experiences. The perspectives of classroom assistants and therapists, presented in the following sections, further illuminate how individualised support unfolded across multiple professionals.

The Class Assistant's Actions and Experiences

Data sources: School Web page; Assistant Interview (C1 AI); Classroom Observations 1 and 2 (C1 CROB 1; C1 CROB 2); School Community Concept Paper Assistance staff / Assistenzpersonal (CPA); Classroom Staff Interview (C1 TI)

Claudia's work as an assistant entailed supporting Raul's 'one-to-one' situations. If he did not need her direct support, she supported other children. Out of the 24 lessons per week that children attended at school, Claudia was in class for seven. Lisa, as a SNE teacher, was responsible for instructing Claudia on what and how to work with Raul and supervised her work (CPA 2). With fewer hours, different responsibilities and tasks, Claudia's engagement and experience within the class placed her in a unique position, also impacting Raul's position.

Navigating Support and Position

This theme describes how Claudia navigated both her support and position as a classroom assistant working with Raul in inclusive settings. These two aspects were inseparable: how she positioned herself (spatially, relationally, and in terms of authority)

shaped the support she could provide, while the type and intensity of support she rendered defined her position within the classroom community. Navigating this dynamic relationship was central to facilitating Raul's inclusion.

Claudia worked under Lisa's supervision, who prepared materials and planned adaptations for Raul. Claudia received materials and instructions in advance, worked alongside Raul, preferably within the classroom, and debriefed with Lisa after lessons (C1 AI 191). The classroom teacher, Sonja, also preferred that Raul and Claudia remained in the classroom. For example, during a mathematics lesson, Claudia and Raul worked quietly in a reading corner with adapted materials while the rest of the class engaged in similar activities at their desks (C1 CROB 2 49). This setting allowed Raul to remain part of the shared classroom situation, with his one-on-one work in a separate area, yet engaging in similar activities to other children, a more inclusive approach than leaving the room.

Claudia navigated her level of support depending on the specific requirements of the task, group setting, or teachers' preferences. During learning arrangements such as the maths atelier, Raul worked independently while Claudia supported other children (C1 CROB 2 17). Her approach reflected Sonja and Lisa's method of enabling learning, offering prompts and questions rather than direct answers so that children could "*figure it out on their own*" (C1 AI 18). By adapting her support in this way, Claudia positioned herself as a facilitator for multiple children, reducing the visibility of Raul's individual support arrangement.

In small group settings, Claudia facilitated Raul's peer interactions by sitting "*behind*" rather than "*next to*" him, encouraging him to take the initiative in engaging with and responding to his peers (C1 AI 60, C1 CROB 2 46). She slowed down group work to give Raul space to respond at his own pace, supporting his engagement and inclusion (C1 AI 393–395). This subtle approach was reinforced by the supportive classroom culture, where children naturally encouraged each other to participate (C1 CROB 2 47). Claudia's strategic positioning, physically behind rather than beside Raul, exemplified how she navigated both her spatial position and the intensity of her support to facilitate peer interaction while remaining available when needed.

Claudia's nuanced navigation of support and position extended beyond the classroom. On a school trip involving travel, hiking, and interacting with llamas, she supported Raul's gradual engagement with the group of animals and children, considering his sensory challenges and anxiety by scaffolding his actions. Initially, he walked between the llamas "*with arms folded*" while Claudia walked backwards to guide him. Later, they "*walked*", with Raul behind Claudia, and on a third attempt, Raul "*walked through on his own*" (C1 AI 219–221). Claudia also noted progress in sensory tolerance: he touched the animals and ate "*his snacks*" without "*needing to wash his hands*",

something he had previously insisted on (C1 AI 229). By gradually reducing support in response to his changing needs, Claudia enabled him to join his peers in the situation, acknowledging the effort Raul invested in overcoming barriers linked to his neurodiversity.

This one-to-one support balanced Raul's individual needs with his engagement in shared occupational situations. However, Claudia's position differed from that of the classroom teachers, as she did not lead the class, which gave her a distinct status. This distinction influenced how Raul was perceived as the only child with an assigned assistant. Navigating this visibility was central to her position. Although she provided essential support, Raul often sought validation from Sonja or Lisa for "*marking and confirming his work*" (C1 AI 165), instead of Claudia, acknowledging their greater perceived authority. When Raul resisted her instructions, Claudia deferred to Lisa, who then reinforced her role with firm guidance (C1 AI 321). These dynamics underscored Claudia's need to navigate her ambiguous position as a supportive adult with limited authority in the classroom. This ambiguity shaped both how she could provide support and how her position was understood by Raul and the classroom community.

Lisa played a crucial role in helping Claudia navigate this balance. She advised Claudia to reduce the intensity of her support through active observation, intervening only when Raul "*immersed himself in his world*" (C1 AI 24). This less intrusive approach made Claudia's presence less conspicuous and reshaped her understanding of the assistant role. Lisa further advised Claudia to "*ease up a bit*" (C1 CLSI 191), highlighting the importance of navigating support to enable Raul to experience inclusion more fully.

Claudia's position was shaped by her long-term involvement with Raul, spanning from kindergarten through second grade, and continuing into third grade as he transitioned to a new class and school building. Aware of Raul's neurodiversity and anxiety, Claudia anticipated the transition would be particularly stressful. To reduce this stress, Lisa suggested that "*it would be good*" if Claudia continued "*with him*" to reduce the number of changes: "*new class, new children, new school building, new teachers, new class assistant*" (C1 AI 275). Claudia acknowledged that these changes also placed demands on her, yet she aimed to provide sustainability and stability in Raul's support. Claudia's continuity positioned her as a consistent thread across changing contexts, demonstrating how her sustained presence and evolving support relationship with Raul contributed to his inclusion over time.

Claudia's navigation of support and position illustrated the complexity of providing individualised support within an inclusive classroom. An identified tension arose from Raul's status, being the only child with an assigned assistant, which marked him as different. Her position was also defined by continuity: she had supported Raul since kindergarten and would continue with him into third grade, maintaining stability while

adapting her support as his needs evolved. This sustained relationship enabled Claudia to refine how she navigated both the intensity of support and her positioning.

The Therapist's Actions and Experiences

Data Sources: Nadja Gut, Psychomotor Therapist (C1 PMT); Tom Zonta, Speech and Language Therapist (C1 SLT)

Two therapists worked with Sonja and Lisa's class. Both therapies were education-related disciplines integrated into the canton's SNE framework. Tom Zonta was a speech-language therapist who had been working for 10 years for the community. He had been seeing Raul for weekly one-to-one sessions since kindergarten.

Nadja, the school's psychomotor therapist, also with 10 years of experience, supported three children from the class. She worked individually with Raul and in small group sessions with Nevio and Nino. Although the SLT and PMT rooms were conveniently located within walking distance from the school, the therapists had separate spaces and did not share the teachers' staff room. Therapy sessions were usually scheduled outside regular class hours, and parents were responsible for ensuring attendance. Lisa, as the SNE teacher, coordinated communication between all parties.

The therapists' actions and experiences with children, parents, and classroom staff were constructed into three themes. The first theme, Working in Therapy, described the therapists' work with the children and parents. The second theme, Understanding and Translating illustrated how therapists got to know the children and their family situations in more private settings, and how they translated this understanding to the class context, leading to the third theme, Safe Space in a Larger School Community.

Working in Therapy

This theme describes each therapist's work with children in general and with the three specific children from Sonja and Lisa's class. It shows how that work was guided by clear responsibilities.

I have the responsibility to ensure that the child gets better at school or kindergarten ... so that they simply have fewer difficulties. That is a responsibility towards the school and not just towards the parents. [Ich habe den Auftrag, dass das Kind in der Schule oder im Kindergarten ... besser wird... also, dass es einfach diese Schwierigkeiten weniger hat. Das ist ein Auftrag der Schule und nicht nur von den Eltern.] (C1 PMT 158)

Nadja worked with Raul to develop flexible thinking and generate more ideas through role play. Her aim was to strengthen his social skills; thereby, indirectly supporting his engagement with others in shared occupational situations, enabling inclusive experiences. She had a sincere interest in children's well-being, working to

support them in occupations where they “*need to do well*”, seeing their “*potential to succeed*” in their doings. She transmitted an underlying attitude of “*come on, you can do it*” (C1 PMT 215). She explicitly linked Raul’s therapy to his broader goal to engage with peers, conveying to him that in therapy he is there “*to practise*” and work at “*doing with other kids*” (C1 PMT 215).

When Nadja grouped Nevio and Nino, she harnessed their contrasting personalities to learn new skills with one another. She described Nino as fast and “*impulsive*”, whereas Nevio was “*slow and deliberate*” (C1 PMT 39). During role play with Nino, Nevio demonstrated “*imagination and fantasy*” (C1 PMT 39), becoming adept in acting and deciding, skills less evident for him in the class setting. When Nino engaged in play with Nevio during therapy, he learnt to listen and negotiate effectively.

Nadja used the separative PMT setting to strengthen the three children’s individual competencies that supported their interactions in class. She then looked for opportunities to transfer these skills by engaging children in reflective discussions about what went well in therapy. However, while her work aimed to enhance the children’s individual social competencies, its contribution to inclusion remained indirect and was limited by the setting’s separative nature.

As Raul’s speech language therapist, Tom had worked with him since kindergarten on various language-related and broader developmental skills. Tom proposed that his therapy approach would not have been suitable for a classroom setting, as one of their primary achievements was establishing a trusting working relationship, with Raul initially struggling to engage in therapy without his parents present. Tom’s work had also seen Raul shift from initially resisting and evading demands to working collaboratively.

Given that Albanian was Raul’s family’s first language, Tom focused on language-related aspects in therapy, working on vocabulary, speaking, reading and writing skills, differentiation of b and d, and graphomotor skills. Implicitly, he also worked on endurance, perseverance, and autonomy. To support learning autonomy, Tom introduced strategies to aid Raul’s comprehension of content or tasks, ranging from re-reading sentences to asking for help when needed. While attaining these skills showed Raul’s individual progress, how they translated into his inclusion in class remained unspecified.

Both therapists saw value in working with Raul, Nino, and Nevio in separate settings. They believed that observing the children’s strengths and vulnerabilities outside the classroom allowed for more child-centred approaches tailored to their specific needs and abilities. Although this individual work could enhance personal competencies, its direct impact on classroom inclusion was limited by its separative nature.

Translating and Reframing Understandings of Children's Doings

Translating and reframing were two interrelated processes by which Nadja and Tom assessed and observed children's skills and challenges to gain deeper, nuanced understanding of their learning needs. Translating involved communicating these insights to classroom staff and parents, enhancing collective understanding and clarifying the gap between a child's current abilities and the demands of classroom activities. Reframing involved explaining how children's difficulties affected specific tasks and actions in class, such as how a child's emotional state could impact their participation and engagement with peers. This deeper understanding could lead to adjusting expectations, teaching strategies and support methods within both school and family environments.

Adopting this individual-focused view contributed to the shared goal of ensuring children's well-being at school and success in their occupations. Nadja reflected that as "*a therapist*" rather than "*an educator*", they "*looked at things differently*" (C1 PMT 115). She explained that therapists aimed to delve deeper into understanding why children did things or behaved in certain ways to uncover and "*change the underlying cause*" (C1 PMT 265) behind their behaviour. When translated into the classroom context, this deeper understanding could potentially lead to adjustments in educational approaches or strengthen the relationship between teachers and students, thus supporting inclusive practice. Nonetheless, the therapists agreed that not all teachers actively sought collaboration or saw value in these complementing views on children to benefit their school practice.

Therapists working separately and away from the school building might have hindered exchange between classroom staff and therapists. At the same time, attending therapy sessions in the school building may have carried a stigma for children. How the creation of a separate "*safe space*" contributed to or deferred inclusive practice is explored in the following theme.

Therapy, a Safe Space in the Larger School Community

Despite viewing themselves as integral to the education system and responsible for enhancing children's academic performance, both Nadja and Tom described the intersection between therapy and home as a "*safe space*" essential for establishing trust with parents and children. For children, a safe space could entail exposing vulnerabilities that they might have been apprehensive to expose in class. Nadja specifically mentioned traumatised children, whom she believed were particularly in need of safe spaces to avoid triggering fear or aggression while still working on therapeutic aims. Tom suggested his expertise extended beyond SLT, encompassing elements of psychology and special needs education within his profession.

Nadja also broadened the notion of safe spaces in relation to normative expectations within some class cultures. She reflected on parents' common desire for their children, such as those with autism spectrum disorders, to "*have friends*", raising the question of whether this "*corresponded to the child's needs*" (C1 PMT 121). From this viewpoint, a safe space entailed negotiating children's individual needs and abilities rather than conforming to perceived normative expectations, thereby aligning with inclusive values as a form of lived diversity.

While one-to-one sessions may have seemed at odds with inclusive practice, occurring outside the shared classroom context and focusing on individual remediation, they allowed therapists to gain nuanced understanding of why children acted in certain ways and adapt their interventions to cater to these differences, supporting diversity as an inclusive value. However, how this deeper understanding or the provision of a safe space for parents and children translated into inclusive classrooms remained uncertain, as therapists were not actively involved in creating a class community that valued all children equally.

The Principal's Actions and Experiences

Data Sources: Principal Interview (C1 PRI); Teacher Interview (C1 TI); Assistant Interview (C1 AI)

Fabio had served as principal for 4 years, overseeing pedagogical development, personnel leadership, and operational management, including financial responsibilities. Within each of these domains he contributed to developing the school towards inclusion, with organisational aspects such as smaller class sizes favouring inclusion alongside developing teaching skills guided by pedagogical concepts.

A key initiative under Fabio's leadership was the school-wide adoption of the NA concept (Omer, 2011), focusing on the dimensions of 'presence', 'self-control', and 'building support networks'. By integrating NA, Fabio aimed to promote an environment where all students felt valued and supported, thereby enhancing inclusive practices within the school. This approach aligned with inclusive education principles by fostering a school culture that emphasised relational authority and collaborative support. The approach will be elaborated in the theme Promoting Inclusion by Implementing and Reinforcing the Concept of NA.

As principal, Fabio actively translated cantonal legislation and SNE guidelines into daily school operations. His leadership guided inclusion through allocating children to suitable classes, matching teaching staff, and negotiating with parents regarding inclusion opportunities for their children. These actions will be encapsulated in the theme

Leading Towards Inclusion: Enacting Cantonal Legislations and SNE Guidelines into Everyday School Life.

Promoting Inclusion by Implementing the Concept of NA

Implementing the concept of NA schoolwide illustrates how an overarching concept could provide a method for the school to develop inclusive practice that encompassed all children and teaching staff. Fabio introduced and implemented Haim Omer's (2011) NA concept at his current school to foster inclusive practices. He emphasised that inclusion was fundamentally an attitude:

For me, inclusion is also a question of attitude. And the right people who have the same attitude have to work together and want to live this attitude. [Für mich ist Inklusion auch eine Haltungsfrage. Und es müssen die passenden Personen zusammenarbeiten, welche die gleiche Haltung haben und diese Haltung leben wollen.] (C1 PRI 11)

To establish this attitude, Fabio cultivated, encouraged, established, advocated for, and built the key NA dimensions of presence, relationship-building, and support networks. He organised team workshops aimed at helping staff apply NA strategies in daily classroom interactions. The following five sub-themes explore how Fabio implemented NA through specific actions aligned with these dimensions.

Cultivating Vigilant Presence

Cultivating vigilant presence involved Fabio emphasising that being present with vigilance towards what happened in situations and responding in a supportive manner was central to inclusion (C1 PRI 15). This vigilant presence was illustrated by Sonja in class, who connected children to support each other in situations (see p. 109). Vigilant presence and being tuned into the situation was also demonstrated by Claudia who supported Raul on the yearly class trip, walking with the llamas and gradually reducing her support while tuning into Raul's adjustment to the situation (C1 AI 219-221). Through workshop discussions and modelling, Fabio cultivated awareness among staff, encouraging them to develop attentiveness to how children do together in shared occupational situations.

Encouraging Modeling of Cooperation

Encouraging staff to model cooperation involved Fabio emphasising how listening to one another and coordinating their actions impacted students' cooperative behaviour. By setting an example in "*listening*" and demonstrating how to "*behave calmly and cooperate with others*", children "*adopted that behaviour*" (C1 PRI 57). He explained: "*If I (as a teacher) set an example that I listen, ... or can behave calmly, can cooperate with someone, can collaborate, then I (students) adopt that behaviour*" (C1 PRI 61). Adopting

cooperative behaviour modelled by classroom staff could impact how children worked together and interacted, creating values for respectful interaction and inclusion.

Establishing Strong Teacher-Child Relationships

Establishing strong and sustainable teacher-child relationships was facilitated by structural arrangements. Specific to Sonja and Lisa's class was the co-teaching situation of a SNE (Lisa) and classroom teacher (Sonja). Fabio highlighted how having two equal classroom staff covering most subjects established "*strong learning relationships*" between teachers and children (C1 PRI 43). This approach encompassed fewer teachers covering most subjects. Being often in the classroom with the class and engaging with all children in various situations established trust and a sustainable relationship between children and teaching staff (C1 PRI 43). To this end, Sonja and Lisa covered all the SNE classes (intensified support for Raul and basic support) and the German as a Second Language classes (DAZ). Subjects such as Sports, Music, and Arts and Crafts were taught by consistent specialised teachers.

Sonja reflected critically on previous models, where a SNE teacher came for just a few hours into the class, with teachers changing yearly. She found this approach straining and difficult for building strong sustainable relationships required to co-create inclusive practice (C1 TI 217). Fabio's establishment of the co-teaching structure addressed these challenges, creating conditions for the sustained relationships between staff-children and the co-teaching staff necessary for effective inclusive practice.

Advocating for Transparency in Treating Children Fairly

Advocating for transparency in treating children fairly, involved Fabio highlighting the importance of communication and transparency about adaptations made for individual children. Advocacy combined the dimensions of presence and relationship-building by teachers being present to children's sense of fairness and building relationships by communicating and explaining supportive measures for some children to all.

Fabio attributed to children a strong "*sense of fairness*" and argued that treating everyone "*equally*" was "*not fair*" (C1 PRI 61) in the context of inclusion. Disclosing and explaining the reasons for adaptations to children and parents facilitated "*an understanding for someone or for a way of acting*" (C1 PRI 113). Making these adaptations transparent could help shift perspectives from treating everyone equally to treating everyone fairly. However, creating inclusive practice posed a challenge of balancing the risk of exposing a single child by highlighting specific adaptations against building understanding and acceptance to promote lived diversity within an inclusive class environment.

Building Support Networks

Building support networks was a NA concept Fabio identified as a key factor in inclusive practice, arguing that "*doing it alone*" would not work and that "*support and networking*"

were essential to creating inclusive schools (C1 PRI 13). Some aspects of network-building and supporting each other were built through structured processes, such as “*intervision*” (structured peer reflection and problem-solving sessions) or “*interprofessional case consultation*” (C1 PRI 53). More informally, teachers connected to the support network by talking to other professionals outside the classroom about specific children, typically initiated by teachers themselves. While the principal emphasised the value of support networks, regular networking outside the classroom had not yet become routine practice and remained dependent on individual teachers’ initiative. Building on the understanding that support networks were essential yet remained dependent on individual initiative, Fabio’s leadership extended beyond cultivating collaborative attitudes to systematically enacting the structural and legislative frameworks that could institutionalise inclusive practice.

Leading Towards Inclusion: Enacting Cantonal Legislation and SNE Frameworks

This theme describes how Fabio led the enactment of cantonal legislation and SNE framework into everyday school life. The legislation and guidelines defined structural processes for how school communities could enact inclusive practice. The practical translation of these processes was part of the principal’s responsibilities, in cooperation with the school’s board of trustees and the school teaching team. The theme centres on how Fabio enacted inclusion in everyday school life, responding to children like Raul who required adaptations and additional support. Fabio’s leadership involved four key actions: supplementing cantonal support with municipal resources, advocating for contextualised assessments, matching teaching staff to class needs, and navigating tensions between inclusion rights and practical realities.

Supplementing Cantonal Support with Municipal Resources

Supplementing cantonal support with municipal resources describes how Fabio actively supported the teaching staff by providing additional support measures to meet the specific needs of individual classes. Support measures towards inclusive practice were regulated at cantonal level by assessing children’s needs individually. Cantonal regulations (see the start of the current chapter) did not consider how a class was constituted collectively, inclusive of children and classroom staff. Drawing on his knowledge of the classes, staff, and children, Fabio used municipal funding, for example for classroom assistants, to complement canton-funded measures, ensuring that inclusion worked in practice for children and classroom staff in specific class constellations.

Structural division between cantonal funding provisions and municipal funding responsibility had potential to jeopardise inclusion for children with higher support needs. The division particularly posed risks when, in contrast to Fabio’s actions in Raul’s case,

school principals or municipalities did not assess the specific demands of a class constellation and provide supplementary resources, such as classroom assistants or therapeutic support necessary for successful inclusion.

Advocating for Contextualised Support Assessments

Fabio expressed concern over the dissolution and restructuring of the canton's SNE department, which had previously enabled specialists to visit classrooms and collaborate directly with classroom staff. The restructuring led to school psychologists working in separate settings, away from the classroom, where they conducted assessments and recommended support measures.

Reflecting on current practices, Fabio highlighted the disconnect between assessments conducted in “*one-to-one testing settings*” and the realities of everyday classroom life with “*18 to 20 children*” (C1 PRI 39). He advocated for support measures to be coordinated with classroom staff and tailored to the specific environment in which the child is situated. Such an approach, he argued, would be more responsive to classroom dynamics and more effective in creating successful inclusion. Through these critiques, Fabio advocated for a shift in cantonal assessment practices, from decontextualised individual testing to classroom-based evaluations that more accurately inform support needs within inclusive classroom settings.

Matching Teaching Staff to Class Needs

Fabio emphasised the importance of matching teachers' skills with the diverse needs of children in their classes. He considered the composition of each class, particularly the inclusion of students with special educational needs like Raul, to ensure that the class and teaching staff were matched to best create an inclusive environment.

Fabio highlighted that Sonja and Lisa's co-teaching set-up, covering most subjects together, had provided “strong teaching relationships” and offered complementary skills that best matched Raul's and the class's support needs. However, regarding inclusion, Fabio acknowledged that while this successful model demonstrated how the municipality could “*offer integration*”, such arrangements could not be replicated “*in all school locations*” (C1 PRI 105).

Navigating Tensions between Inclusion Rights and Inclusive Practice

Fabio acknowledged that Switzerland had ratified the UNCRPD in 2014; however, in everyday school life he observed limitations, citing a Federal Court ruling which stated that there was “*no unconditional right to integration*” (C1 PRI 101). He described challenges in negotiating solutions for children with high needs, particularly when parents' communication shifted towards asserting “*their right to inclusion*” (PRI 101), leading to differing views between school authorities and families. Fabio believed that in such conflicts, it was the child that “*ultimately lost out*” (C1 PRI 101). This tension underscored the importance of careful communication and the ambiguity schools faced

in enacting inclusive practice. While the Swiss principle of “*integration before separation*” (PRI 101) aligned with the Federal Court stance, where the child was ‘integrated’ in school situations if possible, it deviated from a fully inclusive approach that adapts the environment to the child’s needs. Acknowledging the current system’s limitations, Fabio advocated for a shared approach focusing on the “*child’s well-being*” (C1 PRI 101). In cases where the “*child is unable to cope*” he suggested that both schools and parents must “*mutually accept*” and consider solutions outside mainstream schooling (C1 PRI 101).

Fabio’s actions as principal demonstrated how leadership at the school level shaped the enactment of inclusive education through both pedagogical and structural approaches. The findings presented across the perspectives of classroom staff, children, parents, the classroom assistant, therapists, and the principal reveal multiple dimensions of how inclusive education was co-created, situated, and contextualised at Oak School. Having examined these varied perspectives and their interconnections, the following section distils these findings into key assertions that synthesise the context, actions, and experiences across all stakeholders.

Assertions Oak School Case

This section presents my assertions, derived from the case study report of the Oak School case, based on the actions and experiences of different participant groups within the context, described in the findings section. Case studies investigate how things work and aim to develop an understanding of complex situations within a specific context. They serve to synthesise key insights from the data by making generalisable claims based on the analysis of multiple data sources from specific cases (Stake, 1995), synthesising and highlighting key insights related to the research question: How is inclusive education created in mainstream schools in Switzerland for children aged between 8 and 12 years? Assertions are constructed through the analysis and interpretation of all data sources, shaped iteratively by my evolving understanding and experiences gained through engagement with schools as well as interactions with children, parents, teachers, therapists, and principals, alongside findings from the scoping review. Additionally, discussions with the supervisory team and their specific research expertise have supported the development of these assertions.

The assertions are presented in sequence, from classroom actions and situations through to broader influences on inclusive education. Specifically, assertions related to classroom situations, derived from the actions and experiences of classroom staff and children, are followed by those concerning therapists and the principal.

Assertion 1: Inclusive Experiences are Co-created Amongst all Class Members

Co-creating amongst class members refers to collaborative processes through which teachers and children actively shape shared occupational situations, enabling all students to participate and experience connections and inclusion. Co-creation of inclusive experiences involves working together and the intentional practice of noticing and responding to individual needs, skills, and perspectives. In the process of co-creating inclusive experiences, the development of the class as an entity, and individual thriving, is formed in an interconnected and simultaneous manner, with each dimension nurturing the other.

In co-creation of inclusive experiences, classroom staff intentionally make spaces and activities for class members to reflect on their own and others' experiences. This space enables children to critically assess and value their own and other children's contributions to the class community. Children learn to formulate and voice feedback to others, enhancing a culture of mutual respect as an inclusive value.

Co-creation also involves sharing responsibility and is supported by an ongoing dialogue among children and adults. This allows for the continuous development and adaptation of inclusive actions, monitored by the classroom staff, and leads to processes in which children develop their capacities to co-create inclusive experiences for all.

Assertion 2: Intentionally Choosing and Structuring Occupations to Connect Students Promotes Inclusive Experiences

The choice and intentional structuring of occupations by classroom teachers plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive experiences among diverse children. The occupations can be broadly categorised into two domains: collaborative doing and individualising doing in shared situations.

By choosing and structuring shared occupational situations that promote and require collaboration, classroom staff create opportunities for diverse students to engage with one another. Working together towards a common goal supports their connection. Additionally, choosing open, less competitive, and less outcome-focused occupations (e.g., singing, playing, art, crafts) fosters children's ability to interact with all peers, building an inclusive classroom culture. Choosing more outcome-focused, collaborative tasks, such as group work aimed at solving a specific problem, can still facilitate inclusive experiences when structured to support participation for all children. Structures that support children, enabling them to contribute according to their abilities, and valuing and respecting their contributions, promote inclusive experiences.

Choosing and structuring individualising occupations involves establishing routines that guide children's actions and providing clear expectations regarding what needs to be done, how, and when. Established routines facilitate children's independent

and self-directed work in a non-comparing atmosphere, where each child is in charge and held accountable for their own work. Individualising learning formats (e.g., atelier-work) can offer diverse tasks graded by difficulty levels. These formats are structured in ways that encourage children's self-directed learning to complete tasks at their skill level alongside other children working on similar tasks, reducing competitive comparison that interferes with inclusive experiences. While some tasks are suitable for peer collaboration, children have the freedom to choose whether to complete them individually or with a peer, which supports inclusive experiences.

Assertion 3: Classroom Teachers Who Establish and Share Inclusive Values and Co-lead a Class, Support Inclusive Practice

Classroom teachers include the SNE and the classroom teacher who establish and share inclusive values and engage in equal co-leading to promote inclusive practices. Co-leading refers to both teachers being equally present in teaching and leading all children in various teaching situations, ensuring that all teachers equally attend to all students and are equally seen by students as providing leadership. Co-leadership also prevents the alienation and stigmatisation of children with SNE by avoiding their separation with the SNE teacher for learning, while other children remain with the classroom teacher.

Sharing values and co-leading a class is supported by, and supports, mutual understanding of individual children's strengths and needs. The ways that each staff member supports individual children are aligned and implemented by all classroom teachers. Shared values and co-leadership ensure consistency and sustainability of inclusive practices when applied in various shared occupational situations, thereby promoting inclusive practice.

Assertion 4: Sustained Teaching Partnership Generates Creative Freedom in Developing Inclusive Class Communities

A sustained teaching partnership refers to a stable, collaborative relationship between classroom teachers who work together consistently over time, sharing daily experiences and responsibilities for all students within the same class. Through ongoing collaboration and reflection in everyday practice, teachers develop a deep understanding of individual children and the class as a dynamic, evolving entity.

This sustained partnership fosters creative freedom and the ability to respond spontaneously and flexibly to children's emerging needs while co-creating inclusive situations. Rooted in mutual understanding of the class community, creative freedom enables teachers to move beyond prescribed approaches and act with nuanced responsiveness. Teachers can adapt learning situations in real-time, shape inclusive class environments that accommodate change, and develop flexible practices that support both individual children and the collective group. Teachers with creative freedom can experiment with innovative approaches, adjust their methods based on what they

observe, and create inclusive opportunities that emerge from their deep knowledge of their students. This dynamic, responsive approach ensures that inclusive practice remains alive and adaptable, promoting meaningful participation for all children while allowing the class community to grow.

Assertion 5: Holding Children Accountable for Their Actions Promotes Inclusion

Holding children accountable involves the classroom staff guiding children to take responsibility for their actions and the ways their actions impact on themselves and others. Accountability is strengthened through positive reinforcement, with teachers actively commenting on and affirming children's contributions, emphasising the importance of their contributions in shared situations. Recognising positive actions and addressing issues cultivates a culture in which every child understands the value of their actions within the class. This approach promotes accountability as a means of supporting individual children and building class cohesion.

Addressing actions that negatively impact others, cause harm, or lead to exclusion further fosters children's accountability. To this end, classroom staff address such disruptions until they are resolved and remediated. The process guiding the resolution ensures that all sides are heard, with each perspective valued equally to understand the situation and how it came about. Once the issue is understood, solutions are explored collaboratively, consequences are decided, and actions are taken to resolve the conflict; ultimately helping to restore the relationships among the involved children. To ensure a conflict is fully addressed, resolution can extend beyond the classroom to external individuals, such as parents or social workers. By holding children accountable for their actions, an atmosphere is created where children feel safe, promoting inclusion.

Assertion 6: Equally Valuing Each Child Supports Lived Diversity and Inclusion

Living diversity means recognising that children in a class have different strengths, vulnerabilities, and learning preferences without applying a normative standard. Using actions that demonstrate how the diverse range of children's abilities across different domains are valued is essential for fostering inclusion. Valuing this diversity requires creating responsive solutions that address each child's specific needs and challenges by building on their individual strengths.

Equally valuing each child involves the classroom staff's efforts to meet the diverse needs of all children by modifying activities, providing support, and adjusting interactions, so that all can participate and contribute. This approach is modelled and encouraged by the classroom teachers, resulting in children learning to value the diverse abilities within their peer group and develop skills to include those with abilities different

to their own. For example, a skilled competitive soccer player might invite a less experienced peer to join his team, even at a risk of losing the game. Similarly, a child with strong mathematical abilities collaborates with a peer to solve a problem, encouraging and valuing their contributions. Likewise, when leading the CC, giving every child the opportunity to participate, drawing on their unique abilities, exemplifies inclusion.

Assertion 7: Learning to Support Each Other's Learning Promotes Inclusion

Supporting one another's learning means that children must develop the ability to recognise when a peer is struggling with doing a task or problem and learning how to guide them toward finding their own solution, rather than providing the answer.

Supporting peers in this way requires children to understand the skills and processes involved in a task. They must assess their peer's current level of understanding and identify ways to bridge the gap between that level and the demands of the task, without giving away the solution. These skills require a high level of situational awareness, presence, and empathy towards a peer, which supports inclusion. While peer support has the potential to create power imbalances, particularly if the same children are consistently positioned as helpers, it can also foster inclusion when rooted in a classroom culture of all helping all.

Assertion 8: Navigating Support Facilitates a Child's Engagement in Shared Occupational Situations with Their Peers

Navigating support refers to the practice of providing a child with as little assistance as possible, but as much as necessary, to enable their engagement with peers in shared occupational situations both within and beyond the classroom. This approach may, at times, involve initial, separate measures. For instance, a neurodiverse child may use a separate dressing room to minimise sensory exposure to noise and movement. Such adjustments can prevent overstimulation and enable participation in subsequent shared activities, such as swimming or PE lessons.

Navigating support requires the teaching team to commit to the inclusive value that the disabled child shares experiences and participates in situations with all. To do so, educators must develop a nuanced understanding of the specific participation challenges a child may face in a specific situation. Support measures are then created in a way that enables the child to interact with other children, responding to situations. These strategies rely on the changeability of a situation. They include modifying the occupation itself, adapting the physical and social environment, or working directly with the child. As situations become a better fit for the child's capability or the child's capacities evolve, support is gradually adjusted or withdrawn. The aim is to position the

child as an active participant among peers, supported in a way that facilitates, rather than interferes with peer interaction and inclusion.

Assertion 9: Parents Engaging in Class Activities Reassures Them That Their Children are Seen and Valued for Both Their Strengths and Vulnerabilities

When parents engage in class activities, mutual trust and partnerships between families and teachers are built. Teachers' efforts to support parental engagement reassure parents that their children are recognised both for their strengths and individual vulnerabilities. The teaching team's commitment to equity and participation, central to their classroom practice, is reflected consistently in their approach to working with parents.

Parental engagement in their children's school occupations forms an integral aspect of inclusive practice, extending the inclusive focus beyond the classroom to encompass the broader family system in support of each child's development and well-being. Through contact before the school year begins, relationship-building, ongoing communication, and varied forms of engagement, parents actively participate in their children's educational experiences.

Parental engagement is facilitated through both formal and informal means, ranging from structured information evenings and curriculum-related meetings to personalised interactions that respond to specific child-related needs. Efforts to accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity by organising interpreters or offering flexible formats for dialogue reflect inclusive values, and ensures that all parents feel welcome, respected, and able to contribute without pressure or exposure. Parents who engage in these opportunities gain insight into their children's learning through classroom visits, collaborative projects, and class events, strengthening home-school connections. Parent meetings organised around specific topics provide space for parents to exchange experiences and knowledge on themes such as 'use of social media'. By cultivating a safe and inclusive atmosphere, parents engage in open dialogue and strengthen connections as a community. By upholding values of diversity and emotional safety for children and parents, classroom staff bridge inclusive practices to the wider sphere of families.

Assertion 10: Therapists' Work Complements Inclusion but Working Outside the Classroom Excludes Them from Directly Influencing Inclusive Practice

Therapists working outside the classroom do not directly impact inclusive practice within it. Although external positioning limits direct classroom influence, therapists' contributions become valuable when they complement the inclusive actions and perspectives of teachers and families. This collaboration fosters a broader, more

nuanced understanding of how children's classroom engagement and learning can be both hindered and supported.

Therapy settings facilitate relational connections between therapists, children, and parents, enabling therapists to build bridges between school, home, and therapy. Therapists providing long-term support develop sustainable relationships with children and parents, supporting transitional processes when children move between grades. However, lack of direct classroom involvement limits therapists' ability to shape interventions for specific classroom situations, constraining their contribution to inclusive practice.

While therapeutic interventions aim to address underlying causes of occupational performance challenges, therapists primarily build individual skills outside classroom contexts. This setting is argued to provide a safe space where children can practise specific skills without peer exposure. However, the extent to which such work translates into improved classroom participation remains unclear.

Conducting therapy sessions outside the classroom limits opportunities to utilise specific classroom support options and capitalise on classroom resources and routines. This separation creates a paradox: while therapy aims to support children's overall development and participation, its external positioning constrains direct contribution to the inclusive practices it seeks to enhance.

Assertion 11: Implementing a Schoolwide Concept, such as 'NA', Forms a Unifying School Culture Supporting Inclusive Practice

Implementing a framework like NA supports inclusive practice by establishing a unified schoolwide culture. In the context of NA, the culture is grounded in presence, relationship-building, and engaging in support networks. By integrating NA principles through workshops and collaborative practices, schools cultivate a common environment where teachers and staff are more responsive to students' needs, actively model cooperative actions, and build strong, sustainable, and supportive relationships, thereby promoting inclusive practice throughout the school.

Assertion 12: School Principals Bridge the Gap Between Policy and Practice by Providing Additional Support and Negotiating Solutions to Enable Inclusive Practice

Within everyday school life, school principals play a crucial role in bridging policies outlined in cantonal legislation, the SNE Framework, and municipal school board objectives with the practical realities of implementing inclusive education. The principal serves as a key intermediary, identifying gaps between support needs and available provision while negotiating solutions that enable inclusive practice for all children. The process of bridging policy and practice involves the principal actively identifying where cantonal resourcing falls short of classroom requirements and initiating additional

provision to support inclusive practice. This includes complementing canton-funded measures with municipal resources, such as providing classroom assistants. The principal's role extends beyond resource allocation to encompass strategic decision-making about how to structure support for entire class communities rather than individual children.

Assertion 13: Tensions Created Between Rights to Inclusion and Federal Rulings Require Collaborative Negotiation to Sustain Inclusive Practice Focused on Children's Well-being

Legal frameworks surrounding inclusive education create tensions between human rights commitments and practical limitations. In Switzerland, the UNCRPD establishes commitments to inclusion; yet Federal Court rulings assert there is “no unconditional right to integration”, creating ambiguity about children's entitlements. These tensions manifest when parents and school leaders shift from collaborative problem-solving to rights-based advocacy, transforming cooperative relationships into adversarial ones, where competing legal interpretations overshadow the shared goal of supporting the child. The tension between ‘integration before separation’ (fitting children into existing systems) and true inclusive practice (adapting systems to children's needs) further complicates decision-making.

In the face of such disparities, it is ultimately the child who suffers, caught between competing adult interpretations of rights and responsibilities. Effective leadership within the school shapes inclusion by moving beyond legal positioning towards collaborative negotiation. Children's well-being is prioritised as the central criterion, demanding that both schools and parents work together to find human rights-based solutions.

The Oak School case findings and assertions illustrate how inclusive education is created within one particular context. The Village School case offers an opportunity to examine how a different school context shapes the creation of inclusive education.

Chapter 5. The Village School Case

The Swiss political and legislative context for both cases was outlined in Chapter 4. This chapter details the specific contexts of the canton, municipality, school, and class for the Village School case. The shared occupational situation of the Village School class PE lesson is described, followed by presentation of the actions and experiences of classroom staff, children, parents, assistants, therapists, and the principal.

Context Description: Canton, Municipality, and Village School Case

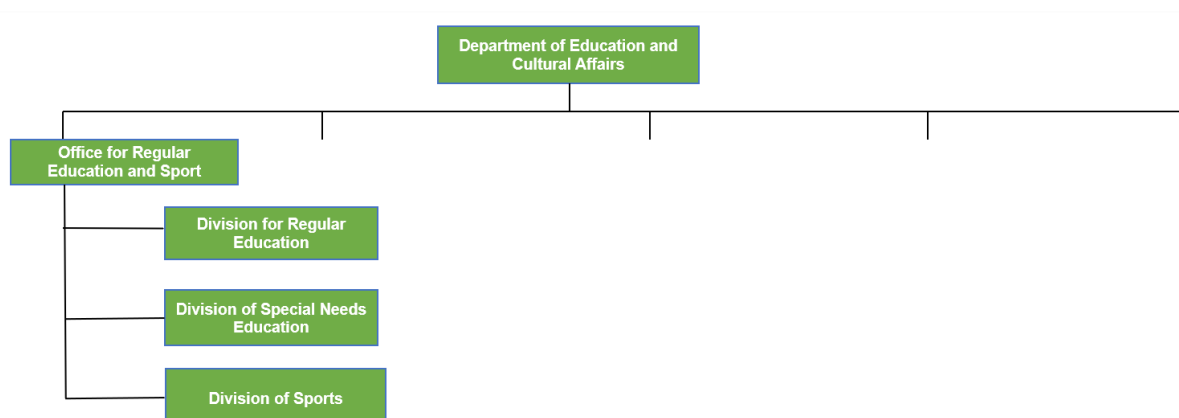
Canton

The Village School was situated in a canton with approximately 57,000 inhabitants, one of the smallest German-speaking cantons in Switzerland. The population was diverse in terms of disability and nationality. Specific cantonal disability data were unavailable; however, 68% were Swiss citizens or naturalised, and 27% had migrated to Switzerland (BFS, 2024). Children with refugee status or disabilities were excluded from specific cantonal statistics. However, 3.4% of schoolchildren were educated in segregated settings, 1.4% lower than in the Oak School case.

The canton's school structure corresponded to that of the Oak School framework (Figure 9, p. 78). The Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs oversaw five subdivisions, including the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, with additional sub-structures (Figure 23). As with the Oak School case, special needs education and regular education were structurally distinct.

Figure 23.

Organisation of the Office for 'Public School and Sport'



Note: Adapted and published with the cantonal authority's copyright permission. For confidentiality, this figure is not referenced.

Cantonal SNE

The canton's SNE framework demonstrates a comprehensive commitment to inclusive education, aligning with international principles including the UN Salamanca Statement (1994a, b) and UNCRPD (2006). Its primary objective is "to enhance the activity, participation, and connectivity of children and adolescents" (Konzept Sonderpädagogik, 2024, p. 14; for confidentiality reasons not in reference list).

By adopting the ICF framework (World Health Organization, 2001), which advocates for a shift from deficit-based disability models towards empowerment and inclusion, the canton moved beyond protective, institutionalised approaches. The SNE framework prioritises inclusive practices, requiring justification for any separate special education measures, such as why integrative settings had not been suggested or why obstacles could not be removed. It requires targeted documentation of support and evaluation results (Cantonal Framework for SNE, for confidentiality reasons this framework is not referenced).

Like the Oak School case, the SNE framework provides two types of special education support: 'Förderangebot' (Support Services) offers basic measures through classroom staff and school teams, including special education teachers and therapeutic services. 'Verstärkte Massnahmen' (Intensified Support Measures) requires external diagnosis from Beratung und Unterstützung; (Consulting and Support), and is delivered by special education teachers, therapeutic services, and relevant specialists. Cantonal support extends beyond education to include additional after-school care through 'sozialpädagogische Unterstützung' (social-pedagogical support), and structured day programmes in the form of social-pedagogical assistance or boarding arrangements (Konzept Sonderpädagogik, 2024, p. 15, for confidentiality reasons not in reference list).

Specialists from Consulting and Support typically work directly within schools and families' natural environments, collaborating with educational teams on-site. Resource allocation shifts from collective (shared classroom support) to individual (dedicated specialist hours) when support escalates from basic to intensified measures. This targeted approach ensures intensive, personalised intervention while maintaining familiar settings to benefit both the child and the broader support network (Konzept Sonderpädagogik, 2024). Unlike the Oak School case, the Village School canton explicitly recognises parental caregivers as equal partners (Konzept Sonderpädagogik, 2024), engaging them in active dialogue with school and therapy professionals to collaboratively agree on educational measures and decisions.

Municipality

The Village School municipality, with approximately 4,327 inhabitants, oversaw kindergarten, primary, and secondary education. About 500 primary pupils attended two school entities across 17 classes in two buildings, with 120 secondary students in seven

classes in a different building. A team of 70 teachers educated the 620 students, supported by 20 staff, including assistants, social workers, and after-school care providers. Primary school children were taught in multi-grade learning groups, recognising that same-age pupils did not necessarily share identical learning needs (information retrieved from the publicly available school website).

The financial structure of the Village School differed significantly from that in other Swiss municipalities. The municipality community council provided the school with an annual global budget, securing the entire school operations and managed independently by educational and administrative principals. This framework provided greater latitude for school development, with management involved in budgeting as part of strategic implementation. This situation promoted holistic 'entrepreneurial thinking', enabling the school principal to build an inclusive school community, guided by a 'just and caring' school community concept (Oser et al., 2008), emphasising tolerance and consideration for others.

This concept drove internal reform with the constant goal of 'social togetherness' through 'learning by doing' principles. The concept created opportunities for social understanding, cooperation, and mutual support via three key actions. Firstly, every 3 weeks, full assemblies were prepared by teacher-student groups from each class, managing organisational needs and addressing issues. Secondly, classes engaged in dilemma discussions or CC, where students explored moral conflicts involving incompatible values and no clear solutions. These dilemmas were based on real-life situations that arose within the school community. In the CC, teachers facilitated discussions by encouraging diverse viewpoints without imposing 'correct' answers, helping students develop critical thinking, tolerance, and decision-making skills. Thirdly, regular rituals and ceremonies (weekly gatherings, group singing, welcoming new students) allowed classes to mix, fostering cross-class interest and respect (C2 PRI 35 schoolwebpage, for confidentiality reasons, not referenced).

Over time, 'Just Community', a concept adapted to the Swiss context by Fritz K. Oser (Oser et al., 2008), became embedded in the 'normal' school routine and reflected a culture of lived democracy. The implementation of a just community approach by the classroom staff with children and other stakeholders, including parents, subject teachers, and therapists, is detailed in the sections representing their specific actions and experiences.

All Village School primary classes were multi-grade: two parallel elementary classes (Kindergarten-Grade 2), two third- to fourth-grade classes, and two fifth- to sixth-grade classes, embracing diversity within heterogeneous groups. Third and fourth graders had 28, 45-minute lessons each week, with structured daily schedules: four morning lessons (8.00am to 11.30am) with a 30-minute break, followed by a 2-hour lunch

break, then afternoon lessons (13.30pm to 15.00pm or 16.05pm) and optional early morning catch-up time (7.30am to 8.00am). Most children returned home for lunch, while others stayed at after-school care. The school's structure and just community concept shaped how the class was led by the two classroom teachers, Sabina and Nicola, supported by the SNE teacher, Rebecca, and Daniela, the assistant, as described in the next section.

Overview of Village School Participants

Tables 11 to 13 introduce the case participants, all names are anonymised.

Table 11.

Village School: Participants Representing Education Professionals

Participants Education Context	Name	Age	Years of experience
Classroom staff			
Classroom co-teacher (class lead)	Sabina Walter	44	21
Classroom co-teacher (SNE teacher in training)	Nicola Ignaz	26	3.5
Incoming SNE teacher	Rebecca Sardos	33	10
Class Assistant	Daniela Niederer	61	4
Principal			
	Franz Heeb	63	15
Therapists			
Speech Language	Anabel Seitz	50	24

Table 12.

Village School: All Children in Class

Girls	Age	Grade	Boys	Age	Grade
Dana	9	3	Finn	8	3
Zoe*	9	3	Karl	8	3
Nina	9	3	Tom	9	3
Sofia	8	3	Damian	10	4
Anna**	13	4	Matteo	10	4
Eva*	10	4	Max*	9	4
Julia*	10	4	Nino	9	4
Laura*	10	4	Simon	10	4
Melanie	9	4			
Nadja	11	4			
Svenja	10	4			
3 children not participating		3			
		4			
		4			

*Children participating in the focus group, **child with Trisomy 21

Table 13.

Village School: Parents and Associated Child, Participating in the Focus Group

Parent Name	Parent of
Rita Anders (mother)	Anna
Beate Roos (mother)	Eva
Selma Leisinger (mother)	Julia
Andreas Zentsch (father)	Max
Nico Boos (father)	Zoe
Natalie Danz (mother)	Laura

Participants and contextual situations (classroom, PE, etc.) within the Village School class community were visualised on Miro Boards for analysis (Appendix AO).

Overview of Data Gathering Methods and Abbreviations

Various data sources contributed to the construction of the findings (Stake, 2006). The sources are referenced in the findings using the abbreviations (detailed in Table 14), with the number following the abbreviation indicating the corresponding text section.

Table 14.

Village School: Overview and Abbreviations for Data Gathering Methods and Sources

Data Gathering Method	Abbreviation
Classroom Observation PE Class 1	C2 CROBS 1
Classroom Observation 2	C2 CROBS 2
Classroom Observation 3	C2 CROBS 3
Classroom Observation 4	C2 CROBS 4
Playground Observation 1	C2 PGOBS 1
Round Table Discussion Observation	C2 RTD
Focus Group Interview with five children	C2 FGI
Teacher Interview with Sabina and Nicola	C2 TI
SNE Teacher	C2 SENI
Parent Interview 1 Natalie Danz	C2 PAI 1
Parent Interview 2 Beate Roos	C2 PAI 2
Parent Interview 3 Selma Leisinger	C2 PAI 3
Parent Interview 4 Nico Boos	C2 PAI 4
Parent Interview 5 Rita Anders	C2 PAI 5
Parent Interview 6 Andreas Zentsch	C2 PAI 6
Speech Language Therapist Anabel	C2 SLTI
Assistant Interview Daniela	C2 AI
Principal Interview Franz	C2 PRI

Description of the Village School 3rd and 4th Grade Class

Sabina and Nicola co-taught this class of 16 fourth graders and 8 third graders, with equal gender distribution in both groups. Sabina served as the primary classroom teacher and was most frequently present; Nicola, who was pursuing part-time SNE studies, focused on specialised support measures. The school's policy of fostering natural heterogeneity through multi-level learning groups created a class with varied learning needs and social dynamics that shifted each year as children progressed through grades, and class compositions changed annually.

Two children were from Ukraine, and Zoe, with a Tamil background, was a German citizen. Some children were naturalised Swiss citizens from culturally diverse family backgrounds. Three children chose not to participate in the study.

Anna, diagnosed with Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome), was included in this multi-grade class and was 3 years older than her classmates. Although the class was her primary support location, she followed a different school programme and joined an elementary class on Fridays, where she played a supportive role with younger children (C2 PRI 20). Anna received weekly speech-language support sessions in a separate building during school hours. Therapy times were strategically scheduled during lessons Anna could not access (such as English lessons) to avoid removing her from activities she could participate in, while alleviating classroom staff responsibilities. She qualified for intensified support measures provided by Nicola and Rebecca, the SNE teacher who worked across multiple classes. Kurt E., a specialist from the canton's Consulting and Support Department, was involved in Anna's support network. The principal, Franz H., had coordinated Anna's inclusion and support since she entered the school system (C2 PRI 6).

Similar to the Oak School classroom staff arrangement, Sabina and Nicola divided classroom responsibilities according to their roles. Sabina handled general classroom management, and Nicola specialised in SNE education. Together, they covered all subjects except Arts and Crafts and 1-hour of Geometry. When both teachers were present, they typically divided the class by grade level, teaching third and fourth graders separately.

The School Building

Built around 1900 and now under monument protection, the schoolhouse underwent extensive renovation in 2020 to meet modern teaching needs. The first and second floors included main classrooms, shared hallways with workspaces (Figures 24 & 25), and group rooms supporting flexible teaching and collaboration between parallel classes.

The Village School third and fourth grade classroom featured four groups of desks (Figures 26 & 27), each consisting of two or three double desks, with three single desks arranged centrally in a row. Anna and another girl sat at a double desk adjacent to the teacher's desk. All furniture was height adjustable. Children could choose and negotiate seating arrangements with classroom staff (C2 FGI 43), fostering autonomy and enabling flexible social groupings that supported peer learning across abilities. Children's active participation in decisions about their physical learning environment reflected the democratic principles embedded in the school's 'Just Community' approach. This flexibility resulted in mixed-grade group desks and others with single grades, allowing children to form relationships based on interest and friendship rather than grade level or ability alone.

Figure 24.

Floorplan Village School house: The third and fourth grade classroom (yellow), with shared communal spaces (blue) were used by both third and fourth grade classes on this floor. (Furniture in all rooms was organised differently than pictured)

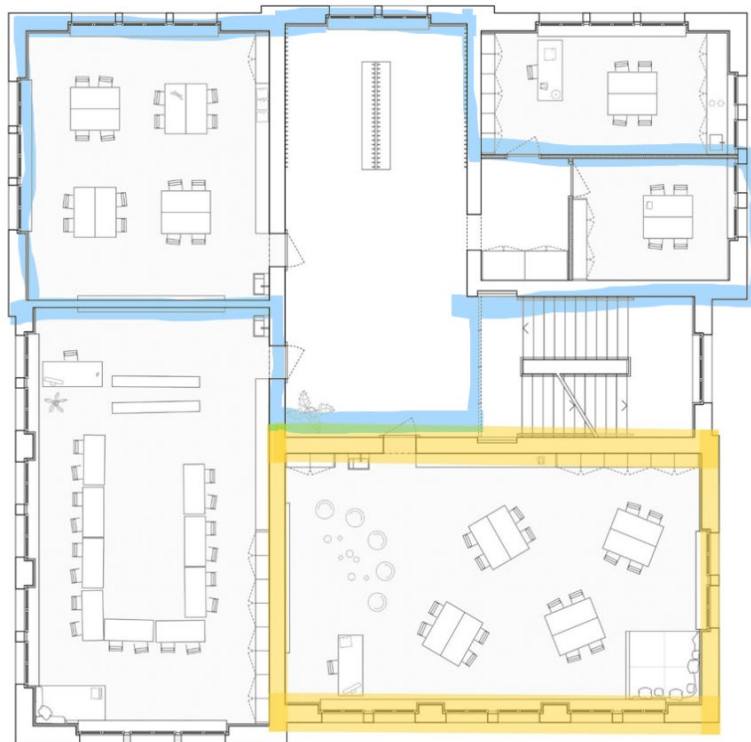


Figure 25.

Village School: First Level Hallway for two Third and Fourth Grade Classes, Showing Shared Changing Area for Shoes and Coats and Workspaces



Figure 26.

Village School: Classroom Looking to the Back



Figure 27.

Village School: Classroom Looking to the Front



At the back, a space with small benches and cushions (circle time space; Figure 28) was used for learning activities, encouraging verbal interaction and collaborative work with the entire class or individual grades. This multi-purpose space, including a classroom reading area located at the back of the classroom (Figure 29), enabled whole-class discussions that valued every child's contribution.

Figure 28.

Village School: Space for Circle Time



Figure 29.

Village School: Classroom Reading Corner



The classroom extended into the hallway and other working spaces, such as group rooms and changing areas, offering flexible learning environments. Children used these spaces variably, adapting to task requirements and group formations. During individual work, children often selected their preferred workspace, exercising agency over their learning conditions. To reduce stimuli, they could unfold a large cardboard shield called a 'learning office', which shielded three sides of their desk, reducing sensory input so they could remain within the classroom community. Occasionally, classroom staff placed learning offices on children's desks to reduce distractions (C2 CROBS 1, 2, 4).

A wall-mounted table displayed the daily schedule, making the day's structure visible and predictable for all children while allowing flexibility for adjustments (Figure 30). The transparency enabled children to anticipate transitions and focus on their current activities and interactions supporting orientation to sequence and subject.

Figure 30.

Village School: Table Displaying the Daily Schedule

8.00	Lesezeit	Morgenkreis
8.45	Dies & Das	
9.30		Pause
10.00	Deutsch	
10.45	Englisch	
11.30		Mittagspause
13.30	NMG	
14.15		
15.00		Pause
15.20	NMG	
16.05		

Each child had a personal pencil case on their desk which they typically took home for homework. Personal learning materials were stored under their desks, and individual drinking cups were kept on a shelf next to the water tap. These organisational systems promoted children's independence and reduced reliance on adult direction, enabling them to organise themselves. For example, in English, each Learning Unit had its own drawer, separated and colour-coordinated for each grade (Figure 31), allowing children to locate and access materials autonomously.

Figure 31.

Village School: Organisation English Units



Some learning rules were pinned on the wall to be accessed freely, supporting individual learning and inclusion (Figure 32).

Figure 32.

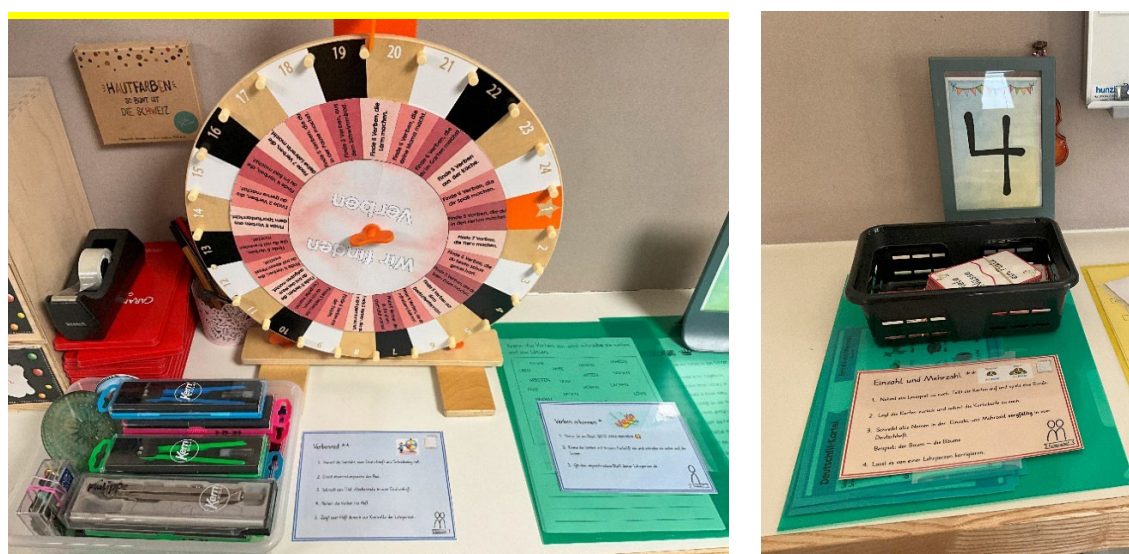
Village School: German Grammar Rules Pinned to the Bookshelf for Easy Access and Reminder



Besides rules, there were encouraging messages supporting learning: 'I have made a lot of mistakes; mistakes help me to learn'. Materials for individual or group work (Figure 33) were organised in dedicated workstations, allowing children to choose the sequence of tasks they would work on. They took materials to their workspace and returned them upon completion, fostering individualised learning that catered for diverse needs and promoted inclusive practice.

Figure 33.

Village School: Material Organisation for German Tasks, Catering for Individualised Learning Needs to Promote Inclusive Practice



The following sections present findings from classroom staff, parents, children, therapists, and the principal, detailing their actions and experiences. The findings begin by exploring a shared occupational situation: a Wednesday morning PE lesson attended by all children, classroom teacher Sabina, and assistant Daniela.

Description of a Specific Shared Occupational Situation: PE Class November 2023

Data sources: Classroom Observation (PE) 1 (C2 CROBS 1)

In the Village case, I selected a PE class that effectively illustrated how Sabina, the classroom teacher, and Daniela, the assistant, structured lessons to enable inclusive experiences for all children. The weekly PE lesson took place on Wednesday morning from 8:00am to 9:30am, with children assembling directly at the gym. This class focused on three gymnastics exercises: floor routines, horizontal bars, and swing rings. Lessons were structured so both staff and children took active roles in leading activities, encouraging shared responsibility and engagement. The physical environment, exercise

organisation, and social context shaped interactions between children and adults. Spotlight moments illustrate specific observations demonstrating inclusive practice.

Location of PE Class

PE class took place in a gymnastics hall 750 metres away from the main school building. The large hall could be divided into three sections using movable partitions suspended from the ceiling. For gymnastics, the class used two sections, as shown in Figure 34.

Figure 34.

Village School: Gymnastic Hall



Getting Ready

When the bell rang, all children entered the changing rooms. Due to a recent incident, Anna changed in a separate cubicle in the teacher's changing room, alongside Sabina and Daniela who accompanied her to the gym. Other third- and fourth-graders changed in designated boys' and girls' rooms. Once ready, the children entered the gym one by one. The hall can only be entered in bare feet or wearing sneakers. Sabina stood by the entrance, welcoming each child individually with a handshake. One girl spontaneously hugged Sabina, and she allowed the gesture. One child brought a bunch of green ribbons, which were later used in a game of catch. The light green ribbons were elastic, which made running together easier, providing adaptation for all.

Starting Together Playing Ribbon Catching

Children followed familiar routines, assembling in a circle after the first whistle. These established routines provided a predictable structure that enabled all children to participate confidently, creating a secure foundation from which Sabina could introduce variations. Sabina welcomed them, introduced the researcher, and explained the lesson programme, beginning with ribbon-catching. Children sat against the wall while Sabina

explained the rules and selected two volunteers from the many children with raised hands.

All were familiar with the game and spread out using the full hall space. Sabina played Swiss children's songs as the game progressed. When catchers tagged a child, the newly tagged child joined them, running as a group of three connected by rubber bands. When a fourth child was caught, the group split into two pairs. Sabina adapted the traditional hand-holding game by using rubber bands, allowing for more flexibility and faster movement, which enhanced the game's pace and excitement.

All children blended seamlessly, running and interacting without distinctions of grade, ability, gender, or language. As more children were caught, it became increasingly challenging for the remaining players to stay uncaught. Sabina gradually lowered the music to signal the game's end, then blew the whistle. Children gathered, sitting against the wall. Sabina gave positive feedback: "*Wow, you're really energetic!*" (C2 CROBS 1 7). Her encouragement focused on collective effort rather than individual performance, reinforcing the inclusive ethos that valued participation and engagement.

Sabina initiated the transition from warm-up to the main activity by pulling out the heavy mat trolley for practice stations. Several children immediately assisted, working together to move the equipment. Her whistle prompted the children, who were ready for further instructions.

Preparing the Three Practice Stations Together

Sabina introduced setting up floor gymnastics, horizontal bars, and swing rings, reminding children of previous routines. Because the setup was familiar, children could focus their attention on working together rather than on task instructions, freeing them to notice where help was needed and coordinate spontaneously with peers. Children moved confidently into action, naturally taking on tasks without assigned roles. Two girls navigated large floor mats towards the ring setup while three boys moved a rolled mat on a trolley. Both groups engaged enthusiastically, chatting and laughing.

Adults supported specific tasks for safety, such as Daniela unlocking and lowering the swing ring mechanism, unreachable for children. Two ring pairs were adjusted to different heights, and a third had wood inserted, creating a swing for seated activities. Sabina assisted with horizontal bar construction, allowing various practice opportunities. Anna was part of this group, observing attentively. Some children took a more hands-on approach, actively assisting with the setup. Three boys unrolled the 12-metre floor mat and others placed smaller green mats, creating a continuous track. The bulky materials naturally elicited collaborative teaming, as children required partners to manage the weight and size of equipment, creating opportunities for peer cooperation. Setup enabled children to support each other in task-oriented activities, requiring diverse skills with multiple involvement opportunities, creating an inclusive environment rich with

spontaneous interactions between groups and pairs. After setting up, Sabina gathered the children, reviewed and demonstrated exercises to the group.

Re-introducing the Exercises in the Three Stations

Sabina and Daniela worked collaboratively, fluidly exchanging leadership roles and distributing responsibility amongst themselves and the children. This flexibility created multiple pathways for participation and enabled children to take on valued roles beyond their usual classroom positions, supporting an inclusive environment where competence could be demonstrated in diverse ways.

Sabina asked the more experienced children to demonstrate specific exercises, beginning with the ring station. Daniela, the assistant, took over from Sabina, introducing the task at hand and assuming a more leading role with all the children. First, Nino, a gymnast, demonstrated the swing ring exercise, timing foot movements with each swing. Daniela emphasised timing using rhythmic cues: “*step to the front and to the back*” (C2 CROBS1 19). Her positive recognition of Nino’s demonstration and praise of his performance affirmed his competence and established him as a skilled peer. Daniela announced he would co-lead the swing ring practice, providing him with a leadership opportunity.

Second, Sabina explained three progressively graded setups for the bar hip thrust. Lena demonstrated at all three stations and co-led the horizontal bar station. The third station, floor exercise, was not demonstrated as children knew what to do. Eva was asked to support the floor group, with Sabina’s encouraging remark: “*You can help since you’re good at it*” (C2 CROBS 1 22), framing her expertise as an asset to the group and creating another leadership role.

Adults and children assumed different roles than in the classroom. Daniela, the class assistant, took a leading position overseeing a group, distinct from her usual classroom role. By distributing authority and expertise across multiple participants—adults and children—the PE lesson created an inclusive structure where leadership was accessible, valued contributions were diverse, and competence could be demonstrated through different forms of participation. The following section highlights interactions between children and classroom staff supporting one another as inclusive actions.

Diversity in Interacting During Practice Sequences

Children moved freely between stations, except for the co-leaders, who remained assigned. The following sections focus on the smaller interactions and moments that occurred, illustrating how inclusive practice was enacted through spontaneous peer support, responsive assistance, and flexible role-taking. Observations are clustered by where, with whom, and how they took place, rather than in chronological order.

Swinging Rings Situation

Nino assisted children alongside Daniela. When one boy struggled with timing his push-offs, Nino drummed a rhythm on the mat to help him find a more efficient technique. Simultaneously, three girls practised together: one hung on rings while the other two coached, offering suggestions before switching positions. This peer collaboration demonstrated how children supported one another skilfully, promoting a sense of inclusion. Daniela re-engaged Anna by encouraging her to sit on the ring swing, pushing her high. This action caught the attention of other girls; Nina took over the pushing, which Anna clearly enjoyed. After a while, they switched places, with Nina now enjoying being pushed high by Anna. Both girls seemed to relish the chance to explore different roles.

These 'swinging ring' activities were used diversely by different children, depending on their social and physical skills. Inclusive actions came from peers and adults, both competent at adapting their assistance in response to individual needs. The swinging ring station remained physically and socially accessible throughout the lesson, with children able to rejoin activities at any point and take on different roles, swinger, pusher, or coach, without needing formal transitions.

Horizontal Bar Situation

The spatially defined setup allowed support persons to remain closely attuned to children's individual needs and progress. While children focused on the hip thrust exercise, Sabina stayed physically nearby, offering immediate feedback in a soft voice and observing and commenting on their progress. Her encouraging comments and specific observations created a supportive atmosphere that emphasised effort and improvement rather than perfect execution. Three girls all attempted the bar hip thrust, practising alongside one another, learning from each other's efforts and providing physical assistance.

The progressively graded horizontal bar set-ups, ranging from lower, easier positions to higher, more challenging ones, facilitated independent practice tailored to the children's varying skills and motivations. By adjusting the physical demands of the exercise, children could select entry points that matched their current abilities and confidence levels. The proximity of the setups and focused nature of the hip thrust movement made it easier for Sabina and the children to observe technique and provide targeted support, facilitating their engagement and tuning in to the children's actions. Children often formed smaller same-gender groups, offering peer support during practice.

Floor Gymnastics Situation

The 12-metre area with parallel mats enabled child-led activities. Within this spacious setup, a range of child-led activities emerged, inspired by additional materials such as softballs. Nino oversaw the station without adult involvement.

A forward roll exercise paired with getting up and catching a ball thrown by another child was set up with five pink softballs, tempting some children to engage in unrelated games. To address this distraction, Sabina briefly stepped over to the boys and collected three of the five balls, refocusing the group and preventing the distraction from causing the group and task to fall apart. Her intervention demonstrated responsive monitoring and maintaining conditions for collaborative practice.

Nino practised with Sven on forward rolls and catching the ball. Nearby, Damian, observing them, became motivated to try the roll. He struggled to finish the roll and get to his feet. Nino noticed Damian's difficulties and encouraged him to keep trying; but despite his efforts, Damian was unable to succeed. Max joined the two boys, cheering Damian on, and all three shared smiles. Together, Nino and Max created an inclusive situation where Damian could persist in his efforts and feel supported despite his challenges.

The floor gymnastics activities illustrated how children enacted inclusion through observable group interaction skills: noticing peers' needs, offering encouragement, maintaining task focus, and responding to one another. These actions, demonstrated by both children and adults, revealed that inclusion is more than a concept; it is a set of learned task and social skills actively practised within shared occupational situations.

Interactions Outside Stations

Children used other areas to interact with one another. Anna and Selina, for instance, sat by the wall bars chatting, while Matteo played soccer with one of the softballs. The long mat inspired Matteo to gallop along like a horse, while other children rolled across it. Children's freedom to choose activities, locations, and companions enabled them to participate in ways that matched their interests and social preferences, creating multiple pathways for engagement within the shared occupational situation. This autonomy supported inclusion by validating diverse forms of participation, from structured gymnastics practice to imaginative play, as equally legitimate ways of being present in the class community. Groups formed organically, though boys and girls tended to group separately.

After about 30 minutes of practice, Sabina gathered the children, shifting the activity structure and allowing the child leaders to change stations and participate in other activities. After an additional 20 minutes, Sabina called the children to the wall to announce that during the next session they would be examined on what they had learned, reassuring them that these small tests would be conducted privately with her rather than in front of the whole class, ensuring no one felt exposed. By conducting assessments privately, Sabina enabled children to focus on their own learning within the group without fear of public comparison or judgment.

Sabina signalled the session's end, inviting everyone to help with a quick clean-up. Much like at the start, the children helped one another, noticing where assistance was needed. Before dismissing, Sabina thanked the three student leaders, and the class applauded in appreciation.

The three-station setup created varied occupational demands, swinging, balancing, tumbling, that afforded various interactions and supported inclusive practice, enabling children to support each other in learning new skills while facilitating fun and playful interactions. Classroom staff provided guidance and ensured both physical safety (spotting, equipment management) and emotional safety (encouragement, private assessment), creating secure conditions for individual and collective learning. Through offering positive feedback, they created an encouraging atmosphere. The inclusive nature of this PE lesson was further highlighted by both children and adults being attentive to each other's support needs. Children noticed where help was required and naturally stepped in to assist, transforming the PE lesson from individual practice into a collaborative, inclusive experience.

The Classroom Staff's Actions and Experiences

Data sources: Teacher's Interview (C2 TI); Classroom Observations (C2 CROBS 2, 4, 5); SNE Teacher's Interview: (C2 SNEI); Principal's Interview (C2 PRI); Speech Language Therapist's Interview (C2 SLT), Assistant's Interview (C2 AI).

Sabina and Nicola co-taught this class, with Sabina teaching every day except Thursday mornings. Nicola started teaching 3 years ago as a newly graduated teacher. She transitioned to co-teaching with Sabina at the start of the 2023 school year, while pursuing part-time studies to become a SNE teacher. The teaching team also included Rebecca, a SNE teacher, and Daniela, the assistant. From Sabina and Nicola's perspectives, 'balancing inclusive experiences for all children' (first theme) was central to their teaching approach. The second theme explores how coordinating collaboration contributed to achieving inclusive experiences, with a focus on all children, and specifically Anna.

Balancing Inclusive Experiences for All Children

Sabina and Nicola agreed that teaching a class diverse in age, skills, and language abilities was a "*balancing act*" (C2 TI 60). Balancing inclusive experiences meant adapting various aspects of class occupations: choosing an activity, determining how much structure to provide for activities, deciding on group or individual work, and considering whether all children performed the same tasks. It involved balancing diverse children's skills and roles while providing children with opportunities to have a choice and voice. Balancing all these processes required advance planning and responsive

adaptation to emerging situations. Balancing is explored through three subthemes: building trust and acceptance for all; supporting each other; and negotiating challenging situations to shape a culture of connection and inclusion.

Building Acceptance for All

Sabina and Nicola emphasised that building acceptance was pivotal to balancing accommodations for children's diverse strengths and vulnerabilities within shared occupational situations. Building acceptance meant children felt safe and never exposed in their vulnerability but recognised for individual achievements. Nicola summarised: *"That they enjoy coming and that they feel comfortable, that every child feels at ease"* (C2 TI 27).

They built acceptance through creating situations inside and outside the classroom that encouraged children to get to know one another, promoting appreciation of one another across dimensions such as gender, age, ability, and language. Sabina called these situations *"special activities"* (C2 TI 12), which included the *"front door hike"* (C2 TI 32) where they visited each child's house at the beginning of the year. In-class activities that built trust and acceptance of diversity included whole-class games, smaller group activities, and regular CCs. Nicola described building acceptance as an ongoing process: *"By taking the children as they are, also Anna, they've known her for a very long time"* (C2 TI 59).

Supporting Each Other

Depending on the structure of shared occupational situations, chosen activities, required skills, and roles taken by children and adults, support was weighed up and provided in various ways. Children and adults adjusted their support responsively, carefully calibrating assistance to match individual needs while maintaining each child's agency within the shared occupation. The following four situations illustrate the dimensions of providing support: Julia taking on a teaching role, Lisa encouraging Anna's participation, Max advocating for the Ukrainian boy Damian, and adults initiating peer support to balance diverse participation needs

Support by taking on a teaching role: Sabina recalled Julia facilitating positive learning with a third-grade boy struggling with reading. Due to age and experience differences, pairs had varying skill levels. Noticing some sheets were too long for younger students like Marc, Julia thoughtfully read text to him, watched his writing, and praised him. Sabina commended Julia: *"You're doing that very well, as a teacher"* (C2 TI 83), highlighting how Julia adjusted her approach to Marc's skill level, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Supporting Anna to engage in a required learning situation: This was prompted when Anna was expected to do the next task. Lisa, Anna's desk neighbour, reading the situation and recognising the need for action, responded skilfully, providing support that

was neither intrusive nor directive. Anna was hiding under the table and was required by the classroom staff to sit on her chair. Unsolicited, Lisa facilitated Anna's engagement by inviting her to play the game with her, which Anna followed (C2 SENI 41-42). Lisa's approach balanced gentle encouragement with respect for Anna's autonomy, creating conditions for participation without coercion.

Max advocating for Damian's situation: When two boys made derogatory remarks about Damian, an overweight boy with limited understanding of German, Max overheard and took Damian's side, providing support by asking them to imagine: "*being in Damian's situation*" (C2 CROBS 2 40). Max supported Damian's inclusion by requesting empathy from peers, preventing further exclusion.

Children supporting each other, facilitated by adults: While Daniela worked with Anna using adapted language materials, other children worked in pairs on verb declensions. Samuel and Laura (fourth graders) pulled words from an envelope and classified them. Nicola set up an additional desk for Anna to join them, then removed herself from the situation. Although Anna did not contribute directly to solving tasks, Laura supported Anna's contributions by letting her roll dice and ask for answers (C2 CROB 4 24-27). Laura recognised Anna's potential and assigned tasks she could fulfil, balancing the support to ensure inclusive experiences.

Nicola reasoned that this "*class culture of supporting and helping each other*" (C2 TI 79) was intentionally constructed over time; "*I think it arises in the classroom, the children sense what is important to us*" (C2 TI 65). Classroom staff deliberately modelled supportive interactions and created structures that encouraged peer assistance, and children gradually internalised these values and practices. Situations that facilitated inclusive experience varied in structure, tasks, grouping, and required skills, and were sometimes initiated by adults. Children and adults became skilled at reading situations and responding accordingly, carefully weighing when to offer support, how much to provide, and when to step back, a nuanced practice of balancing assistance with independence that sustained inclusive experiences for all.

Navigating Solutions for Challenging Situations

Challenging situations involving Anna frequently occurred during less structured contexts such as break times, transitional periods, changing for PE, or walking between buildings, especially when adult supervision was limited. This subtheme examines how classroom staff, children, and Anna's mother worked together to navigate these situations while balancing the needs and safety of all children.

Nicola attributed Anna's disruptive behaviour, spitting, throwing stones, and pushing peers, to communication difficulties and her insistence on preferred activities, which intimidated others during breaks. Nicola summarised: "*Anna is aware of her (age-related) physical superiority and sometimes intimidates the other children, not*

responding to the 'stop' rule" (C2 CROB 5 112). Consequently, Anna was required to remain in the classroom during breaks.

Nicola implemented measures, including a positive reinforcement plan, onsite support from Anna's mother, and a structured break timetable developed with a group of girls (C2 TI 57). However, "*the girls no longer want to continue, which we must respect*" (C2 TI 57), illustrating the changeability of situations. Negotiating solutions and meeting diverse children's interests required ongoing processes involving classroom staff as facilitators and children volunteering to spend break time with Anna, balancing inclusive experiences for all.

Navigating solutions for challenging situations involved considering all children's needs, weighing when Anna could be included in breaktime activities and when alternative arrangements were necessary. Sabina and Nicola continuously assessed situations; created solutions with stakeholder input; and engaged in iterative cycles of testing, evaluating, and refining structures, tasks, spaces, and roles. This iterative process, adjusting, refining, and recalibrating support, exemplified the ongoing work of balancing diverse needs within inclusive practice. Effective problem-solving relied on collaboration, detailed in the next theme.

Coordinating Collaboration

Coordinating collaboration meant organising and aligning the efforts of multiple stakeholders, classroom staff, parents, children, therapists, and principal to create inclusive practice. The complexity of this coordination arose from the number of people involved, their varied roles and expertise, and the different amounts of time each spent with the children. Sabina reflected on this complexity: "*Having lots of people is really great, cool, but it requires a lot of coordination*" (C2 TI 21).

Coordinating collaboration involved managing four distinct but interconnected networks. First, the core classroom team of four adults coordinated their daily work and decision-making. Second, classroom staff coordinated with Anna's mother to navigate challenging situations and maintain consistency between home and school. Third, classroom staff coordinated with the diverse children in class to facilitate peer support and democratic participation. Finally, the teaching team coordinated with the principal and canton's designated therapists and support persons to access specialised expertise and resources. Each network required different coordination strategies, timing, and levels of formality.

The Core Classroom Team Coordinating Their Collaboration

Four adults worked with the class: Sabina and Nicola, Rebecca the designated SNE teacher (recently returned from maternity leave, present for eight weekly lessons), and Daniela, the assistant. Nicola and Rebecca shared responsibilities for Anna based on

subject areas: Rebecca focused on language-related subjects (three lessons) and Nicola oversaw Mathematics and Nature, People, and Societies. Rebecca also evaluated diverse children's needs for special support and provided enrichment "*sufficient food*" for gifted children in five weekly lessons (C2 SI SEN 27). Daniela saw her role as "*helping where I am needed*" (C2 IA 7) for the whole class, but specifically for Anna.

Sabina and Nicola identified two planning methods: scheduled regular meetings and rolling planning. Regular Monday meetings lasted until 8pm, where they prepared lessons, assigned tasks for both grades, and decided how to involve Anna. They continuously refined their approach, debating whether to split grade levels or teach together, reflecting and adapting. Nicola explained:

Last year we worked together too, but we were more separate, and you weren't around as much. Yes, exactly, I think we're figuring it out [und letztes Jahr haben wir schon auch zusammengearbeitet, aber wir haben mehr getrennt und du warst nicht so viel da. Ja genau, ja, ich glaube, wir sind dran, das rauszufinden.] (C2 TI 99)

Sabina described a rolling planning process addressing emerging issues, with adjustments, or even overriding "*planning something completely different*" and "*spontaneously changing plans*" (C2 TI 102). Co-teaching in an inclusive setting required coordinating planning, presence in the situations, reflections, and adaptations. With Rebecca joining, the three met every Tuesday, coordinating responsibilities: Nicola and Rebecca primarily focused on Anna's learning and planned together, though Rebecca was the main external contact. Flexibility was crucial when working with Anna, requiring adjustments based on who could best motivate her, "*having to switch during the sequence*" (C2 TI 11). Sabina and Rebecca concentrated on the other children, collaborating on tasks like drafting speech-language therapy referrals, with Sabina "*writing and submitting two requests*" (C2 TI 102). Before lessons, the three teachers loosely assigned tasks and decided who would "*have an eye on...*" but generally, "*we are all everywhere*" (C2 TI 112). With Daniela, the assistant, Sabina and Nicola coordinated planning, exchange, and daily work "*on the go*" (C2 TI 106).

Coordinating this multi-person team for inclusive practice was experienced as strenuous. The team also coordinated with external support staff and found solutions for challenging situations. Anna's mother was a valuable contributor to solutions, leading to the next section on classroom staff and parent coordination.

Coordinating Collaboration with Parents

Coordinating collaboration with parents involved navigating the varied attitudes towards the school's inclusive education approach. Some parents were sceptical, while many "*who think it is good*" (C2 TI 123) appreciated and supported it. However, with critical parents, Sabina felt exposed, having to prove that inclusion benefited all children, even

their own. She thought that “*if they really are here*” and come to visit and “*see how things are going ... they’ll be convinced*” (C2 TI 123). Yet, she also noted that having a visitor during a challenging situation with Anna increased her stress, underscoring the vulnerable position of classroom staff in the community’s inclusive education context.

Classroom staff described their collaboration with Anna’s parents as open and committed, contributing to Anna’s inclusion. Anna’s mother often accompanied the class during special events and excursions. She also provided valuable recommendations, such as “*fixed seats during circle time*” (C2 TI 123), which helped Anna and other children to participate during circle time activities for an extended time. Sabina observed that Anna’s family’s active participation played a key role in facilitating her inclusion. The family frequently engaged in activities like “*skiing and hiking*” and were well-integrated in the community. This involvement supported Anna’s inclusion and fostered belonging for her entire family within both the class and wider community, with Anna “*going everywhere*” as “*normal*” (C2 TI 123). Thus, coordinating collaboration with parents required classroom staff to navigate between managing concerns from sceptical parents about inclusive education while actively partnering with Anna’s family, whose insights and involvement directly enhanced inclusive practice for all children.

Coordinating Collaboration with Children in a Multigrade Classroom

Coordinating collaboration among classroom staff and children in a multigrade classroom meant creating a structured yet responsive learning environment where adults and children collaborated to create inclusive experiences for all. This structural coordination was shaped by yearly changing social dynamics inherent in multigrade settings, requiring careful navigation of advantages and disadvantages.

Sabina found the annual class reconstitution “*always rolling*” (C2 TI 11) demanding but recognised the benefit of not starting from scratch each year with half the children already familiar with routines. This partial continuity meant that for some children, routines and classroom culture were familiar, but entering students needed to be on-boarded. Further, social “*turbulence*” was a disadvantage (C2 TI 11), as the existing social class entity had to reform, building connections with new members as children navigated the changing social constitution.

To support collaborative learning in a newly formed class, the classroom staff frequently used random pairing by “*drawing lots*” (C2 TI 85) to assign partners and groups. With this simple practice, staff prevented children from clustering with familiar peers and created opportunities for cross-grade, -ability, and -gender collaboration. Random pairing also protected children who might otherwise be excluded from peer selection. This approach helped mix and match different student combinations, encouraged children to get to know one another, and fostered a sense of unity as a reconstituted class.

Coordinating collaboration among children involved navigating their differences within deeply rooted democratic values in the school and classroom. This understanding was reinforced by the “*just and caring community*” concept (C2 PRI 35), exemplified by the CC led by Sabina. Living democracy in the classroom meant that the classroom community was negotiated through participatory processes where children’s voices, their decisions, and resulting actions shaped how children did together and interacted. This democratic approach required careful coordination: teachers facilitated discussions, guided decision-making processes, and ensured all voices were heard, while children learned to balance individual preferences with collective needs. Students were motivated to help each other learn and had autonomy to decide whether they “*wanted to help*” or “*continue working independently*” after completing tasks, letting children decide without taking “*advantage*” (C2 TI 85) of their altruism.

Coordinating collaboration amongst children operated on multiple levels: through diverse activities and different student groupings the class’s social bonds were rebuilt and strengthened annually. Sabina and Nicola further encouraged children to support one another while balancing their autonomy to decide if, when, and how they wanted to assist peers. The next subtheme explores collaboration with various stakeholders, focusing on coordinating extended support beyond the classroom.

Coordinating Collaboration with External Support Persons

Coordinating collaboration with external support personnel primarily revolved around Anna and was led by Rebecca, the SNE teacher. All teaching staff were involved in implementing recommendations or enacting specific approaches. Anna’s main external support figures included Franz, the principal; Kurt, the designated coach from the canton’s SNE Department; and Anabel, the speech-language therapist. Coordinating this network of specialists required managing different professional perspectives, institutional mandates, and expertise levels, while keeping Anna’s needs and her family’s wishes central.

As outlined previously, RTDs focus on finding solutions to specific issues concerning disabled children. Anna’s most recent RTD, led by Rebecca as SNE coordinator and Nicola as both SNE and classroom teacher, addressed her future schooling options. The meeting included Franz, Rita (Anna’s mother), Anabel, Kurt, and Sabina. Anna and the class assistant were absent. The RTD exemplified coordinated decision-making; rather than experts determining Anna’s path, the process involved multiple stakeholders whose varied expertise and relationships with Anna contributed different dimensions to decisions.

The RTD began with updates on Anna’s current learning and social status from all participants. Rebecca presented four potential schooling options using paper slips for visual support, evaluated based on social connections, staff resources and motivations,

spatial resources, and provision of the best possible support for Anna's future. This structured approach guided conversation and coordinated collaboration in decision-making (C2 CROB 5 135-138). Rebecca's use of visual supports and clear evaluation criteria coordinated the discussion by providing a shared framework, enabling participants with different professional backgrounds and personal stakes to engage meaningfully in complex decision-making.

Franz initiated discussion by emphasising the school's openness to all options, committing to "*look at what it takes to make it work for Anna*" (C2 CROB 5 140), ensuring that any chosen path worked effectively. Anna's mother, Rita, expressed concerns about transitioning to the fifth and sixth grades or secondary school, fearing that the gap between Anna and her peers might widen, leaving her with "*fewer opportunities in which she can participate*" (C2 CROB 5 166), noting that other children would continue with subjects like French. Rita's concerns highlighted a central tension in inclusive education coordination: how to maintain meaningful participation as academic demands increase and peer divergence widens.

Franz underscored that "*social connections*" were "*the big question*" (C2 CROB 5 153), desiring for Anna to remain at the school, while acknowledging secondary education challenges. He emphasised that "*integration is continuing, and the mother's opinion is very important. We are not going to decide today*" (C2 CROB 5 146). By prioritising social connections over academic progression and honouring the mother's voice, Franz guided the discussion towards values-based rather than purely pedagogical decision-making.

One option discussed was a separative special education school. Kurt noted that social connections might not always be guaranteed in special education settings but highlighted their "*crucial role in preparing students for future careers by familiarising them with career exploration at age 16*" (C2 CROB 5 155). Kurt's perspective introduced a different challenge: balancing immediate social inclusion against long-term vocational preparation, raising questions about which life stages and outcomes should guide present decisions.

Coordinating collaboration required examining various perspectives on what each option would mean for Anna, her family, peers, teachers, and the broader community. The discussion sought to reconcile Anna's and her family's preferences with the school's inclusion goals while considering current social, cultural, and political structures that might influence Anna's future employment prospects and the overall effectiveness of inclusive education.

The RTD illustrated how the group negotiated between different temporal horizons (present social connections versus future employment), different value systems (inclusion versus specialised setting), and different forms of expertise (professional

knowledge versus parental knowledge of Anna). The meeting exemplified how coordinating inclusive education extended beyond classroom management to involve navigating institutional structures, professional boundaries, family aspirations, and societal constraints.

Managing the multilevel third and fourth grade class required careful collaborative coordination to create teaching strategies that ensured inclusive experiences for all students. Addressing current challenges and planning Anna's future necessitated collaboration among various stakeholders, maintaining commitment to an inclusive path. The RTD was guided by SNE teacher Rebecca, whose actions and experiences towards creating inclusive practices will be described next.

The SNE Teacher's Actions and Experiences

Data sources: SNE Teacher's Interview (C2 SNEI)

Rebecca served as SNE teacher for 8 hours per week in the third- and fourth-grade class. As a specialist entering an established classroom community, her role differed fundamentally from that of Sabina and Nicola. While the classroom teachers shaped classroom dynamics through routines, teaching approaches, and class culture, holding responsibility for the entire class and its social cohesion, Rebecca came from outside, primarily focusing on providing individualised support for children with exceptional learning needs. She experienced her role as working within the existing classroom system, tailoring individualised support to fit established structures rather than reshaping them. Two themes explore her work: Tailoring Individualised Support for All Children and Anna and Establishing Positions and Responsibilities.

Tailoring Individualised Support for all Children and Anna

Tailoring individualised support for all encompassed multiple dimensions. Rebecca sought to utilise the natural diversity of the multi-grade classroom to implement individualised teaching strategies. However, the challenge remained in moving beyond rigid third- and fourth-grade categorisation to truly embrace diversity. Rebecca's tailoring work was constrained by her limited classroom hours and position as an external specialist entering an established system (canton's SNE framework, for confidentiality reasons, not referenced, C2 SENI 81), requiring her to adapt her individualised support to fit existing structures rather than reshape them.

Naturally Lived Diversity

Rebecca understood inclusive practice as a school-wide approach to diversity, encompassing both the entire class and individual children as *"a matter of course, that we look at: what does each child need now? And that differences are a matter of natural*

course" (C2 SNEI 98). She advocated shifting focus from the "*integrated girl*" to seeing all children as "*individuals*" with unique needs (C2 SNEI 98), using the natural age-related heterogeneity as an opportunity for individualised teaching approaches promoting inclusive experiences for all. For Rebecca, inclusion meant diversity was not an accommodation requiring special arrangements but the natural fabric of classroom life, a vision where varied needs were simply the expected starting point for teaching.

However, she observed a tendency to think "*in a double class*", failing to create individualised approaches and falling back on age-related categorisation (C2 SNEI 96). This tension between grade-level organisation and individualised support created a challenge for Rebecca in tailoring her work: the classroom structure itself reinforced categorical thinking that worked against the lived diversity she envisioned. Rebecca envisioned true inclusion where diversity was inherently normal: "*that diversity is simply so normal*" (C2 SNEI 95). She believed achieving this level of inclusion would "*benefit society as a whole*" (C2 SNEI 57). Her vision extended beyond the classroom, positioning inclusive education as preparation for a more equitable society where difference required no special notice.

For Rebecca, successful inclusion depended on how other children engaged with Anna, her "*having friends, and feeling comfortable*", which was "*very closely linked to the other children*" (C2 SNEI 44). This relational understanding of inclusion meant that Rebecca's tailoring work could not focus solely on Anna's individual needs but had to attend to the social fabric connecting Anna to her peers, a dimension largely beyond her control as an external specialist with limited classroom presence. Despite these efforts, tension between inclusive ideals and the practical realities of implementing inclusion remained challenging in structural, organisational, and pedagogical aspects, as the following examples illustrate.

Tailoring Individualised Support for Diverse Needs

Classroom staff often grouped students by abilities, with Rebecca "*having the weakest*", (C2 SNEI 8) including Anna. Rebecca prepared separate programmes tailored to Anna's needs, working with Daniela (assistant) in parallel settings close to other students. While this arrangement enabled targeted skill development, it simultaneously marked these children as requiring special support, creating visible distinction that contradicted the "*naturally lived diversity*" Rebecca envisioned. The physical proximity to other students could not fully mitigate the social meaning of separation, a paradox in Rebecca's tailoring approach, where meeting individual needs risked social exclusion.

Further, following reading skills screening, Rebecca established a multi-grade reading support group with structured programmes to enhance collective reading skills. Although framing support as a group rather than individual intervention reduced stigma, the group's composition, lower-ability students receiving specialist teaching, remained

visible to other children. Rebecca's position as the incoming SNE teacher further marked this group, placing these students at risk for stigmatisation despite her inclusive intentions.

Anna-centred individualised support involved tailoring and implementing specialised support for her learning needs within the existing class system. Rebecca described this as discovery, taking "*a very long time to get to know her*" and "*get to know the system*" (C2 SNEI 8). This dual learning process, understanding both Anna's needs and the classroom's established patterns, shaped how Rebecca could tailor individualised support. She could not simply import ideal practices but had to craft solutions that Anna would accept, aligned with classroom routines, and that other children would understand and support. Working with Anna was challenging, "*a little bit of finding out*" what worked, in what form, and for how long (C2 SNEI 100). It required identifying participation opportunities with other children, resulting in highly adaptable plans and flexible situations, to create inclusive experiences for her and others. Rebecca's tailoring was thus an ongoing experimentation rather than application of established protocols, a responsive, iterative process of adjusting support to fit Anna's fluctuating engagement and the classroom's evolving dynamics.

Rebecca experienced ambiguity about whether their approach truly met both Anna's needs and those of the class. This ambiguity was not a failure but inherent to tailoring individualised support in complex inclusive settings, where multiple, sometimes competing needs must be balanced and where no single solution satisfies all dimensions. The RTDs provided essential validation that Rebecca's tailored approach, while imperfect, was working "*well enough*" given the constraints. Inclusion was identified as an ongoing process requiring continuous reflection, exchange with diverse stakeholders, responsiveness to all children, and co-creating solutions. However, coming from the "*outside*" with limited hours in the classroom, she faced the challenge of "*finding her way*" into the system, which is explored next.

Establishing Positions and Responsibilities

Rebecca's inclusion into the teaching team required gaining presence and contributing to inclusive classroom practices. Establishing her position was complex, requiring constant evaluation and adaptation. She desired fuller inclusion into the teaching team to contribute actively to shaping all children's classroom experience but found it challenging: "*trying to experience as many positive things as possible with them, which is more difficult if I'm not there often*" (C2 SNEI 32). Rebecca's limited hours created a constraint: she could tailor individualised support for specific children during her presence but could not shape the broader classroom culture and relationships that sustained inclusion when she was absent, as she remained partially outside the daily doing together, the sharing of experiences that bound the classroom community.

Rebecca highlighted how leadership visibility influenced pupil perceptions of teacher status, with pupils “*seeing very quickly who is leading, who has the lead, who decides what happens*” (C2 SNEI 31, 36). This created hierarchy among teaching staff. Even minor actions like announcing transitions significantly shaped teacher presence (C2 SENI 36). Children’s acute awareness of authority patterns meant that when Rebecca worked with small groups while Sabina led whole-class activities, children learned who held primary authority, a social arrangement that reinforced Rebecca’s specialist-support role rather than co-teacher status.

Rebecca attributed primary classroom leadership to Sabina, who was there “*almost every day*” and took “*the lead*” (C2 SNEI 31). Having been a classroom teacher herself, she found it more difficult to shape inclusive practice as an “*incoming SNE teacher*” (C2 SNEI 31). This shift from classroom teacher to specialist revealed how structural positioning determined influence over inclusive practice. Rebecca possessed the knowledge and experience to lead inclusive classrooms but her designated role as SNE teacher placed her outside the authority structure. To shift this dynamic, Rebecca wished to “*lead the whole class from time to time*” instead of “*always just standing on the sidelines*”, to be “*closer*” and more engaged with all children (C2 SNEI 31) and shape inclusive practice in contextualised situations. Her desire for occasional whole-class leadership was not about status but building relationships with all children and demonstrating that inclusive practice extended beyond specialist intervention to everyday teaching. By “*standing on the sidelines*” she remained marked as the special needs teacher rather than becoming included in the fabric of classroom life.

Rebecca’s experience illuminated how structural constraints (C2 SENI 81) shaped inclusive practice. The number of hours present influenced the perceived hierarchy among classroom staff which, in turn, restricted her impact on shaping class structures, organisation, and approaches to individualised teaching for lived diversity and inclusion. Her external position hindered opportunities to share positive experiences with all children by leading the class, ultimately limiting her capacity to influence inclusive practice for this class. Rebecca’s structural positioning, such as limited hours, external status, and specialist role, constrained her ability to foster the “*naturally lived diversity*” she envisioned.

The Assistant’s Actions and Experiences

Data sources: Assistant Interview (C2 AI), Classroom Observations (C2 CROBS 2).

Daniela had been accompanying Anna for the last 4 years. She described her position as being “*there for the class*” and that she simply helped “*where needed*” (C2 AI 7), to support Anna and other children in various situations, as detailed in “Supporting Anna

doing with others”, which highlights what, where, when, with whom and how Anna participates. “Shaping support for inclusion” describes how Daniela contributed to inclusive practice from her specific position.

Supporting Anna Doing with Others

Daniela supported Anna’s individualised learning while facilitating situations that connected her with other children. Five situations varied greatly in what, where, when, with whom, and how Daniela supported Anna’s participation, emphasising the importance of “knowing them a bit” to support adaptation and create inclusive situations (C2 AI 37), which meant considering all children’s needs and class dynamics.

Supporting Anna and Her Peers in Project Work

Daniela facilitated Anna’s contribution to a joint project with a peer in the subject “*Nature, Man, Society*” (C2 AI 53), creating a class presentation about planets. Anna’s partner took on the writing and presenting, while Anna, under Daniela’s step-by-step guidance, created a poster. Daniela recalled modelling each step, naming planets, choosing colours, and guiding Anna through the process (C2 AI 53). During the presentation, Anna and her peer divided responsibilities “*the other girl gave the presentation, she spoke*” and “*Anna just went around at that moment and showed all the children drawings or pictures*” (C2 AI 53). This work division enabled Anna to contribute visibly to the shared task while working within her capabilities. Daniela’s scaffolding transformed what could have been Anna’s exclusion from a complex academic task into genuine, if adapted, participation.

In a series of science experiments, children worked in small groups. Anna collaborated with two friends, relying less on Daniela’s involvement: Anna “*really took part and she also took notes*” (C2 AI 53). Showcasing confidence from previous experiences, her friends gave Anna space to contribute according to her abilities. These contrasting situations, the planet project requiring extensive scaffolding versus the experiments where Anna worked more independently, revealed that inclusion was not a fixed state but varied according to task demands, peer relationships, and Anna’s familiarity with activity types. Daniela’s role shifted responsively: providing intensive support when needed, stepping back when peers could facilitate Anna’s participation. Inclusive situations were shaped by what was being done, with whom, where and when, and how the involved actors responded to one another. These situations allowed for contributions to the task at various skill levels. Daniela modelled ways to support Anna in contributing within her range of possibilities.

Doing with Max: A Peer Encounter Outside the Classroom

Initiated by Kurt, the external coach, the teaching team incorporated everyday activities for Anna, such as making orange juice. Critical of the separative approach, they adapted

the activity for other children to join Anna, working in pairs. They identified the task as an opportunity to extend her social interactions to include boys. Max was invited to the “orange juice team”, supervised by Daniela, who observed: “A conversation really did start. Max didn’t really want to go back (to class) and Anna didn’t make a move either” (C2 AI 53). The practical occupation of making orange juice created conditions for genuine connection that classroom academic tasks had not; the shared doing provided a natural focus that supported conversation without demanding it. That neither wanted to leave suggested authentic engagement, not mere compliance with an inclusion activity. Although outside the classroom, this activity facilitated shared experiences and meaningful interactions between Max and Anna, a pair not naturally formed in class.

Responding to Anna Leaving Shared Occupational Situations

Anna’s peers were involved when Anna spontaneously left the classroom during Arts and Crafts. Daniela described this as “rather difficult” (C2 AI 55), as Anna’s engagement was highly variable, “sometimes she doesn’t feel like it anymore” (C2 AI 55). Anna left through balcony windows into the wintery outside weather. After Anna refused invitations to return, Daniela locked the windows and asked her to return through the main entrance, advising the class to ignore Anna, as “this is a game now” (C2 AI 56). One child revealed: “didn’t we do a good job because she kept wanting us to open [the windows]. And she wouldn’t have stopped” (C2 AI 55). Daniela’s strategy enlisted peers as collaborators in managing Anna’s behaviour, framing non-response as collective action (“ignoring”) rather than rejection. This approach distributed responsibility across the group and positioned children as active participants in maintaining classroom functioning. However, it also placed children in the uncomfortable position of withholding a response from a peer, revealing the tensions inherent in balancing Anna’s inclusion with classroom order and other children’s needs.

Working Individually in Class

In some situations, Anna engaged in different activities from the others, such as during personal reading time. While nearly all the children pulled out books, Daniela briefly discussed with Anna, who started drawing, as did Tom (C2 CROBS 2 11). Both preferred not to read and engaged in a similarly quiet, individual activity at the same time and in the same room as the other children, promoting inclusion. Across situations, Anna’s participation was shaped by the dynamic interplay of what, where, with whom, and how situations evolved. Daniela played a pivotal role in creating these situations by modelling inclusion, interpreting group needs, or guiding peer interactions.

Shaping Support for Inclusion as Class Assistant

Shaping support for inclusion came from a unique position as the sole adult without responsibilities for teaching, leading, or organising wider classroom activities, situating

Daniela between the classroom teachers and children. This liminal positioning, neither teacher nor child, provided distinct advantages: Daniela could observe classroom dynamics that teachers managing instruction might miss, build relationships with children uncomplicated by assessment or discipline, and attend closely to individual needs without managing the whole group. From this position, she regularly provided feedback and detailed observations to teaching staff, including identifying children who had not grasped explanations, were not progressing, or were not working well together. She recognised how her “*different view of the class*” (C2 AI 46) added value for classroom staff in providing inclusive experiences for all.

While most children appreciated Daniela’s support, two or three showed clear “*dislike*” and actively rejected her help (C2 AI 44), revealing that children understood distinctions in adult roles and that receiving assistant support carried social meaning. For some children, Daniela’s help marked them as needing special assistance, a designation they resisted. When a parent complained to the teaching staff after Daniela set boundaries for their child, it revealed how some parents perceived her position as having less status than classroom teachers, limiting her classroom influence and contribution to inclusion. Bypassing Daniela to address teachers directly illustrated how institutional hierarchies shaped whose authority was recognised. Despite her extensive knowledge of the children and her daily presence, Daniela’s formal position constrained her capacity to act with full professional authority, a structural parallel to Rebecca’s experience as external SNE teacher. Daniela’s position ranged in complexity from supporting Anna’s inclusion to serving as confidante to other children, while sometimes having her presence rejected.

The Children’s Actions and Experiences

Data sources: Focus Group Interview (C2 FGI), Classroom Observations (C2 CROBS 1).

This section presents understandings about how the children experienced inclusion and the actions that influenced those experiences. The findings are drawn from a focus group interview involving Zoe (third grade, Tamil background); Julia, Eva, and Laura (fourth graders, Anna’s friends); and Max (fourth grade). The group was formed according to teacher recommendations, based on children who played and engaged with Anna and were willing to discuss their experiences. Anna was not invited as she “*could hardly participate in group discussions*” (C2 CROBS 5 90).

Central to all children’s experiences of inclusion was cooperating and doing things together, represented in Working Cooperatively. The five children also reflected on how doing things together facilitated getting to know each other and establishing

relationships in a changeable multi-grade classroom, illustrated in Building Connections as a Class.

Working Cooperatively

Inclusive experiences at school related to being part of a class and doing things together with others in diverse activities. When asked what school meant to them, Max responded: *“just that we do a lot together”* (C2 FGI 248). This deceptively simple statement captured a vital dimension of inclusion from children’s perspectives: the everyday experience of collective participation in shared occupations. Consistent with Dewey’s understanding of the importance of context and how things vary depending on it, and aligned with children’s references to specific places and times, the subthemes are presented in relation to particular situations. The following sections describe children’s collaborative actions and experiences in PE and classroom contexts.

Cooperating in PE

PE was organised to ensure children engaged through doing, playing, and practising together while helping each other (detailed description on pp. 146-151). Situations for cooperative work towards common goals were created by setting up materials, putting children in leading positions, and evolving situations whereby children recognised situations where help was needed and responded by taking actions to support their peers as part of inclusive practice.

Cooperative situations emerged through three interrelated processes: how the situation was structured and organised, how leadership was shared, and responsive peer support. Setting up the stations was a familiar task to the children. Julia reflected: *“we help each other with setting up and then we also do gymnastics together”* (C2 FGI 58), illustrated by the observation of three boys pushing the large floor mat trolley with lots of fun, while two girls pushed a different mat trolley towards the high bars (C2 CROBS 1 17). The openness of the arrangement created a situation where children had the freedom to decide how to organise themselves, encouraging teamwork and quick problem-solving amongst the team members.

Autonomy in organising their cooperation and deciding who would carry what, required children negotiating roles and pace without adult direction. Children developed cooperative skills, which they transferred to the gymnastics activities themselves. They recognised when help was needed and responded, such as when some children assisted Nino in lifting a mat onto the trolley (C2 CROBS 1 46). Laura explained:

You automatically notice very quickly what you need to do, where help is needed or where you could still help, so if someone isn’t able to do it, you can still help [Man merkt eigentlich automatisch sehr schnell, was man tun muss, wo es Hilfe braucht oder wo man noch helfen könnte, also wenn es jemand nicht gerade schafft, dass man da noch hilft.] (C2 FGI 31)

Laura's description revealed group interaction skills: reading others' struggles, assessing one's own capacity to help, and moving fluidly between receiving and providing support. Her use of "*automatically*" suggested these cooperative patterns had been shaped by a classroom culture of supporting each other. This presence in the situation, along with the skill to notice and respond to where help was needed, facilitated cooperation. It cultivated a sense of shared responsibility and highlighted how children contributed to inclusion through small, intuitive acts of support.

Cooperating in Classroom Activities

The children recounted various collaborative actions and situations in which they worked in pairs or small groups, ranging from helping each other succeed in experiments to doing mathematics. Eva experienced this as: "*we read in German in pairs, and I had fun doing that*" (C2 FGI 17). Eva's emphasis on enjoyment revealed that cooperation was meaningful. Working together created positive experiences that seemed to sustain engagement.

Eva and Laura recalled project work experimenting together: "*put jelly bears in the water*", "*watched what happened*" and saw "*the result at the end*" all "*doing together*" (C2 FGI 21). This open-ended experimentation situation positioned children as co-investigators, enabling diverse contributions. The setup allowed children to move independently from one activity to another, and team up with students from the parallel class in the neighbouring classroom. This approach encouraged children to cooperate with peers beyond their usual classmates, reflecting the school's aim to foster a sense of unity between classes and reinforce the idea of a cohesive, inclusive, and wider school community.

Laura highlighted another feature of cooperation, assuming a teaching or coaching role after finishing their work: Teachers advised, "*You can help the others by walking around and see who needs help*" (C2 FGI 41). The children were required to note where support is needed: "*In math, if someone gets stuck, we can also help them with learning*" (C2 FGI 39) and how to provide support in an inclusive way that promoted individual learning. This peer teaching arrangement distributed expertise across the classroom. By positioning children as potential teachers, classroom staff acknowledged varied paces of learning while creating meaningful roles for those who finished quickly. However, this system also risked creating visible hierarchies of competence and, as Rebecca noted, potentially burdening helpful children. The teachers' emphasis on voluntary participation, children could choose whether to help, attempted to mitigate these risks.

Cooperation also happened intimately with desk neighbours. Zoe and Julia noted: "*me and Julia always explain it quite well to one another when we get stuck*" (C2 FGI 42), revealing that fourth and third graders were exchanging at eye level. This reciprocal

support between different grade levels demonstrated how the multi-grade structure facilitated cooperation across age and ability.

Cooperating Democratically in the CC:

Children spoke fondly of the CC to practice democracy. Eva explained the CC as:

When we want to say that something has improved or where we need to look a little closer, or when we want to do something [wenn wir sagen wollen, dass etwas besser geworden ist oder auch wo wir etwas mehr schauen müssen, oder wenn wir mal etwas tun möchten.] (C2 FGI 95)

It allowed them to propose issues, debate, problem-solve, vote, and make decisions, which were important for their cooperation. Structured with four specific roles: leader, rule keeper, timekeeper, and minutes taker, the children meet weekly to reflect “*if we want to say what has improved, or where we need to pay more attention*” (C2 FGI 95), discuss issues related to their working together and sharing material, like iPad management “*we had a problem*”, “*simply not being plugged in*” being put back “*without being switched off*” (C2 FGI 98).

By addressing such practical matters democratically, rather than through adult-imposed rules, children learned that their collective decisions shaped daily classroom cooperations, embodying Dewey’s understanding of democracy as a lived experience. The CC thus served dual functions: it was a forum for practising democratic processes and a mechanism for sustaining the collective cooperation that enabled inclusive practice. Over time, children developed the cooperative and democratic skills central to the school’s ‘Just Community’ approach, learning to balance individual preferences with collective needs.

Creating inclusive experiences for all children required the classroom staff to intentionally structure and lead situations that fostered a sense of belonging. However, from Anna’s perspective, there were situations (e.g., CC) where she did not participate, as she joined the multi-grade elementary class on Fridays. Her absence from CC meant Anna could not influence decisions that affected her classroom participation. This exclusion from democratic practice, even if necessary for her Friday programme, revealed tensions in balancing individualised support with collective co-creations of shared situations.

Max’s earlier comment, “*just that we do a lot together*” expanded later to “*that we definitely have a sense of togetherness and that it’s fun and knowing the class well*” (C2 FGI 248), suggesting that doing things together supported connecting as a class and provided inclusive experiences. Max’s elaboration revealed how cooperation in shared occupational situations, the “*doing together*”, generated connections (“*fun*”), social knowledge (“*knowing the class well*”), and collective identity (“*sense of togetherness*”).

Cooperation and how it was structured seemed the very process through which inclusive experiences were created. Building on this, the next theme focuses on how connecting and having friends shaped inclusive experiences for all.

Building Connections as a Class

This theme explores what children hoped, for in terms of feeling connected, that formed a sense of belonging. Building connections was facilitated through everyday cooperative work with diverse peers, close friendships that provided experiences of safety during transitions, and processes of reconnecting that revealed both the possibilities and tensions of inclusive practice. Two intertwined dimensions shaped these connections: the actions children took in working with diverse peers and the bonds they formed through shared occupations that created a sense of belonging within their class community.

Connecting Through Working with Diverse Peers

Connecting as a class referred to developing cohesion through shared experiences, such as learning, working on projects, playing, singing, and practising with diverse children. The multi-grade structure meant “*diverse peers*” encompassed differences in age, ability, and language, requiring children to navigate varied skill levels and social dynamics in their daily cooperative work. Classroom staff emphasised children’s openness to connect with everyone. Doing things together facilitated getting to know each other, being familiar with one another, and becoming a cohesive whole. Zoe recalled Nicola expecting them to connect with all: “*don’t let it show, because it’s not so great for everyone when you say: ‘Mhhh I’m with him’*” (C2 FGI 264). Nicola’s directive revealed the deliberate cultivation of connections: children were taught to manage their preferences privately rather than expressing reluctance publicly. This expectation protected potential targets of rejection while teaching children that inclusive participation sometimes required setting aside personal preference for collective benefit. Eva extended this to working with children you do not necessarily get along with, and ensuring “*that you can work together*” (C2 FGI 261). Eva’s distinction between “*getting along*” and “*working together*” revealed mature understanding: connection did not require liking someone but the capacity to work cooperatively.

Julia believed that “*a good class is one that gets along and that the class sticks together*” (C2 FGI 254), highlighting the importance of minimising “*competition*” (C2 FGI 255) and maintaining freedom to say, “*I wouldn’t like to take part here*” (C2 FGI 255). Julia’s vision of a “*good class*” balanced cohesion (“*sticks together*”) with individual autonomy (freedom to decline participation). This balance suggested that inclusive connection required solidarity without compulsion; children needed the right to opt out.

Minimising competition implied reducing hierarchies based on valued skills that might hamper cohesion.

The children's understanding of cohesion suggested that connection meant working together effectively, even without necessarily getting along well, highlighting the importance of tolerance, having a choice to participate, and less competition, all of which contributed to inclusive practice. Children thus articulated a working definition of connection: cooperative engagement across difference, sustained by tolerance, voluntary participation, and de-emphasised competition. This definition prioritised collective functioning over individual preferences while protecting individual agency, a delicate balance central to inclusive practice. However, the school's multi-grade setup caused yearly disruptions to the class cohesion. The next section explores how these annual changes affected children.

Experiencing Safety Through Friendships in Times of Change

The multi-grade structure caused yearly disruptions to class connections. Within this context of recurring change, close friendships took on particular significance, providing emotional anchors that helped children navigate uncertain transitions. Connecting as friends captured how children built and maintained friendships while adapting to new peer constellations each year, playing an important role in developing familiarity within the peer group and creating a sense of safety.

Eva shared her experience of changing classes after kindergarten: "*then it was difficult, I no longer knew any children*" (C2 FGI 245). She also lost "*Lina, she was my sanctuary, she was my friend*" (C2 FGI 245), indicating that connecting and building friendships fostered a sense of safety. Eva's metaphor of "*sanctuary*" revealed the protective function of friendship: Lina provided refuge from the stress of navigating an unfamiliar social environment. Losing this sanctuary when classes changed left Eva vulnerable; her safety depended both on general class connections and specific, trusted relationships. Eva found it reassuring when Sophie, a same-grade peer, offered support: "*always be there if you need anything*", giving her "*the safety of knowing that I know someone*" (C2 FGI 245). Sophie's offer, and Eva's relief, demonstrated how friendships operated as social insurance during transitions. Laura recalled a reversed situation, where all her friends left. Finding it "*a bit hard*" (C2 FGI 246), Laura's experience of being left behind, rather than leaving, revealed a different vulnerability. When friends departed, the remaining children lost the mutual understanding those relationships provided. This asymmetry of transition experiences highlighted how the multi-grade structure created varied inclusion challenges depending on one's position in the grade progression.

Even though the yearly shift in the class social makeup presented challenges for the children, they also recognised many positive aspects, as they looked forward to reconnecting with former peers when moving to fifth grade. This forward-looking

orientation, anticipating reunion with familiar peers, helped children persist with present disruptions. The temporal dimension of connection, past relationships informing present safety and future possibilities, shaped how children experienced belonging in the multi-grade context. Building familiarity was supported by the classroom staff's emphasis on children developing skills to engage with diverse peers. The next section describes how children experienced and adapted when transitioning to the next grade and reconnecting with their peers.

Reconnecting

Reconnecting refers to re-establishing relationships after separation. For most students, reconnecting helped rebuild bonds, re-establish a sense of familiarity, and contribute to a sense of continuity as they adjusted to the newly structured group. However, this did not extend to Anna, whose transitions were paced differently (occurring outside the class pace). Her path was more fragmented, uncovering tension regarding inclusive experiences for all children. Divergence between Anna's transition arrangements and those of the rest of the class revealed how inclusion could fracture when structural arrangements created different temporal experiences for different children.

Julia shared her excitement by saying she was *"really looking forward to the fifth"* and *"having the old class again"* (C2 FGI 217), relating this excitement to being together as a class rather than specific individuals. Julia's anticipation of 'the old class', a collective entity, suggests that class identity persisted across separation. Eva and Max reflected that the future classmates already *"had contact with each other"* (C2 FGI 239), making it easier *"to build teams"* (C2 FGI 239). Eva added that being acquainted with *"who is how"* (C2 FGI 242) would facilitate reconnecting after separation. Eva's phrase *"who is how"* captured the social familiarity gained through understanding peers' personalities, strengths, preferences, and tendencies, reducing the effort of forming effective cooperation. Reconnecting with familiar peers facilitated re-engaging with children to create inclusive experiences.

The five children were aware that Anna's different transition pace impacted her reconnection prospects, revealing less inclusive aspects that separated her from the rest of the group. They were unsure how and where Anna would attend school next year, speculating on separate settings or repeating the fourth grade. Julia assumed it might be *"nicer"* for Anna *"if she goes to a school like this, possibly finding peers who go to a school where everyone is like her"*, revealing tension surrounding truly inclusive experiences, subtly dividing the class into 'us' and 'her'. Anna was perceived as different from her peers, which was reinforced by her irregular transitions between classes.

Despite this tension, the children expressed sincere concern about Anna having friends. Laura, one of Anna's close friends, voiced concerns about *"the current fourth graders leaving"*, imagining solutions with the remaining third graders who *"might well*

play with Anna" (C2 FGI 211), and her having "*new good friends*" (C2 FGI 211). Laura's concern and problem-solving revealed genuine care: she worried about Anna's friendship prospects and actively imagined solutions. Her identification of remaining third graders as potential friends demonstrated inclusive thinking, searching within existing structures for connection possibilities. Max considered this to be a "*stress for her all the time*" (C2 FGI 205), feeling that Anna "*needed someone*" but "*they're not there*" (C2 FGI 205), suggesting adult support as substitutes for peer friendships: "*she still has Mrs N. (Daniela)*" (C2 FGI 212) or "*Mrs. I (Nicola)*", the classroom assistant and SNE teacher. Max's acknowledgement of ongoing "*stress*" and his suggestion of adult substitutes revealed both empathy and a tacit acceptance of limits to peer inclusion.

The children's genuine concern about Anna having friends reflected an inclusive mindset, wishing her similar experiences of connecting and re-connecting. However, Anna's distinct educational path set her apart from the group, creating a subtle division between 'us' and 'her' and uncovering tension in inclusive practice. Resolving this tension involved adults stepping in as 'connectors', with children suggesting familiar adults as bridges. This solution was imagined specifically for Anna, rather than for all children, uncovering the tension of inclusion as it sought to bridge the gap between us and her, even within a caring and supportive environment. The fact that this bridge-building fell to adults suggests inclusion remained incomplete. It was present in daily interactions yet fractured by divergent pathways.

Children's participation in, and experience of, inclusive shared occupational situations emphasised that doing together in different situations facilitated inclusion. Through playing, practising, and doing other things together, they learned to respond in supportive ways and have fun at the same time. Inclusive practice was created through engagement with diverse peers and building class connections. Despite yearly reconstitution, they experienced a sense of reconnection with familiar peers in a 'new old class'. Doing things together strengthened their bonds, easing the transitions. However, for Anna, this process was more complex, as her different-paced transitions uncovered tensions within inclusion, showing that the sense of connection and continuity most children experienced was not shared equally.

The Parents' Actions and Experiences

Data sources: Parent Interviews: Mrs Danz, Laura's mother (C2 PI 1); Mrs Roos, Eva's mother (C2 PI 2); Mrs Leisinger, Julia's mother (C2 PI 3); Mr Boos, Zoe's father (C2 PI 4); Mrs Anders; Anna's mother (C2 PI 5); Mr Zentsch; Max's father (C2 PI 6).

These six parents (five parents of focus group children and Anna's mother) brought perspectives shaped by personal experiences, family dynamics, and professional

backgrounds, offering a multifaceted view on inclusive practice. Their accounts highlighted how understandings of inclusive practice were relational, context-dependent, and shaped by both personal and systemic dimensions. Each parent's positioning, as immigrant, school board member, parent of a disabled child, or political representative, provided distinct perspectives from which to assess inclusive education, revealing how inclusion was understood differently depending on one's social context and lived experience. Mr Boos, an immigrant from Sri Lanka who partly grew up in Germany, empathised with Anna's experience of being different. Rita, Anna's mother, collaborated more closely with classroom staff than other parents. Mrs Danz's perspective was shaped by her husband's teaching profession and her service on a school board. Mrs Leisinger described earlier difficulties in Julia's school career and how the school found solutions. Mrs Roos considered academic learning challenging in multi-grade classes due to noise-related distractions. Mr Zentsch witnessed the school system's evolution towards more inclusive and multi-level classrooms through his four children (oldest 23 years) and brought a political perspective as a local council member. This diversity of parental perspectives meant that the findings represented a spectrum of views shaped by varied experiences of inclusive education.

Learning in a Multi-grade Class

This theme explores how all six parents viewed multi-grade classrooms as valuable opportunities for inclusive practice, appreciating natural, age-based diversity as providing chances for children to learn from one another while benefiting from individualised support. However, they recognised challenges, particularly annual changes in class dynamics and smaller peer groups limiting friendship formation opportunities. Parents' perspectives revealed tensions between appreciating diversity in principle and sometimes reinforcing categorical thinking about ability hierarchies. Their accounts illuminated how 'learning' in multi-grade contexts encompassed both academic progression and social development dimensions, which seemed challenging to integrate into a nuanced understanding of inclusive education.

Learning with Diverse Peers Across Grade Levels

Parents categorised the children in the multi-level class hierarchically as "*above*" or "*below*" (C2 PAI 3 50) "*little*" (C2 PAI 5 13) and "*big ones*" (C2 PAI 6 6), grade categorisation, based on their perceived skill levels. They believed that children could orient themselves according to their interests, abilities, and motivation either "*upwards*" or "*downwards*". This belief introduced tension, implying an ability hierarchy rather than reflecting class diversity. Positioning children as 'above/below' or 'little/big', revealed how age-based organisation shaped parental understanding of classroom diversity.

Mr Boos' daughter, Zoe, excelling in Mathematics, worked with fourth graders after expressing interest in advanced tasks. Mr Boos appreciated this flexibility for *"children who are interested in learning more"* (C2 PAI 4 5). Whereas Mrs. Anders explained that Anna oriented herself towards younger children, benefitting from the setting being *"really great because she still plays a lot, and she could always keep up with the younger ones"* (C2 PAI 5 13). These contrasting examples illustrated how the multi-grade structure accommodated varied learning trajectories. Yet this accommodation operated within a hierarchical logic rather than as a lateral engagement with different learning opportunities. The class's natural diversity gave children more opportunities to engage in activities aligning with their preferences and abilities, facilitating inclusion.

Mr Boos viewed peer teaching as beneficial for inclusion, noting children *"listen more"* when *"peers explain something"* rather than adults (C2 PAI 4 63). Mr Zentsch emphasised the teaching staff's role in enabling peer interaction, with students benefiting from each other, *"little ones from the big ones"* and *"big ones can pass on something they have already learned"* (C2 PAI 6 6), in terms of *"working together, creating something together"* (C2 PAI 6 38). Peer engagement was seen as beneficial for all, as children participated in shared learning situations where they worked together and progressed their individual skill levels, contributing to inclusive experiences for all.

For social development, Max's father valued the opportunity for his son to work with a variety of classmates, seeing it as a way for him to understand that, despite their differences, all children are fundamentally the same, reflecting a core inclusive value, based on the realisation, *"working on something together ... to solve something"* (C2 PAI 6 36). This universalist framing, *"all children are fundamentally the same"*, could support inclusion by emphasising common ground, yet it risked erasing the significance of difference and the specific accommodations diverse children require.

Similarly, Mrs Danz, Julia's mother, attributed her daughter's increasing openness not *"differentiating between who she plays with, whether boy or girl or younger or older"* (C2 PAI 1 18) to engaging with diverse peers resulting from the inclusive setting. Parents viewed this setting as favourable to building skills to engage with all peers as a means of successful inclusive practice. Despite these benefits, parents found the annual changes in the social construct challenging, particularly in supporting their children to find and maintain friendships.

Navigating Friendships in Changing Class Constitutions

Parents described yearly changes as creating constant cycles of gaining and losing peers and friends. Mrs. Anders found this unsettling being *"not together for a year, then they're together again for a year"*, making it difficult *"to find colleagues"* (C2 PAI 5 97). Mrs Danz described it as an emotional rollercoaster when older classmates left and joy

when reconnecting with former peers. This volatility, loss followed by reunion, was emotionally unsettling for both children and parents as they managed repeated transitions.

Mr Zentsch viewed changes as natural: *“At the turn of the year, a few leave and a few new ones arrive”* (C2 PAI 6 27). Mr Zentsch’s acceptance of these transitions contrasted with other parents’ experiences, suggesting that attitudes towards social disruption varied by experience, or perhaps by how successfully one’s own child navigated the changes. His four children’s progression through the system may have familiarised him with these changes. Mrs Leisinger noted smaller grade sizes limited choices for *“making friends”* (C2 PAI 3 22), while Mrs Roos contrasted her own single-grade experience with wider friend choices, criticising multi-grade approaches as *“difficult to maintain friendship continuity”* (C2 PAI 3 22).

During transitions, Mrs. Anders noted that Anna *“took time”* to talk to the teachers but engaged in the class *“relatively quickly”* (C2 PIA 5 89), stating that it was easier for Anna if peers *“want to play something with her”*, but became more difficult when Anna *“wanting something and the others don’t want it”* (C2 PIA 5 59), highlighting how peer familiarity supported Anna to navigate social interactions, but when occupational preferences diverged, challenges arose. This asymmetry revealed how inclusion could be contingent on others’ goodwill and was easier when shared occupational interests aligned, suggesting that co-creating inclusive experiences required constant negotiation and accommodation.

Opinions on the social dynamics of classes varied. Some found the annual changes unsettling, while others accepted them as a natural part of the experience. Parents, except for Anna’s mother, did not explicitly view the multi-grade structure as an instrument for promoting inclusive practice. Instead, they often viewed the different grade levels as separate, with opportunities for accelerated or slower learning, highlighting a focus on categorised learning groups, rather than an individualised approach connected in a learning community. Parents’ challenges in conceptualising the multi-grade class as an integrated learning community suggest that deeply rooted educational assumptions about age-based progression and ability grouping shaped their understanding. How welcoming all and practising democratic values contributed to inclusive practice is examined next.

Welcoming All

Parents’ understanding of welcoming all centred primarily on structural conditions, sufficient staff, collaborative teams, and a positive atmosphere. This framing positioned inclusion as something adults provided through adequate resourcing and professional commitment, with less attention to how inclusion was co-created in daily classroom actions. Welcoming all as an inclusive practice was seen as the teaching staff’s

responsibility, supported by the school's provision of adequate resources and effective team collaboration, illustrated in the subthemes Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere and Collaborating with the Teaching Team. These subthemes encapsulate the parents' views concerning the village School, specific class, and their own contributions.

Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere

Mr Zentsch, whose children attended different schools within the same community, reflected on his "*individual, subjective*" experience, noting that he connected more easily to the "*Village*" school team (C2 PAI 6 17). He acknowledged that while both schools had "*good teams*", they were "*still different somehow*" (C2 PAI 6 17). He clarified that this did not mean "*that the atmosphere for pupils there is not as good as it is here*" (C2 PAI 6 19). Mr Zentsch's careful qualification revealed the complexity of articulating what made one school's atmosphere distinctive. His emphasis on personal connection with the Village School team suggested that welcoming atmospheres emerged partly from interpersonal rapport between parents and staff, a dimension that could not be fully captured by structural measures.

Mrs Leisinger believed that Julia's transfer to the Village School was "*huge luck*" and that for her daughter "*in terms of character, it simply fits well*", in a sense that the class "*have it pretty good together*" (C2 PAI 3 22). While parents agreed the Village School atmosphere was special, the precise nature of what made it fit well or special was difficult to define. The welcoming nature of their children's specific class, however, was attributed to the teaching team's committed efforts and the school's provision of adequate resources.

Providing Adequate Teaching Resources

Parents viewed the four-member teaching team (Sabina, Nicola, Daniela, Rebecca) as unique in their community. All agreed that sufficient resources were crucial for inclusive practices. Mrs Leisinger noted, "*it stands or falls on the fact that there is enough support staff*" (C2 PAI 3 46). Mr Zentsch concurred that adequate resources were "*the package where you get every child through somehow*", otherwise "*it doesn't work*" with "*only one teacher at the front*", risking excluding disabled children (C2 PAI 6 15).

Mrs. Anders specified that while adequate teacher numbers were important, their willingness to engage was equally important: "*The teachers have to want it (inclusion), it needs enough teachers because it's a huge task*" constantly adapting "*the whole curriculum*" and the teachers are "*doing a lot*" (C2 PAI 5 85), emphasising the willingness of the teaching team to create inclusive situations. While parents agreed that inclusive practices depended on adequate support staff, the 'high' staff ratio was justified by the presence of Anna, with the parents' focus centred on Anna's specific needs rather than on how all children benefitted. This framing revealed a tension as parents tended to view the resource-intensive model as necessary specifically for Anna's inclusion. This logic,

of extra resources justified by the disabled child's presence, risked positioning disabled children as costly exceptions requiring special provision rather than as inclusion improving the educational quality for everyone.

Collaborating with the Teaching Team

Welcoming all required collaboration with the parents. Mrs Leisinger and Mr Boos appreciated the school's Klapp communication app, making contact easy with "*no reluctance to get in touch quickly*" (C2 PAI 3 51). Mrs Roos described teachers as "*easy-going and open*", meeting parents "*as equals, almost on a collegial level*" (C2 PAI 2 2), contributing to parents feeling welcome. Mrs Roos' description of "*almost collegial*" relationships revealed an emphasis in this school context towards more egalitarian collaborative partnerships between teachers and parents.

Mrs. Anders described collaborative solutions as "*Yes, we'll look together at what we can do*" (C2 PAI 5 25), collaborating more closely than other parents on Anna-related challenges. Rita took over special tasks such as "*break supervisions ... we are really all together, constantly keeping an eye on things*" (C2 PAI 5 25). While other parents were less involved, Mrs. Anders' proactive approach underscored the importance of flexible, needs-oriented collaboration between parents and staff. Her involvement ranged from coordinating logistics between the gym and the main school building, participating in circle time, or addressing issues like the challenges in the changing room. Mrs Anders' intensive involvement revealed both the depth of collaboration possible and the unequal distribution of collaborative actions amongst parents.

Some solutions impacted all children. During circle time, it was challenging for Anna to join and engage with her peers sitting on small benches. To solve this issue, the classroom staff initially decided that Anna could draw at her desk during circle time, while the other children participated in the group activity. However, with this separation, Anna continued "*to disturb*" (C2 PAI 5 61). Mrs. Anders hypothesised that Anna's challenge arose from not knowing who was sitting beside her and her desire to be with the others. She suggested "*fixed seating arrangements*", so Anna knew "*where she was sitting, then it was fine*" (C2 PAI 5 62). Collaborating on a solution to support one child's participation led to the structural adjustments that benefited all children by providing a clear structure of where to sit, making this measure supportive for all. Mrs Anders' alternative reframed the difficulty from individual deficit to environmental design, creating an inclusive solution without special treatment. Overall, parents recognised the importance of adequate teaching resources but equally valued the teaching team's dedication and skill in creating inclusive situations.

Diverse Views on Inclusive Practice

This theme explores parents' diverse perspectives on inclusive practice, shaped by their personal experiences and values. Parents' views encompassed both their appreciation of the school's democratic structures endorsed by the Just Community framework, and their varied understandings of what inclusion meant and required. This diversity suggests that the meanings and value of inclusive education were interpreted through individual biographical lenses.

Views on Practising Democracy for Inclusion

Mr Zentsch found his son Max's school's democratic approach distinctive as "*a democratic movement here in this house, maybe that's what makes it*" that "*very strongly promotes cohesion and cooperation*" (C2 PAI 6 44). His connection between democracy and 'cohesion and cooperation' revealed an understanding that democratic participation fostered inclusive community through children doing together and accommodating differences.

Mrs Leisinger agreed that children "*learn a lot socially from things like this*" (C2 PAI 3 82). Mrs Danz added that children were able to "*express what they like*" and "*also have a say*" (C2 PAI 1 95). In contrast, Mrs. Anders mentioned that her sons are less inclined to engage in such democratic processes, and that they "*do not go to parliament voluntarily*" (C2 PAI 5 110). Despite differing levels of student engagement, all parents appreciated the school's democratic structures which they saw as contributing to an inclusive environment where children are heard and valued. This appreciation suggests that democratic structures signalled a school culture that prioritises voice, agency, and collective responsibility, qualities parents associated with an inclusive community.

Views on Inclusive Practice

Parents' views on inclusion, as represented by the six volunteering participants, revealed a range of perspectives shaped by individual experiences, surroundings, and children. Some parents saw the "*integrated child*" (C2 PAI 2 115) as a distinct category within the classroom. Mrs Roos characterised inclusion as "*normal everyday life*", noting that children "*never complain about an inclusive child*" (C2 PAI 2 115). Others approached inclusion conditionally, appreciating that disabled children attended local schools but framing this as fairness rather than a human right, suggesting a more intersectional view.

I think it's nice for those who are affected that they are permitted to go to school in their own village, of course [Ich finde es schön für diejenigen, die es betrifft, dass die natürlich im eigenen Dorf in die Schule gehen dürfen.] (C2 PAI 2 109)

The language of permission positions inclusion as a concession and suggests that school attendance for disabled children remained negotiable. It was framed as primarily benefiting disabled children rather than enriching the educational community

necessary to build inclusive societies. Another condition for including all was formulated as depending on the child, *“how loud it is or how much it disturbs”* (C2 PAI 2 110). These views suggested that inclusion is perceived as reliant on the suitability of the individual child and the availability of sufficient resources, with less emphasis on the support for all and a rights-based approach to inclusion.

Mr Boos, drawing on migration experience, connected deeply with inclusive values, *“knowing what it feels like to be an outsider”* (C2 PAI 4 156). Mr Zentsch viewed inclusion in societal contexts as facilitating social change, with children having *“no longer prejudices”* or *“fear of contact”*, contributing to schools becoming *“more diverse”* and the world *“more normal”* (C2 PAI 6 34). Mrs Danz related *“being an outsider”* as a difficult position that *“influenced later life”* (C2 PAI 1 59), whereas Mrs Leisinger, with a disabled godchild, offered nuanced perspectives based on personal experience, advocating inclusion while acknowledging *“it doesn’t always work equally well”*, especially when *“social aspects were missing”* and her godchild at some point *“didn’t have anyone to socialise with”* (C2 3 25).

The diversity in parents’ perspectives underscored inclusion’s complexity and position within societal discourse. Living democracy within the school reflected commitment to democratic values and inclusion through structured activities that fostered children’s voices and participation in decision-making, contributing to inclusive practice. Parents’ varied views, from a more rights-based advocacy to conditional acceptance to emphasis on resources, uncovered that inclusive education remained contested ground where different values, interests, and experiences produced divergent views on its desirability, feasibility, and meaning. The school’s inclusive practice thus operated within a community holding multiple, sometimes conflicting, understandings of what inclusion meant and whether it succeeded. The following section turns to the professional perspective of the school’s speech and language therapist.

The Speech Language Therapist’s Actions and Experiences

Data sources: Speech Language Therapist Interview (C2 SLTI).

SLT was financed by the canton (canton’s SNE framework, for confidentiality reasons, not referenced) and offered as an individual support measure on the school site but outside the classroom. Anabel, a speech language therapist, employed for 23 years, provided services in two municipalities. She worked with the children in a separate building that also housed early SNE services. In addition to therapy sessions, she visited schools for annual language development screenings. Anabel viewed her structural and physical position on the education system’s periphery as both challenging and providing opportunities, creating tension. The first theme: Piecing Together Anna’s Support

Network Puzzle, outlines her work with Anna and her family, and school staff. The second theme, Supporting Inclusive Processes From the Periphery, examines Anabel's broader role operating at the education system's margins.

Piecing Together Anna's Support Network Puzzle

This theme captured the ongoing process of organising and coordinating the various support elements Anna needed to participate in class over time. Like assembling a puzzle, each piece, be it a teacher, specialist, or resource, formed a specific part, ensuring Anna could engage with her peers in class. The theme highlights Anabel's view on the complexity and careful matching required to ensure that Anna, her family, and the class received the appropriate support combination. Two subthemes describe this puzzle-building: Building a Sustainable Support Network explores how 'puzzle pieces' came from various sources, changed over time, and required reassembling to accommodate Anna and the class's evolving needs. Reassembling the Support Puzzle Pieces exemplifies how the reassembly of support puzzle pieces came about.

Building Sustainable Support Network

Anabel described building sustainable support networks that facilitated inclusion as starting with trusting relationships. Working with Anna and realising her potential required forming reciprocal bonds that *"took me a very long time"*, until Anabel *"was confident, believing Anna enjoyed SLT"* (C2 SLTI 97).

After Anna transitioned to her third-fourth grade class, her support network shifted due to various circumstances. Rebecca, one of her key support teachers, went on maternity leave and was replaced by two SNE teachers, and Nicola reduced classroom time to start SNE teacher training. This shift required *"putting this puzzle together again and again"* (C2 SLTI 72), which Anabel described as particularly vulnerable times disrupting Anna's stable support network, emphasising *"the reliability of the relationship being gone"* (C2 SLTI 72).

Anabel characterised her work as *"strengthening vertically"* (C2 SLTI 16), referring to building long-term stability within changing systems through relational approaches that developed slowly but solidly. This vertical support extended beyond the child, creating stability involving Anna's family, assistant, teachers, and cantonal support staff, benefiting inclusive practice for *"not only the children, but also the environment"* as the *"gained knowledge, expertise, and experience transferred to others"* (C2 SLTI 16).

A decisive factor for successful inclusion was Anna's *"relationship with the children"* (C2 SLTI 93). The support team regularly evaluated her need for other support services, such as occupational therapy or PMT, choosing continuity over change, not wanting *"to take the relationship away from her"* (C2 SLTI 111), and prioritising sustainable relationships over involving other services.

Reassembling the Support Pieces

Piecing together the support network, much like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, relied on a proactive, reciprocal interest in understanding each other's contexts. Anabel made efforts to learn about the topics being covered in school. With the SNE teacher on leave, Anabel focused more intensely on Anna's language skills and intensified their weekly sessions, claiming this as being *"helpful for the school, that you piece this (jigsaw) puzzle together again and again"* (C2 SLTI 70). However, the increase in therapeutic support meant separating Anna from engaging with her peers.

When peers started English lessons, Anna's readiness was assessed, with SLT used as an alternative: *"if it becomes difficult for Anna at school, that she then comes to therapy"* (C2 SLTI 36), illustrating both flexibility and limitations of assembling the support puzzles. While individualised solutions met Anna's needs, they resulted in separation from classmates. In the upcoming RTD, Anabel proposed rearranging the support network, suggesting that she was *"going out and taking a break (from providing therapy)"*; (C2 SLTI 38) underscoring time as another significant factor and highlighting that networks evolved, requiring pauses and reshaping to remain effective.

Building support networks for inclusive practice was characterised by interlocking factors, including sustainable relationships, stability among teaching staff, and challenging class situations. Different pieces represented various situational aspects, including individuals entering and exiting the network, subjects Anna was not attending, the settings, and time. Piecing together the support network meant integrating support within the classroom or coordinating separate support measures outside the classroom.

While the separate therapy setting allowed Anabel to gain a comprehensive understanding of Anna's language skills, it offered limited insight into how these skills supported Anna's peer interactions or contributed to inclusive practices. This tension between specialist knowledge developed outside the classroom and Anabel's peripheral position as a therapist is explored next.

Supporting Inclusive Processes from the Periphery

This theme foregrounds a critical tension in the therapist's role, operating at the education system margin. While her work intended to promote inclusion, her peripheral position, outside the immediate classroom structures and interactions, constrained her capacity to contribute directly to inclusive experiences of all children. Anabel experienced her physical position on the periphery as a disadvantage for supporting inclusive practice. Building relationships with teachers required them *"to get along with me, too, otherwise it might not work"* (C2 SLTI 116), revealing vulnerability entering the system from the periphery. Anabel made an effort to visit the nearby school building twice a week, joining the teaching team for morning breaks and engaging with them, strengthening

connections by bridging her being “*away from them locally*” and supporting their “*feeling that I actually belong to them*” (C2 SLTI 116).

During a recent visit to Schoolhouse D., Anabel encountered many people with whom she had “*points of contact*”. “*Talking with each other between door and door*” (C2 SLTI 117) led to the desire for therapy rooms within the school building, believing “*that would be even more inclusive, wouldn’t it?*” (C2 SLTI 117). Onsite positioning was seen as providing opportunities to advance inclusive practice by extending Anabel’s reach into classroom situations.

Anabel saw her primary responsibility as “*ensuring that special need educational expertise is transferred to regular schools*” (C2 SLTI 116), suggesting that objective, external perspectives benefited the system, potentially counteracting the canton’s emphasis on evaluating a child’s needs within their immediate context. However, it remained unclear how this ‘outside knowledge’ and ‘SNE expertise’ was effectively transferred into the classroom and how the cantonal SNE expertise complemented the on-site class SNE team expertise. Similar to the SEN teacher Rebecca’s experience, not being able to co-create classroom situations limited Anabel’s contribution to inclusive practice.

The Principal’s Actions and Experiences

Data sources: Principal Franz H. Interview (C2 PRI), RTD Observation (C2 RTD).

Principal Franz H. had worked at the school for 15 years, with responsibilities including overseeing the school’s “*pedagogical guidance*” and “*school development, quality development, staff development ... hiring teachers, firing teachers*” (C2 PRI 2). The school community had a long-standing tradition of practising inclusion: “*Actually, this attitude was there right from the start. But that does not mean that we were able to integrate all children [eigentlich war diese Haltung von Anfang an da, was aber nicht heisst, dass wir alle Kinder integrieren konnten]*” (C2 PRI 5). Franz’s leadership encompassed three interconnected dimensions: cultivating a democratic culture, coordinating resources, and enabling flexibility.

Three themes were constructed from Franz’s accounts. Building Sustainable Inclusion highlighted how Franz fostered inclusion by Building Just Communities (subtheme one) and Built the School’s Capacity for Inclusive Practice (subtheme two). The second theme focused on Coordinating Resources for Inclusion to welcome families with disabled children and coordinate resources. Theme three, Cultivating Flexibility in Practice, explored how financial and organisational flexibility supported inclusive practice.

Building Sustainable Inclusion

Building sustainable inclusion refers to creating and maintaining a school community that is welcoming to all students. The idea was not just to make temporary changes or accommodations for single children but to embed inclusive practice into the school's cultural values and fabric, within classrooms, among teachers, children, and other adults, collaborating to create inclusive situations. Sustainability was based on democratic values and implementing Just Community concepts. Further, Franz built capacity across stakeholder groups, advancing empathy and tolerance of diversity, sensitising teaching staff to the value of inclusion, strengthening SNE teachers' impact, and viewing children as inclusion multipliers. This dual approach, cultural transformation through democratic values and systematic capacity-building across stakeholders, continuously built an inclusive practice.

Building “Just Communities”

Based on Franz's view that “*school in a democracy should be a democratic school*” (C2 PRI 35), building sustainable inclusive education required developing awareness of a school's heterogeneity, and the adoption of approaches focusing on diverse children and adults working together, embodied in Just Communities. Franz's vision stemmed from his understanding of the “*societal consensus*” regarding inclusive practices, which asserted that “*children, if at all possible, are allowed to attend the mainstream class at school close to home*” (C2 PRI 4). Franz adopted broader educational visions aligning with internationally recognised values while drawing on Swiss democratic principles.

Building democratic values and a just and caring community went beyond mere voting; it required building the “*capacity for empathy*” (C2 PRI 35). Empathy enabled children to listen to each other's arguments, integrate different perspectives, and “*incorporate these arguments and then think beyond them. That's actually the bigger purpose behind it*” (C2 PRI 35)—learning from one another through active listening and respecting different perspectives. Franz framed empathy as a cognitive skill, the capacity to integrate others' perspectives into one's thinking. This reframing positioned empathy as a learnable competence developed through structured democratic practice. Capacity for empathy, in turn, fostered “*tolerance towards the other*” (C2 PRI 70), which Franz extended beyond disability to include other groups defined by “*skin colour and, and, and...*” (C2 PRI 70), fostering his notion of “*caring communities*” promoting inclusion.

Franz advocated that “*living together in heterogeneous communities is something that will accompany us throughout our lives*” (C2 PRI 70), arguing:

Our society is so pluralistic and so heterogeneous, it really only helps if they (children) experience this from an early age [unsere Gesellschaft ist so pluralistisch und so heterogen, es hilft eigentlich nur, wenn sie (die Kinder) das einfach von klein auf so erleben.] (C2 PRI 71)

This generational logic, preparing children for pluralistic futures, positioned inclusive education as essential socialisation making inclusive practice pedagogically necessary. Further, it extended education beyond academic learning to social learning within caring communities where children collaborate in everyday actions. One example was the school house meetings, which gathered all children and staff in the assembly hall where children showcased what they had learned, ranging from “somersaults” to “finger rhymes” (C2 PRI 94), highlighting the value of diversity. Whether it was related to age, learning content, personal preferences, or seasonal and project-based factors, all supported the development of a heterogeneous, diverse, and inclusive learning, developing “*individualising school community*” (C2 PRI 93). How Franz built capacity to create inclusive learning environments is portrayed in the next section.

Building Capacity for Inclusive Practice with Various Stakeholders Over Time

Building capacity for inclusive practice across stakeholders involved gradually developing the attitudes, knowledge, skills, relationships, and structures required to include all learners. Franz emphasised that sustainable inclusion depended on diverse groups’ contributions, recognising each group’s unique roles while cultivating capacity through active engagement over time. Creating shared situations was central:

Yes, the whole thing, like an African proverb: It takes a whole village to raise a child, it takes a whole school to be able to support a child inclusively [Es braucht ein ganzes Dorf, um ein Kind zu erziehen, braucht es ein ganzes Schulhaus, um ein Kind inklusiv zu fördern.] (C2 PRI 20)

Franz described the school’s journey as a “*learning on the job*” approach (C2 PRI 20). Engaging all stakeholders included children playing and working together in shared situations, created by classroom staff and SNE teachers. Teachers brought different experiences and attitudes toward inclusion while working together to create inclusive education. Some parents, like Anna’s mother, actively contributed to finding solutions, enabling her child’s participation. Parents listened to their children sharing experiences of collaborating with their peers and gained insights into inclusive practices during school visits. Franz recognised that children, teachers, parents, and specialists accumulated skills and knowledge to build capacity for inclusive practice, valuing diverse forms of knowing and skills. By developing this culture of inclusion, Franz collaborated with various groups, including cantonal representatives as described in the next section.

Building Capacity with the Canton

Franz maintained “*active exchange*” (C2 PRI 80) with the canton’s SNE education team. Building relationships over time, rooted in his strong commitment to inclusion, stating he was “*always clear ... Inclusion is simply part of it*” (C2 PRI 80). His dedication to making inclusion a central aspect of education shaped his collaboration with the canton’s department and influenced the canton’s political will to support inclusion, asserting:

Politically, to say quite clearly, hey guys, ... that's societal consensus, that's it. [politisch, ganz klar zu sagen, hey Leute, ... das ist gesellschaftlicher Konsens, Fertig.] (C2 PRI 80)

Franz's "*societal consensus*" assertion functioned strategically: by framing inclusion as a given political reality, he positioned inclusive practice as a non-negotiable baseline. He acknowledged challenges with children that "*we don't succeed in including*" (C2 PRI 80). His collaboration with cantonal authorities facilitated shared understanding of inclusive practices, streamlining a solution-finding process for individual children. However, the journey toward fully inclusive education was still ongoing. The following section explores how Franz built capacity with the classroom staff.

Building Capacity for Inclusive Practice with the Teaching Team

To build capacity for inclusive practices across the entire school team, Franz engaged staff through multiple approaches. Each school entity had designated team leaders who met with Franz twice monthly to "*discuss things in terms of attitude (inclusive), how we can develop this further*" (C2 PRI 20), deciding on specific training courses emphasising inclusive topics, tailored to meet the team's evolving needs.

Focusing on individual teachers' attitudes and practical skills, Franz "*regularly went on school visits ... staff development meetings, of course such things are discussed*", describing it as difficult "*you can't just snap an attitude ... It's not a virtue it's just an attitude*" (C2 PRI 20), which "*simply developed over the years*" (C2 PRI 20). Franz's metaphor of attitudes developing slowly over years revealed patience in accepting gradual evolution through sustained capacity and experience building. Franz adopted a long-term perspective in building individual teachers' inclusive capacity, continuously seeking opportunities for teachers to refine their inclusive skills. For example, some staff hesitated toward inclusive practice, worried they "*can't do the child justice*" (C2 PRI 24). To resolve this concern, Franz carefully assessed the classroom and SNE teacher team composition and simply said, "*this child comes to you, ... simply because I knew it would work*" (C2 PRI 29). Franz's strategic class assignments built inclusive capacity by ensuring initial success, trusting that his staff would build capacity to meet these demands.

Learning on the job was a main facilitator for building inclusive practice capacities in all classrooms. Franz intentionally created teaching teams that he believed were well-suited to developing inclusive practice. He viewed SNE staff as "*specialists, who are well versed in inclusion*" (C2 PRI 51), emphasising that successful inclusion required "*a good relationship with each other*" (C2 PRI 51). Franz contributed to creating an atmosphere in which inclusive practice was developed by doing it and addressing challenges as they arose.

Having “*integrated children in every class*” (C2 PRI 20) built capacity over time by engaging all classes and staff and enabling the entire school to develop expertise in creating inclusive situations. By continually learning from these experiences, the school developed its stance on inclusion from it not being “*enough for just one class with two teachers to implement it*” to “*actually taking an entire school building to make this inclusion a reality*” (C2 PRI 20).

Building Capacity for Inclusive Practice with Parents

Franz’s capacity-building approach with parents was shaped by his democratic understanding that “*you simply have to take everyone seriously, of course*” (C2 PRI 45). He engaged with parents individually and collectively, addressing concerns as they arose. For instance, when a parent reported that an integrated child had spit on another child, he took the issue seriously and responded directly. Franz’s commitment to “*taking everyone seriously*”, reflected democratic principles that all voices warranted a response.

Franz also dealt with broader parental concerns, illustrated by an incident a few years ago when parents expressed worries about an integrated child in the class. They wrote a letter, “*having the feeling that the child is given too much space and demands too much energy from the teachers and that the others get too little attention*” (C2 PRI 72). Initially, Franz was “*quite shocked*” (C2 PRI 72) but recognised that they lacked an “*inclusive attitude*” (C2 PRI 72). In response, Franz organised a parent meeting focusing on inclusion, inviting a school psychologist to help explain the benefits of inclusion, emphasising that “*the other children also benefit from it*” (C2 PRI 72). Franz highlighted the additional resources provided by the SNE teacher and assistant, who supported all children in the class: “*After that, it was good, then it worked*” (C2 PRI 72). Franz’s strategy combined expert knowledge (school psychologist), universal benefit framing (all children benefit), and resource reassurance, addressing both resistance towards inclusion and practical concerns.

Franz recalled many “*really good success stories*” with parents being “*also very satisfied and still approach me today*” (C2 PRI 27). His deep democratic values, paired with his commitment to sustainable inclusion, encompassed actively addressing parents’ concerns, broadening their understanding of the school’s attitude, and the skills required to welcome all children. This engagement potentially enhanced parents’ capacity to support inclusion. The next section explores capacity building with the children.

Building Capacity for Inclusive Practice with Children

Franz viewed children as the most important educational stakeholders and “*multipliers, for sure*” (C2 PRI 78). They took their experiences as young children of doing together with diverse children into adult life, contributing to building pluralistic societies. They acted as inclusion multipliers within their families and communities, sharing their school experiences like: “*Imagine that Anna stood freehand on the gymnastics parallel bars*

today”, which “*works for sceptics*” (C2 PRI 74). Franz’s concept of children as ‘multipliers’ positioned them as agents of social change: their inclusive experiences radiated outward through families and communities, gradually shifting broader attitudes. Franz highlighted children’s role both in shaping their own experiences and attitudes and influencing the broader community’s perspective on inclusion.

Developing Sustainable Inclusion encapsulated how the principal acted with different stakeholder groups, guided by his clear vision and commitment to building inclusive schools deeply rooted in a democratic philosophy, with a strong emphasis on preparing all children to live in a pluralistic, heterogeneous society. Franz also played a key role in coordinating resources for classrooms that included disabled children. His insights and experiences will be explored further in the following section.

Coordinating Resources for Inclusive Practice

Coordinating resources to support disabled children involved evaluating the child’s needs, assessing the necessary resources to meet those needs in and outside the classroom, and ensuring those resources were effectively coordinated and funded. Various stakeholders participated in this process, and Franz communicated with them to gain a comprehensive understanding of each individual case, allowing him to better prepare the classroom staff. Franz’s resource coordination shifted the focus from allocating support to individual children toward assessing entire class needs, positioning inclusion as a systemic rather than individualised intervention.

Franz described the typical process, starting when the early education specialist working with the child at home contacted him approximately 10 months before the child began school, providing information about the child and their diagnosis. Since Franz was initially unfamiliar with the child, his first step was to speak with the early education specialist, who helped identify: “*What does this child need at our school*” (C2 PRI 8). Franz relied heavily on the early education specialist’s firsthand experience, without referencing medical or other formal reports. Prioritisation of experiential knowledge revealed Franz’s trust in practitioners’ situated expertise developed through doing together and interacting with the child and their family. His initial conversation helped Franz evaluate the resources and support needed while identifying who would provide these measures, allowing effective coordination. For physically disabled children, he also assessed the buildings’ accessibility.

Second, Franz met with the teachers, starting with a new group of children in their mixed-grade elementary class, those “*which might be considered*” (C2 PRI 8). He described the child and posed the same key question to the teachers: “*What does the child need?*” followed by, “*Can we provide that?*”, resulting in “*In most cases, we can say, yes, we can manage this somehow*” (C2 PRI 8). Franz’s question sequence, ‘what does the child need?’ followed by ‘can we provide that?’ positioned need assessment before

feasibility determination, ensuring children's requirements drove resource decisions rather than available resources constraining inclusion. Franz made it a point to personally consult with the prospective staff, evaluating the resources available within the classroom and assessing the additional support required for the staff, ensuring he could set up and coordinate the necessary assistance.

The third step involved a deeper, expert-driven evaluation (early education specialist, school psychologist, and cantonal authorities) of the child's needs, allowing Franz to determine the feasibility of coordinating resources and assessing whether the school could provide the required support. The fourth step involved a final decision, "*then we actually decide whether yes or no*" (C2 PRI 8), before "*the parents join in*" (C2 PRI 10), informing them that "*it is possible*" and "*we are looking forward to your child*" (C2 PRI 10). Delaying parent involvement until after feasibility determination protected families from disappointment and allowed staff an honest assessment without parents' advocacy pressure. This sequential approach prioritised institutional readiness before family engagement.

Onboarding parents meant reassuring them "*we are also prepared to embark on this journey together*" (C2 PRI 10), acknowledging that "*perhaps not everything is perfect*" but "*we are looking forward, to tackle this*" (C2 PRI 10). Franz's language of 'embarking on a journey together' positioned inclusion as collaborative venture requiring an ongoing process. His acknowledgement that 'not everything is perfect' set realistic expectations while maintaining commitment. In this process of welcoming a disabled child to the school system, Franz ensured that the family understood that the school was doing their best to provide the necessary resources and support to include their child.

What stood out was Franz's commitment to personal conversations and dialogue to gain a clearer understanding of the child's needs, engaging various parties in the decision-making process. He began by consulting someone with firsthand experience of working with the child, such as the early education specialist, but not personally affected by the decision, like the parents would be. Early on, he sensitised classroom staff to the child's needs before consulting with experts to arrive at a final decision, which he then communicated to the parents, inviting them to collaborate.

Central questions were what children needed to engage with others in classrooms and whether schools could provide the necessary support. Franz continuously evaluated the resources required to support both the child and the classroom staff in creating inclusive practice, operating at the intersection of the canton, school community, teachers, classroom staff, therapists, and families also managing the financial aspects involved.

Franz created a holistic approach to inclusive practice by integrating various levels of responsibility (canton, local community), involving the expertise of professionals

(early intervention specialists, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, and teachers) and the parents. Coordinating resources over time involved remaining attentive to children's evolving needs and well-being and ongoing commitment to support measures, as shown during RTDs regarding Anna's transition, highlighted by "*being open to everything*", seeing "*what it takes to make it work for Anna*" (C2 CROBS 5 140), aligning with his assertion that inclusive practice required the entire school. Engaging the whole school demanded flexibility, different aspects of which are explored next.

Cultivating Flexibility to Support Inclusive Practice

Flexibility conveys the idea of adapting, accommodating, or adjusting to changing situations or challenges. In the Village School, it involved being open to new ideas, and planning and implementing changes to accommodate diverse needs or circumstances. Franz positioned flexibility as a systematic organisational capacity enabling responsive, inclusive practice. Flexibility was showcased in two aspects: how a global budget enabled flexibility to create, and how the flexible use of diverse settings supported, inclusive practices.

Financial Flexibility

Political authorities entrusted Franz with an overall budget, granting him freedom and responsibility to decide what developments he wanted to prioritise and where the money was invested. This freedom was a significant motivator to develop sustainable inclusive practice: "*That's why I'm still here, I have to say quite honestly, the global budget*" (C2 PRI 86), emphasising they "*are simply much more flexible*". The global budget "*naturally requires a lot of trust from the authorities and the school board*" (C2 PRI 86). Franz's acknowledgement that the global budget was why he remained in the position revealed how financial autonomy functioned as a professional retention tool, enabling leadership that might otherwise be constrained by bureaucratic resource allocation.

This financial organisation supported inclusive practice by allowing Franz to coordinate resources to where they were needed, providing "*leeway*" (C2 PRI 100) compared to other municipalities where recognising a child's special needs required council decisions and the principal "*to submit an application for two more lessons ... tedious, we are simply much more flexible*" (C2 PRI 86). The contrast between Franz's autonomy and other principals' bureaucratic processes, requiring council approval for additional lessons, revealed how financial structures either enabled or constrained responsive inclusion. Franz's leeway meant he could act responsively to emerging needs. Franz's approach highlighted that inclusive practice was effective when assessing the class resource needs with diverse children, while incorporating an understanding of the immediate context, shifting focus from individual children towards the class, supporting the creation of inclusive education.

Flexible Use of Settings

The availability of different settings and individuals' willingness in those settings to accommodate other children contributed to the school's flexibility necessary for inclusion. In Anna's case, flexible solutions allowed her to join the mixed-grade elementary class on certain days. Anna was familiar with this setting; the more playful environment met Anna's occupational preference for playing, based on the thoughtful selection of shared occupational situations, suitable for Anna to engage with peers. Anna's participation in younger classes was a strategic use of varied settings to match her occupational interests, revealing how flexibility enabled individualised participation patterns across school spaces.

Franz noted that certain occupations were very suitable for Anna to do with her own class, "*art and crafts*", for example, while he did not think "*it makes much sense*" in English classes (C2 PRI 61), indicating that occupations or subjects played a major role in deciding whether to choose a different setting. Franz's occupation-based flexibility positioned curriculum content and activity type as legitimate bases for setting selection, moving beyond classroom-oriented placement. Flexibility in using different settings was "*quite situational*" (C2 PRI 53) and "*so well-established that it is possible, even if it is not planned*" (C2 PRI 53), allowing the school to adapt to the needs of the students as situations arose, representing both planned and spontaneous options.

Involving various classroom settings reflected a broader development strategy aimed at "*building a (support) network in each school unit*" (C2 PRI 59), ensuring that alternative settings were available when needed: "*Sometimes there are simply situations where a teacher can no longer work with a child for whatever reason*", which relieved the situation by knowing "*that you can place the child in this class*" (C2 PRI 59). Offering alternative settings depended on the classroom staff's openness to welcoming other children and collaborating with colleagues, demonstrating flexibility and a willingness to support one another in facilitating inclusion. This inter-class flexibility required collegial reciprocity: teachers welcomed other students knowing colleagues would reciprocate, creating a mutual support system.

Franz emphasised that sustainable inclusive education extended beyond individual teachers or classes, requiring the entire school community's involvement based on democratic values and building capacity for inclusive practice with different stakeholders. His resource coordination approach shifted focus from allocating resources to single children toward assessing entire class needs, promoting holistic and inclusive approach to resource allocation, ultimately favouring inclusive practice. Franz's leadership revealed sustainable inclusion as a multi-dimensional achievement requiring cultural transformation (democratic values), capacity development, resource

coordination, and organisational flexibility. No single dimension sufficed; together they created conditions enabling a school welcoming all children.

Franz's actions as principal revealed how leadership at the school level shaped the co-creation of inclusive education through cultivating democratic culture, coordinating resources, and enabling flexibility. The findings presented across the perspectives of classroom staff, children, parents, the assistant, the SNE teacher, the speech-language therapist, and the principal reveal multiple dimensions of how inclusive education was co-created, situated, and contextualised at the Village School. The following section synthesises these findings into 10 key assertions that capture the situated and contextualised nature of inclusive practice across all stakeholders.

Assertions Village Case

This section presents my assertions derived from the Village case study report. They represent diverse participant perspectives related to the research question: How is inclusive education created in Swiss mainstream school classes for children aged between 8 and 12 years? As in the Oak case, assertions are presented in sequence from classroom actions and situations through to the broader influences on inclusive education. Specifically, assertions regarding classroom situations, informed by the actions and experiences of classroom staff and children, are subsequently followed by those relating to therapists and the principal.

Assertion 1: Doing Together Builds Familiarity and Connections, Supporting Social Cohesion and Inclusion

Children value doing things together as a way to get to know one another, build familiarity, and form connections. Familiarity involves knowing someone well enough to feel comfortable around them and express oneself freely, which facilitates connecting and social bond formation. As familiarity grows, it enhances experiences of connection and belonging, ultimately fostering social cohesion within groups.

Social cohesion refers to solidarity among children, developed through interactions in diverse situations with mutual respect. Shared occupational situations, such as collaborative project work, create opportunities for meaningful engagement, promote connection through joint action, and strengthen the social fabric of classes.

Building social cohesion through doing together among all children relies on respecting diversity across multiple dimensions, including disability, language, socio-economic background, and race, while working to prevent discrimination and exclusion in any form. Respecting diversity is supported by ensuring all children engage with one another through varied and inclusive grouping strategies. Building familiarity and connecting through shared experiences supports the development of social cohesion, a collective bond that indicates connectedness and inclusion.

Assertion 2: Intentionally Choosing, Structuring, and Creating Occupational Situations that Provide Opportunities to Share Experiences Promotes Inclusion

The choice of occupations and how occupational situations are structured and created influence how children engage, what they engage with, how they do it, with whom, where, and for how long. Intentionally creating situations to create inclusive experiences involves recognising the potential of specific occupations to enable children to interact, engage, and build connections.

Creating and structuring inclusive situations requires understanding the nature of occupations, how situational elements might be changed, and the abilities and needs of children involved. This means adapting to accommodate diverse strengths and needs, so all children can contribute according to their abilities and participate meaningfully. Such adaptations can be planned and structured in advance or may emerge spontaneously in response to real-time needs.

Creating inclusive experiences is not a static process but is shaped by the dynamic interplay of what, where, with whom, and how situations are created. This ongoing process must be responsive to the changing nature of shared occupational situations within specific contexts (what and where), children's evolving capacities (with whom and how), and dynamics within groups. Importantly, both children and adults can develop skills to create, structure, and adapt shared occupational situations, supporting inclusion as a responsive practice.

Assertion 3: Classroom Staff Co-leading and Sharing Responsibilities Promotes Inclusive Experiences

Inclusive experiences for all, children and staff, are supported when all educators co-lead and are recognised as equal members of the teaching team. Co-leading means actively attending to and being present for all students, naturally leading to shared responsibilities. This co-leadership approach strengthens the status of support staff in the classroom and helps reduce stigmatisation of students with additional needs by avoiding situations where a child is the only one working with a classroom assistant or SNE teacher.

Co-leading and sharing responsibilities among classroom staff is based on building shared understandings and common values regarding how inclusive practice is implemented to be equally responsive to all children in class. While adequate resources support inclusive practice, structural limitations, such as grouping less able children with SNE staff, can lead to stigmatisation. When responsibilities are shared, and all teachers are present for all students, inclusive experiences for all are more likely to develop, helping reduce stigma and promote inclusion.

Assertion 4: Presence in Shared Occupational Situations, Noticing What is Needed, and Responding to Where Help is Needed Facilitates Inclusion

A shared occupational situation is one in which two or more people are doing something together. Presence in such a situation means being attentive and engaged with people, the occupation at hand and the environment. The presence of both children and classroom staff, along with the skill to notice and respond to others' needs, plays a critical role in creating inclusive experiences. Active noticing and responding by those present cultivates a sense of shared responsibility and illustrates how small, intuitive acts of support by both children and adults contribute to inclusive practices.

Small intuitive acts of support within shared occupational situations enable inclusive actions and peer learning. Examples include supporting a peer during physical education exercises, helping each other tidy up materials, or prompting a peer to engage in a required task. Furthermore, peer learning as an inclusive act is fostered not by offering direct solutions but by facilitating learning processes and finding ways to involve others meaningfully. Presence, noticing, and responding are rooted in empathy and a culture of mutual help through inclusive action.

Assertion 5: Collaborative Teaching Combined with Adaptable Planning and Flexibility within the Occupational Situation Supports Inclusion

Collaborative teaching is an approach where two or more teachers work together to plan and deliver lessons to groups of learners. Through collaborative planning, classroom and SNE teachers create joint teaching approaches aimed at meeting diverse learning needs within classes. During shared lessons, teaching staff draw on their specific expertise and backgrounds to address children's varied needs. This collaborative approach ensures that teaching is both targeted and inclusive, supporting all learners through shared professional responsibility.

Adaptable planning means that, during teaching, initial plans can be adjusted in response to emerging needs in classroom situations. Flexibility within situations means that teachers collaborate as a team and respond to the evolving needs of diverse learners. Teaching staff skilled in adapting planned content and instructional strategies, adjusting allocated time, and regrouping students flexibly in response to situations help ensure that all learners remain engaged and supported. The process of collaborative planning combined with responding flexibly during teaching actions is central to creating inclusive practice.

Assertion 6: The Natural Heterogeneity of a Multi-grade Class can be Capitalised on to Promote Inclusion Through Diversity

The natural heterogeneity of a multi-grade class refers to the inherent diversity of learners in terms of age, developmental stage, ability, learning needs, interests, and social skills within one classroom, where two or more year levels are taught together.

Inclusive teaching approaches accommodate children's differences in age, ability, language skills, and other factors that influence what they enjoy doing, how skilled they are, the pace at which they learn, and what interests them. The diversity of children in such classes facilitates individualised teaching approaches and builds class communities that overcome the limitations of grade-based categorisation.

Categorising children by grades can limit inclusive experiences by imposing normative expectations about what, how, and by when children should do things and achieve learning outcomes. This hinders the development of individualised learning communities and inclusion. In contrast, the natural heterogeneity of multi-grade classes can promote inclusive experiences by capitalising on this diversity. By creating shared occupational situations that address the varied developmental stages, interests, and abilities of all children in classes, individual children can contribute and learn according to their resources and needs.

Assertion 7: Inclusive Practice Requires Integrating the Values, Actions, and Experiences of Diverse Stakeholders as an Ongoing Process

Stakeholders such as children, classroom teaching staff, SNE professionals, parents, therapists, and the principal all contribute to inclusive practice. In relation to inclusion, each group brings specific actions, experiences, and values to the classroom, the schoolhouse, and the wider school community. Integrating contributions depends on ongoing dialogic processes grounded in mutual respect and underpinned by democratic and human rights-based values. It includes providing time, space, and structures to develop inclusive values through shared learning. Integrating values, actions, and experiences of diverse stakeholders becomes especially critical when instances of exclusion, discrimination, or stigmatisation occur, whether through peer interactions, parents voicing concerns about inclusive practice, or teaching staff feeling unequipped to support all children.

Processes that support schools in becoming more inclusive can be initiated by any stakeholder group, with responsive actions involving one or several parties. For example, in the classroom, staff may act when children are excluded by peers. At the schoolhouse level, inclusive action might involve providing access to alternative classrooms when children need different learning environments. In collaboration with parents, the principal might respond to criticism of the school's inclusive approach by organising meetings. One way to support less experienced teachers is by pairing them with SNE specialists experienced in working with disabled children.

Furthermore, it is essential to facilitate processes that address exclusion when it arises and proactively cultivate inclusive practices, such as staff events to establish shared inclusive values. The active involvement of diverse stakeholders in creating inclusive practices promotes the development of shared values through transformative

processes that continuously advance and strengthen school communities grounded in democracy and human rights.

Assertion 8: Allocating Resources and Support Measures to the Class Rather than Individual Children Facilitates Inclusive Practice

Evaluating specific needs and providing appropriate resources at the class level, while acknowledging diverse dimensions of vulnerability within a class, such as age, ability, language skills, and others, supports the inclusion of all children. This approach enables every child to participate in shared occupational situations by responding to their individual strengths and challenges within classroom settings.

Allocating class-level resources can effectively address various changeability elements, including strategies for grouping, types and levels of support, modes of interaction, and the adaptation or choice of occupations, thereby facilitating inclusion. By viewing classes as dynamic entities and allocating resources accordingly, schools can promote inclusive practice by enabling all children to do together with others, participate in shared occupational situations, and contribute according to their abilities.

Assertion 9: Developing Sustainable Inclusion is Achieved Through Capacity-building Over Time

Developing sustainable inclusion over time refers to creating and maintaining school communities in which all students are genuinely welcomed and valued. Sustainable inclusive practice involves embedding values and actions in everyday school life, moving beyond temporary accommodations for individual children to whole-school approaches.

School-wide capacity for inclusive practice is built first through intentional creation of situations where children of different ages and abilities engage with one another. Secondly, it relies on strengthening staff capacity by fostering collaboration between classroom and SNE teachers, who bring diverse expertise and experience. Through joining their efforts and developing a common understanding of inclusive values, a sense of commitment and willingness to contribute to common goals can emerge. Capacity for sustainable inclusion is further strengthened by providing regular continuing professional development and creating informal opportunities for staff to exchange ideas and reflect on inclusive practices.

Achieving this aim requires openness and flexibility from the principal and teachers, as well as financial flexibility to invest in the resources, long-term planning, and everyday actions necessary to sustain inclusion. Financial flexibility is enabled by the school's global budget, which political authorities have entrusted to the principal. This level of trust and autonomy allows the principal to prioritise inclusive developments and allocate resources based on the school's specific needs. The trust and autonomy placed in the principal's role serve as a motivator and enabler, for building sustainable inclusive practice over time.

Assertion 10: To Transform Educational Practice to Become More Inclusive, it is Essential to Uncover Tensions and Engage in Reflective, Dialogic Processes

Transforming educational practice to become more inclusive requires identification and understanding of hidden or overlooked tensions that may hinder inclusive experiences for all. Uncovering tensions involves engaging in ongoing processes of reflective dialogue, continually questioning what works, what does not, and why. These reflective dialogic processes enable transformation by helping classroom staff, children, parents, therapists, principals, and others recognise tensions and explore how, when, where, and with whom situations can be changed to become more inclusive.

A key aspect of these reflections requires asking whether all children are truly able to participate with their peers in shared occupational situations, learning with and from one another, and whether they genuinely experience inclusion. Tensions may emerge when this ideal is disrupted. For example, the inclusion experiences of disabled and other children can become strained as academic expectations increase, sometimes resulting in separate learning situations. While individualised teaching approaches can help address specific needs, they may also limit opportunities for shared occupational situations and reduce potential for doing together.

Another example of tension arises from parents who hold differing views on inclusive practice. Bringing implicit and often unacknowledged tensions to light offers opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue. While some parents describe inclusion as 'normal everyday life', others perceive the 'integrated child' as a separate category, revealing conditional understanding of inclusion shaped by personal experience, cultural context, and perceived impacts on their own children.

Uncovering and acknowledging these diverse perspectives and approaches, as well as these tensions, is the first step towards engaging in open, reflective, and dialogic processes. Such open dialogues aim to acknowledge inclusive practice as a process that integrates different views, experiences, and values towards the shared aim of welcoming all children. Engaging in reflective, dialogic processes can lead to transforming underlying values and supporting actions towards creating more inclusive learning environments.

Having presented the findings and assertions from both case studies, the following discussion examines how these situated and contextualised findings contribute to broader understandings of inclusive education, interpreting them within international literature and the theoretical framework that underpins this research.

Chapter 6. Discussion

Introduction

Bringing an occupational perspective to inclusion gives prominence to how people engage together in shared occupational situations. This perspective bridges the human rights framework and Dewey's (1916/2008, 1938/2015) collective democratic experience-based practices, underpinning this study by focusing on what and how people do together to create inclusive experiences. Following Dewey's understanding of transaction, inclusive education is seen as co-created through dynamic exchanges between individuals and their environments, where meaning and practice are co-constructed and changeable through shared occupational engagement, shaping underlying values and actions (Dewey & Bentley, 1946, 1949).

While inclusive practice is inherently contextualised and situated (F. Felder, 2022), the Salamanca Declaration's (UNESCO, 1994b) call for global alliance emphasises learning across international and local contexts. The scoping review (Chapter 2) captured international views and practice approaches from multiple perspectives, which are briefly recapped in the first discussion section. It provided guidance for conducting locally contextualised and situated case studies to reveal how inclusive practices unfold in specific local settings.

At the classroom level, reconceptualising inclusive practice from an occupational perspective exposes a needed shift from providing individual support to collective co-creation, focusing on actions in the class at school. It involves how people create shared occupational situations, shape inclusive values, and foster class communities that connect children and classroom staff in individualising yet collective experiences, a concept explored in the discussion of individualising class communities. At the wider school community level, inclusive education unfolds as an open-ended, situated, and contextualised process that creates environments welcoming to all children.

International Perspectives: Scoping Review Insights

Analysis of the international literature was undertaken to inform the design of the case studies. It identified that inclusive education unfolds within shared occupational situations, contexts where two or more people are doing something together, shaped by specific occupations, interactions, and contexts. These situations encompass both what is being done (doing projects, sports, learning or playing), and how activities are organised (outcome-oriented, teacher-centred, competitive situations, with more rules and structures or outcome-open, child-centred, collaborative, less structured situations), who participates, and the nature of interactions that occur.

Central to these findings was the recognition that situations are changeable. The literature demonstrated that inclusive experiences can be enhanced by adapting occupations and equipment, reimagining participant roles, and reconceptualising the nature of activities themselves—how grouping is facilitated, support is rendered, and people interact. Particularly significant for inclusive practice was the finding that children valued peer support over adult assistance and that effective inclusion required a comprehensive understanding of individuals’ strengths and challenges rather than deficit-focused approaches.

Analysis also revealed how underlying influences, beliefs, attitudes, policies, and institutional practices shape possibilities within shared occupational situations. This insight highlighted that inclusive education extends beyond classroom interactions to encompass systemic factors enabling or hindering inclusive practices (Echsel et al., 2025). These occupational, human-rights perspectives informed the Swiss case studies examining how inclusive education is co-created within specific institutional and cultural contexts. The next section addresses insights from classroom practice, conceptualised as ‘from individual support to collective co-creation’. It discusses the wider school context, framed as ‘inclusive education: an open-ended, situated, contextualised process’, which addresses more systemic complexities that shape inclusive practice.

Reconceptualising Inclusive Practice: From Individual Support to Collective Co-creation

This study’s contribution shifts inclusive practice from individualised support toward collective co-creation. Collective co-creation refers to collaborative processes grounded in shared values, developed and enacted through shared occupational situations. It is this shared value foundation that makes the co-creation truly collective, distinguishing it from instrumental collaboration. All class members, including children, teachers, and support staff, engage in this ongoing process by actively shaping shared occupational situations, enabling all children to participate in and contribute to class activities as equally valued members.

The case study findings and assertions challenge individualistic special education models by demonstrating that effective inclusion cannot rely on individual accommodations and support (Assertion 3, Oak School; Assertions 1, 2, Village School). Three claims are made. First, shared occupational situations serve as transactive spaces, providing the means through which inclusive experiences are collectively co-created and diversity is lived and valued (Assertions 3, 4, 6, Oak School; Assertions 1, 2, Village School). Second, teachers’ leadership can create inclusive classroom cultures grounded in inclusive values, such as democracy, supporting each other, equally valuing and respecting all, and accountability. Shared occupational situations serve as the

means through which these values guide children and staff to collectively co-create inclusive experiences (Assertions 1, 2, 6, 8, Oak School; Assertions 2, 4, 5, Village School). Third, living inclusive values over time in collectively co-created, many shared occupational situations, cultivates a dynamic individualising class community. The classroom community becomes individualising when all children are seen in their strengths and vulnerabilities and valued equally for their unique contributions (Assertions 4, 5, 7, Oak School; Assertion 1, Village School).

Bringing the three concepts together to reframe inclusive practice rejects the positioning of children with disabilities as the only ones receiving specialised support. Instead, it positions inclusive practice as a collective approach where all those involved are responsible for constructively contributing to inclusion.

Shared Occupational Situations as a Means to Collectively Co-create Inclusive Experiences

Two moments from the case studies illustrate how shared occupational situations function as interactive spaces for collective co-creation. On Oak School's playground, Nino organised a soccer group that included Raul, who participated in the activity in his own way without compromising its competitive nature. At Village School, when Anna retreated under her desk during a learning activity, her classmate Dana spontaneously invited Anna to playfully join the game, transforming a moment of (self-) exclusion into collaborative engagement.

These examples demonstrate how shared occupational situations function as spaces where diverse participants co-create inclusion. In Raul's soccer participation, competitive players maintained game intensity while Raul contributed through his unique participation style; the shared situation and Nino's leadership enabled diverse participation modes without requiring modification. Similarly, Dana showed skills to respond inclusively, transforming Anna's withdrawal into re-engagement. These examples illustrate how diversity is lived: Raul's 'own way' and Anna's fluctuating engagement are part of the collective dynamic rather than problems requiring individual support.

Inclusion unfolds specialised interventions and all participants shaping shared spaces together which challenges traditional individual support approaches that position children with disabilities as passive recipients of specialised adult support, which accommodates them within existing classroom structures. Deficit-oriented, individual approaches separate 'special needs' children from their 'typically developing' peers through categorisation and labelling, inadvertently reinforcing exclusion through the very mechanisms intended to promote inclusion (F. Felder, 2022; J. Hollenweger, 2018; Messiou, 2017; Norwich, 2024; Slee, 2019; Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018). The present study reveals that inclusion succeeds or fails not through the quality and amount

of individual support but in how inclusive practice structures opportunities for all children and classroom staff to contribute to shared occupational situations.

The way that doing together is structured enables both collective engagement with individual contribution and individualised learning, resolving the dichotomy of social belonging and academic achievement. These findings address a persistent challenge in inclusive education: the artificial separation between social and academic learning (Allan & Slee, 2019; F. Felder, 2022; F. B. Felder, 2022; J. Hollenweger, 2014). Current approaches that prioritise academic outcomes often lose social interaction and cohesion, while those emphasising social inclusion may compromise learning expectations (F. Felder, 2022; J. Hollenweger, 2014, 2018). Both case studies provide evidence supporting this finding by demonstrating how intentionally structured shared occupational situations effectively integrate social and academic learning, breaking down the traditional barriers between these domains. On a class level in the Oak School case, the mathematics lessons in which classroom and SNE teachers co-led problem-solving activities enabled children with varying abilities to contribute their unique strengths, while achieving grade-level, individualised learning objectives. Similarly, in the Village School case, multi-grade project work allowed children of different ages and abilities to collaborate as experts in different domains. These examples show that effective inclusive practice requires deliberate structuring that positions all participants as contributing learners, fundamentally shifting how learning situations are created.

Further, shared occupational situations as a means for collective co-creation operationalises Dewey's (1938/2015) vision of schools as places of "associated living" within contemporary diverse societies (El-Mafaalani, 2025). Dewey's emphasis on learning through shared experience finds concrete expression when all children participate as contributing members. Unlike many traditional, collaborative learning approaches that follow predetermined structures (Gillies, 2016), shared occupational situations accommodate diverse participation modes through their open, contextualised nature. For example, when classroom staff intentionally choose open-ended, less competitive activities such as arts, crafts, and collaborative inquiry, children develop skills for engaging across differences. Even outcome-focused academic tasks became inclusive when structured to enable multiple forms of contribution, bringing together both individual thriving and thriving as a class.

This practical manifestation of Dewey's (1916/2008) vision aligns with contemporary theoretical perspectives on inclusive education that emphasise the collective dimension of learning. F. Felder (2022), for instance, accentuated that inclusion has "a deeply social aspect" (p. 141), a perspective that resonates strongly with the findings presented here. The discussed concept of 'collectively co-creating inclusive experiences in shared occupational situations' offers a response to Felder's call for

bridging “practical transformation requirements with conceptual considerations” (p. 141) that capture “processes of collective transformative activities” (p. 143). This study directly addresses Felder’s emphasis on bringing together “individualising and collective developments” (p. 147), a synthesis that will be explored in the following two sections on building an inclusive classroom culture and individualising class communities.

Building Inclusive Classroom Culture Over Time

Evidence from both cases suggests that while school staff initially establish the foundation for inclusive classroom cultures rooted in shared values, the development of these cultures becomes a collective responsibility over time. Values of democracy, supporting each other, equally valuing and respecting all, and accountability, are developed, enacted, and reinforced through shared occupational situations. The measure of a truly inclusive classroom culture is when children naturally step into leadership roles without specific instruction.

Democracy was practised in the CC of both cases, where children could propose issues, debate, problem-solve, vote, and make decisions, all of which were essential for collaboration (iPads situation, Village School) and making changes (the indoor swimming pool was too cold for some, Oak School). Supporting each other manifested differently across schools. Village School children developed intuitive responsiveness where they *“automatically notice very quickly what you need to do, where help is needed”*, (p. 166) while Oak School teachers explicitly taught meaningful help, *“not just to say, hey, you have to write 14 there because it is 14. But rather, think about it ... bringing them on the track”* (p. 98). Equal valuing was demonstrated through Oak teachers ensuring *“all having equal rights to be guided through obstacles”* (p. 96), while respecting all meant Village children learned to work *“effectively and connecting, even without necessarily getting along that well”* (p. 196), highlighting the importance of tolerance and respect. Accountability in Oak School involved children *“taking charge of their own learning and not judging others”* (p. 96), holding them responsible for their actions to contribute to the class community.

Inclusive classroom culture developed through repeated enactment over time. The Oak School case illustrates this evolution clearly: the CC progressed from simple emotion-sharing with glass nuggets to child-led agenda setting and collaborative problem-solving to address issues within their occupations; as Sonja noted, *“this class council has developed”* (p. 99). Similarly, peer support evolved from teacher-instructed helping techniques, *“bringing them on track, rather than giving answers”* (p. 98), to intuitive responses like Dana reengaging Anna (p. 199). Accountability transformed from individual behaviour management to collective responsibility, where children examined the effects of their actions on peers and the class community. This developmental process can be understood as the gradual cultivation and enactment of values, a process

through which teacher-initiated structures become authentic community practices as children gain competence in democratic participation, supportive interaction, and shared responsibility.

The development of an inclusive classroom culture aligns with human rights frameworks. The UNCRPD (2006) and the UNCRC (UN General Assembly, 2019) establish normative foundations for inclusive education that require not merely access but meaningful participation and belonging. Article 12 of the UNCRC, which recognises children's right to express views and participate in decisions affecting them, finds concrete expression in the democratic practices described in the CC. Similarly, the UNCRPD's emphasis on full and effective participation (Article 24) is operationalised through peer support and accountability values that position all children as contributing members of the class community. While values-based approaches to inclusive education have emphasised the importance of democratic participation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility (Lundy, 2007; Oser et al., 2008; Robinson, 2017; The Council of the European Union, 2018), these approaches have often remained at the policy or theoretical level, without demonstrating how such values are actually initiated by classroom staff and developed in classroom practice over time, where children naturally develop these competencies. This research addresses that critical gap in inclusive education literature.

While human rights frameworks and values-based approaches provide essential normative foundations, they typically lack empirical evidence (Nilholm, 2021). Following Dewey's understanding that values develop through experience (Danforth, 2019; Dewey, 1938/ 2015), this study reveals how shared occupational situations function as the means through which inclusive values become lived experiences. In addition, the study's occupational perspective, supported by F. Felder's (2022) activity-theoretical lens, provides specific examples of how inclusive values can actually be enacted, developed, and sustained in classroom practice by showing what, how, where, and with whom children and adults do together (Hocking, 2017; Pereira & Whiteford, 2013).

Building on Booth and Ainscow's (2016) work on developing inclusive schools led by inclusive values, where schools actively translate principles like equality, participation, and community into daily practices, this study highlights children's agency as essential to the process. The findings suggest that children's role as active co-creators is fundamental to building inclusive classroom cultures and the inclusive societies envisioned by human rights frameworks. This skilled agency develops collectively through sharing responsibility for class community building.

Furthermore, existing literature rarely addresses the temporal dimension of value-based inclusive classroom culture. This study suggests that cultural development is an ongoing process, where repeated engagement in shared occupational situations

enables children and teachers to collectively develop increasingly sophisticated democratic, supportive, and accountable practices. The concept of shared occupational situations thus provides a missing link between the theory of human rights frameworks and inclusive values and the day-to-day realities of inclusive classroom communities. It shows not just what inclusive classroom cultures can look like, but how they are enacted and developed over time.

Inclusive classroom culture development, initiated by adults, that responds to dynamics that exclude and oppress others, creates opportunities for children to actively enact inclusive values. This values-based culture building establishes the foundation for what this study identifies as the ‘in’ of inclusive practice, an individualising class community in which all members belong as diverse and contributing participants: recalling Sonja’s words, “*together, all, we are one class*”. The following section discusses how collectively co-created shared occupational situations coalesce into a dynamic individualising class community.

Individualising Class Communities as Dynamic-Entities Where All Belong

The study’s third key finding emerges from building and enacting inclusive values through shared occupational situations over time: the development of individualising class communities as dynamic entities where all children belong. This concept, children belonging while being valued for their strengths and vulnerabilities, was a central concern for stakeholders across both cases.

Comparing the two cases revealed similarities and differences in community-building processes. In both cases, classroom teachers emphasised building class community and preventing exclusion and bullying. Children expressed a desire to engage in numerous shared activities to build familiarity and strengthen class connections. Parents viewed their children’s connection with others in the class community as crucial for inclusive experiences and well-being. However, Oak School’s stable class community over 2 years allowed continuous development, while Village School’s annual grade transitions disrupted sustained relationship-building.

At Oak School, community building involved intentionally developing collaboration competencies, considering the class’s social composition. Competencies in self-awareness, accountability (supporting individualising), and consideration for others (strengthening class community) were continuously cultivated. The extended 2-year approach enabled complex community development where individualising and collaborative aspects developed simultaneously. Children learned to “*take responsibility for their behaviour in a good way*” (classroom teacher Sonja p. 97) while contributing to collective problem-solving through CC and peer support. This continuity allowed community-building processes to deepen and mature over time.

In contrast, Village School's annually changing multi-grade composition impacted community building differently. Multiple stakeholders experienced this process as disruptive. The heterogeneous classroom functioned as a less individualising community; children were more traditionally categorised by grade levels rather than seen as individual contributors to the whole class. While children expressed the importance of "*connecting as a class*" (p. 168) and developed tolerance, the changing grade structure limited the depth of individualising processes. Belonging was fragmented as children experienced cycles of "*gaining and losing peers*" (p. 174), which disrupted the sustained relationship-building that appeared necessary for the sustained experience of belonging to a community.

This study's collective co-creation approach extends Kuttner's (2023) redefinition of school belonging as "a dynamic social process in which students engage interpersonal relationships, intersecting and fluid identities, their locations within systems of power, and the politics of inclusion and exclusion as they establish a place for themselves" (p. 8). While Kuttner positioned students as active agents, integrating this study's collective action to co-create shared occupational situations extends student agency beyond individual navigation to encompass collaborative responsibility for shaping inclusive educational environments. As students, teachers, and other participants collectively co-create and transform educational spaces over time, belonging is cultivated within individualising class communities that recognise both individual growth and collective contribution.

This process reveals that belonging and inclusive experiences are mutually constitutive; belonging enables meaningful participation while inclusive experiences deepen the sense of acceptance and connection to the community. This reciprocal relationship aligns with inclusive education scholars, demonstrating that belonging both enables and results from meaningful participation in learning communities (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Long & Guo, 2023; Messiou, 2017; Subban et al., 2023). However, belonging manifested differently across cases, suggesting the social environment is not a static context for belonging but is actively co-created over time. The findings suggest individualising processes and class community development are interconnected, situated, contextualised, and temporally bound, which to my knowledge is a novel contribution of the current study.

The three concepts discussed, shared occupational situations as interactive spaces, building inclusive classroom culture, and individualising class communities, contribute to the development of collectivist orientations in occupational science and occupational therapy. Malfitano et al.'s (2021) work "Transcending the individual: The promise and potential of collectivist approaches in occupational therapy" identified this development as nascent but necessary. While their scoping review revealed insufficient

epistemological foundations for collective practice, the current study provides empirical evidence of how collective co-creation through shared occupational situations can transcend individual-focused approaches in educational settings.

These concepts address Malfitano et al.'s (2021) call for scholarly development. First, shared occupational situations as interactive spaces demonstrate occupations as collective contexts, showing how 'doing together' creates dynamic foundations where inclusion manifests. These situations provide the distinct methodological accounts that Malfitano et al. found lacking, offering specific examples of how children, teachers, and other participants engage across diverse activities, from CCs to project work and play, that collectively shape inclusive experiences. Second, building an inclusive classroom culture addresses their recognition of the implications of policy frameworks for collectively oriented practice. The findings demonstrate how human rights principles can be operationalised through enacting inclusive values such as democracy, supporting each other, equally valuing and respecting all children, and accountability within shared occupational situations. Third, individualising class communities as dynamic social entities where all belong, shows how class communities form social spaces where individualising and community development occur simultaneously. Together, these processes provide the empirical foundation necessary for advancing collectivist occupational science and practice. The following sections extend beyond classroom practice to examine inclusive education as an open-ended, situated, and contextualised process at the broader school community level that develops through collaborative engagement among all stakeholders.

Inclusive Education: An Open-Ended, Situated, and Contextualised Process

Drawing on findings and assertions from both the Village School and Oak School cases, two interconnected processes emerge as central to sustainable inclusive education: collaborative capacity building and the constructive navigation of tensions through reflexive dialogue. The first section explores how co-creating and sustaining inclusive education requires collaborative capacity building across all stakeholders, children, families, educators, and community members, each contributing unique expertise to create genuinely welcoming school communities (Assertions 9, 10, 11, Oak School; Assertions 4, 6, 7, 10, Village School). The second section examines how tensions within inclusive practice function as generative forces for transformation when approached through reflective dialogue and responsive action (Assertions 12, 13, Oak School; Assertion 10, Village School).

Together, these processes illustrate how inclusive education develops through continuous democratic engagement that transforms both educational practice and the

broader social and political environments. The discussion proceeds across three interconnected levels: classroom practices where daily tensions are navigated through collaborative problem-solving, school community dynamics where diverse stakeholder perspectives require democratic leadership, and sociopolitical contexts.

Co-Creating and Sustaining Inclusive Education by Collaborative Capacity Building

Co-creating and sustaining inclusive education over time refers to creating and maintaining school communities in which all students are genuinely welcomed and valued. Sustainable inclusive education involves embedding values and actions in everyday school life, moving beyond temporary accommodations for individual children to whole-school approaches. As Franz, the Village School principal, emphasised: “*It takes a whole village to raise a child, it takes a whole school to be able to support a child inclusively*”. This understanding recognises that building capacity for inclusive practice requires the contributions of all educational stakeholders, each bringing unique expertise that contributes to teaching all children.

Building on F. Felder’s (2022) interpretation of Dewey’s democratic education theory, a collaborative approach reflects how schools create communities through dual functions: creating or strengthening community within school boundaries through shared engagement, and preparing participants to extend democratic practices into broader society. This theoretical foundation supports the study’s findings that sustainable inclusive practice develops through co-creation rather than expert transmission. Dewey’s (1916/2008) emphasis that diversity enriches communication processes, fostering openness to new ideas and critical engagement with different perspectives, directly aligns with this study’s evidence that multi-stakeholder collaboration enhances capacity building for inclusive education. However, hierarchical structures often inhibit the sharing of aims and experiences necessary for such co-creative community building (F. Felder, 2022).

Schoolwide capacity developed through what Franz described as “*learning on the job*”, representing collaborative processes where diverse expertise is created and shared through practice over time. Franz intentionally composed teams “*well-suited to developing inclusive practice*” (p. 185), viewing SNE staff as specialists while emphasising that successful inclusion required “*a good relationship with each other*” (p. 185). By ensuring “*integrated children in every class*” (p. 186), the school built capacity by engaging all staff in developing expertise. Similarly, Fabio’s emphasis on having “*the right people who have the same attitude*” (p. 122) strengthened staff capacity through sustained collaboration. Lisa and Sonja’s partnership exemplified collaborative expertise, with shared responsibility for most subjects and Lisa coordinating with

therapists and subject teachers, illustrating how collaborative capacity building requires both individual expertise and systematic knowledge coordination.

Multi-directional capacity building extended to parents, welcoming them as active co-creators. Anna's mother contributed expertise by suggesting fixed seating arrangements, leading to structural adjustments supporting all children. These examples of collaborative problem-solving reveal how capacity building operates through reciprocal knowledge exchange, where parents' situated understanding enhances collective capacity across the learning community.

Children demonstrate significant agency in capacity-building processes, learning to co-create inclusive experiences through daily practice while carrying these experiences into families and communities. Children instructing Damian during PE, or Nino leading soccer groups that included children with varying abilities, illustrate how children contribute through peer-to-peer engagement. Franz recognised children as "*inclusion multipliers*" (p. 183), indicating how effective capacity building develops knowledge and skills enabling transformation of broader social attitudes, positioning schools as catalysts for societal change. The evidence reveals that inclusive actions occur subtly and situationally across all stakeholder groups, challenging traditional models relying on expert interventions for individual children.

Further, the evidence shows that building capacity to support each other flows in multiple directions across all stakeholders, creating sustainable support networks. Dana's action in reengaging her peer Anna in learning situations supported both Anna and her classroom teachers, who had not found effective ways to invite Anna back to work. This pattern appeared consistently across both cases: classroom staff supporting assistants, children supporting each other and their teachers, parents supporting their children's engagement, principals supporting teaching teams, and community members supporting children's participation in school activities. These reciprocal support relationships create the social fabric necessary for sustainable, inclusive communities.

Current inclusive education literature predominantly positions capacity building as teacher responsibility, overlooking contributions that children, families, therapists, and others can and do make to sustainable inclusive education. The OECD (Brussino, 2021) represents dominant approaches by proposing that "effectively valuing diversity and fostering inclusion in the classroom depends on ensuring that teachers possess the right set of skills and knowledge to do so" (p. 11), positioning teachers as having primary responsibility, while treating others as beneficiaries. Recent research maintains this teacher-centred focus. Ackah-Jnr et al. (2025) advocated for 'on-the-job mentoring' where teachers learn and directly apply knowledge through discussions with experienced colleagues. Similarly, Sepadi Themane (2025) focused on short learning programmes for teachers without considering other stakeholders' potential contributions.

Smythe's (2025) research represents progress by recognising capacity building as a 'collective practice' among educational professionals. Her study examined collaboration between mainstream and SEND settings, finding that diverse expertise and experience build collective capacity to "better include pupils" (Smythe, 2025, p. 515). Similarly, Bourke-Taylor et al. (2018) found collaborative partnerships between families, schools, and outside organisations crucial for inclusive practice. However, both studies remain primarily focused on professional and organisational partnerships rather than recognising children's and parents' agency in creating and sustaining inclusive communities.

This study contributes a more holistic view of how sustainable inclusive communities develop through collaborative capacity building across all stakeholders. The evidence suggests that all people in the educational community both need and provide support through participation in collaborative creation of inclusive social spaces. Jones et al.'s (2017) research on community participation for children with traumatic brain injury offers theoretical support for this approach by identifying four participation-enabling skills, "driving, leading, including, and performing", which are "learned by adults and children through engaging in shared occupation" (p. 99). These skills were observed across stakeholders in both cases, supporting the findings that competencies for inclusive education develop through collaborative engagement in shared occupational situations.

This shift from individualised support to collective co-creative actions raises questions about how inclusive practices should be conceptualised and implemented: "Who needs support, what kind of support can be considered, who renders the support, how is it implemented?" (Echsel et al., 2019, p. 6). The multi-stakeholder approach recognises capacity building as open-ended, situated, and contextualised processes that adapt to community needs. Such collaborative practice differs from current Swiss and other countries' SNE frameworks that position children with diverse needs as 'different and special' requiring expert solutions, making children vulnerable to exclusion if the available expert support does not meet the child's needs (Vandenbussche & De Schauwer, 2018).

Multi-stakeholder capacity building reveals how inclusive communities sustain themselves through ongoing, collaborative co-creation of social spaces where all members contribute and become valued. As Subban et al. (2023) argued, successful collective inclusion requires "acceptance by individual members to accept responsibility and commit to positive values towards inclusion ... through a collaborative mindset involving the whole school community" (p. 9). Inclusive education as an open-ended, situated, and contextualised process naturally encompasses tensions that create challenges in classrooms, schools, and policy contexts. The next section discusses how

these tensions become opportunities to engage in reflective dialogues that lead to responsive actions that continuously build capacity and develop inclusive education.

Navigating Tensions: Reflective Dialogue and Responsive Actions to Transform Inclusive Education

Tensions within inclusive practice and education represent opportunities to engage in reflective dialogues that lead to responsive actions. These processes continuously develop inclusive values and build capacity for inclusive practice while generating evidence to change structural and political environments.

As an open-ended, situated, and contextualised process, inclusive education inevitably generates tensions when diverse perspectives, competing demands, and complex realities intersect. These tensions reflect broader societal struggles between valuing conformity and embracing diversity, maintaining hierarchical structures and fostering democratic participation, and standardised approaches versus responsive practice (Allan & Slee, 2019; Echsel et al., 2025; Norwich, 2024; Schuelka et al., 2019). The competing discourses about inclusion for some versus inclusion for all create tension about how to structure educational provision on a philosophical, socio-political and theoretical level, to school community and classroom practice level (F. Felder, 2022; J. Hollenweger, 2014; Leijen et al., 2021).

Rather than viewing tensions as problems to solve, this study reveals how uncovering and responding to tensions through reflective collaborative dialogue creates conditions necessary for transformative action. This positions tensions as generative forces for societal transformation, aligning with Dewey's view of education's essential purpose in driving social change (Dewey & Bentley, 1946). The collaborative capacity-building processes discussed previously contribute to this transformation, enabling educational communities to navigate tensions constructively while transforming underlying societal structures to better support inclusive practice. Next, navigating tensions will be discussed on three levels: classroom level, school community level with parent engagement, and as context shaped by SNE frameworks and regulations.

Navigating Tension at Classroom Level

At the classroom level, tensions manifest in daily inclusive practice, where educators must navigate competing values of belonging and accommodation, support and independence, individual needs and collective participation. These tensions create opportunities for reflective dialogue that lead to solutions and deeper understanding of what inclusion can mean in practice.

Raul's swimming experience at Oak School exemplifies how tensions between separation and inclusion can become generative forces. When Raul's olfactory sensitivity to chlorine and crowded changing rooms created barriers, Lisa navigated the tension by creating participation opportunities while accommodating his needs through

temporary separation via a separate changing room with intensive support, ultimately succeeding in Raul joining peers in the pool. Lisa's approach exemplifies democratic problem-solving that honours both individual needs and collective participation, reflecting core democratic values of equity over equality as lived diversity (Ferreira & Reis-Jorge, 2025; Lillefjell, 2006; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Slee, 2014). The temporary nature reveals Lisa's understanding of inclusion as a dynamic process, scaffolding support that built Raul's capacity for independent engagement while supporting the instructor and class.

Lindner and Schwab (2020) identified shifting from 'one-size-fits-all' models to individualised teaching as essential for educational equity; yet noted the ongoing challenge of balancing diverse needs. Educational systems tend to create tension by demanding both individualised support and normative participation expectations (J. Hollenweger, 2014; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Naraian et al., 2020; Slee, 2013). Similarly, Anna joining the younger elementary class on Fridays where her occupational play interests were better met illustrates the dual nature of alternative contexts: providing necessary flexibility while creating inequitable access based on SNE categorisation rather than individual needs. This reveals how special education categories simultaneously provide necessary support while creating inequitable access to educational alternatives for all (Naraian et al., 2020; Norwich, 2024). Inclusive educators navigate this tension by acknowledging diversity, as Sonja noted: "*Yes, there are different children here, so you always have to pay a little attention to them*" (p. 96).

Navigating Tension at a School Community Level

At the school community level, tensions manifest in the competing values and perspectives that different stakeholders bring to inclusive education. School leaders navigate between diverse parent expectations, policy requirements, and inclusive principles while building community consensus (Norwich, 2024). Parent communities mirror broader societal tensions, bringing varied understandings shaped by personal experience, cultural context, and perceived impacts on their children. While some parents describe inclusion as "*normal everyday life*" (p. 178), others perceive the "*integrated child*" (p. 178) as separate, revealing conditional understanding. These tensions create opportunities for educational leadership that will transform community understanding through reflective dialogue.

Franz's experience at Village School illustrates how tensions become catalysts for community transformation. When parents expressed concerns about an integrated child demanding "*too much energy from teachers*" with "*others get[ting] too little attention*", they revealed assumptions about resource allocation challenging the school's inclusive values. Franz recognised parents lacked an 'inclusive attitude' and organised a parent meeting with a school psychologist to facilitate expert-informed dialogue. This

approach honoured parents' concerns and created space for deeper understanding of the benefits of inclusive education. Drawing on democratic and human rights values, Franz reframed inclusion as collaborative school improvement, designing intervention around constructive community dialogue. His responsive actions illustrate tensions becoming opportunities to build inclusive values and facilitate change (Ainscow, 2020; DeMatthews, 2021; Naraian et al., 2020). This aligns with Ainscow's (2020) emphasis on building consensus through participatory engagement and embodies what Naraian et al. (2020) described as "the creative potential of inclusion lies in the unpredictability of steps that may be taken to resolve differences" (p. 1259).

Navigating tensions through reflective dialogue transformed them into value development and capacity building, illustrating inclusive change within existing systems. However, broader societal and political tensions shaping these dynamics require engagement beyond individual school leadership.

Navigating Tension at the Sociopolitical Level

Legal frameworks shaping inclusive education create tensions between human rights commitments and practical limitations. In Switzerland, while the UNCRPD establishes commitments to inclusion, Federal Court rulings assert there is "no unconditional right to integration". Both cantonal policies create categorical systems that mark some children as different while claiming to support inclusion. Local educational leaders like Fabio and Franz navigate balancing policy compliance with inclusive values, creating opportunities for inclusive practices.

The Village School canton aligns with international principles, committing to "*enhance the activity, participation, and connectivity of children and adolescents*" while adopting the ICF framework to move "*beyond protective, institutionalised approaches*" (p. 135), conceptualised in this study as individualising class communities. However, in both cantons' two-tiered systems, basic measures for all students and intensified measures for special educational needs requiring external assessment create categorical distinctions that inclusive education seeks to eliminate (J. Hollenweger, 2014; Slee, 2014).

Both cases developed responsive actions navigating these tensions. The Village School used global budget authority to implement co-teaching across all multi-level classrooms, aiming for natural heterogeneity and in-class capacity building, with SNE teacher expertise and classroom assistants as part of the overall teaching capacity. At Oak School, SNE and classroom teacher roles were integrated entirely, with both working with all children, thus making individualised support less visible. This merger eliminates hierarchical distinctions among classroom staff. It addresses what the scoping review identified: children marked as different can position families as vulnerable to exclusion when the provided interventions do not fit their needs (Echsel et al., 2025). As

Naraian et al. (2020) warned, such positioning can marginalise families requiring 'special' support. Similarly, Slee (2011) advocated for educational environments where diversity is normalised rather than pathologised to eliminate this tension.

The sustainability of such innovations depends on broader political commitment to inclusive values over administrative convenience. Norwich's (2013) shift from 'living with uncertainty' to 'resolving democratically' (Norwich, 2024) indicates a movement toward broader inclusion, addressing all children rather than just some. His proposition to resolve democratically addresses tensions and dilemmas through public dialogue about educational purposes and how inclusion relates to other social and political values. Both school leaders' navigation of policy tensions illustrates how local, reflective engagement can drive broader systemic change. By working within existing frameworks while subverting the embedded separative logic, they created contextualised inclusive education that demonstrates alternative possibilities. Their success suggests that transformation of separative policy structures may emerge from local practice, reflecting Dewey's (1916/2008) understanding of societal transformation driven by education, which requires continuous, process-oriented, democratic dialogue that engages with multiple stakeholders.

Contemporary scholars continue to build on Dewey's vision. F. Felder (2022), an educational philosopher, argued that in rapidly changing societies facing global challenges like migration, "people today can and must learn to deal with societal diversity to a much greater extent" (p. 143). Towards that end, she advocated educational approaches centred on social cooperation and collective participation. Principals' Franz and Fabio's multi-stakeholder collaboration models precisely this kind of cooperative engagement. Similarly, El-Mafaalani and colleagues (2025) argued that schools must adapt their function as families face increasing pressures, advocating child-centred approaches supporting social and emotional well-being. Both schools moved beyond academic instruction to create supportive community networks.

The study's multi-perspective, contextualised approach suggests refocusing future inclusive education developments on continuous, democratic, dialogic processes for co-creating inclusive experiences with all children in mind. This involves building stakeholder capacity by learning from and with each other, and sharing experiences, knowledge, and competencies, while responding to identified barriers so that practices and values transform at both school and community levels. Such transformation requires engaging with the education theorists and philosophers who guide practice while reciprocally informing them through grounded child-centred approaches.

Following Norwich's (2024) emphasis on resolving tensions through democratic dialogue and Dewey's associated living, inclusive education transformation requires forums that bring practitioners, researchers, families, and political stakeholders together

into ongoing dialogue about educational purposes and values. In this way, processes for engaging constructively with tensions could be created while generating policies that enable rather than constrain local innovation.

This study makes several theoretical contributions, including conceptualising shared occupational situations and their changeability set in cultural, societal, and institutional contexts; and reconceptualising inclusive practice as collective co-creation. The study also examines collaborative capacity-building processes and positions tensions as generative forces for transformation. These contributions advance theory development while acknowledging that these concepts require testing across diverse educational settings. Thus, although these theoretical contributions offer new ways of understanding inclusive education, it is important to acknowledge the limitations inherent in the study's design and scope.

Study Limitations

Several methodological constraints influenced the scope and depth of the findings. While adopting a human rights-based approach that emphasises the voices and perspectives of all stakeholders, not all children and parents were heard equally. Most notably, Anna's participation was limited by language barriers that would have required significantly more time to overcome than the PhD project timeline allowed. Her mother represented Anna's perspective in interviews but this indirect representation cannot fully capture Anna's own experience and agency. This limitation highlights the ongoing challenge of ensuring authentic participation for all children, especially those with communication differences in inclusive education research.

CS methodology, while providing rich contextual understanding, limits generalisability to other educational contexts. However, as Nilholm (2021) argued, despite immense research since the Salamanca Statement in 1994, there remains "a lack of theories that have empirically been shown to be successful tools in the development of more inclusive school systems, schools and classrooms" (p. 358). From this perspective, case studies offer methodological approaches "well suited for the development of such theories" (Nilholm, 2021, p. 358) by examining how inclusive education unfolds in specific contexts.

The temporal constraints of a doctoral research project also limited longitudinal understanding. Observing inclusive education transformation requires extended engagement to understand how children transfer their skills to co-create inclusive experiences and build class communities in other classes, how tensions evolve and are resolved to change inclusive practice, and how collaborative capacity building develops over time.

Implications for Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy: Toward Collectivist Occupational Practice and Science

This study responds to Malfitano et al.'s (2021) call for the development of the epistemological foundation of collectivist occupational therapy practice. Their scoping review identified a critical gap: while articles engage with collective dimensions of politics, contexts, and actions, contributions remain 'insufficient' for grounding collectivist practice. This study offers empirical evidence of what collectivist practice can look like in educational contexts, demonstrating how occupational therapy and occupational science can shift from individual intervention to facilitating 'doing together' across communities.

From Individual Intervention to Collective Co-Creation: Individualising Class Communities

School-based occupational therapy increasingly operates through tiered service delivery models (Campbell et al., 2023; Salazar Rivera & Boyle, 2020). Campbell and colleagues' (2023) Partnering for Change model transforms the occupational therapist's role from individual service provider to collaborative partner supporting whole school communities. However, Rivera's (2020) research demonstrates that, in practice, occupational therapists primarily deliver support in targeted and specialist tiers with limited universal engagement. My study provides the epistemological foundation these emerging practices require by demonstrating how occupational therapists can facilitate collective co-creation of inclusive experiences through their understanding of shared occupational situations and their changeability.

Children's perspectives exemplified that a good school experience is 'doing a lot together' while also needing space for who they are, with it being okay to be 'more of a loner'. The concept of individualising class communities brings together both social collective aspects and academic individualised learning, directly addressing Ramugondo and Kronenberg's (2015) call to bridge the individual-collective dichotomy.

While Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has emerged as a framework for supporting diverse needs and promoting inclusion, Kennedy and colleagues' (2018) scoping review of UDL implementation by rehabilitation health professionals, including occupational therapists, found that most literature lacked a clear definition, and high-level empirical research remains limited. The current study provides empirical evidence for how shared occupational situations can be organised to address individualised academic learning needs of 'all' children, not just 'some' with special needs. The Mathematics atelier at Oak School demonstrated how collective approaches operationalise the inclusive principles that frameworks like UDL aspire toward, showing that with an extensive understanding of occupation and its effects, occupational therapists can work as facilitators who, together with all involved at school, collectively

support the changeability of shared occupational situations so all children experience inclusion.

Occupational Science: Theoretical Grounding in Collective Occupation

Ramugondo and Kronenberg's (2015) conceptualisation of collective occupations provides theoretical grounding for this shift from individual-focused to collective understandings of inclusive education. Their work bridges the individual-collective dichotomy by foregrounding intentionality and interconnectedness in human occupation, demonstrating how collective occupations manifest on a continuum between oppressive and liberating relationships. They defined collective occupation as "occupations that are engaged in by individuals, groups, communities and/or societies in everyday contexts; these may reflect an intention towards social cohesion or dysfunction, and/or advancement of or aversion to a common good" (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015, p. 10). Their emphasis on the "relational dimension" (p. 5) and specification of 'everyday contexts' resonates with this study's concept of shared occupational situations. Critically, this framework requires attention to power relations within these collective occupations. As Laliberte Rudman and Huot (2013) argued, transactional relations always involve power dynamics, shaped by how institutional structures, cultural norms, and embodied dispositions that privilege certain forms of participation while marginalising others.

Building on this foundation and drawing from research on 'doing together' in processes of social transformation (Schiller et al., 2022), this study introduces shared occupational situations to emphasise the collective, contextual, and changeable nature of inclusive experiences within institutional settings. In both cases, addressing children's participation needs required transformation of the ways shared occupational situations were created and enacted, so all can participate according to their abilities and who they are as persons. Raul's swimming participation was co-created through Lisa's collaborative work with him, the instructor, and the class to modify changing room arrangements and build collective capacity, exemplifying what Malfitano and Whiteford (2021) described as engaging with communities in a collectivist way, creating conditions where all participants contribute to solutions. While Ramugondo and Kronenberg articulated the potential for both cohesion and dysfunction, the current study's focus on changeability adds the transformative agency necessary for actively building and sustaining social cohesion in educational settings.

Directions for Future Research

The findings, interpreted through the convergence of occupational science, human rights, and Deweyan educational philosophy, reveal how shared occupational situations function as sites where inclusive education is collectively co-created. Dewey and Bentley's (1949) transactional theory provides a philosophical foundation for

occupational scientists' emphasis on shared occupational situations as sites of co-creation (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013). Both frameworks reject the individual-environment dichotomy in favour of understanding how persons and contexts mutually constitute each other through occupation. This Deweyan (1916/2008) vision of democratic education, when combined with the human rights for inclusive education and occupational science's understanding of collective occupation, demands research approaches that examine not individual adaptation to contexts but the transactional processes through which communities collectively transform to become inclusive.

Future research can examine how shared occupational situations become changeable across diverse contexts, how collective approaches build community capacity, and how participatory research methods can centre collective co-creative perspectives. Inclusive systems become truly inclusive when they are collectively co-created through intentional transformation of shared occupational situations.

Implications for Educational Research

The study findings point to critical directions for advancing inclusive education research, particularly in developing methodologies that align with the reconceptualisation of inclusive practice as collective co-creation and in testing the theoretical contributions across diverse contexts.

Involving All Children in Research

The study's limitations regarding children's voices, particularly Anna's constrained participation due to language barriers and limited time to build trusting relationships, highlight the need to progress participatory research methodologies (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Future research needs to develop approaches that authentically include all children's perspectives, moving beyond traditional interview-based methods to embrace multimodal, creative, and prolonged engagement strategies that honour diverse ways of expressing experience and sharing knowledge (Alderson & Morrow, 2012; Horgan, 2017).

Scoping reviews reveal that while various engagement strategies are reported, they are rarely systematically evaluated (Gonzalez et al., 2021), and few well-reported examples exist of successfully involving disabled children as research partners (Bailey et al., 2014). Bailey et al. (2014) identified the importance of flexible methods adaptable to individual communication needs, particularly for children with non-verbal communication, and the value of strong parent partnership in research design. This highlights the dual challenge wherein protective ethical frameworks that prioritise vulnerability over capability can hamper children's participation (Horgan, 2017), while the increased time and resources needed for authentic engagement with children with

communication differences (Gonzalez et al., 2021) are often not adequately supported in research designs.

Methodological Approaches to Transactional Processes

The study findings illuminate the transactional processes through which inclusive education is collectively co-created; yet educational research lacks adequate methodologies for capturing these transformative dynamics. Dewey's transactional theory (Dewey & Bentley, 1949) provides the philosophical foundation: persons and contexts mutually constitute each other through ongoing experience. F. Felder (2022) recognised that collaborative aspects of learning are increasingly important, requiring flexible and adaptive responses to heterogeneity and social challenges. However, developing research methods capable of capturing how these transactional processes unfold in educational transformation represents a critical research direction.

The concepts of shared occupational situations and their changeability in creating individualising class communities require empirical testing across diverse educational and cultural contexts. Researchers could examine how these concepts operate in different national education systems, with varying policy structures, and across cultural contexts with different understandings of collectivity and individuality. Such comparative work could refine the concept and identify contextual factors that shape how social collective and academic individualised learning integrate through transactional processes.

This study found that tensions functioned as generative forces for inclusive transformation. Norwich and Koutsouris (2017) argued that tensions and dilemmas are inherent to inclusive education, arising when multiple values around differentiation, participation, identification, and location of provision come into conflict, yet these tensions are often overlooked. Building on this recognition of inherent tensions, Leijen et al. (2021) identified a dilemma between 'inclusion for some' (specially trained staff for children with special needs) and 'inclusion for all' (all children learning together), representing opposing discourses that shape policies and practices. This study advances beyond the identification of these tensions to demonstrate that when engaged constructively through reflective dialogue, tensions can catalyse transformation. The concept of individualising class communities offers a framework for bridging what Leijen et al. described as opposing narratives, demonstrating how social collective and academic individualised learning can integrate to address 'all' children rather than 'some' with special needs. Understanding how tensions shift from potentially destructive conflicts to productive opportunities for dialogue, how different types of tensions (pedagogical, relational, political) require different navigation approaches, and how educational communities develop capacity for constructive tension engagement, demands methodological and theoretical development.

Similarly, children's agency in inclusive transformation emerged as a powerful finding that existing research inadequately addresses. While student voice literature acknowledges children's participation in educational decision-making (Lundy, 2007; Müller-Kuhn et al., 2020; Rogers & Boyd, 2020), research examining how children's contributions actively co-create and transform inclusive experiences remains scarce. Understanding how children's agency develops over time, what supports or constrains their capacity to act as agents of inclusion, and how different pedagogical approaches enable or limit their transformative participation requires new conceptual frameworks and longitudinal research designs. Both tensions and children's agency findings point to the need for a deeper reconceptualisation of belonging in inclusive education.

Educational research on belonging has grown substantially, examining how children experience inclusion and connection in schools (Allen et al., 2021; Goodall, 2020; Kuttner, 2023; Long & Guo, 2023). However, my study's findings suggest that collective co-creation represents a more fundamental process; rather than treating belonging as an outcome to be achieved for individual children, this research demonstrates that the situations through which children experience belonging are themselves collectively co-created. Understanding how shared occupational situations become changeable through intentional collective action, how teachers, children, families, and communities together transform the conditions of participation, shifts the theoretical focus from measuring belonging outcomes to studying the transactional processes through which inclusive experiences emerge.

Implications for Political Stakeholders and Policy: Shifting Systemic Conditions for Collective Co-Creation

The paradigm shift from individual intervention to collective co-creation of inclusive education cannot occur without corresponding transformation at both policy and systems levels. The study's findings reveal that in both cases, classroom staff, children, principals, parents, and others built inclusive communities through 'doing together' across various levels (classroom, parent collaboration, school teams) despite working within SNE frameworks that did not support such collective approaches. Both cases demonstrated how inclusive practice could be enacted, yet these collective co-creative practices required practitioners to navigate around, rather than being enabled by, current policy frameworks. Creating the structural conditions that enable the collective, transactional, and rights-based approaches this study illuminates requires action from political stakeholders.

Reimagining Funding and Resource Allocation to Create Conditions for Collaborative Practice

In both cases, the SNE frameworks and funding structures relied on individual diagnosis and deficit identification to allocate resources for ‘intensified support measures’. My study’s concept of individualising class communities challenges this model: when shared occupational situations are organised to address the individualised academic learning needs of ‘all’ children, funding structures need to change accordingly. A human rights-based approach requires shifting from diagnosis-driven individual support allocation toward capacity-building investments that benefit entire classroom communities. This includes funding for collaborative planning time, professional development, and capacity building focused on collective approaches, along with resources that support individualising learning environments where all children can contribute according to their abilities.

Subsequently, professional development policy needs to shift from individual skill acquisition to collective capacity building. As Franz and the Village School demonstrated, systems can invest in team-based professional learning that builds collective competencies for co-creating solutions, navigating tensions, and sustaining inclusive transformation over time. Administrative policies regarding scheduling, class composition, and staffing need to enable the collaborative work this study revealed as essential. When Lisa needed to coordinate with the swimming instructor or when Oak School teachers required time to plan individualising-yet-collective learning experiences, systemic flexibility was crucial. It requires examining how current structures (fixed timetables, siloed professional roles, standardised curricula) can either constrain or enable the adaptive, responsive practices demonstrated in this study. Some structures supported flexibility; for instance, the differentiated learning materials in the Mathematics atelier at Oak School allowed teachers to match students with appropriate resources while tending to the situation. In contrast, other structural elements limited the collaborative time and coordination needed for truly responsive practice, as illustrated by the Village School case, where the incoming SNE teacher worked limited hours and focused primarily on children with learning needs.

Creating Space for Productive Tensions and Democratic Problem-Solving

The finding that tensions function as generative forces has policy implications. Current accountability and compliance frameworks, as demonstrated in both cases, often treat disagreement, difficulty, or deviation from plans as problems to eliminate. Yet the transformative dialogue between Lisa, Raul’s family, and school staff; or Franz’s work addressing parents’ opposition to a disabled child’s inclusion, demonstrates that tensions, when engaged with constructively, drive inclusive transformation. Policy frameworks need to create space for productive tension and democratic problem-

solving. This requires shifting to capacity-based accountability, aligning with both Dewey's (1916/2008) emphasis on democratic participation in education and the human rights principle that inclusive education must be situated and contextualised.

Enabling Children's Agency for Inclusive Transformation

Children's agency in inclusive transformation, a powerful finding from this study, requires policy action to support student voice and participation in educational decision-making. International human rights frameworks, including the UNCRC and the UNCRPD, establish children's right to participate in decisions affecting them. Yet policies rarely operationalise this right in ways that enable children to act as agents of inclusion. Political stakeholders can mandate and support children's participation, recognising them as active contributors in shaping their educational experiences and inclusive community building. Both cases showcased formats such as CC, where children participated democratically at the classroom level, demonstrating that structures enabling children's agency are feasible and effective.

Enabling Adaptive Policy Frameworks

This study reveals that the transactional processes where persons and contexts mutually constitute each other require policy approaches that are themselves adaptive and responsive. This demands what might be called 'enabling policy' frameworks that set the direction while trusting and supporting local capacity for democratic problem-solving. The Village School's global budget authority exemplifies this approach, enabling the principal to allocate resources flexibly to support inclusive practice.

Conclusion

This study asked, "How is inclusive education created in mainstream schools in Switzerland for children aged between 8 and 12 years?". The answer reveals a paradigm shift: inclusive education develops through collective co-creation of shared occupational situations where all stakeholders, children, educators, families, therapists, and administrators, engage in 'doing together' to enable participation for all. Both cases demonstrated that when shared occupational situations become changeable through collective action, inclusive communities develop where all children can participate according to their abilities and who they are as persons.

Interpreted through the convergence of occupational science, human rights frameworks, and Deweyan educational philosophy, these findings illuminate the transactional processes through which inclusive education is collectively built. Dewey's concept of 'associated living' finds empirical grounding in the study's central finding that children themselves identified 'doing together' as essential to their school experience. The concept of individualising class communities bridges what occupational science

scholars describe as the individual-collective dichotomy, demonstrating how social collective aspects and academic individualised learning can integrate to address the needs of 'all' children rather than 'some' with special needs. Critically, this study reveals that tensions, often treated as problems to eliminate, function as generative forces when engaged constructively through reflexive dialogue. This study positions children as active agents who co-create their experiences of doing together and belonging.

These findings point to transformative actions across research, practice, and policy. Occupational scientists, therapists, and educators require support to shift from individual intervention to facilitating collective co-creation processes. Research methodologies must progress to authentically include all children's voices, capture dynamic transactional processes, and examine how collective competencies develop through 'doing together' across diverse contexts. Consequently, at the policy level, frameworks can support capacity-building and enable structures that trust and support local democratic problem-solving. Inclusive systems become truly inclusive only when they are collectively co-created through transformation of the shared occupational situations that constitute everyday educational life. This study provides both the epistemological foundation and empirical evidence for enacting this paradigm shift, revealing that the 'in' of inclusion lies not in placement within static systems, but in collective co-creation of social spaces where all engage in 'doing together'.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Reporting Checklist for Qualitative Study

	Reporting Item	Page Number
	#1 Concise description of the nature and topic of the study identifying the study as qualitative or indicating the approach (e.g. ethnography, grounded theory) or data collection methods (e.g. interview, focus group) is recommended	14
	#2 Summary of the key elements of the study using the abstract format of the intended publication; typically includes background, purpose, methods, results and conclusions	ii
Problem formulation	#3 Description and significance of the problem / phenomenon studied: review of relevant theory and empirical work; problem statement	1-12
Purpose or research question	#4 Purpose of the study and specific objectives or questions	12-13
Qualitative approach and research paradigm	#5 Qualitative approach (e.g. ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, narrative research) and guiding theory if appropriate; identifying the research paradigm (e.g. postpositivist, constructivist / interpretivist) is also recommended; rationale. The rationale should briefly discuss the justification for choosing that theory, approach, method or technique rather than other options available; the assumptions and limitations implicit in those choices and how those choices influence study conclusions and transferability. As appropriate the rationale for several items might be discussed together.	43-60

Researcher characteristics and reflexivity	#6	Researchers' characteristics that may influence the research, including personal attributes, qualifications / experience, relationship with participants, assumptions and / or presuppositions; potential or actual interaction between researchers' characteristics and the research questions, approach, methods, results and / or transferability	16
Context	#7	Setting / site and salient contextual factors; rationale	15, 77, 138
Sampling strategy	#8	How and why research participants, documents, or events were selected; criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary (e.g. sampling saturation); rationale	55-60
Ethical issues pertaining to human subjects	#9	Documentation of approval by an appropriate ethics review board and participant consent, or explanation for lack thereof; other confidentiality and data security issues	54
Data collection methods	#10	Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures including (as appropriate) start and stop dates of data collection and analysis, iterative process, triangulation of sources / methods, and modification of procedures in response to evolving study findings; rationale	60-68
Data collection instruments and technologies	#11	Description of instruments (e.g. interview guides, questionnaires) and devices (e.g. audio recorders) used for data collection; if / how the instruments(s) changed over the course of the study	60-68
Units of study	#12	Number and relevant characteristics of participants, documents, or events included in the study; level of participation (could be reported in results)	84-85 141-142
Data processing	#13	Methods for processing data prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data entry, data management and security, verification of data integrity, data coding, and anonymisation / deidentification of excerpts: Transcribers under confidentiality agreement; During transcription Swiss German was translated to Standard German. During coding in MAXQDA, codes were generated in English; all names pseudonymised; data stored on password-	

protected ZHAW servers

Data analysis	#14	Process by which inferences, themes, etc. were identified and developed, including the researchers involved in data analysis; usually references a specific paradigm or approach; rationale
Techniques to enhance trustworthiness	#15	Techniques to enhance trustworthiness and credibility of data analysis: Multiple triangulation strategies (data source, investigator, theory, methodological); prolonged engagement (May-December 2023, 16-19 hours per site); thick description; reflexive memos; peer debriefing with supervisors
Syntheses and interpretation	#16	Main findings (e.g. interpretations, inferences, and themes); might include development of a theory or model, or integration with prior research or theory
Links to empirical data	#17	Evidence (e.g. quotes, field notes, text excerpts, photographs) to substantiate analytic findings
Intergration with prior work, implications, transferability and contribution(s) to the field	#18	Short summary of main findings; explanation of how findings and conclusions connect to, support, elaborate on, or challenge conclusions of earlier scholarship; discussion of scope of application / generalizability; identification of unique contributions(s) to scholarship in a discipline or field
Limitations	#19	Trustworthiness and limitations of findings
Conflicts of interest	#20	Potential sources of influence of perceived influence on study conduct and conclusions; how these were managed
Funding	#21	Sources of funding and other support; role of funders in data collection, interpretation and reporting

The SRQR checklist is distributed with permission of Wolters Kluwer © 2014 by the Association of American Medical Colleges. This checklist can be completed online using <https://www.goodreports.org/>, a tool made by the [EQUATOR Network](#) in collaboration with [Penelope.ai](#)

Appendix B: Introduction to the Scoping Review

1. International development of inclusive education

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together, in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in abilities, gender, race and class, and language (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014; UNESCO, 1994). This perspective contrasts with the historical practice of categorising and labelling children with disabilities so that their particular learning needs could be catered for via specialist pedagogy and services (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2019; Snipstad, 2019). The underlying notion of that approach appears 'norm driven' (Hollenweger, 2014; Snipstad, 2019), whereby children who deviate too far from the norm were effectively excluded from regular schools.

Global transformation towards inclusive education was sparked by the United Nations Conference in Salamanca, in 1994, which marked a move away from biomedical views of deficits, impairments, and disabilities (Hollenweger, 2014). However, some countries changed their laws years before this global initiative. Notably, the United States passed the 'Education for All Children Act' in 1978, followed by the 'No Child Left Behind' Act in 2002 (Frolek Clark, 2013), aiming to include as many children as possible into mainstream schooling. Similarly, New Zealand enacted a special education legislative framework in 1989, which mandated the right of all students to attend their local schools and learn alongside their peers, regardless of impairments or disabilities (Simmons Carlsson et al., 2007; Thomson, 2013). Efforts to enact inclusive education tend to be contextualised within local systems and vary across socio-historical and cultural contexts (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Slee, 2013). That is, they are shaped by national and local policies, historical developments and experiences, and cultural values, reflecting unique societal facilitators and barriers to welcoming all children.

The right to education without discrimination of any kind is mandated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). These conventions provide guidance and principles to ensure the rights of children with disabilities in education and society, while emphasising children's right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them, and for their views to be taken seriously. The human rights approach to education acknowledges that every learner has a fundamental right to access educational opportunities. Nonetheless, it also recognises that various socio-political, historical, and cultural factors can either facilitate or hinder an individual's access to these rights in practice (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2019).

Teachers are at the front line of enacting inclusive education in accordance with children's rights. Their understanding ranges from knowing that inclusive education involves students with disabilities being educated alongside students without disabilities through to delivering education that supports and welcomes diversity among *all* learners (Miller et al., 2020; Mooney & Lashewicz, 2015). Understanding students' learning differences and appreciating their skills and strengths (Miller et al., 2020) is extended through involvement in and communication about inclusive education to family and community members, and accessing further knowledge, expert experience, and resources. Collaborating with and building bridges to families, experts, and other people relevant to a child has been identified as a key factor in achieving inclusive education within social, educational, and health literature (Echsel et al., 2019; MacArtney & Morton, 2013; Miller et al., 2020).

To understand children's and classroom staff's everyday experience of inclusive education, John Dewey's (2008) idea of classes as associated living offers valuable insights. The term associated living encompasses social spaces, collaborative practices, and communication. Dewey (2008) saw education as an agent of societal transmission of civilisation and humanity. That is, by communicating habits of doing, thinking, and feeling, ways of interacting socially are passed on from the older to the younger, preparing children to be citizens who can actively participate in democracy (Dewey, 1937). Regarding this study, social change is related to inclusion of all children in regular educational settings, thus building diverse and more inclusive societies (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2009). Diversity in a classroom is an essential aspect of doing and being together, in that, as Dewey suggested, it enriches social spaces, collaborative practices, and communication. Classrooms are thus viewed as social institutions wherein diverse students and classroom staff learn and problem-solve, do projects together, and act cooperatively as a community (Williams, 2017).

1.1. Perspectives on how to enact inclusive education

Literature suggests principles can support implementation of inclusive education, but also reveals gaps in knowledge. A comprehensive review of 65 grey and scientific articles on organising interdisciplinary school-based support services, including rehabilitation professionals, classroom and special education teachers (Anaby et al., 2019) identified that most services target students with disabilities, and take place at school, rather than reaching out to families and communities. In addition, services are targeted towards specific diagnostic groups rather than the whole spectrum of children, risking overlooking some children and failing to recognise diversity.

Another limitation of the research to date is that outcome evaluations of services at school have been generally limited to the perspective of schools or focused on outcomes for children with medical diagnoses, neglecting outcomes for the broader school community (Hollenweger, 2014; Holt et al., 2019; Messiou 2017; Somma & Bennett 2020). Anaby et al. (2019) emphasised the need for more comprehensive evaluations that include the perspectives of families and children as service users, as well as teacher and family-related outcomes. The research also reveals that current services tend to prioritise educational achievement, overlooking 'context-related' understandings of children's diversity and the extent to which they engage and do things together in an inclusive education setting (Berryman & Eley, 2019).

The summarised evidence suggests that contextual variables influence children's experiences of inclusion or exclusion. Accordingly, efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school. Some factors identified as key for increased participation are overall flexibility in adapting learning situations and asking students for their solutions for adapting activities to do and be together with their peers (Asbjørnslett et al., 2015; Asbjørnslett & Hemmingsson, 2008; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010; Woodgate et al., 2020). However, a coherent understanding of the highly contextual variables in conceptualising inclusive education and ways of collaborating to enact inclusive situations has not been achieved, despite research efforts reported across the social, educational, and health sciences. What is evident is that developing a shared understanding of inclusive practice is an ongoing process, involving collaboration of diverse stakeholders at school and recognition of their different skills and experiences (Anaby et al., 2019; Echsel et al., 2019; Missiuna et al., 2012; Mooney & Lashewicz, 2015).

Recognising the need to focus on the skills and experiences of all stakeholders as they collaborate to create inclusive schooling, the approach informing this review was to view each school and its classes as an associated living unit (Dewey, 2008). That is,

rather than an educational or disability lens, a transactional lens was employed to call attention to the things children and adults do together, including collaborative and shared social experiences, and communication within the class and school community. Interactions amongst children, parents, classroom staff, school leaders, and therapists are contextualised within structural, environmental, and cultural components, guided this review. The review aimed to investigate inclusive education, exploring the range of stakeholder perspectives as to the ways that people can act to influence inclusion in shared occupations. For purposes of this review, inclusion was defined from an occupational perspective as a concern with what people do together, where it happens, and its personal, social, and cultural meanings, as well as the socio-cultural, political, economic, geographic, and historical contexts that promote or inhibit such actions (Hocking, 2009). The research question was: 'From an occupational perspective, what actions support and hinder inclusive education from the viewpoint of children, parents, classroom and therapy staff, and others?'

Appendix C: Scoping Review Overview Included Articles

Study Location of Data gathering	School Setting	Discipline	Method Methodolog y	Participants Sample	
				Children Diagnosis Age in years Gender	Adults
1 Bourke-Taylor, H., Cotter, C., Johnson, L., & Lalor, A. (2018) USA	schools varied in size (200- 500 pupils) and location (1 rural, 5 suburban, 3 urban)	education	qual quant phenomenol ogy	7 students D: cerebral palsy A: 6 to 17 G: 5f / 2m	10 parents of a child or young person with CP 11 teacher of students with CP 9 principals where the school community included a student with CP 10 allied health professionals 27 Teachers
2 Cassery, A. M., Tiernan, B., & Maguire, G. (2019) Ireland	nine multi- grade, level 2- 4 mainstream primary school mixed groups children with ADHD / ASD	education	qual NS	NA	
3 Dimitrellou, E., & Male, D. (2020) England	three mainstream state-funded secondary schools. Suburban metropolitan area	education	qual NS	37 students D: 17 mild learning disability (MLD), 13 social emotional mental health (SEM) 7 'abnormal' pupils A: 11 to 14 G: NS	NA
4 Efthymiou, E., & Kington, A. (2017) England	mixed primary school in a village in the Midlands of England (rural)	education	qual case study	students without disabilities 4 students with D: mild to moderate disability A: 11-12 G: NS	teachers teaching assistants
5 Gaffney, M. (2020) New Zealand	regular school in a NZ city (urban)	education	qual ethnographi c case study framework over a period of 3 years	Jack, his friends, peers Jack: D: memory impairment A: 11-14 (time span study 3 years) G: male	parent, teachers, other school staff
6 Harrington, I. (2011) Australia (New South Wales)	NS	education	qual NS	*12 children D: autism spectrum (ASS) A: 8-13 G: 2f / 10m	12 parents
7 Hodges, A., Joosten, A., Bourke- Taylor, H., & Cordier, R. (2020) Australia (Perth)	mainstream primary schools (urban)	developmental disability	qual NS	*children D: autism spectrum disorder (ASD) A: 6-11 G: NS	15 parents 11 educators (teachers, deputy principals, learning support coordinators)
8 Hummerston e, H., & Parsons, S. (2021) England	mainstream secondary school	education	qual participatory approach	12 children D: autism spectrum disorder (ASS) A: 11-15 (2 aged 15)	NA

Study Location of Data gathering	School Setting	Discipline	Method Methodology	Participants Sample	
9 Lindsay, S., & McPherson, A. C. (2012) Canada (Ontario)	integrated classrooms	rehabilitation / Health	qual phenomenology (not clearly stated)	G: 1f / 11m 15 children D: cerebral palsy CP A: 8-19 (2 aged 15) G: 9f / 6m	NA
10 Lowrey, K. A., Hollingshead, A., Howery, K., & Bishop, J. B. (2017) USA / Canada	diverse schools, general education classrooms	rehabilitation / Health	qual narrative inquiry	*13 children D: moderate to severe intellectual disabilities (ID) A: "diverse" G: NS	7 general education teachers (Universal Design for Learning, UDL experienced) 4 from Canada 3 from the USA
11 Maher, A. J. (2017) England	physical Education in secondary schools	education	qual NS	*children with and without disabilities D: NS A: 11-16 G: NS	12 learning support assistants (LSA) 12 special education Needs coordinator (SENCO) 21 regular classroom teachers
12 Majoko, T. (2016) Zimbabwe	public primary mainstream school classroom	education	qual NS	*Children with and without disabilities D: autism spectrum disorder (ASD) A: NS G: NS	
13 Morrison, H. J., & Gleddie, D. (2021) Canada Alberta	case 1: grade seven to nine school case 2: small kindergarten to grade six school case 3: kindergarten to grade nine	education	qual interpretive case study design	children with and without disabilities D: autism spectrum disorder (ASD), other NS, A: 7 - 14 G: f / m (No NS)	3 physical education teachers and 3 educational assistants
14 Mortier, K., Hunt, P., Leroy, M., Van De Putte, I., & Van Hove, G. (2010) Belgium Flanders	catholic public elementary school	education	qual NS	*3 children with a disability D: down syndrome 2, autism 1, A: kindergarten to second grade ap. 4-8 G: f and m (no NS)	support team Jacob (Down Syndrome): teacher, care coordinator, itinerant support, mother support team Olivia (autism): teacher, care coordinator, itinerant support teacher, speech therapist mother. support team Jade (Down Syndrome): teacher, care coordinator, mom, dad
15 Mortier, K., Van Hove, G., & De Schauwer, E. (2010) Belgium Flanders	regular school environment	education	qual multiple case study	3 children: Yasmin, Emma, Nathalie D: cognitive communication and motor, cognitive A: 6, 12, 17 G: 3f 15 children with diverse disabilities (5-17)	focus groups with support staff: 1 itinerant teacher 2 support teachers 3 personal assistants 1 speech therapist parent and teachers: 2 kindergarten teachers, 3 primary school teachers, 9 parents. single interviews with: 26 teachers
16 Mukhopadhyay, S., Mangope, B.,	6 primary schools in the 2 rural, 2 suburban, 2 urban	education	qual NS	72 children 36 learners with SENs and 36 without:	NA

Study Location of Data gathering	School Setting	Discipline	Method Methodolog y	Participants Sample	
& Moorad, F. (2019) Botswana				D: albinism/ partially sighted, physical disability, speech impairment, language impairment, mild intellectual impairment, hearing loss, chronic health impairment, blind, mild hearing impairment, A: 8–14 G: with SEN: 15f / 19m without SEN: 15f / 19m	
17 Pereira, E., Cour, K. L., Jonsson, H., & Hemmingsson, H. (2010) Portugal	regular primary and secondary school urban	health	qual phenomenol ogy	14 children D: cerebral palsy, intellectual impairment (mild and borderline), asperger, duchenne, blindness, retinopathy A: 8-11 G: 7f / 7m	NA
18 Petrie, K., Devcich, J., & Fitzgerald, H. (2018) New Zealand	primary school Year 5/6 ethnically diverse suburban	education	qual practitioner action research process	children: class with diverse children, one associated with a motor neuron condition D: motor neuron condition A: NS G: NS	1 teacher
19 Schwab, S., Wimberger, T., & Mamas, C. (2019) Austria	regular mainstream school NS	education	mixed methods (qual plus questionnair e)	3 classes with students with hearing impairment (HI) educated together with peers without HI D: HI A: ap. 13 G: Class 1: 13m Class 2: 12f / 12m Class 3: 8f / 17m	3 teachers
20 Scorgie, K. (2015) Canada	regular school, some with special classrooms NS	education	qual narrative	*children D: down syndrome, autism, deafness, AD/HD, learning disability, cerebral palsy, emotional/behavio ral disorder, severe developmental delay, genetic disorder, seizure disorder, intellectual delay A: 3-26 (mean 12.5) G: 13f / 18m	28 parents representing 27 families (one interview included both parents

Study Location of Data gathering	School Setting	Discipline	Method Methodolog y	Participants Sample	
21 Strogilos, V., & King-Sears, M. E. (2019) Greece	co-taught classes drawn from 22 mainstream schools located in five local educational authorities NS	education	qual NS	*children with and without disabilities D: 12 students with Autisms spectrum disorders (ASD) and 10 students with intellectual disabilities (ID) A: ap. 5-9 G: NS	43 teachers in co-taught settings
22 Thoren, A., Quennerstedt , M., & Maivorsdotter , N. (2021) Sweden	NS	education	qual NS	3 PE classes 76 children D: Neuro- developmental disorder such as ASD and ADHD A: 8-11 G: f / m (No NS)	3 PE teachers 3 teaching assistants (TA), caregivers (No NS)
23 Tiernan, B., Cassery, A. M., & Maguire, G. (2020) Republic of Ireland (ROI) Northern Ireland (NI)	multi-grade class teaching (two or more grade groups taught together by a teacher in the same classroom) in 9 primary schools rural	education	qual small-scale qualitative study	*children with and without disabilities D: NS A: junior, middle and senior classes G: NS	27 mainstream teachers who were teaching in multi-grade classes in 9 primary schools
24 Vandenbusse he, H., & De Schauwer, E. (2018) Belgium Flanders	NS	education	qual NS	*children D: NS A: NS G: f / m (No NS)	12: 3 focus group with 4 four participants. Every group was assembled with one self-advocate, one parent of a child with SEN, one friend or sibling of a person with SEN, and one personal support worker of a student with SEN
25 Wang, Y., Florian, L., (2019) China	four mainstream primary schools urban	education	qual ethnographi c study	11 children D: learning difficulties (LD) A: NS G: 8f / 3m	NA
26 Zitomer, M. R. (2016) Western Canada	five elementary schools located in two large school districts in Western Canada urban	education	qual interpretivist qualitative research approach	8 elementary cchool children D: autism spectrum disorder, neurodevelopment al disability, intellectual disabilities, and visual impairment A: 6-10 G: NS	NA

Appendix D: Ethics Approval AUTECH NO 2221



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH)

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26 April 2022

Margaret Anne Jones
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Margaret Anne

Re Ethics Application: **22/21 How can inclusive education be enacted in mainstream education by children, teachers, other staff and parents?**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 26 April 2025.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTECH in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTECH prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTECH Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTECH Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTECH grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTECH Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: echs@zhaw.ch; Clare Hocking



Revisor: siehe Beilage

ZHAW /AUT
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Katharina Sulzer Platz 9
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Kanton Zürich
Kantonale Ethikkommission



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F 4000 0612
Rg. 9003376622
v. 26.4.23

28. März 2023 / ktr
BASEC Nr. Req-2023-00376
Clarification of responsibility

**Title: How can inclusive education be enacted in mainstream education
by children, teachers, other staff and parents?**

Dear Ms Echsek

We refer to your submission dated 22.03.2023.

Your research project does not fall within the scope of the Human Research Act (HRA).
Therefore, an authorization issued by the Cantonal Ethics Committee Zurich is not required.

Herewith we confirm that the ethics committees in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] all follow the assessment of the KEK Zurich.

Kindly note that an invoice in the amount of CHF 200.- will be issued by the cantonal
accounts department for coordination activities



Virgilia Rumetsch

Appendix F: Amendment Recruitment Strategy AUTEK 2221



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK)

30 March 2023

Margaret Jones
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Margaret

Ethics Application: **22/21 How can inclusive education be enacted in mainstream education by children, teachers, other staff and parents?**

Thank you for submitting your request for amendments to your ethics application.

The amendment to the recruitment protocol (to use the researcher's professional network) is approved subject to:

1. Provision of updated Information Sheets to reflect 'how' the participant was identified;
2. Clarification of why the expression of interest in taking part goes to the recruiter rather than directly to the researcher;
3. Clarification of approaching "eligible classes" rather than teachers of eligible classes

Please provide a response to the conditions in a memo and attach any altered documents, such as the Information Sheet, Consent Forms, Survey.

A revised EA1 is not required unless specifically requested in the conditions.

Please reference the application number and study title in all correspondence.

The Committee is always willing to discuss with applicants the points that have been made. There may be information that has not been made available to the Committee, or aspects of the research may not have been fully understood.

When the conditions have been met, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application. Full approval is not effective until all the conditions have been met. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. If these conditions are not met within six months, your application may be closed, and a new application will be required if you wish to continue with this research.

If you have any enquiries about this application, please contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEK Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: echs@zhaw.ch; Clare Hocking

Appendix G: Amendment Age Adaptation AUTC 2221



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC)

31 May 2023

Margaret Jones
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Margaret

Re: Ethics Application: **22/21 How can inclusive education be enacted in mainstream education by children, teachers, other staff and parents?**

Thank you for your request for approval of amendments to your ethics application.

The amendment to the inclusion criteria (lower the age of children taking part in the research from 9 to 8 years) has been approved.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please amend the age range in the "Board of Trustees" and "Principal Approval" for the study to take place within the school" sheet and send to the secretariat for file.

Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTC unless requested but must be completed before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: echs@shaw.ch; Clare Hocking

Auckland University of Technology, D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, New Zealand
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316; E: ethics@aut.ac.nz; www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

Appendix H: PIS School Principal



Participant Information Sheet

Principal

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 26th 2021 (adapted to the actual date of each case)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I have become more interested in finding out how and in what ways inclusive education is enacted in a class like yours, by teacher, special education teacher, children, parents and therapists or other support staff and how you all are working together to create an inclusive school, a school for children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in their abilities. Efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school, with a growing awareness that inclusive education needs to be human rights-based. However, research to date has predominantly canvassed teachers' perspectives and focused on academic outcomes. In this study, the perspectives of all those participating in education will be captured, including children with and without disabilities aged between 9 and 12 years of age, parents, school and therapy staff, and school leaders. Experiences and views on inclusive schools sought include the things people do together at school, in the classroom and the playground, that lead to social participation and inclusion. "Doing together" includes the collaboration of parents and teachers, children in the class and the playground, as well as facilitating and hampering aspects of the physical school environment. In order to capture all these different aspects, a variety of data gathering methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, review of policy papers and photos of the school grounds are planned.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your school was approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. You are invited to participate because of your experience working together with parents, the school staff, therapists and children with diverse abilities, and because there are children with a disability at your school. This research aims to capture the experience and views of all these different people.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

A consent form is attached to this information sheet. If you agree to participate in this study, carefully read the consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

What will happen in this research?

For this research project, different data gathering methods will be used. Data gathering methods are ways to obtain information to answer the research question.

For you as principal data gathering procedures include: Observation of your involvement your contribution to the round table discussion (60 minutes). The focus on the observation will looking at ways you, the classroom and support staff (therapists class assistants), parents and possibly the child with a disability collaborate to create inclusive situations.

Further, a one to one interview for up to 60 minutes is planned at your convenience, either in person on the school grounds, or by telephone or video-call. In this interview I will ask you about your experience in leading the school team to welcome all children, strategies you are using, or specific ways of collaboration and support.

I will take brief notes during the observation and interview. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. The information will be analysed and written up into a case study report.

The children in the class of the participating teacher will be invited for observation (in class and in the playground), and five of them will be invited to attend a focus group, including the child with a disability. The parents of these five children, therapists who support them at school, and the school principal will be invited to participate in an interview. Participants in a round table discussion will also be asked if they agree to me observing their discussion.

For the observations and interviews, I will need your permission to access the school grounds, in specific the classroom of the participating class, the meeting room you usually meet for your round table discussions, the school playground, a group room for the focus group interview with the children and one to one interviews.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Provide a full, and friendly, description.

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with you, the children, and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the group that support inclusion.

Questions in the interview are about your experience supporting inclusion for-the diverse children at school, and your collaboration experience with classroom staff, parents, therapists, and other support staff. During interviews, there might be some questions you find awkward to answer. If you feel hesitant answering a question, you can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If for your staff any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, you might be asked to support the arrangement of a solution.

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's political agenda, culture and social aims and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities. In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

This project is part of my studies for a doctoral degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will replace all real names of persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality. However, there is a possibility other people associated with the school may be aware of your involvement in the study, and other participants in the study may recognise your input.

Photos taken will not include any people. If photos are used in a publication or presentation, they will be used so that schools and places cannot be identified. Consent for using these pictures will be obtained by school authorities and the people who took the photo.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Part of this research will take place in everyday life at school, such as observation during class, in the playground, and the round table discussion, therefore no costs are anticipated from this.

In addition, there will be one interview which will take 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to you by e-mail. You might recognise quotes you contributed. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.2022, AUTC Reference number 22/21.

Appendix I: PIS Classroom Staff (Classroom/ SEN teacher and Assistant)



Participant Information Sheet

Classroom Staff

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 15th 2021 (adapted to the actual date)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I have become more interested in finding out how and in what ways inclusive education is enacted in a class like yours, by teacher, special education teacher, children, parents and therapists or other support staff and how you all are working together to create an inclusive school, a school for children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in their abilities. Efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school, with a growing awareness that inclusive education needs to be human rights-based. However, research to date has predominantly canvassed teachers' perspectives and focused on academic outcomes. In this study, the perspectives of all those participating in education will be captured, including children with and without disabilities aged between 9 and 12 years of age, parents, school and therapy staff, and school leaders. Experiences and views on inclusive schools sought include the things people do together at school, in the classroom and the playground, that lead to social participation and inclusion. "Doing together" includes the collaboration of parents and teachers, children in the class and the playground, as well as facilitating and hampering aspects of the physical school environment. In order to capture all these different aspects, a variety of data gathering methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, review of policy papers and photos of the school grounds are planned.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your school was approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. You are invited to participate because of your experience working together with parents, the school principal, therapists and children with diverse abilities, and because there is a child/children with a disability in your class. This research aims to capture the experience and views of all these different people.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

How do potential participants let you know that they want to take part in the research? Do they need to complete a Consent Form and if so, where do they obtain it? If they will not need to complete a Consent Form, describe what will occur. Also, make clear that participation is voluntary. You need to include the following wording:

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw

from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

A consent form is attached to this information sheet. If you agree to participate in this study, carefully read the consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

What will happen in this research?

For this research project, different data gathering methods will be used. Data gathering methods are ways to obtain information to answer the research question.

For you as classroom staff data gathering procedures include: Observation of your involvement in usual activities with children in the classroom up to 90 minutes. In addition, your work, if any, in the school playground may be observed (up to 60 minutes) and your contribution to a round table discussion (60 minutes). The classroom observation will be prearranged between you, your team and me, to suit your convenience. The focus on the observation will be ways you and the children do things together to enable participation to support inclusive situations.

Further, a one to one interview for up to 60 minutes is planned at your convenience, either in person on the school grounds, or by telephone or video-call. In this interview, I will ask you about your experience teaching the diverse children in your class and working together with parents and support staff.

I will take brief notes during the observations and interview. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. The information will be analysed and written up into a case study report.

All children in your class will be invited for observation (in class and in the playground), and five of them will be invited to attend a focus group, including the child with a disability. The parents of these five children, therapists who support them at school, and the school principal will be invited to participate in an interview. Participants in a round table discussion will also be asked if they agree to me observing their discussion.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with you, the children, and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the group that support inclusion.

Questions in the interview are about your experience supporting inclusion for the diverse children in your class, and your collaboration experience with parents, therapists, other support staff and the principal. During interviews, there might be some questions you find awkward to answer. If you feel hesitant answering a question, you can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, please contact your principal to arrange a solution.

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's political agenda, culture and social aims and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities. In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

This project is part of my studies for a doctoral degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will replace all real names of persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality. However, there is a possibility other people associated with the school may be aware of your involvement in the study, and other participants in the study may recognise your input.

Photos taken will not include any people. If photos are used in a publication or presentation, they will be used so that schools and places can not be identified. Consent for using these pictures will be obtained by school authorities and the people who took the photo.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Part of this research will take place in everyday life at school, such as observation during class, in the playground, and the round table discussion, therefore no costs are anticipated from this.

In addition, there will be one interview which will take 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to you by e-mail. You might recognise quotes you contributed. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.2022, AUTC Reference number 22/21.

Appendix J: PIS Parent Child with Disability



Participant Information Sheet

Parent of the child with a disability

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 15th, 2021 (adapted to the actual date of each case)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I have become more interested in finding out how and in what ways inclusive education is enacted in a class like yours, by teacher, special education teacher, children, parents and therapists or other support staff and how you all are working together to create an inclusive school, a school for children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in their abilities. Efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school, with a growing awareness that inclusive education needs to be human rights-based. However, research to date has predominantly canvassed teachers' perspectives and focused on academic outcomes. In this study, the perspectives of all those participating in education will be captured, including children with and without disabilities aged between 9 and 12 years of age, parents, school and therapy staff, and school leaders. Experiences and views on inclusive schools sought include the things people do together at school, in the classroom and the playground, that lead to social participation and inclusion. "Doing together" includes the collaboration of parents and teachers, children in the class and the playground, as well as facilitating and hampering aspects of the physical school environment. In order to capture all these different aspects, a variety of data gathering methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, review of policy papers and photos of the school grounds are planned.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

The school your child goes to school was approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. You are invited to participate because of your experience your child having a disability and being at a regular school, working together and the classroom staff, therapists and the school principal. This research aims to capture the experience and views of all these different people.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice), and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

A consent form is attached to this information sheet. If you agree to participate in this study, carefully read the consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

What will happen in this research?

For this research project, different data gathering methods will be used. Data gathering methods are ways to obtain information to answer the research question.

For you as a parent of a child with a disability, data gathering procedures include: Observation of your contribution to a round table discussion (60 minutes). The focus on the observation will be ways you collaborate with others to enable participation and to support inclusive situations for your child.

Further, a one to one interview for up to 60 minutes is planned at your convenience, either in person on the school grounds, or by telephone or video-call. In this interview, I will ask you about your experience being a parent of a child with a disability, working the classroom- and other support staff, therapists, and the principal.

I will take brief notes during the observations and interview. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. The information will be analysed and written up into a case study report.

All children in the class will be invited for observation (in class and in the playground), and your child and four others will be invited to attend a focus group. The parents of the other four children, classroom staff, therapists and the school principal will be invited to participate in an interview. Participants in a round table discussion, like you, will also be asked if they agree to me observing their discussion.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with you, the children, and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the group that support inclusion.

Questions in the interview are about your experience supporting inclusion for-the diverse children in your class, and your collaboration experience with parents, therapists, other support staff and the principal. During interviews, there might be some questions you find awkward to answer. If you feel hesitant answering a question, you can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, please contact your principal to arrange a solution.

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's political agenda, culture and social aims and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities. In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

This project is part of my studies for a doctoral degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will replace all real names of persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality. However, there is a possibility other people associated with the school may be aware of your involvement in the study, and other participants in the study may recognise your input.

Photos taken will not include any people. If photos are used in a publication or presentation, they will be used so that schools and places can not be identified. Consent for using these pictures will be obtained by school authorities and the people who took the photo.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Part of this research will take place in everyday life at school, such as the round table discussion, therefore no costs are anticipated from this.

In addition, there will be one interview which will take 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to you by e-mail. You might recognise quotes you contributed. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

Researcher Contact Details:

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Project Supervisor Contact Details:

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.2022, AUTC Reference number 22/21.

Appendix K: PIS and Consent Form President School Board



Participant Information Sheet for the Members of the Board of Trustees

Date Information Sheet Produced:

July 6th 2023

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An information and invitation for the school

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I have become more interested in finding out how and in what ways inclusive education is enacted in a class at your school, by teachers, special education teacher, children, parents and therapists or other support staff and how they are working together to create an inclusive school, a school for children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in their abilities. Efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school, with a growing awareness that inclusive education needs to be human rights-based. However, research to date has predominantly canvassed teachers' perspectives and focused on academic outcomes. In this study, the perspectives of all those participating in education will be captured, including children with and without disabilities aged between 9 and 12 years of age, parents, school and therapy staff, and school leaders. Experiences and views on inclusive schools sought include the things people do together at school, in the classroom and the playground, that lead to social participation and inclusion. "Doing together" includes the collaboration of parents and teachers, children in the class and the playground, as well as facilitating and hampering aspects of the physical school environment. In order to capture all these different aspects, a variety of data gathering methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, review of policy papers and photos of the school grounds are planned.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was the school of which you are a board member being identified to participate in this research?

The principal of your school and your school was approached and agreed to participate in this study because of the school's reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. The school staff is experienced in working together with parents, the school staff, therapists and children with diverse abilities, including children with disabilities. This research aims to capture the experience and views of all these different people and will be conducted on the school ground and one class of your school.

How does the board if trustees agree for the researcher to access the school ground and a class at school.

The principal of the school, of which you are a trustee, has agreed to participate in the study. The participation of a specific class, including a child with a disability at your school, will be chosen. Of this class children, classroom staff, some parents and therapists all associated with the specific class will need to agree to participate in this research. The participation is voluntary and whether the school board agrees for the school to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage the school. The school can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw the school from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to the school removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

A consent form is attached to this information sheet. If you as a board agree for the school to participate in this study, read the consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.



What will happen in this research?

For this research project, different data gathering methods will be used. Data gathering methods are ways to obtain information to answer the research question.

For the invited class data gathering procedures include:

The children in the class of the participating teacher will be invited for two observation (in class, 90 minutes and in the playground, 60 minutes), and five of them will be invited to attend a focus group (90 minutes), including the child with a disability. The focus on these two observations will look at ways children do things and work together to create inclusive situations.

Further, participants in a round table discussion will also be asked if they agree to me observing their discussion. The classroom and support staff (therapists class assistants), parents and possibly the child with a disability are observed on how they collaborate to create inclusive situations (60 minutes). I will take brief notes during the observations.

The parents of these five children participating in the focus group, therapists who support children at school, classroom staff the school principal will be invited to participate in a one to one interview for up to 60 minutes. In these interviews, I will ask about specific ways of collaboration and strategies used to create inclusive situations and support each other. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. The information will be analysed and written up into a case study report.

For the observations and interviews, I will need your permission to access the school grounds, in specific the classroom of the participating class, the meeting room you usually meet for your round table discussions, the school playground, a group room for the focus group interview with the children and one to one interviews.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with the children, and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the group that support inclusion.

Questions in the interview are about experiences supporting inclusion for the diverse children at school, and collaboration experience with classroom staff, parents, therapists, and other support staff. During interviews, there might be some questions participants find awkward to answer. Participants are invited to let the interviewer know about any discomfort answering a question and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If for your staff and children any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, the principal might be asked to support the arrangement of a solution.

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's political agenda, culture and social aims and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities. In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, the board of trustees may gain benefit from knowing to support to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

This project is part of my studies for a doctoral degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

How will privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will replace all real names of persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality. However, there is a possibility people associated with the school may be aware of other participants contributions to the study.

Photos taken will not include any people. If photos are used in a publication or presentation, they will be used so that schools and places can not be identified. Consent for using these pictures will be obtained by school authorities and the people who took the photo.



What are the costs of participating in this research?

Part of this research will occur in everyday life at school, such as observations during class, in the playground, and the round table discussion; therefore, no costs are anticipated.

In addition, there will be interviews which will take 45 to 60 minutes of each participants time. The focus group interview with the five children will last for up to 90 minutes.

What opportunity does the board of trustees have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree for the school to participate in this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional e-mail reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to the school board by e-mail. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on April 26th 2022, AUTEK Reference number 22/21.



Form of agreement for the Head of the Board of Trustees representing the Board

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will need access to the school grounds for observation in the playground, classroom and meeting room, the focus group interviews and single interviews.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will take photographs of the school grounds and classroom to document the physical context.
- ☐ I understand that there will be no persons on the photographs.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during observation in the playground, classroom, and round table discussion.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (participants choice) and that participants may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if participants withdraw from the study, then they will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I understand that in the unlikely event of any issues of discomfort arising for the classrooms staff, children and parents and therapists, the principal will support participants to arrange a solution.
- ☐ I agree to permit the researcher to access the school grounds.
- ☐ I agree that the principal support the participants to arrange solutions if discomfort arises as a direct result of participating in this research.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on April 26th 2022, AUTEK Reference number 22/21.

Appendix L: Flyer Parent Classroom and Playground Observations

Zürcher Hochschule
für Angewandte Wissenschaften



Gesundheit

Institut
für Ergotherapie



Gemeinsam in der Schule

Einladung zur Teilnahme Ihres Kindes am Forschungsprojekt zur Untersuchung von inklusiven Schulen in der Schweiz

Die Schule Ihres Kindes wurde ausgewählt, weil sie das Ansehen hat, Kinder mit unterschiedlichen Fähigkeiten zu inkludieren und willkommen zu heissen. Sie hat zur Teilnahme der Studie zugestimmt.

Was bedeutet das für die Schule Ihres Kindes? Die Forscherin (Angelika Echsel), erfahren in der Arbeit mit Kindern, Lehrpersonen und Eltern, wird die Schule Ihres Kindes besuchen und beobachten, was die Kinder und die Lehrpersonen im Schulalltag gemeinsam tun.

Was bedeutet das für Ihr Kind? Ich komme in die Klasse Ihres Kindes und beobachte das Zusammenspiel von Kindern und Lehrpersonen im Klassenzimmer und auf dem Pausenplatz.

Detaillierte Informationen: Wenn Sie den QR scannen, gelangen Sie Informationsseite der Studie. Zusätzlich erhalten Sie ein detailliertes Informationsblatt durch das Schulsekretariat.



Diese Forschung bildet Teil meines Doktoratsstudiums an der Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Neuseeland und der Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften (ZHAW), Schweiz. Danke für die Möglichkeit, dieses Projekt durchzuführen und Ihr Interesse an der Teilnahme durch Ihr Kind! Sollten Sie weitere Fragen haben, zögern Sie nicht, mich per Mail oder telefonisch zu kontaktieren.

Angelika Echsel
Ergotherapeutin MSc, Lehrperson
PhD cand AUT / ZHAW
echs@zhaw.ch
058 934 43 98

Wenn Sie damit einverstanden sind, dass Ihr Kind an dieser Studie teilnimmt, sprechen Sie bitte mit Ihrem Kind darüber. Ich lade Sie ein, das ausführliche Informationsblatt zur Studie sorgfältig durchzulesen, die beigefügte Einverständniserklärung auszufüllen und diese der Schulleitung abzugeben. Die Zustimmung Ihres Kindes ist ebenfalls erforderlich. Dafür muss es eine separate Einverständniserklärung ausfüllen. Die Einverständniserklärungen werden sicher aufbewahrt.

Ich danke Ihnen für Ihre Bemühungen. Mit freundlichen Grüßen



English Translation

Together at school

Invitation for your child to participate in a research project investigating inclusive schools in Switzerland

Your child's school has been approached because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities and agreed to participate.

What does this mean for your child's school? A researcher (Angelika Echsel) experienced working with children, parents and teachers will come to your child's school and observe what children of your child's class and classroom staff do together in everyday life at school.

What does this mean for your child? I will come to your child's class and observe children and the classroom staff's interaction in the classroom and playground.

Detailed information: You can scan the QR code and be linked to the participant information sheet for you as a parent of a child participating in the observations for more detailed information. Alternatively, you can get a hard copy at the school administration office _____ (contact details of the school administration office).

This research is part of my doctoral studies at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), New Zealand and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) Switzerland. Thank you for this opportunity to do this project, involving your child and your interest in your child to participate! If you have any further queries, don't hesitate to contact me via e-mail or phone call.

Angelika Echsel
Occupational Therapist MSc, Teacher
PhD cand AUT / ZHAW
echs@zhaw.ch
058 934 43 98

If you agree for your child to participate in this study, please talk to your child about it, carefully read the information sheet linked under the QR code, fill in the attached consent form, and return it to the school administration office. Your child's assent is also required, he/she will fill in a separate assent form. The consent /assent forms will be stored safely.

Thank you for your efforts. Kind regards

Appendix M: PIS Parent Classroom and Playground Observations



Participant Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians of Children participating in Classroom and Playground Observations

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 27th 2021 (adapted to the actual date of each case)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I am interested in finding out how children do different things together and how teachers, parents, therapists, and the wider school team can work together to create a school that is inclusive of children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology AUT in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet, will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

In inclusive schools like your child's school, children with and without disabilities go together to school, do things together in classrooms, playgrounds, do sport together and go on outings so all children can learn from each other. By learning about the things all the people do at your school to support children do things together, the information from this research can be used to help other schools to become more inclusive.

The things I find out, so-called findings, will be written up as a report, which I plan to present in conferences and publish an article in a journal.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your child's school and class were approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. I would like to observe some of the things children do to include one another into classroom and playground activities. This research focuses on children aged between nine to twelve years. Your child is invited to participate in observations in her / his usual school activities because of your experience learning, doing group work or other things in class or playing on the playground.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary (it is her/his choice), and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage your child or you as a parent. Your child can withdraw from the study at any time. If your child decides to withdraw from the study, then your child and you will be offered the choice between having any data from the observation that is identifiable as belonging to your child removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

You as parents need for your child to agree to participate in this study. A consent form for you is attached to this information sheet. If you as a parent agree for your child to participate in this study, carefully read the parent consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office. Your child will receive a similar Information sheet and assent form to be signed by your child.

What will happen in this research?

For your child this will mean participating in two observations.

I am seeking consent to observe your child as part of the group(s) of children during their normal activities in the up to 90 minutes in the classroom and up to 1 hour in the playground. I will be observing the sorts of things that children do that help one another to be involved in classroom activities and during play in the playground. I will take brief notes during the observations.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with your child, the teacher and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the group that support inclusion.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Although it is very unlikely, if any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your child's participation in this research, you can contact the school counselling office.

(Address of school counselling office was provided after case selection)

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's social aims, culture and political agenda and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities.

In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

How will my privacy be protected?

During the observations, children's names will not be used when taking notes, and children's actions will be noted down in general terms only rather than referring to a specific child. Pseudonyms (fictitious names) will replace all real names of your child and other persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Your child's participation in the observations will occur in everyday life at school, such as observation during class and in the playground; therefore there are no additional costs or time are required.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree for your child to participate in the observations for this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information sheet. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to your child's school, and the school administration will forward it to you. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your child's school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. phil. Christina Schulze
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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.2022, AUTC Reference number 22/21.

Appendix N: Flyer Children Classroom and Playground Observations



Gemeinsam in der Schule

Einladung zur Teilnahme an unserem ZHAW- Forschungsprojekt inklusive Schulen in der Schweiz

Liebe Lernende

Eure Schule wurde für dieses Forschungsprojekt ausgewählt, weil sie sich besonders für Inklusion engagiert und unterschiedlichen Kinder miteinander zur Schule gehen.

Was bedeutet das für eure Schule? Wir als erfahrene Forscherinnen (Angelika Echsel, Christina Schulze), arbeiten schon viele Jahre mit Kindern, Eltern und Lehrpersonen. An eurer Schule werden wir euch Kinder, Lehrpersonen im normalen Schulalltag im Klassenzimmer und auf dem Pausenplatz, beobachten und mit einer Gruppe von fünf Kindern ein Gruppeninterview durchführen. Es interessiert uns, was ihr Kinder und Lehrpersonen im Schulalltag gemeinsam tut, wie ihr arbeitet, in Gruppen lernt oder auf dem Pausenplatz spielt.

Was bedeutet das für dich? Alle Kinder der Klasse werden Teil der Beobachtungen sein. Fünf Kinder aus deiner Klasse werden zu einem Gruppeninterview mit uns eingeladen. In diesem Gespräch werden dir Fragen gestellt, was ihr zusammen macht z. B. zu gemeinsame Schulprojekte, Gruppenarbeiten oder auf dem Pausenplatz.

Weitere Informationen: Dieses Forschungsprojekt ist Teil meines Doktoratsstudiums an der Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Neuseeland und der Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften (ZHAW) Schweiz. Der QR-Code führt Dich zu einer Webpage zu dieser Studie-



Ich freue mich sehr dieses Projekt an eurer Schule mit euch und euren Lehrpersonen durchzuführen zu können und euer Interesse teilzunehmen! Falls du weitere Fragen hast, zögere nicht, mich per E-Mail oder telefonisch zu kontaktieren.

Angelika Echsel
Ergotherapeutin MSc, Lehrerin
PhD cand AUT / ZHAW
echs@zhaw.ch
058 934 43 98

Anonymisierung: Alles, was du in der Studie sagst oder an welcher Schule sie stattfindet wird anonymisiert. Das heisst alle Namen von Personen und Orten werden geändert, so dass niemand der die Studie liest, weiss wo sie durchgeführt wurde und welche Personen teilgenommen haben.

Wenn du mit der Teilnahme an dieser Studie einverstanden bist, lies das separate Informationsblatt und fülle das beiliegende Einverständnisformular aus und gib es auf dem Sekretariat ab. Auch deine Eltern müssen einverstanden sein. Sie werden ein separates Informationsblatt erhalten und

Einverständniserklärung ausfüllen. Die Einverständniserklärung und das Einwilligungsformular werden sicher aufbewahrt.

Vielen Dank für Deine Bemühungen. Mit freundlichen Grüßen



English Version

Together at school

Invitation to participate in a research project investigating inclusive schools in Switzerland

Your school has been approached because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities and agreed to participate.

What does this mean for your school? A researcher experienced working with children, parents and teachers will come to your school and observe what you and other children and classroom staff do together in everyday life at school.

What does this mean for you? I will come to your class and observe you in the classroom and playground.

Detailed information: You will find more detailed information in the attached participant information sheet. You can also contact me; you find the contact details in the information sheet.

Thank you for this opportunity to do this project with the children and teacher in your class at your school.

Angelika Echsel, main investigator Occupational Therapist MSc, Teacher

Appendix O: PIS Children Classroom and Playground Observations



Participant Information Sheet for Children participating in Classroom and Playground Observations

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 27th 2021 (adapted to the actual date)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children like you, parents, teachers and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I am interested in finding out how children do different things together and how teachers, parents, therapists, and the wider school team can work together to create a school that is inclusive of children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology AUT in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet, will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

In inclusive schools like your school, children with and without disabilities go together to school, do things together in classrooms, playgrounds, do sport together and go on outings so all children can learn from each other.

By learning about the things all the people do at your school to support children do things together, the information from this research can be used to help other schools to become more inclusive.

The things I find out, so-called findings, will be written up as a report, which I plan to present in conferences and publish an article in a journal.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your school and your class were approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. I would like to observe some of the things children do to include one another into classroom and playground activities. This research focuses on children aged between nine to twelve years. You are invited to participate in observations in your usual school activities because of your experience learning, doing group work or other things in class or playing on the playground.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice), and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data from the observation that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Both you and your parents need to agree for you to participate in this study. An assent form for you is attached to this information sheet. If you agree to participate in this study, carefully read the assent (children) form (parent), sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

What will happen in this research?

For you as a child this will mean participating in two observations.

I am seeking your assent to observe you as part of the group(s) of children during your normal activities for up to 90 minutes in the classroom and up to 1 hour in the playground. I will be observing the sorts of things that children do that help one another to be involved in classroom activities and during play in the playground. I will take brief notes during the observations.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with you, your teacher and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the children and adults that support inclusion.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Although it is very unlikely, if any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, please talk to your parent. Your parent and you can contact the school counselling office.

(Address of school counseling office will be provided after case selection)

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's social aims, culture and political agenda and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities.

In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

How will my privacy be protected?

During the observations, your and all other children's names will not be used when taking notes, and your actions will be noted down in general terms only rather than referring to a specific child. Pseudonyms (fictitious names) will replace all real names of you and other children and persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Your participation in the observations will occur in everyday life at school, such as observation during class and in the playground; therefore there are no additional costs or time are required.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in the observations for this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you or your parent have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information sheet. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to your school, the school administration will send it to you. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21.

Appendix P: PIS Therapists



Participant Information Sheet

Therapist

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 15th 2021 (adapted to the actual date of each case).

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I have become more interested in finding out how and in what ways inclusive education is enacted in a class like yours, by teacher, special education teacher, children, parents and therapists or other support staff and how you all are working together to create an inclusive school, a school for children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

Inclusive schools teach children skills to engage with each other and do things together in classrooms, playgrounds and other places, disregarding differences in their abilities. Efforts to promote inclusive education increasingly focus on children in their social context at school, with a growing awareness that inclusive education needs to be human rights-based. However, research to date has predominantly canvassed teachers' perspectives and focused on academic outcomes. In this study, the perspectives of all those participating in education will be captured, including children with and without disabilities aged between 9 and 12 years of age, parents, school and therapy staff, and school leaders. Experiences and views on inclusive schools sought include the things people do together at school, in the classroom and the playground, that lead to social participation and inclusion. "Doing together" includes the collaboration of parents and teachers, children in the class and the playground, as well as facilitating and hampering aspects of the physical school environment. In order to capture all these different aspects, a variety of data gathering methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, review of policy papers and photos of the school grounds are planned.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

The school you are associated with was approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. You are invited to participate because of your experience working together with the child with a disability, the child's parents, the school principal and the classroom staff. This research aims to capture the experience and views of all these different people.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice), and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

A consent form is attached to this information sheet. If you agree to participate in this study, carefully read the consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

What will happen in this research?

For this research project, different data gathering methods will be used. Data gathering methods are ways to obtain information to answer the research question.

For you as a therapist, data gathering procedures include: Observation of your contribution to a round table discussion (60 minutes). The focus on the observation will be ways you collaborate with others to enable participation and to support inclusive situations for the child with a disability.

Further, a one to one interview for up to 60 minutes is planned at your convenience, either in person on the school grounds, or by telephone or video-call. In this interview, I will ask you about your experience working with the child with a disability at this school and collaborating with the child's parents, classroom- and other support staff and the principal.

I will take brief notes during the observations and interview. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. The information will be analysed and written up into a case study report.

All children in the class you are working with the child with a disability will be invited for observation (in class and in the playground), and five of them will be invited to attend a focus group, including the child with a disability. The parents of these five children, you, classroom staff and the school principal will be invited to participate in an interview. Participants in a round table discussion, like you, will also be asked if they agree to me observing their discussion.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the observations. I will interact as natural with you, the children, and other staff during observations, and the focus is on everyday interactions amongst the group that support inclusion.

Questions in the interview are about your experience supporting inclusion for the diverse children in your class, and your collaboration experience with parents, therapists, other support staff and the principal. During interviews, there might be some questions you find awkward to answer. If you feel hesitant answering a question, you can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, please contact your principal to arrange a solution.

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's political agenda, culture and social aims and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities. In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

This project is part of my studies for a doctoral degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will replace all real names of persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality. However, there is a possibility other people associated with the school may be aware of your involvement in the study, and other participants in the study may recognise your input.

Photos taken will not include any people. If photos are used in a publication or presentation, they will be used so that schools and places can not be identified. Consent for using these pictures will be obtained by school authorities and the people who took the photo.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Part of this research will take place in everyday life at school, such as the round table discussion, therefore no costs are anticipated from this.

In addition, there will be one interview which will take 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to you by e-mail. You might recognise quotes you contributed. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.2022, ATEC Reference number 22/21.

Appendix Q: Flyer Children Focus Group Interview



Gemeinsam in der Schule

**Einladung zur Teilnahme an einem Fokusgruppen Interview
unseres ZHAW-Forschungsprojekt inklusive Schulen in der
Schweiz**

Liebe Lernende

Eure Schule wurde für dieses Forschungsprojekt ausgewählt, weil sie sich besonders für Inklusion engagiert und unterschiedlichen Kinder miteinander zur Schule gehen.

Was bedeutet das für eure Schule? Ich als Forscherin, die mit Kindern, Eltern und Lehrpersonen arbeitet, wird eure Schule besuchen, um zu beobachten und Interviews darüber zu führen, was ihr und andere Kinder sowie das Schulpersonal im Schulalltag zusammen macht.

Was bedeutet das für dich? Du und vier andere Kinder aus deiner Klasse seid zu einem Gruppeninterview mit mir eingeladen. In diesem Interview werdet ihr Fragen dazu gestellt bekommen, was ihr in der Schule und auf dem Pausenplatz zusammen macht. Du findest mehr Informationen auf dem beiliegenden Informationsblatt und auf dieser Webseite.



Weitere Informationen: Dieses Forschungsprojekt ist Teil meines Doktoratsstudiums an der Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Neuseeland und der Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften (ZHAW) Schweiz.

Ich freue mich sehr dieses Projekt und die Fokusgruppe mit euch, an eurer Schule durchzuführen zu können und euer Interesse teilzunehmen. Falls du weitere Fragen hast, zögere nicht, mich per E-Mail oder telefonisch zu kontaktieren.

Angelika Echsel
Ergotherapeutin MSc, Lehrerin
PhD cand AUT / ZHAW
echs@zhaw.ch
058 934 43 98

Anonymisierung: Alles, was du in der Studie sagst oder an welcher Schule sie stattfindet wird anonymisiert. Das heisst alle Namen von Personen und Orten werden geändert, so dass niemand der die Studie liest, weiss wo sie durchgeführt wurde und welche Personen teilgenommen haben.

Wenn du mit der Teilnahme an dieser Studie einverstanden bist, fülle das beiliegende Einverständnisformular aus und gib es Deiner Lehrerin. Auch deine Eltern müssen einverstanden sein. Sie werden ein separates Informationsblatt

erhalten und Einverständniserklärung ausfüllen. Die Einverständniserklärung und das Einwilligungsfomular werden sicher aufbewahrt.

Vielen Dank für Deine Bemühungen. Mit freundlichen Grüßen



English Version:

Together at school

Invitation to participate in a research project investigating inclusive schools in Switzerland

Your school has been approached because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities and agreed to participate.

What does this mean for your school? A researcher experienced working with children, parents and teachers will come to your school and observe and do interviews about what you and other children and classroom staff do together in everyday life at school.

What does this mean for you? You and four other children from your class are invited to a group interview with me. In this interview you will be asked questions about doing things together at school and in the playground.

Detailed information: You will find more detailed information in the attached participant information sheet. You can also contact me; you find the contact details in the information sheet.

Thank you for this opportunity to do this project with the children and teacher in your class at your school.

Angelika Echsel, main investigator
Occupational Therapist MSc, Teacher

Appendix R: PIS Children Focus Group Interview



Participant Information Sheet for Children participating in the Focus Group Interview

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 27th 2021 (adapted to the actual date)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children like you, parents, teachers and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I am interested in finding out how children do different things together and how teachers, parents, therapists, and the wider school team can work together to create a school that is inclusive of children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology AUT in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet, will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

In inclusive schools like your school, children with and without disabilities go together to school, do things together in classrooms, playgrounds, do sport together and go on outings so all children can learn from each other. By learning about the things all the people do at your school to support children do things together, the information from this research can be used to help other schools to become more inclusive.

The things I find out, so-called findings, will be written up as a report, which I plan to present in conferences and publish an article in a journal.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your school and class were approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. This research focuses on children aged between nine to twelve years. All children of your class have been invited to participate in observations in their usual school activities. You and four other children are invited to participate in a focus group, because of your experience learning, doing group work or other things in class or playing on the playground with each other. This means the group of five children will talk to me about what kind of things you do together at school.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice), and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data from the focus group interview that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Both you and your parents need to agree for you to participate in this study. You find an assent form for you attached to this information sheet. If you agree to participate in this study, carefully read the assent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

What will happen in this research?

For you, this will mean participating in a focus group interview with four other children.

I am seeking assent to interview you and the other four children. The focus group interview will take up to 90 minutes and will take place in a separate, private room at school. I will be asking questions about the sorts of things you do that help one another to be involved in classroom activities and during play in the playground. The focus group interview will be audiotaped and later written down in the same wording. Notes will be taken during the interview.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the focus group interview. Questions in the interview will be about you doing things together and how you are supporting each other. During the focus group interview, there might be some questions you might find awkward to answer. If you feel hesitant answering a question, you can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Although it is very unlikely, if any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, please talk to your parent. Your parent and you can contact the school counselling office.

(Address of school counselling office will be provided after case selection)

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities.

In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

How will my privacy be protected?

When transcribing the interviews pseudonyms (fictitious names) will replace your real name and names of other children in the group. All other persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality.

To protect the privacy of all children who participate in the focus group interview, it is important that we keep things we talk about confidential. This means that you agree not to tell other people who participated in the focus group interview and what was said.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The group interview for the group of five will take up to 90 minutes of your time. The interview will be arranged at a time convenient the group of five children.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in the observations for this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you or your parent have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information sheet. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to your school, the school administration will send it to you. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the assent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

Researcher Contact Details:

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Project Supervisors Contact Details:

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix S: Flyer Parent of Children Focus Group Interview



Gemeinsam in der Schule

**Einladung zur Teilnahme ihres Kindes an einem
Fokusgruppeninterview eines Forschungsprojekt zur
Untersuchung von inklusiven Schulen in der Schweiz**

Liebe Eltern

Die Schule Ihres Kindes wurde ausgewählt, weil sie das Ansehen hat, Kinder mit unterschiedlichen Fähigkeiten zu inkludieren und willkommen zu heissen. Sie hat zur Teilnahme der Studie zugestimmt.

Was bedeutet das für die Schule Ihres Kindes? Die Forscherin (Angelika Echsel), erfahren in der Arbeit mit Kindern, Lehrpersonen und Eltern, besucht die Schule Ihres Kindes und führt Beobachtungen und Interviews über den gemeinsamen Schulalltag von Kinder und Lehrpersonen durch.

Was bedeutet das für Ihr Kind? Ihr Kind und vier weitere Kinder der Klasse werden zu einem Gruppeninterview mit mir eingeladen. In diesem Gespräch werden den Kindern Fragen zum gemeinsamen Tun gestellt, z. B. zu gemeinsamen Schulprojekten, zum gemeinsamen Lernen und zu Aktivitäten auf dem Pausenplatz.

Was bedeutet das für Sie? Ich werde untersuchen, wie Lehrpersonen, Therapeut:innen und Klassenassistent:innen und Eltern wie Sie zusammenarbeiten, um die Schule und sich gegenseitig zu unterstützen. Um die Sicht der Eltern zu erfassen, werde ich die fünf Eltern der fünf Kinder befragen, die an einem Gruppeninterview teilnehmen.

Detaillierte Informationen: Wenn Sie den QR scannen, gelangen Sie zur Studienwebseite. Auf den zwei beiliegenden Informationsblättern finden Sie detaillierte Informationen zum Fokusgruppen-Interview ihres Kindes und dem Interview mit Ihnen.



Weitere Informationen: Diese Forschung bildet Teil meines Doktoratsstudiums an der Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Neuseeland und der Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften (ZHAW), Schweiz. Danke für die Möglichkeit, dieses Projekt durchzuführen und Ihr Interesse an der Teilnahme Ihres Kindes am Gruppeninterview! Sollten Sie weitere Fragen haben, zögern Sie nicht, mich per Mail oder telefonisch zu kontaktieren.

Angelika Echsel
Ergotherapeutin MSc, Lehrerin
PhD cand AUT / ZHAW
echs@zhaw.ch
058 934 43 98

Anonymisierung: Alles, was ihr Kind in der Studie sagt oder an welcher Schule sie stattfindet wird anonymisiert. Das heisst alle Namen von Personen und Orten werden geändert, so dass niemand der die Studie liest, weiss wo sie durchgeführt wurde und welche Personen teilgenommen haben.

Wenn Sie damit einverstanden sind, dass Ihr Kind am Gruppeninterview teilnimmt, sprechen Sie bitte mit Ihrem Kind darüber. Ich lade Sie ein, das beigelegte Informationsblatt sorgfältig durchzulesen, die beigelegte Einverständniserklärungen (Gruppeninterview ihres Kindes, Einzelinterview Sie als Eltern) auszufüllen und diese der Schulleitung abzugeben. Die Zustimmung Ihres Kindes ist ebenfalls erforderlich. Dafür muss es eine separate Einverständniserklärung ausfüllen.

Vielen Dank für Ihre Bemühungen. Mit freundlichen Grüßen



English Version:

Together at school

Invitation to participate in a research project investigating inclusive schools in Switzerland

Your child's school has been approached because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities and agreed to participate.

What does this mean for your child's school? A researcher experienced (Angelika Echsel) working with children, parents and teachers will come to your child's school and observe and do interviews about what children and classroom staff do together in everyday life at school.

What does this mean for your child? Your child and four other children from your class are invited to a group interview with me. In this interview the

children will be asked questions about doing things together, such as doing school projects together, learn together and do things in the playground.

What does this mean for you? I will also look at how adults such as you as parents, teachers, therapists, class assistants work together to support the school and each other. To capture the parents' view, I will interview the five parents of the five children participating in a focus group interview.

Detailed information: You can scan the QR code and be linked to the participant information sheet for more detailed information. Alternatively, you can get a hard copy at the school administration office _____ (contact details of the school administration office).

This research is part of my doctoral studies at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), New Zealand and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) Switzerland. Thank you for this opportunity to do this project involving your child's school and your interest in your child to participate in this group interview! If you have any further queries, don't hesitate to contact me via e-mail or phone call.

Angelika Echsel
Occupational Therapist MSc, Teacher
PhD cand AUT / ZHAW
echs@zhaw.ch
058 934 43 98

If you agree for your child to participate in this group interview, please talk to your child about it, carefully read the information sheet linked under the QR code, fill in the attached consent form, and return it to the school administration office. Your child's assent is also required, he/she will fill in a separate assent form. The consent /assent forms will be stored safely. If you agree for to participate in a one to one interview with me, please read carefully the information sheet, linked to this QR code and sign the attached consent form.

If you agree to participate in a one to one interview with me, please read carefully the information sheet, linked to this QR code and sign the attached consent form.

Thank you for your efforts. Kind regards

Appendix T: PIS Parent of Children Focus Group Interview



Participant Information Sheet for Parent / Guardians of children participating in the Focus Group Interview

Date Information Sheet Produced:

October 29th 2021 (adapted to the actual date)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children, parents, teachers, and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I am interested in finding out how children do different things together and how teachers, parents, therapists, and the wider school team can work together to create a school that is inclusive of children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology AUT in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet, will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

In inclusive schools like your child's school, children with and without disabilities go together to school, do things together in classrooms, playgrounds, do sport together and go on outings so all children can learn from each other. By learning about the things all the people do at your school to support children do things together, the information from this research can be used to help other schools to become more inclusive.

The things I find out, so-called findings, will be written up as a report, which I plan to present in conferences and publish an article in a journal.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your child's school and class were approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. This research focuses on children aged between nine to twelve years. All children of child's class have been invited to participate in observations in their usual school activities. Your child and four other children have been chosen and are invited to participate in a focus group, because of their experience learning, doing group work or other things in class or playing on the playground. This means the group of the five children will talk to me about what kind of things you do together at school.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary (it is her/his choice), and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage your child or you as a parent. Your child can withdraw from the study at any time. If your child decides to withdraw from the study, then your child and you will be offered the choice between having any data from the focus group interview that is identifiable as belonging to your child removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

You as parents need for your child to agree to participate in this study. A consent form for you is attached to this information sheet. If you as a parent agree to participate in this study, carefully read the parent consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office. Your child will receive a similar Information sheet and assent form to be signed by your child.

What will happen in this research?

For your child this means to participate in a focus group interview with four other children at school.

I am seeking consent to interview your child as part of the group of five children. The focus group interview will take up to 90 minutes in a separate private room at school. I will be asking questions about the sorts of things

that children do that help one another to be involved in classroom activities and during play in the playground. The focus group interview will be audiotaped and written up in the same wording.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the focus group interviews. Questions in the interview will be about children doing things together and how they are supporting each other. During interviews, there might be some questions your child might find awkward to answer. If your child feels hesitant answering a question, she /he can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Although it is very unlikely, if any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your child's participation in this research, you can contact the school counselling office.

(Address of school counselling office)

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's social aims, culture and political agenda and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities.

In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

How will my privacy be protected?

When transcribing the interviews pseudonyms (fictitious names) will replace all real names of your child and other persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The group interview for the group of five will take up to 90 minutes of your child's time. The interview will be arranged at a time convenient to the group of children.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree for your child to participate in the focus group interview for this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information sheet. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to your child's school, and the school administration will forward it to you. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch
Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz
Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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Switzerland
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echs@zhaw.ch

Project Supervisors Contact Details:

Primary Supervisor:

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Occupational Therapy
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Secondary Supervisors:

Professor Dr. Clare Hocking
Occupational Therapy
Auckland University of Technology
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Tel: +64 9 921 9162
clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. phil. Christina Schulze
Forschungsstelle Ergotherapie
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CH-8401 Winterthur
Switzerland
Tel: ++41 58 934 63 83
sina@zhaw.ch

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22, AUTC Reference number 22/21

Appendix U: PIS Parents Single Interview



Participant Information Sheet

For parents of children participating in the focus-group interview

Date Information Sheet Produced:

29th 2021 (adapted to the actual date)

Project Title

Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices

An Invitation

My name is Angelika Echsel, I am an occupational therapist and a primary school teacher and have been working with children like you, parents, teachers and many other specialists for over twenty years. From this work, I have become more interested in finding out how and in what ways children do different things together and how teachers, parents, therapists, and classroom staff are working together to create inclusive schools, a school for children with and without disabilities. This interest leads to this research project, which is part of my doctoral studies in cooperation with Auckland University of Technology AUT in New Zealand and the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW in Winterthur. This information sheet, will explain the research project in detail. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You find my contact details at the end of this document.

What is the purpose of this research?

In inclusive schools like your school, children with and without disabilities go together to school do things together in classrooms, playgrounds, do sport together and go on outings so all children can learn from each other. In this research, I will capture views of children but also adults, like your parents, teacher, therapists, class assistants and the school leader.

I am especially interested in how children with and without disabilities find ways to play, work, have fun, or even argue with each other at school.

Like children, I will also look at how adults such as you as parents, teachers, therapists, class assistants work together to support the school and each other so all can learn in different ways. I will also listen to your child and four other children of the class of your in a group interview to hear how they do things together. In addition I will capture the parent of the class' perspectives in one to one interviews.

The things I find out, so-called findings, will be written up as a report, which I plan to present in conferences or publish in an article.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your child's school and the class were approached and agreed to participate in this study because of its reputation for including and welcoming children with diverse abilities. You are invited to participate in a one to one interview, in your role as a parent of a child of that class.

This research aims to capture the experience and views of all different people, such as some parents, children, teachers, the principal, and therapists.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

The class and the school of your child were selected and agreed to participate in this study, because they are experienced in working together with all involved such as teaching staff, parents, school leaders, therapists and children, to include and welcome all children. This research captures the experience and views of all these different people in and close to school.

Because there are so many different people participating in this study, the project is quite large. Therefore, I need to limit the invitations for a one to one interview for to up to five parents. You also receive an additional information sheet for your child participating in a focus group interview. Preferably, a child and parent of the same family participate. You and your child can discuss this with each other.

This information sheet is for you as parent agreeing to a one to one interview. If you agree to participate to participate to a one to one interview, carefully read consent form, sign it, and return it to the school administration office.

Besides children and parents, educators such as classroom staff,- assistants, special education teachers, support staff such as therapists and school leaders are participating because they're all working together

What will happen in this research?

For you as a parent this will mean participating in one interview.

All children in the class of your child will be invited for observation (in class and in the playground), and five of the children will be invited to attend a focus group, including your child. In this interview children will be asked to share their view on doing things together with the other children.

In addition, classroom staff, therapists who support children at school, and the school principal will be invited to participate in an interview. Participants in a round table discussion will also be asked if they agree to me observing their discussion.

What are the discomforts and risks?

This study is about everyday life at school. No discomfort is anticipated from the interview.

Questions in the interview are about your experience bring a parent of a child in this class and your view on supporting inclusion for the diverse children in that class, your collaboration experience with classroom staff, therapists, possibly other support staff and the principal. During interviews, there might be some questions you find awkward to answer. If you feel hesitant answering a question, you can let the interviewer know about this discomfort and proceed to a comfortable topic.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If any issues of discomfort arise directly as a result of your participation in this research, please talk to the principal to arrange solutions.

What are the benefits?

The development of inclusive education is different across the world and is closely linked to a country's social aims, culture and political agenda and how people work together and support each other to educate children with and without disabilities.

In Switzerland, enacting inclusive education is still young. By contributing to this study, you may gain benefit from knowing you will be helping to build knowledge about the best ways and examples of how inclusive education can be enacted in the Swiss context, so others in Switzerland and internationally can learn from it.

This project is part of my studies for a doctoral degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will replace all real names of you children and other persons, places, schools or municipalities when the study is written up for the thesis, and for any publications and/or presentations. Minor details about the school and participants will be changed to further support confidentiality.

Photos taken will not include any people. If photos are used in a publication or presentation, they will be used so that schools and places can not be identified. Consent for using these pictures will be obtained by school authorities and the people who took the photo.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The one to one interview will take up to 60 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Remember to provide a reasonable timeframe. AUTECH recommends that one month is usually a reasonable period of time for potential participants to be given.

Please consider this invitation carefully. If you agree to participate in this study, please let me know within the next four weeks. If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details at the end of this information. If I have not heard from you over this time, one additional email reminder will be sent by the school administrator.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It will take time to process all the data and formulate the findings. A summary of the findings will be sent to your school. I am also available for a presentation of the findings at your school.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Swiss Project Supervisor,

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze

E: mail sina@zhaw.ch

Phone number: +41 58 934 6368.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

Researcher Contact Details:

Angelika Echsel: echs@zhaw.ch

Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze: sina@zhaw.ch

Dr. Margaret Jones: margaret.jones@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Dr. Clare Hocking: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

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Prof. Dr. phil. Christina Schulze
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sina@zhaw.ch

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.2022, AUTEK Reference number 22/21.

Appendix V: Parent Consent Forms Classroom and Playground Observation



Parent/Guardian Consent Form: Classroom and Playground Observations

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated: _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that my child will be observed participating in everyday group activities at school on two occasions, once in the classroom and once in the playground.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the observations
- ☐ I understand that my child taking part in this study is voluntary (her/his choice) and that she/he may withdraw from the study at any time without them being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw my child from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to my child removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of our data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to my child/children taking part in this research.
- ☐ I understand that my child is able to refuse to give assent to take part in this research.

Child/children's name/s :

.....

Parent/Guardian's signature:

Parent/Guardian's name:

Parent/Guardian's Contact Details:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEC Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix W: Children Assent Form Classroom and Playground Observation



Child Assent Form: Classroom and Playground Observations

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated: _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that I will be observed as part of everyday group activities at school on two occasions: once in the classroom and once in playground.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the observations
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw myself from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any information about me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my information may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to taking part in this research.
- ☐ I understand that I can refuse to give assent to take part in this research.

Child/children's name/s :

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix X: Consent Forms Parents Single Interview



Consent Form for Parent participating in One to One Interviews

Project title: *Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices*

Project Supervisors: *Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze*

Researcher: *Angelika Echsel*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during observation Round Table Discussion.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study, then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in an one to one interview:
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix Y: Consent Form Classroom Staff



Consent Form

Classroom Staff

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisor: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during observation in the playground, classroom, and round table discussion.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study, then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in classroom observation:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ I agree to take part in the playground observation:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ I agree to take part in the round table discussion observation:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ I agree to take part in an one to one interview:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:



Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix Z: Consent Form Therapist



Consent Form

Therapist

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisor: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during observation in the playground, classroom, and round table discussion.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study, then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in the round table discussion observation:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ I agree to take part in an one to one interview:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date on which the final approval was granted* AUTEK Reference number *type the AUTEK reference number*

Appendix AA: Consent Form Principal



Consent Form

School Principal

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisor: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during observation in the playground, classroom, and round table discussion.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study, then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will need access the school grounds for observation in the playground, classroom and meeting room, the focus group interviews and single interviews.
- ☐ I understand that in the unlikely event of any issues of discomfort arise for the classrooms staff I will support the classroom staff to arrange a solution.
- ☐ I agree to take part in the round table discussion observation:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ I agree to take part in an one to one interview:
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- ☐ I agree to permit the researcher to access the school grounds.
- ☐ I agree to support the classroom staff to arrange solutions, if discomfort arise as direct result of participating in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:



Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....

.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEC Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix AB: Consent Form Parent Children Focus Group



Parent/Guardian Consent Form of Children participating in the Focus Group Interview

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated: _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that my child will participate in a focus-group interview with four other children
- ☐ I understand that the focus-group interview will be audiotaped, and notes will be taken during the interview
- ☐ I understand that the focus group interview is confidential and that my child will not talk about who participated and what was said during the interview to other people.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw my child/children and/or myself from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw my child/children and/or myself from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to my child/children and/or myself removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of our data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to my child/children taking part in this research.
- ☐ I understand that my child is able to refuse to give assent to take part in this research.
- ☐ I agree for my child not to tell other people who participated in the focus group interview and what was said.

Child's name:

Parent/Guardian's signature:

Parent/Guardian's name:

Parent/Guardian's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix AC: Assent Children Focus Group



Assent Form for Children participating in the Focus Group Interview

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated: _____.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that I will participate in a focus-group interview with four other children of my class
- ☐ I understand that the focus group interview will be audiotaped, and notes will be taken during the interview
- ☐ I understand that the focus group interview is confidential and that I will not talk about who participated and what was said during the interview to other people.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw my child/children and/or myself from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of our data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I agree not to tell other people who participated in the focus group interview and what was said.

Child's name:

Date:.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix AD: Observation Protocol Classroom

Observation protocol in class

The classroom observation aims to understand inclusive situations in class, this might be any subject, where children work in groups.

Observation will be part of the teachers and children's everyday teaching and learning routine. The observation will be prearranged with the classroom staff to capture children, classroom and support staff, doing together in class.

Duration: 60 to 90 minutes.

This is an observation protocol suggestion. In discussion with supervisors, the protocol will be adapted to the culture and the school's routines.

Following school routines and rules, the teacher is asked to remind the children that the researcher will be observing the class the day before the observation.

Researcher briefly introduces herself, saying hello. Thank the children and classroom staff for allowing me to visit and observe in the classroom. Inform them about note-taking during the observation, that they are confidential, which means pseudonyms for all persons and the school are used. Check if that is ok with them. Describe the aim of the visit by explaining that I am interested in finding out more about things children and teachers do together in class. I might walk around, watch, might ask questions or answer questions, and be there with them. Remind children and adults that they can ask me to stop the visit any time and ask me to delete any observation allocated to them.

Describing (shared) occupations

WHAT instructions are given?

By whom?

HOW? language used, verbal, visual and other forms used

WHERE?

WHAT do children and classroom staff do together?

WHAT are the requisite capacities, knowledge and skills, and the attitudes associated with participation in the specific occupations?

HOW are these skills used, shared by the children?

WHAT is the composition of the groups – the size of the groups, gender, ability; does it change?

HOW do the activities happen? Interaction with each other and classroom staff (leading, supporting, enabling, initiating, following, interrupting) observed in frequency and duration. Material and objects required; space used, layout of material and room.

WHAT are temporal aspects of the occupation: how long it takes; steps involved, the pace of the performance, adaptations?

HOW long do children do what they do?

WHAT transitions can be observed between activities?

WHAT are the outcomes in a material or transient way?

WHAT are possible standards of performance or outcomes?

WHAT are the interaction with other groups or other children or adults?

Response to researcher being there.

Context

Overall description of the classroom: layout, access, equipment, temperature, light, noise.

Description of the specific places where the social interaction and shared occupations take place.

Facilitators

WHAT can be observed, facilitating participation and inclusive situations?

Barriers

WHAT is observed that appears to hinder inclusive situations?

Appendix AE: Observation Protocol Playground

Observation protocol on school playground

The observation in the school's playground aims to understand inclusive situations in the playground. The children will be observed during less structured playground activities.

Before the observation, the main investigator will familiarize herself with the school's safety protocols, rules for playground behaviour and appropriate intervention enforcing the rules.

Duration up to 60 minutes.

Following school routines and rules, the teacher will be asked to remind the children that the researcher will be observing in the playground on the day of observation. This is an observation protocol suggestion. In discussion with supervisors, the protocol will be adapted to the culture and the school's routines.

Observation:

WHAT do the children doing together?

WHAT are the requisite capacities, knowledge and skills, and the attitudes associated with participation in a specific occupation?

WHAT is the composition of groups – size of group, gender, does it change?

Other observable features of groups –Fixed or shared leadership?

HOW does the activity happen – duration, resources used, rules, competitive or cooperative

WHEN – do children begin the activity straight away or does it evolve? Transitions between activities?

WHERE in the playground? Observable barriers/enablers (e.g. amount of space available, level access, need to ask for equipment

CONTEXT – weather, noise, fixed and moveable equipment, proximity of different play areas

Appendix AF: Observation Protocol Round Table Discussion

Observation Protocol Round Table Discussion (RTD):

The Round Table Discussion (RTD) observation aims to understand how different professionals, parents and a child with a disability collaborate to enable participation and inclusion of the child. If the child is invited to the RTD depends on the school's routine.

It is common for the classroom or special education teachers to chair the RTDs. Usually, specific agenda items are discussed during the meeting.

Duration: up to 60 minutes

This is an observation protocol suggestion. In discussion with supervisors, the protocol will be adapted to the culture and the school's routines.

After the RTD leader welcomes the participants, the researcher will introduce herself and explain the aim of her presence and her role as an observer:

The researcher briefly introduces herself, saying hello and thanking the participants for the observation opportunity. Explain the aim of the visit, to observe parents and professionals working together to enable participation for the child with a disability and build inclusive schools. Pointing out that research projects investigate good examples of inclusive education to understand better how it works and learn from each other. Inform them about note-taking during the observation, notes will be confidential, which means pseudonyms for all persons and the school are used. Check if that is ok with them. Remind them that they can ask me to stop the visit any time and ask me to delete any information allocated to them if they wish.

Introduction of the RTD meeting:

HOW are the participants welcomed, introduced and informed about the meeting aims?

WHO is participating (in what role?)

WHO is leading?

Main part:

HOW is previous collaboration evaluated (implemented strategies)

HOW do RTD participants describe the child's situation in class (resources and needs)

WHO's perspectives are represented, in what way?

HOW is the child represented? (Is the child present? In what way is the child involved in sharing information and ideas)

HOW are environmental resources considered?

HOW are difficulties communicated?

Is there missing information that supports understanding the child's situation in class?

Defining participation issues of the child in class:

HOW are environmental (physical and social) aspects contributing to participation issues considered?

HOW are occupation-related issues considered?

HOW are concerns shared, perspectives represented?

Solutions strategies:

HOW are solutions developed (collaborative, in agreement?)

WHAT strategies?

HOW is the implementation of solution strategies planned (who contributes in what way)?
HOW are strategies evaluated?

HOW is information shared amongst the meeting participants and other key players, further arrangements outside the school?

Summary of the meeting:

HOW are solutions summarized and agreed on (by whom? in what form? protocol, verbal, follow up)

Context

Overall description of the meeting environment; layout of furniture, access, room privacy, equipment, light, noise.

Response to researcher being there.

Appendix AG: Interview Guide Classroom Staff

One to one interview with classroom staff 45 to 60 minutes

Aim: This one to one interview aims to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse professionals' specific perspectives.

Participant: Classroom staff such as classroom teacher, special education teacher, or classroom assistant

Place: Quiet, private room on the school ground, or by telephone- or video call.

Duration: up to 60 minutes

This is an interview guide suggestion. In discussion with supervisors, the interview guide will be adapted to the culture and the school's routines.

The researcher will introduce the interview with suggested wording:

"Thank you for meeting me for this one to one interview and agreeing for it to be audiotaped. I will start the recording now.

This interview aims to gain a more profound understanding of your specific perspective in your role as _____ (name of role) and your collaboration with the others and as a _____ (role in the classroom). During observations in the playground, classroom and the round table, some topics on how you collaborate to create inclusive situations came up, which you might want to elaborate on. There might be other collaboration and inclusive education experiences and views with this class you are involved in educating, you would like to share. The interview is audiotaped and, at a later stage, transcribed verbatim. The transcription will be confidential, which means pseudonyms will be used for you and the school. You can stop the interview at any time or tell me which information not to include.

Do you have any questions so far? "

Indicative questions for the one to one interview:

How long have you worked at the school, and what are your responsibilities?

Thinking back over your professional life, what cooperations did you have to enact inclusion?

What are things at your school that supports inclusion?

- Can you tell me something about your school's commitment to include all children?
- What are your thoughts on the physical environment, how does it impact inclusion?

What is your experience educating this group of diverse children?

- Regarding your teaching (how do you prepare for the class, teach and evaluate)?
- What kind of adaptations do you use?
- How do you develop them?
- The children learn together different things?

In what way does your specific role or perspective, know-how and skills contribute to creating inclusive situations such as, _____ (a specific example from observation two is provided)

- Supporting all children; if indicated specific question
- How are you supporting each other in the team?
- In what ways are you contributing to inclusive situations in class?
- Contribute to inclusive education at the school?

Are families involved with the class in any way?

- How?

How has the collaboration with other staff, parents been developed?

- Who initiated the collaboration?
- Are there models, processes routines?
 - In what ways are they helpful?

In what ways do you see your collaboration with others as successful in creating inclusive situations at school?

In your collaboration with all the others, in what ways do you learn from the others (skills, know-how, perspectives)

- Can you name some specific skills, know-how, perspectives?
- How do you use these skills, know-how, perspectives?

Regarding this specific class you are teaching now, can you think of aspects that contribute to creating inclusive school situations?

- In what ways?
- What sorts of things do they see the children doing that support inclusion in the class/playground?
- How does the classroom layout (e.g. furniture, boards, displays) support inclusion?
- What about classroom routines/rituals?
- Are there some resources you use (e.g. books, online materials, games) that help with inclusion?

What sorts of activities (occupations) are supporting involving diverse children in the class?

- What is it about those activities?

From your perspective, can you think of activities you perceive as hampering or less supportive in enacting inclusive education?

- What kind (resources, environmental, personal, political)

Are there other forms of helpful support you can think of, or have you experienced in other situations to enact inclusive education?

Are there other things you would like to implement or to learn more about?

Is there anything else you would like to share or ask me?

Conclusion:

“Thank you for participating in this interview! If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I stop the recording now.”

Appendix AH: Interview Guide Parents

One to one interview with parents of children participating in the focus group

Aim: This one to one interview aims to gain an understanding of the parents' specific perspectives.

Participant: parents of the five children participating in the focus group.

Place: at the convenience of parents, in person on the school ground, per phone or video call. Quiet room on the school ground, the reservation will be arranged by the primary investigator.

Duration: up to 60 minutes

The researcher will introduce the interview with suggested wording:

“Thank you for meeting me for this one to one interview. If it's OK with you, I will start the recording before we get busy and forget. Is that OK? This interview aims to gain an understanding of your specific perspective as a parent. Your child_____ (name the child) volunteered to participate in the focus group, I also observed the class on two occasions.

The school has been developing inclusive education for _____ (name years). I'd like to learn about how you and your child have experienced inclusive education at the (name) school and the sorts of things that happen to support inclusion. There might be collaboration and inclusive education experiences and views of you and your child in and outside school you would like to share.

The interview is audiotaped and, at a later stage, written out (transcribed). The transcription will be confidential, which means pseudonyms will be used for you all names you might mention and the school. You can stop the interview at any time or tell me which information not to include.

Do you have any questions?”

Indicative questions for the one to one interview:

In your role as a parent:

Can you tell me about the ways you are involved with your child's class, the school or the school community?

- What is your experience of those things?

Your child's school welcomes children with diverse abilities, enacting inclusive education. What is your experience (understanding) of inclusive education?

As a parent, are you aware of any specific processes or strategies the school uses to welcome children with diverse abilities?

- In what ways do you think they contribute towards inclusive situations?
- How did you learn about them?

In what ways do you experience your child's school being successful in creating inclusive education?

Regarding your child's specific class, can you think of any aspects that contribute to creating inclusive school situations?

- In what ways?
- Are there things parents could do (or stop doing) to make the school or your child's class more inclusive?

Are there activities/occupations that you are aware your child likes doing with other children in class?

- Are there some things you've noticed your child does that helps other children to get involved? What kind?
- What are some things that you are aware of, the teacher/other children/school more widely does that support your child's or other children's involvement?

From your perspective, can you tell me about that are challenging enacting inclusive education in your child's class?

- What kind (resources, environmental, physical, personal, political)

From your parent perspective what seems your child's experience of going to school with diverse children?

- In everyday life at school. If indicated researcher points towards schoolwork, projects, outings, playground, sports etc.
- Outside school, meeting friends from school?

By going to school with diverse children, can you think of any specific skills your child learns (misses out on learning, being in a different school)?

- In what ways?
- Are there other helpful strategies, ways you can think of, or have you experienced in other situations to build inclusive schools?

Is there anything else you would like to share or ask me?

Conclusion: "Thank you for participating in this interview! I stop the recording now."

Appendix A1: Interview Guide Therapists

One to one interview with the therapist participating in the round table discussion

Aim: This one to one interview aims to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse professionals' specific perspectives.

Participant: therapist of the child with a disability, participating in round table discussion, who supports, the child, family and classroom staff.

Place: Quiet, private room on the school ground; the first investigator will prearrange the reservation. If wished by the participant, per phone- or video call.

This is an interview guide suggestion. In discussion with supervisors, the interview guide will be adapted to the culture and the school's routines.

Duration: up to 60 minutes

The researcher will introduce the interview with suggested wording:

“Thank you for meeting me for this one to one interview and agreeing for it to be audiotaped. I will start the recording now.

This interview aims to gain an understanding of your specific perspective in your role as _____ (name of role) and your collaboration with the others and as a _____ (role in supporting the classroom or situation). During the round table observation, some topics on how you collaborate to create inclusive situations for _____ (name the child with a disability) came up, which you might want to elaborate on. There might be other collaboration experiences and the child, the family, the classroom staff or the class you support; you would like to share.

The interview is audiotaped and, at a later stage, transcribed. The transcription will be confidential, which means pseudonyms will be used for you, people you might mention and the school. You can stop the interview at any time or tell me which information not to include.

Do you have any questions?”

Indicative questions for the one to one interview:

In your role as _____ (specific discipline of therapist):

In your role as a therapist (name kind of therapy):

How long have you worked with the school, and what are your responsibilities?

What is your experience in your therapeutic work with _____ (name of the child with a disability) supporting the child, the child's parent, classroom staff, and other children in class regarding inclusive situations in everyday life at school?

- Regarding your therapeutic work? (How, where and when, with whom?)
- Are there some particular occupations you particularly get involved in addressing (classroom, sports arts and craft)?
- What sorts of strategies have you found helpful to make this happen?
- Are there some features of the school that you have noticed are particularly helpful for involving **child in, e.g. classroom activities, e.g. sports, e.g. play with other children in the playground at break times?

Can you tell me in what way your specific role or perspective, know-how and skills contribute to creating inclusive situations such as, _____ (a particular example from round table discussion observation can be mentioned)

- Supporting the child with a disability.
- Its family?
- Classroom staff?

With that support, what is your experience or judgment that this support affects other children in the class?

- In what way?

Can you tell how you collaborate with the parents and the child?

- What sorts of things do you find are helpful to support collaboration?
- Are there models, processes, routines, or strategies you used to develop the collaboration?
 - From your experience, in what ways have they been helpful?
 - Are there any critical points you would like to mention?

Can you tell how you collaborate with the classroom staff?

- What sorts of things do you find are helpful to support collaboration?
- Are there models, processes, routines, or strategies you used to develop the collaboration?
 - From your experience, in what ways have they been helpful?
 - Are there any critical points, you would like to mention?

In what ways do you see your collaboration with others as successful in creating inclusive situations for _____ (name of the child) at school?

- Are there specific strategies you are using
 - Specific adaptations for the child with a disability
 - Environmental (social and physical) adaptations
 - Adaptations of the tasks to do?
 - Adaptations used flexibly?
 - Who is involved in deciding what adaptations to use?

In your collaboration with all the others, in what ways do you learn from each other (skills, know-how, perspectives) in creating inclusive situations at school?

- Can you describe some specific skills, know-how, perspectives?
- How do you apply these skills, know-how, perspectives? In other settings?
- How are you supporting each other in the team, including children, parents and principal?
- In what ways are you contributing to inclusive situations in class?

Regarding this specific class that _____ (Name of the child) attends, can you think of any aspects that create inclusive school situations?

- In what ways?

Are there other forms of helpful support you can think of or have experienced to enact inclusive education in other situations? What kind (resources, environmental, personal, political)

Are there other things you would like to implement or to learn more about?

From your perspective, can you think of barriers you perceive in enacting inclusive education?

Is there anything else you would like to share or ask me?

Conclusion:

“Thank you for participating in this interview! If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I stop the recording now.”

Appendix AJ: Interview Guide Principal

One to one interview with the school's principal* 45 to 60 minutes.

Aim: This one to one interview aims to gain a deeper understanding of the principal's specific perspective. The principal might have been present at the round table discussion.

Participant: Principal

Place: Quiet, private room on the school ground, possibly the principal's office

Duration: up to 60 minutes

The researcher will introduce the interview with suggested wording:

“Welcome, and thank you for meeting me for this one to one interview. Thank you for agreeing to this interview to be audiotaped. I will start the recording now. We have been in contact on the___ (name occasion). This interview aims to understand your specific perspective in your role as principal and your collaboration with classroom staff, parents, therapists, and children to include all children. As a principal, you are also involved in structural decisions and connecting to local policies concerning inclusive education, which you might want to elaborate on. There might be other collaboration and inclusive education experiences and views within your school or specific class that volunteered to participate in this study you would like to share.

The interview is audiotaped and, at a later stage, transcribed. The transcription will be confidential, which means pseudonyms will be used for you and the school. You can stop the interview at any time or tell me which information not to include. If there are questions you prefer not to answer, that is fine, you can just let me know.

Do you have any questions before we begin?”

In your role as principal:

How long have you worked at the school, and what are your responsibilities?

Thinking back over your professional life, what cooperations did you have to focus on and implement inclusive practice?

Can you tell me about the things at your school that supports inclusion?

- Can you tell me something about your school's commitment to include all children?
- Can you tell me about specific models, perspectives or theories you apply?
- What are your thoughts on the physical environment, how does it impact inclusion?

In your school, enacting inclusive education has a high priority. How did this priority come about?

- In regard to leading your school team?
- Can you tell me about the support classroom staff receive to teach a class of children with diverse abilities?

In everyday life at schools, can you tell me about your experience of things (processes /strategies) that work really well for your school?

- Such as your work with the school team?

- Your work with involving the parents?
- Or children supporting each other in class?
- How were they developed?
- How were they implemented?
- Can you tell me about evaluating these processes?

In the class of _____(name of the teacher) I observed a round table discussion (date) and the collaboration with other staff (name specific staff) and parents and the child (name the child with a disability, if present at the round table). Can you tell me how this collaboration has been developed?

- In what ways?
- Can you tell me about models, processes, routines strategies you might be using? In what ways are they helpful?

In what ways do you see the collaboration with others as successful in creating inclusive situations at school?

I see that at your school, collaborating with therapists, parents from in- and outside the school has been developed over a more extended period. In what ways do you learn from each other (skills, know-how, perspectives)

- Can you name some specific skills, know-how, perspectives?
- How do you use these skills, know-how, perspectives?
- In what ways are they contributing to enacting inclusive education?

Regarding this specific class that volunteered to participate in this study, can you think of any aspects situations where all children can participate? For example, how the teaching staff works with the children. Or specific contributions from children in that class?

In what ways are parents involved?

How does the curriculum in this canton affect the inclusion of some children?

Are there some aspects of the curriculum that are really helpful, supporting involving children with a range of abilities?

What is it about these things that draw in a range of children?

Are there other forms of helpful support you can think of or have experienced to enact inclusive education in other situations?

Are there other things you would like to implement or to learn more about?

Can you think of any other ways you promote inclusive education in your school?

- Public information such as mission statements, the school webpage?

Is there anything else you would like to share or would like to ask me?

Conclusion:

“Thank you for participating in this interview! If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I stop the recording now.”

*In Switzerland, the terms principal and headmaster are used interchangeably

Appendix AK: Interview Guide Focus Group Children

Focus Group Interview children up to 90 minutes

Participants: five children aged 9 to 12 years, including one child with a disability.

Aim: This focus group interview aims to understand how different children do things together in class and outside the class in everyday life at school, contributing to inclusive situations at school. The classroom and playground observations will inform some of the focus group interview questions.

These indicative questions for the focus group interviews are suggestions. In discussion with supervisors, the questions will be adapted to the culture and the school's routines and may include inquiries to specific classroom and playground observations.

Place: Quiet group- or classroom on the school premises. Drinking water will be provided for all participants.

Duration: up to 90 minutes

The main investigator will lead the focus group. Suggested wording of the introduction/warm-up to the focus group:

"A warm welcome to you (name the children's names). Thank you for participating in this focus group. You all agreed this group interview be audiotaped, thank you for that. I will start the recording now.

We know each other from earlier occasions when I was with you and did some observations in the playground and in class. How are you? (brief round that children voice their current state of well being)

This focus group is to understand better how you do things together. On the (date of the observations) seeing you doing specific things together such as _____ (name specifics). In today's interview, we talk more about your experience. All of you might have different perspectives and experiences as you do things differently. In today's focus group, I will capture your different views. The focus groups audiotapes will be written up precisely in the words you said at a later stage. The transcription will be confidential, which means pseudonyms or fictitious names are used for all persons and the school.

Because of confidentiality, it is important that you don't talk to other people about who was here and what we talked about. You can stop the focus group at any time. If you wish to end your participation you can tell me that. You then have a choice if to have your contribution or parts of it being removed or left in.

Do you have any questions? So we can start?."

Indicative main and follow up questions for the focus group interview:

Can you tell me all the things you do at school?

I have seen that sometimes children at this school are doing things in groups, in pairs or on their own. How does that happen – that you are in a group or not in a group?

- Does it happen the same way in the playground/classroom?
- Do you do different things with different groups? How does that happen?

- Follow up questions about specific roles children talk about and contributions of different children doing things together.

Facilitating and hampering factors:

- Are there things that make it easier to do things together?
 - Follow up questions: How?
- Are there things that make it harder to do something together?
 - Follow up questions: In what way?

Environmental factors:

I have seen you _____ (name specific place in the playground and classroom) doing _____ (name specific task)

- Are there specific places where you like to play/do things as a group?
 - Can you explain some more?
- Are there places where it is harder to do things together?
 - In what way?

(If not covered by the first question): In class, I have seen a group of children, a single child or two children doing _____ (name observed occupation) with your teacher (or other adults). Can you tell me about that?

- Are there other things you do together?
- Are there things you do as a class, without your teacher and other adults?
- Or in a small group
- Or one to one

Can you tell me about things you do outside the classroom with your teachers or other adults (e.g. class assistants, therapists)?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me, that I forgot to ask about? Is there anything you'd like to ask me?

After the interview, the children will be thanked: "Thank you for your participation and sharing your thoughts; this has been very interesting! If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can also ask your parents to contact me. I stop the recording now."

Wind up: The children will be asked how they are and if they need any support in getting to the next place.

Appendix AL: Confidentiality Agreement Transcribers



Confidentiality Agreement for Transcribers of Single Interviews and the Focus Group Interview

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature:

Transcriber's name:

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.



Confidentiality Agreement for Typist of the Data from the Observations

Project title: **Inclusive education in Switzerland: listening to all voices**

Project Supervisors: **Dr. Margaret Jones / Prof. Dr. Christina Schulze**

Researcher: **Angelika Echsel**

- ☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to type is confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the contents of the notes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Typist's signature:

Typist's name:

Typist's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

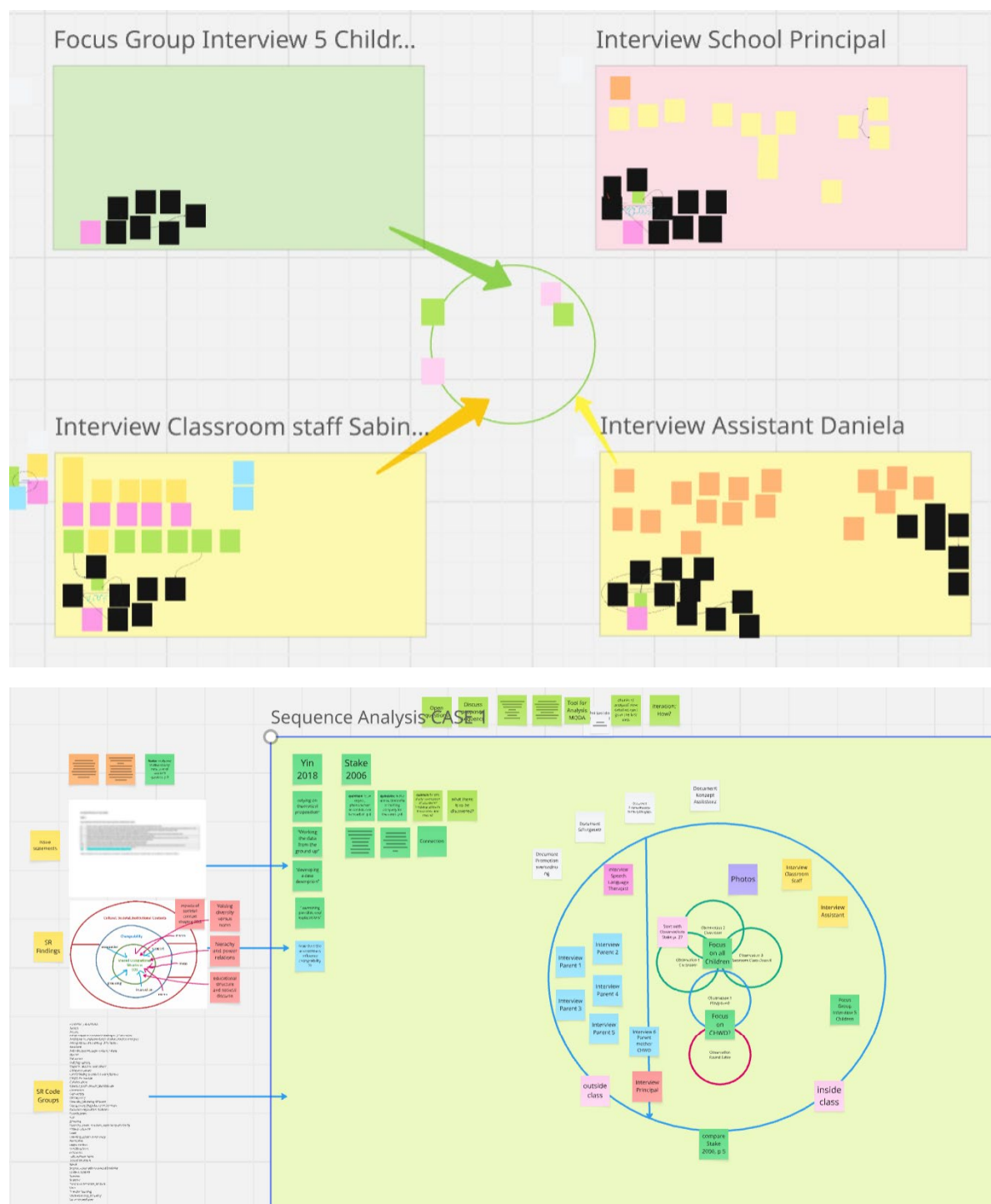
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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26.4.22 AUTEK Reference number 22/21

Note: The Typist should retain a copy of this f

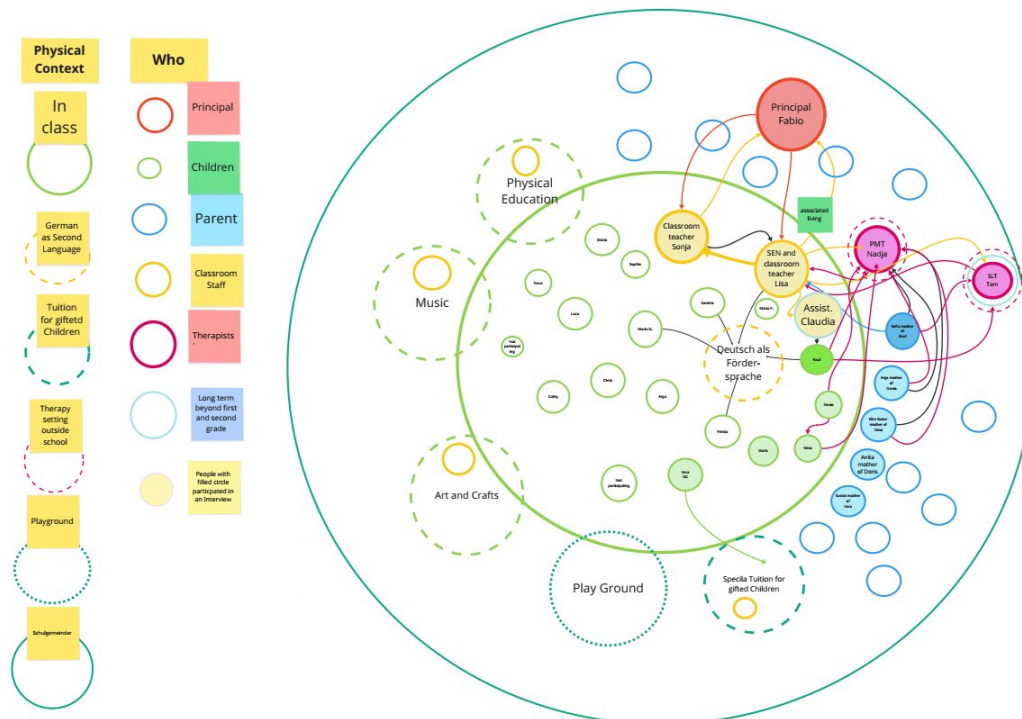
Appendix AM: Examples Analysis Visualisation

Examples Analysis Visualisations Village School Case



[illegible]

Appendix AN: Oak School Case Visualisation Participants and Contextual Situations



Appendix AO: Village School Case Visualisation Participants and Contextual Situations

