Start Your Motor to Break the Code

* A case of collaboration between school and parents of children with dyslexia

Lidija Lazarevic

Specialpedagogexamen 90 hp
Slutseminarium ex. 2015-01-14

Examinator: Magnus Erlandsson
Handledare: Helena Andersson
Acknowledgement

Problems worthy of attack prove their worth by hitting back.

Mary McCarthy in “The stones of Florence”

This study is as much about my life as it is about making a small contribution to improving collaboration between school and home for the sake of what unites us: our children. For years I have been fighting illiteracy, learning difficulties and material restrictions for providing what my colleagues and I believed to be the optimal learning conditions for every singular child/ pupil/ student. Little voices asking me: “Why can’t I be like others at school? Am I stupid?” still resonate in my ears. Some voices belonged to my pupils. One belonged to my child. She is a fourth-year dentistry student today without any diagnosis but with a history of incredibly hard work and enormous ambition to: “make something out of my life”. Diagnoses were still reserved for more obviously damaging health conditions when she started school. “The only thing you can do is practise, practise and practise even more!” was the advice from her first grade teacher with a long history of teaching. Times have changed; diagnosis has become less of a taboo and science has progressed. How does that affect those small voices?

Here I wish to thank all my dear colleagues for their precious time of sharing, discussing, agreeing and disagreeing on the issues that have never ever left us indifferent- teaching!

I wish to thank the wise and inspiring teaching staff at Malmö High school for sharing years of their experience in theoretical and practical dilemmas of SEN with us. And of course, thank you Helena Andersson for enjoyable discussions and your tactical guidance! Finally, I also wish to thank my family for all the understanding, help and support concerning my never ending studies about how and why we function as we do.
Abstract

The intention of this case study is to contribute to the general body of special education needs (SEN) knowledge with the results from SEN provision practice for children diagnosed with dyslexia in one particular school. The aim of the study is to get a deeper understanding for how educators (headmaster, teachers and SEN teachers) and parents of children diagnosed with dyslexia experience their collaboration in meeting the needs of these children in the inclusive mainstream classroom. Questions addressed are: how communication of expectations for the remedial measures takes place, how the process of remedial measures is communicated, how educators and parents experience their cooperation and, what impact does the school policy have on the collaboration between teachers and parents.

The theoretical framework is based on a communication, relations-based perspective (KoRP). The hybrid nature of this perspective covers the different aspects of the schools organisation and practice with the focus on relation between individuals and their environment. Participation of pupils with dyslexia in the learning process is observed in the classrooms as well as through the eyes of their educators and parents. Relations of all sides involved in the SEN: teachers and parents, teachers and pupils with dyslexia, parents and their children are studied. Formal and informal communication and collaboration, seen as participation in SEN activities, are analysed. The methods used are: observations of two lessons, school document analysis and seven interviews. Four educators and three parents are interviewed.

The empirical findings confirm the vital role of good relations for learning of children with dyslexia. Good relations can be established and maintained by securing the clear routines in school with the special accent paid on the sensitivity of the initial contact between school and parents. Swift action in recognizing the difficulties, introducing a SEN toolkit and contacting parents is appreciated by all sides involved. The parents’ relief from the guilty feeling of inadequacy follows. Good relations require meetings in person. Collaboration is established by good relations and it enhances the participation in learning activities of children with dyslexia. School policy documents have a positive effect in giving clear guidance in securing routines of SEN. They provide enough maneuvering space before the action plans of provision (APP) are introduced. Educators see action plans of provision (APP) as necessary documentation while parents show indifference to them. Much about SEN routines in the years 1-3 remains to be done.
In conclusion, the effects of clear routines as defined by Skolverket (2014) leave space for building good relations on all levels: organisational, group and individual and have a positive outcome in this case study. The implications of this study are directed mainly to broadening the mandatory rights of the SEN educators in organising a closer collaboration with the parents of children diagnosed with dyslexia and spreading SEN knowledge to the early stage of the school. Although the results of this case study cannot be generalized they cast the light on questions that need yet to be answered by all schools: how SEN educators can best be involved in the early intervention (years 1-3) and what more they can do to improve the collaboration between school and parents from the position of KoRP.

Key words: collaboration, dyslexia, KoRP, parents, SEN provision, school policy
1. Introduction

By routinely observing their children every parent can come to the similar conclusion as Jean Piaget. Children’s capacity for thinking is innate as are the essential structures and a kind of universal grammar that underlines language (Havnesköld & Risholm Mothander, 2009, pp 38-41). As children grow up, experience, culture and their particular language form their habits. A part of this forming takes place at schools and for most children this process goes without strain. However, according to the Swedish Council on Health Technology Assessment (Statens beredning för medicinsk utvärdering, SBU, 2014) for approximately 5–8 percent of children who suffer from dyslexia, school years mean a period of great struggle with an uncertain outcome. This struggle inevitably involves, besides children, their parents/custodians and teachers.

In the Swedish welfare system dyslexia is a recognised impairment. Since the Swedish education system emphasizes the aim to attend to all pupils’ needs without stating the rights of the children with impairments separately, it is logical to assume that the children with disabilities receive the support guaranteed by the school legislation. The education system wishes to provide genuine opportunities to all pupils in meeting the standards of education formulated into knowledge goals. The educational ambition is that all support should be done in the mainstream school to that extent which is needed to enable these children to get a chance of reaching the educational goals. The Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslagen 2008:567), which embraces the entire education system, stands against discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion or other belief, age, or disability.

The Education Act from 2011 (Skollagen, 3 kap 8 §) states that if a screening shows that a pupil is in need of any special support, action plans of provision (åtgärdssprogram) should be developed. The Education Act and the Curriculum for the Compulsory School System (Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet, Lgr 11, p. 16) specify that the teacher is obliged to secure cooperation and supply of continual information to parents about the situation of their children including their welfare and learning progress at school. The teacher should be well informed about the personal situation of each pupil with respect for their integrity. The headmaster (Lgr 11 pp. 18-19) is responsible for the provision of the special needs for his/her pupils. His/her duty is to secure the routines for prompt investigations concerning any difficulties regarding the pupils in his/her school. He/she is also responsible for the action plans of provision to be devised in order to meet the developmental
needs of the pupil as assessed by teachers. Furthermore, the headmaster is obliged to secure a contact between school and parents. Finally, special educational needs (SEN) teachers should offer specialised provision.

Two things coincided during the year prior to this study: first, the debates in the election year were based on a general assumption of a deteriorating educational practice in Swedish schools, and second, I was immersed in the special need education studies. How can I contribute to a better school as a SEN educator? As a long time teacher of English as a foreign language, I have experienced both despair and happiness in working with pupils who had reading and writing difficulties. The amount of effort put into helping some of my students more often than not, met neither their expectations nor the expectations of their parents. What can be done about this? Are school and home wide apart in their perspectives of the remedial measures provided to the children in need of those? If the answer is positive, why is it so and what can be done about it?

1.1 Aim and scope

Dyson and Skidmore (1994) found out that most schools did not consider the contact with the parents of children with learning disabilities to be anyhow different from the contact with the parents of other children. Most research in the area of communication between school and parents focuses on the professional rather than parental perspective as Buswell Griffiths, Norwich and Burden (2004) point out. Some research has taken into consideration parents’ perspectives (Zetterqvist, 2003; Roll-Pettersson & Heimdahl Matsson, 2007; Buswell Griffiths et al., 2004). I wish to understand both perspectives. In doing so, I will also find out: what kind of compensation pupils receive in school, who decides about compensation and, who should have the last word about it. The overall approach to the study matter and the nature of the questions this work wishes to answer are typical of evaluation research. While I have no intention to influence any decision making in the school itself, I expect to gather enough information of both formative and summative nature\(^1\) to be able to make an assessment of the value and effectives of the SEN policy implementation in the chosen school.

The aim of the study is to get a deeper understanding for how educators (headmaster, teachers and SEN teachers) and parents of children diagnosed with dyslexia experience their

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\(^1\) “Formative information is used to improve the program; summative information contributes to the final decision about its value and effectiveness in producing intended changes” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 16).
collaboration in meeting the needs of these children in the inclusive mainstream classroom. In doing this, I wish to find the answers to:

- how communication of expectations for the remedial measures takes place,
- how the process of remedial measures is communicated,
- how educators and parents experience their cooperation and,
- what impact the school policy has on the collaboration between school and home.

According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2014), the role of the headmaster is crucial in organising the routines of provision, and in obtaining all the necessary support resources such as staff, premises and compensatory teaching aids. He/she is the one who decides on undertaking the investigation of the pupil’s situation. He also decides whether an action plan for provision is to be drawn or not. Thus, I intend to question him/her about the practical implication of educational policies for his/her work and how they are reflected on the communication between school and home of children with dyslexia.

The information I hope to receive from class and SEN teachers is partially directed to organisational issues and partially to their experiences in the communication with the parents. How relation is built and maintained between school and home, what effect it has on all sides involved. What is the outcome of these relations in connection to provision of support? What is the awareness of the school policy like and how it affects the relations between school and home?

Parents of the children with dyslexia are to be asked about their experiences and expectations in the collaboration with school. An additional question for parents is how well informed they are about their legal rights and what future expectations they might have from school.

1.2 Why dyslexia?

There is an ongoing debate caused by identification and use of the label “dyslexia” which may depend on the specific identification criteria applied (Reid, 2005; Høien & Lundberg, 2013; SBU, 2014). However, in the recent edition of their book “Dyslexia”, Høien and Lundberg (2013) have decided to use the term dyslexia broadly, to cover a wide range of a persistent reading difficulty for two reasons. One, the word is short and quite common in everyday practice. Two, it best describes what it represents- difficulty with words (in Greek: dys = difficulty; lexia = word).
Taube (1997) points out that even children without any linguistic weakness can be unfortunate to have a bad start with reading and writing instructions. They can thus refrain from doing the only thing which can make them better at it; they refrain from practicing reading and writing since they do not wish to see themselves as failures. A negative self-esteem is inevitable. There must be plenty of teenagers and adults who still believe they have some unidentified reading and writing difficulties or dyslexia, while in reality, they have had a bad start in learning these skills at school (Jacobson & Svensson, 2007, p. 9). There is no clear-cut division between dyslexia and other reading and writing difficulties known as “garden variety of poor readers” and similar support measures and approaches are offered to pupils showing any deficiencies in reading and writing skills acquisition (Jacobson & Svensson, 2007, p. 16).

There are those who emphasize that dyslexia is a social, cultural and historical construction. The danger of such a construction lies in its psychological impact on the “labelled” person. Once diagnosed, a person is expected to behave in accordance with the diagnosis and a self-fulfilling prophecy is in action (Zetterqvist Nelson, 2003). The label generally leads to different sets of expectations from parents and teachers. Both sides can underestimate different teaching approaches by expecting expert involvement in teaching. The misguided notion of the expert knowledge can lead many a teacher to finding themselves without skills or training for dealing with dyslexia (Reid, 2005, p. 7). On the one hand, the label can be of great value to those children who are going through an unexpected fiasco in literacy (Norwich, Buswell Griffiths & Burden, 2005; Buswell Griffiths, Norwich & Burden, 2004; Long & McPolin, 2009; SBU, 2014). Besides offering release from “guilt” of being stupid or lazy, some parents distinguish a “hierarchy” of learning difficulties where the limitation of specific areas of difficulty (dyslexia) is seen in a more positive light than the difficulties across different areas of learning (slow learners). The definition and identity of dyslexia allows parents to see intellectual capabilities and potential of their children (Buswell Griffiths et al., 2004). On the other hand, the label has to be used with caution. The young person who has been diagnosed with dyslexia has to understand that the absence of guilt does not solve the original problem of literacy and that responsibility for learning is theirs. In order to overcome their specific weakness and compensate for it in their academic achievement, they have to make a conscious effort. Teachers play a vital role in this (Ridsdale, 2004). “Parents and individuals diagnosed with dyslexia may need help coping with the expectation that help is available, as this hope is often awakened during the evaluation process” (SBU, 2014).
In order to avoid further discussions about labelling, I assume that, once the diagnosis has been made, it has become a reality in the lives of those involved in it. The diagnosis is difficult to question or change and it follows its bearer through life. That is why this study focuses on the cooperation between school and home in support of pupils diagnosed with dyslexia. Another reason for choosing dyslexia is a practical assumption that it is a limited phenomenon in the mainstream school. Thus, it can be easier to cover a tiny bit of this huge area within the time limits of this study.

1.3 Limitations

The greatest limitation of this study lies in its inability to present a systematic account of the critical moments in the meeting between parents and professionals (as suggested by SBU, 2014, p. 132) on a much larger scale. This kind of research would involve a team of researchers who would need to identify different school and parents’ communication practices in order to point out significant similarities and differences and then establish which of these would be accepted as beneficial for all sides involved. Even if the recommendations of SBU’s report suggest studies where the experiences of all three sides are involved: parents, their children and professionals, this research will concentrate on two of them: parents and professionals. The latter are also limited to a headmaster, SEN educators and a class teacher. This study excludes other members of the school health team (a school psychologist, a nurse and a social worker). This is done under the assumption that the excluded health team members do not have many opportunities to communicate with the parents once the diagnosis has been set (a referral has been obtained). Although I would be interested in finding out what the children think about the communication between their parents and school, due to the extent of this study I have chosen to leave that for some future research.

1.4 Terminology

A list of terms used in the study is written in alphabetical order and thus does not follow any rule of importance or frequency of use. In this way I could easily add any terms that might appear during the research.

**Action plans of provision** (APP- åtgärdspogram) - is an official term for a documented intervention at school. APP for each pupil are decided upon in cooperation of teachers, parents/ custodians and the pupil concerned. These plans specify the responsibility of each participant involved in it. Both, a decision to draw the APP and a decision not to draw the APP are the headmaster’s responsibility and are appealable (Skolverket, 2014). The term
remedial measures, which is closely connected to the term APP, is used in this study in a broad sense sometimes involving the action plans themselves and sometimes involving all the measures undertaken at school in order to help a pupil meet the educational goals. In Swedish schools, there is a distinctive difference between “anpassning/ stöd/ särskilt stöd” which can be understood as remedial measures without the juridical significance of action plans of provision.

Communication and collaboration are sometimes difficult to define and can be understood as synonyms. For the purpose of this study I intend to use a term communication for any kind of verbal or documented interchange between school and parents. In this study communication is considered in the context of the measures leading to enable and facilitate the learning process of the pupils with dyslexia. Collaboration/ cooperation is used to describe an action which takes place as a result of a communication process. In that sense collaboration is seen as a more limited term.

Disability- The Discrimination Act (Diskrimineringslagen 2008:567) defines disability as a permanent physical, mental or intellectual limitation of a person's functional capacity due to an injury or an illness that occurred at birth, occurred later, or which may be expected to arise.

Dyslexia- Swedish and international researchers consider dyslexia to be a language disorder in which phonological processing is deficient (Høien & Lundberg, 2013; Jacobson & Svensson, 2007; Bishop & Snowing, 2004).

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) in 2002 defined dyslexia as: “a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge”. ²

Dyslexia is often seen as a hidden disability which represents more than a reading difficulty. It is called a hidden disability because it becomes obvious only when literacy skills and certain information processing skills are required from a person. In practice, pupils can make it even more hidden since they can develop skills to conceal and compensate for their dyslexic difficulties by, for example, avoiding reading aloud and by avoiding writing.

² The definition was found on IDA’s website http://www.interdys.org/FAQWhatIs.htm, on November 2, 2014.
It is interesting to note that this genetic condition is manifested differently in different languages. In some languages its phonological manifestation is more obvious than in others. However, slow reading is associated to dyslexia in all languages (Miles & Miles, 1999, pp. 44-56). Dyslexia is also a highly individualised phenomenon: every person with dyslexia has a unique set of strengths and weaknesses. Dyslexia occurs independently of intelligence but it belongs to a family of specific learning difficulties. Related conditions, such as dyspraxia (motoric difficulty), dyscalculia (arithmetical skills difficulty) and attention deficit disorder (ADD) often occur together with dyslexia and this co-occurrence is called comorbidity.

Educators –I use this term in two ways: one to denote all the educational professionals and, two, to make a difference between a SEN teacher who works directly with pupil instruction and a SEN educator who works as a coordinator in the process of remedial measures. However, in the Swedish school practice, SEN educators often work with direct instruction for SEN pupils. This terminological difference is named in literature: SEN coordinator /SEN learning support (Reid, 2005).

Inclusion- as a term appeared first in the eighties. It means a responsibility and actions on the behalf of community towards the excluded individual (Tetler & Langeger, 2009). For Haug (1998, 2000), inclusion is an appreciation of individuals’ differences seen as a resource, not as a hinder. A sole physical presence in a community is not inclusion (Lindstand & Brodin, 2007). In order to accomplish inclusion both, the community and the individual involved in it, need to confirm that it functions. The term inclusion is not explicitly mentioned in the newest school steering documents but the idea of one school for all is what the policy documents formalize in the description of the process of remedial measures (Skolverket, 2014). Furthermore, this term is intrinsically connected to the structural reforms of school organisation. Seen as an organisational bureaucracy with the aim of perfecting their product (knowledge results presented in different tests or grade scales) by “standardising work processes and worker behavior” schools should become “learning organisations” (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996). They are holistic units in which development occurs when the interdisciplinary team of specialists with the equal status and different knowledge skills collaborate. Heimdahl Mattson (2002) wonders why some schools function as professional bureaucracies while others develop into inclusive schools? Her assumption is that schools where heterogeneity among pupils is present are forced into finding flexible solutions. On the other hand, schools with great homogeneity are not pressed into changes, and thus, they continue to function as professional bureaucracies (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996).
Parents/ custodians- I often use the term parents without the term custodians because it is shorter. In almost all situations by using the term parents I mean both: biological parents and custodians if they happen to be different persons. The only case when this terminological usage can be significant for this study is when the genetic nature of dyslexia is central for the discourse.

Response to intervention (RTI) is according to Høien and Lundberg (2013, p. 189) a relatively new practice used as a criterion for the diagnosis of dyslexia. In order to get a referral, a pupil must have undergone a systematic and structured education without showing progress. This intervention operates in tiers. The first tier implies that after finishing the first grade of well organised instruction combined with extra help, the pupil still shows reading difficulties. The second tier covers the work during the second grade, when extra group support is offered to pupils with persistent reading difficulty, and accent is paid to identifying and developing specific reading skill. This is usually done explicitly and intensively in a 30-40 minute sessions, 3-4 times a week during 14 weeks. If no positive outcome is seen after this tier, the third tier covers an individual daily instruction of 20 minutes during 12-18 weeks. It can take place during the spring term of the second grade, or in the autumn term of the third grade.

Even the term intervention can be understood differently. It can mean learning instruction for the SEN pupils but some writers (Norwich et al, 2005) use this term to denote all kinds of help offered to parents, for example, filling in different application forms or informing about legal issues regarding dyslexia.

2. Previous Research

2.1 Research on dyslexia

Dyslexia research involves a variety of scientific disciplines with a same aim: to understand the nature of this disability and to find suitable intervention in order to enable dyslectic individuals to become active members of modern society. To write a summary of the previous research in this field is an ambitious project even for researchers who have been following the development of this area much longer than I have thus, my limited version consists of some important findings in the different areas of dyslexia research. I have tried to structure this research review chronologically in order to follow its historical development. However, that was not always possible since research follows its intrinsic logic of approaching the old results from new perspectives.
The first scientific report of this disorder in school children dates from 1887, when a German ophthalmologist Rudolf Berlin coined the term dyslexia (Høien & Lundberg, 2013, p. 12). Snowling (2004, p. 77) states that until the 1960s, dyslexia belonged primarily to the medical domain. She mentions an American neuropathologist, Samuel T. Orton who considered dyslexia to be “a brain based disorder with a hereditary component, which affected family members often reporting associated speech or language difficulties”. In many respects, his explanation of the phenomenon persists even today although many of the subsequent characterisations of this disorder have been cast away as imprecise. For example, the mention of severe difficulty in learning to read and write despite an adequate IQ and an adequate opportunity is questioned since the term “adequate” is difficult to define. This, so called “discrepancy definition”, is rejected by federal USA institutions by reinforcing a law “Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act” (IDEA) from 2004. This law requires RTI to be used as a criterion of diagnosis. It also requires an establishment of weaknesses in cognitive, linguistic and neuropsychological word decoding processes (Høien & Lundberg (2013, p. 20).

During the 1970s the concentration on the cognitive deficit in dyslexia ended in a series of experiments which, according to Snowling (2004, p. 79), supported Vellutino’s hypothesis that children “recruit verbal codes to support perceptual performance”. He proved that when children with dyslexia did not need to use verbal codes to recode visual stimuli verbally, they performed like children without dyslexia. The perceptual problems arose in connection to verbalisation.

During the 1980s dyslexia research spread significantly and gained impetus in Scandinavia (Høien & Lundberg, 2013, p.7). A shift from the verbal deficit hypothesis towards phonological processing difficulties took place (Snowling, 2004, p. 79). The limitations of verbal short- term memory were recognised. However, there was evidence that children with dyslexia also had difficulties with long-term verbal learning reflected in learning multiplication tables, days of the week and months of the year, as well as learning foreign languages. A deficit in phonological awareness does not best explain dyslexia in all languages. That is why irregular orthographies with no direct consistency between spelling and sounds such as English, become interesting for research in comparison to those of more regular orthographies such as Spanish, German, Italian, and Greek.

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3 More can be read on [http://www.ldonline.org/features/idea2004](http://www.ldonline.org/features/idea2004); accessed on November, 2, 2014.
During the 1990s a question such as “why a deficit in spoken language should affect the acquisition of written language” is asked. The complexity of reading understood as an interactive process which includes all linguistic sources such as phonology, orthography and semantics of a specific language comes into the research focus (Snowling, 2004, p. 81). In the intervention field, a highly structured approach to teaching of reading has started to give positive results in both prevention and improvement of reading difficulties. Individual differences in reading difficulties among dyslexics are researched. Although there is a possibility for a wide range of subtypes of dyslexia due to the individual differences of the phonological processing, classification is generally not considered useful since these subtypes cannot include all the children with the diagnosis.

Finally, Snowling (2004, p. 86) mentions the issue of comorbidity which is explained as a high probability that any developmental disorder will “co-occur with at least one other disorder”. Coordination difficulties (dyspraxia) and attention control difficulties (ADHD) are a common co-occurrence with dyslexia with the explanation that they share the same brain mechanisms involved in these disorders. However, no inferences should be drawn that the motor difficulties or a difficulty in controlling automatic responses are a cause of dyslexia. ADHD can co-occur as a secondary consequence of reading difficulties. Another interesting research result is an evidenced overrepresentation of immune sensitivity such as allergies and asthma with dyslexia (Høien & Lundberg, 2013, p. 152). This can also have an impact on frequent absence from school.

According to Høien and Lundberg (2013, pp. 131-162) brain research has shown differences in brain activities of people with and without reading difficulty. The research has intensified during 1990s thanks to the development of sophisticated technology such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). In a longitudinal experiment led by Sally Shaywitz, a large group of preschool children with serious dyslexia were followed until they were twenty years old. They were divided into a good-readers group and a bad-readers group. No difference in brain activities of the left brain hemisphere was established in either of the groups during reading. However, the group that had overcome their reading difficulties, showed a higher activity in the right temporal lobe. The researchers claim that this finding is important for the reading strategies to be used in teaching children with dyslexia. For most of these pupils, an intensive and systematic training of phonic awareness can give little effect and thus, different strategies which use tactile, kinaesthetic and motoric stimuli are suggested. Reid (2005, p. 53) sees the usage of these strategies in a multiple intelligence curriculum. He points out the multi-faceted side of dyslexia understood from neurological, cognitive and
educational perspectives. He identifies several areas of dyslexia discourse: the definition of dyslexia; confusion and consensus connected to clarification of the term, policies on dyslexia, professional involvement and programmes, and resources for class teachers.

2.2 Intervention programmes
Reid (2005, p. 3) gives a following list of the professionals and others who can have a say in a case conference of a child: a class teacher, educational adviser for the education authority, SEN coordinator/ learning support, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, occupational therapist, ICT specialist, optometrist and parents. In Sweden, this list would normally involve: a school physician, a school nurse, a psychologist, a welfare officer and SEN coordinator/ learning support. The lists of people involved shows how complex intervention is, since it has to include the knowledge of so many professionals as well as a common-sense, lay knowledge of, for example, parents. Buswell Griffiths et al (2004, p. 423) point out this side of the intervention and assume, as I will in this study, that: “all kinds of knowledge in the dyslexia field become accepted, adopted, disputed and reinterpreted by educationists, voluntary groups and parents”.

Recent intervention research shows its complexity. A Dutch Dyslexia Programme researcher, van der Leij (2013), has compared Dutch and Danish experiences of early intervention including children who are at familiar risk (FR) since it has been well established that dyslexia is overrepresented in children with at least one parent and other relatives who have learning disorders. These children usually show signs of poor performance in preliterate skills such as the poor knowledge of letters and ill-developing phonological awareness. Teachers of the first grade can easily recognise the children at risk but they cannot be sure of the reason for the poor performance of these children. These can be many: problems of the dyslectic nature, genetic risk or unfavourable conditions at home or school, or due to the interaction between the two. Parents with low education are often of no help in identifying the possible reason for a delay.

Van der Leij (2013) further discusses four critical threats to the formal reading instruction. The first threat is a lack of opportunity to get the experience of literacy which can be missed by both parents and the kindergarten teachers. The second threat is that even when the opportunity is provided, some children do not benefit from it as much as others. They seem to need more time to learn the same and the delay is inevitable. The third threat is present in the first grade when some children cannot follow the tempo of others in the learning of letters, their phonetic correspondents and decoding of short words. This may affect
their self-confidence and motivation and hamper the progress. Finally, after going through the stages of initial formal instruction, there is a stage of the speeding up process of letter recognition and learning to identify the words. If this process is delayed, the gap between the mainstream readers and those with difficulties becomes progressively larger. This presents the fourth threat.

The suggestion for prevention of the first two threats is an early intervention programme focused on structured training of school children to connect speech sounds (phonemes) and letters (graphemes). In order to neutralise the third threat, supplementary instruction and practise is to be continually provided either in the class, or in small groups outside the class, during the first grade. From the second grade and later, in case of the fourth threat – a serious delay, one-to-one, intensified instruction is suggested. Schools have an obligation to minimise the influence of these threats but they often offer a relatively short intervention time directed at developing a certain sub skill. Van der Leij (2013) concludes that long interventions targeting at the whole reading acquisition and provided as supplementary to regular classes, are the right interventions.

The idea of early intervention is reflected in Sweden, too. Høien and Lundberg (2013, p. 216) claim that an intensive early intervention can lead to the reduction of the SEN in further education. According to the studies they have critically evaluated, the early intervention during school years 1-3, would help approximately 80 percent of pupils overcome their reading difficulties. When SEN is offered in years 3-5, the number of children who experience the same effect, drops to 50 percent. Høien and Lundberg further speculate on the economical and ethical implications of early interventions and conclude that for both aspects, the prospective is positive. However, a new approach to teaching and involving special education resources in these years would need to be considered. Massive and systematic training would break the vicious circle that confines a lot of pupils today.

Dyslexia in Children and Adolescents– Tests and Interventions (SBU, 2014) is a Swedish evaluation report aimed at a large number of diagnostic tests for dyslexia (more than 50) and the support offered to the diagnosed children and adolescents. One of the main conclusions of this report is that there are few evidence based interventions for dyslexia. This report supports intervention programmes focused on structured training of school children to connect phonemes and graphemes in order to enhance improvements in reading comprehension, reading speed, spelling and phonological awareness. What this report does not evaluate, is the preschool intervention. Finally, the report points out that the literature in the field of
intervention is not sufficient enough since it covers the studies of non-randomised studies which is considered insufficient for evidence based results (SBU, 2014, p. 117).

As far as testing is concerned, there is much yet to be done. None of the Swedish diagnostic tests meets all the scientific criteria of this systematic literary review (SBU, 2014, p. 144). Since there are no clearly formalized guidelines about the diagnosing process of dyslexia, it can take quite a long time before the diagnosis is established. During the diagnosing process and even after getting the diagnosis, the support measures can be postponed or completely withheld. Another thing that further complicates matters is the difference in opinions of teachers and parents about when an investigation should be initiated (SBU, 2014, p. 124). There is insufficient evidence about the usefulness of literacy training or compensatory tools. The only sufficient evidence is related to tests which may predict dyslexia at early age such as rapid automatized naming (RAN). However, neither the benefits nor the risks of the tests used to discern the deficits in phonological awareness or letter knowledge have been evaluated.

2.3 Parental Involvement

In the recent years we have witnessed an increase of statutory obligations for educationalists directed towards the principle of inclusion. In the latest policy documents related to the school reform from 2011, we can read a number of guidelines concerning school obligations and the rights of parents/custodians. To draw some very general conclusions- parents/ custodians have the right to be well informed about the complete development and the wellbeing of their children. They also have a right to participate in the process of forming and realising the action plans of provision. Finally, they have the right to appeal if they are not satisfied with them.

According to Topping (1984, p. 13) dyslexia was still seen as “an exotic condition” when statutory right was given to the parents to be involved in their children’ education in UK (1981) and USA (1982). The need for parental involvement in the development of basic reading skills of children with a history of failure was officially recognised. At the time, in Sweden, parental rights were expressed in a limited right to choose a school for their children:

I fråga om grundskolan föreskrivs i skollagen (1985:1100) att kommunen vid fördelningen av elever på olika skolor så långt möjligt skall beakta föräldrarnas önskemål om att deras barn skall tas emot vid en viss skola (4 kap. 6 §). Detta gäller under förutsättning att inte andra elevers berättigade krav på placering i en skola nära hemmet åsidosätts eller betydande organisatoriska eller ekonomiska svårigheter uppstår för kommunen (BET, 2003, s. 7).
In Topping’s method called *Paired Reading*, parents were instructed to read with their children over a longer period of time. Development and improvement of children’s comprehension skills were seen as a vital parental contribution. Terms like *continuity* and *flow* are mentioned as crucial for this reading strategy. Another positive aspect of practicing reading with their children was seen in leaving more time for the technical instruction in classrooms. A clear increase of enthusiasm and confidence was the result of this method for 21 children diagnosed with dyslexia (Topping, 1984, p. 14). The justification for this method was an assumption that having the ability to read without any desire to read was a “hollow achievement”. The motivation achieved in the collaboration between school and home was needed to build the foundation for “life after school” which put into contemporary language would be called a “lifelong learning”. Rack (2004, p. 187) supports the idea of paired reading but he stresses the fact that all the literature on this method point towards a necessity of a previous training for teachers and parents to be involved in the paired reading method.

Conducting collaboration between school and parents to everyone’s satisfaction is difficult since the context of the conception of parent-teacher relationship is constantly changing (Buswell Griffiths et al., 2004). Professionals and parents have different interests and responsibilities. Teachers are oriented to many children and their organizations while parents are oriented only to their children. The differences may also emerge from the class attitudes. Families with lower education tend to be more reliable on schools “to do their job” while parents with higher education tend to intervene more. Buswell Griffiths et al (2004, p. 430) have studied a concept of *extended professionalism* which means assigning a “fieldworker” who would provide extra support to families included in the study. In this way, the fieldworker was supposed to be “sensitive to parental concerns about their children’s learning process, emotional and behavioural adjustment and well-being”. The extended professionalism of a fieldworker corresponds to the duties of a class teacher in Swedish schools. In their conclusion, Buswell Griffiths et al (2004, p. 431) point out that “parenting is not the idealized, egalitarian, decontextualised process that current policies seem to assume”. The gender relation of this phenomenon becomes apparent, too. Mothers take the additional responsibility of managing the education of their children through two processes. One is a social process of “dyslexia knowledge gaining and sharing”. The other is an individualised process of “requiring a solution through individual teaching and learning”. The concept of *extended professionalism* needs to consider these processes, expectations and norms which might differ for different parents and different schools.
In their article on the perspectives of mothers with children with dyslectic difficulties in Swedish schools, Roll-Pettersson and Heimdahl Mattson (2007) confirm the previous research that obtaining diagnosis and understanding the individual needs of their children is crucial for the seven interviewed mothers. The lack of the identification of the knowledge level of their children led to difficulty of identifying their learning needs. The prevalence of “wait and see” attitude confirmed the results of Myrberg and Lange (2006). Drawing effective action plans of provision was found impossible. Roll-Pettersson and Heimdahl Mattson (2007) stress the dualistic role of homework. It is seen as both necessary and too demanding for children and parents. Professionals rely on parental information involvement when children change classes. Problems with a choice of school and small groups vs. whole class have different outcomes. Satisfaction of collaboration between some independent schools and mothers was one of their results. Generally, an individualised approach was needed in every case but the way to secure a meaningful education and a satisfying social environment, was yet to be found.

Inspired by Roll-Pettersson and Heimdahl Mattson (2007) and their suggestion that the findings of Norwich et al (2005) might cast a new light on this topic, I decide to read about this project aimed at supporting parents of children with dyslexia who were experiencing difficulties in the UK mainstream schools provision. This work also has a cross-cultural context which is of interest for the cross-cultural context of the Swedish schools. At the moment of conducting this study, a certain ambiguity considering the educational policy approach to the inclusiveness in the general school system, was present. It seemed that the general approach to arrangements of SEN support and parent partnership was based on the understanding that the UK educational inclusion meant fewer children with referral statements. In this two-year long action research project, which included 14 parental cases, a model of communication based on parents’ perspectives of significance for professionals, was conducted. This model further supported extended professionalism in the matters of social and ethnic diversity. Extended professionalism is “about teachers appreciating parental knowledge and responding to their concerns with sensitivity and respect” (Norwich et al, 2005, p. 163). This concept required key-role teachers who would nurture positive school-parent relationship. The position of a developmental officer was designed for the purpose of the study. She offered a lot of practical support which was seen as intervention. In Swedish schools, most of the interventions provided by the development officer (from the study of Norwich et al.) would be found among the duties of a SEN educator. However, the Swedish school policy requires that the communication with parents is divided between the head teacher, classroom teacher and the SEN educator/ SEN teacher in providing information about
dyslexia, strategies and compensatory toolkit, statutory rights, and organising and attending meetings. Norwich et al (2005) further describe only one of the UK “dyslexia friendly schools” which accommodates a diversity of children with all kinds of needs: dyslectic difficulties, other special education needs, English as an additional language, and those without any additional needs. This school recognises dyslexia as an area of difficulty. However, the early identification and intervention for learning difficulties is undertaken in the classroom setting, and the parents are involved in the whole process through the commitment of the head teacher. The central role of the professional knowledge and skills in this school is established by engaging an educational psychology service (Norwich et al., 2005p. 160).

The Irish experience in this field involves parents’ perspectives on the educational psychology services offered by the Northern Island Dyslexia Centre in the process of having their child assessed for dyslexia (Long & McPolin, 2009). The parents included in this study contacted this centre for a number of reasons which confirm a need of much better reciprocal communication between parents and school. The reasons why parents sought an independent psychology assessment are: a suspicion that their child had dyslexia; seeking advice on remediation strategies; asking for information on their child’s intellectual ability and rate of progress in literacy; because the schools informed the parents that their child had additional needs but did not pursue a referral with the educational psychology service; speeding up the medical procedure and seeking additional provision. In Sweden, we can discern a similar pattern for seeking a referral: parents show concern since no signs of progress in reading and writing of their child is seen; conflicts between teachers and parents follow; child shows behavioural problems after years of no progress in reading and writing; the additional support is given but it does not have much effect and the headmaster sees only that the costly side of referral (Myrberg & Lange, 2006, p. 16). The conclusion of the Irish study is that the involvement of non-statutory educational psychologist services can alleviate parents’ frustration about their child’s literacy achievement rates and thus contribute to the better cooperation between schools and parents.

3. Theoretical framework

According to Rossman & Rallis (2012, p. 123), the term theory has two meanings where one is: “Theories are propositions that are grounded in extensive research; they have been tested and are accepted as explanations for particular phenomenon”. The other meaning relates to our own personal theories that lead us in conducting our work. SEN theories are used in describing, analysing and understanding the organisation of SEN in school and can lead to
developing the school in general (Ahlberg, 2013, p. 55). Theories and approaches to pedagogic studies are founded on the work of Piaget (cognitive perspective) and Vygotsky (social development theory). Some of the theories present in SEN research are: behavioral theory, social constructivism, psychological, and system theory.

Behaviour in school context is often explained by theories based by biological, psychological and social points of view. The danger of using a biological perspective formed on the medical deficit model⁴ lies in the risk of forgetting that learning results from the interaction of the individual with his/her environment. Psychological perspectives have opened a field for the issues such as self-esteem, motivation, emotional intelligence and self-regulation to be studied in the educational settings. Social perspectives are often linked with social disadvantages such as poverty, social class, ethnicity, gender etc.

3.1 The profusion of SEN perspectives

Theoretical, methodological and ethical grounds for research constitute the scaffolds for the practical implications of SEN studies. However, how scientific research contributes to understanding the complexity of this issue, how educators and parents of children diagnosed with dyslexia experience their collaboration in meeting the needs of these children in the inclusive mainstream classroom, will be the issues decisive for the choice of the theoretical background of this study. In other words, the questions I have posed, will determine the choice of the SEN perspectives and the tools which I will use to answer them. I will start by considering the theoretical options for my study.

SEN is interdisciplinary as it covers pedagogy, medicine, psychology, sociology, philosophy, biology and physics (Ahlberg, 2009, p. 19). What is SEN research then? Is it a combination of the research in all the named disciplines or is it something else? The rich variation of scientific questions is according to Ahlberg (2013, pp. 38-39), reflected in SEN search of knowledge about the special conditions and opportunities between people and their environment. SEN research has three goals. First, it aims at developing SEN theories based on the descriptions and analysis of human learning and action on different levels: individual, group, school and social level. Second, it wishes to examine and explain the conditions and opportunities for learning and participation of children and pupils with SEN in the school environment. The focus on terms such as equity, social justice, normality and divergence dominates this kind of research. Third, through a critical analysis of education (seen as

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⁴ A simple understanding of this model is when some characteristic of the individual diverges from what is understood to be most common for that particular characteristic.
ideology and policy) and instruction (seen as what is done in the classroom) it creates knowledge in organising the functional learning environment for SEN children and pupils.

In her system of categorization, Ahlberg (2013) distinguishes a concentrated pattern of four principal perspectives that have emerged from the relation of the researcher’s position to the school related problems: individualistic perspective, organisational and systemic perspective, sociological and structural perspective, and a relational perspective. In some aspects these perspectives overlap (for instance, organisational issues are closely connected to the sociological issues) but the difference is seen in the questions they formulate. Ahlberg (2013, p. 55) points out that some traces of the same questions can be found in different perspectives which are then called hybrid perspectives. For instance, the relational perspective is a hybrid one, since it studies the relations between an individual and a group/ community/ society this individual is a part of.

The ground for the individualistic perspective lies in the assumption that the deficiency of an individual is the cause for their difficulty. The reason for the problems at school lies within the pupil him/herself in relation to school and the cause should be found in the pupil’s character or in his background. This perspective is directly connected to the neurological, psychological and medical research where the cause and the effect relation is analysed. These studies are preferably conducted in groups of individuals with the same symptoms since the high effectiveness of treatment is the goal of research. The studies relating to the cause of dyslexia and its compensation are easily recognised in this perspective. When an individual shows a problem, the focus is placed on its better understanding in order to find the solution for it. Most of the neurological and psychological research is related to this perspective (Høien & Lundberg, 2013; SBU, 2014). The pedagogic aspect of the compensation for the dyslexic deficiencies is studied from a compensatory perspective. After identifying different problem groups at school, the aim of this perspective is to find the neurological and psychological explanations for their difficulties and to create methods for their compensation (Nilholm, 2007). Ahlberg (2013, p. 50) points out that, by including a claim for compensatory measures for the pupils’ differences in their abilities, Educational Inspection (Skolinspektionen, 2010, p. 10) has adopted a compensatory perspective. Haug (1995) sees compensatory perspective as opposed to a democratic perspective where the school environment should be changed to accept the divergence as a norm, and in this way, more children would be included in schools presenting flexible and heterogeneous organisations. The inevitable question here is: how can school compensate for anything without pointing out what it is and for whom the compensation is intended? As I see it, the relational perspective
seems to fill in the gap between the compensatory and democratic perspectives since the way of dealing with this issue is left to the quality of relations between those involved.

**Organisational and systemic perspective** is founded on the assumption that the problems at school derive from the organisation of school as an institution. Answers to questions: how SEN is organised in schools; which cooperation within the school exists in order to facilitate the SEN implementation, and what kind of SEN is offered to pupils, are some of the questions this theoretical position is preoccupied with. Skrtic, Sailor and Gee (1996) and Skidmore (1996) are some of the advocates of this perspective. Nilholm (2007) develops a *critical perspective* closely connected to the organisational theoretical point of view. His ideological contribution in this field is seen in a strong criticism of the political aspects where structural and socioeconomic repression has led to school failure. Thus, the explanation why schools need SEN educators is a political issue. Nilholm (2005) has also developed a *dilemma perspective* with the main assumption that the school policy documents include a number of contradictory statements. These dilemmas are of political and ethical character and demand a clear positioning towards social values, for example towards social justice and individual rights. Although these dilemmas cannot be solved they are important to be discussed by teachers in schools. However practical hinder these dilemmas may present in teachers’ everyday work (e.g. what should be done for all pupils with different predispositions to reach the same goals) they do not have a large impact on the school praxis since a practical action cannot wait for the resolution of theoretical dilemmas (Ahlberg, 2013).

**Sociological and structural perspective** finds the explanation of the school problems in the structural system of the society which is closely related to the political power. Questions: about the social problems posed by functional disability where schools are involved; about the support organisations and agencies; about the conditions for inclusion and its implementation are in focus of this perspective. Within this perspective the democratic participation in the educational system of every citizen, including those with functional disabilities, is a norm. Thus, the reason for SEN is found in the society and the educational system organisation, not because of individual divergence. Skidmore (1996) believes that the problems in the structural organisation of the society are reflected on its institutions. He suggests reforms of the educational system. Neither Skidmore (1996) nor Haug (2000) see any need for SEN educators. Skidmore (1996) sees SEN as a work of categorising which has a tendency of becoming mechanical. Haug (2000) looks at the ever-growing need for support in schools as a shift of expectations for solving school problems, from class teachers to SEN teachers and
educators. He thinks it is reasonable that teachers’ education curriculum should include special needs education.

Relational perspective derives from the sociological and structural perspective. It tries to find the explanation for the cause of school problems in the relations formed when a child/pupil is in a school environment. Questions related to this matter are about the SEN educator’s provision for the different needs of pupils, about understanding the reality of functional disabilities at school, and about the meeting of different professionals and SEN pupils. Finally, the aim of this perspective is to understand the conditions for pupils’ participation in “a school for all”. This perspective implies that all school staff are responsible for the problems that arise in the meeting of a pupil and the school environment. SEN educators should understand the type of difficulty a pupil is facing. Further, in finding the support measures on all levels of school organisation, all SEN activities should take place in ordinary classrooms. This “ideal type” of the theoretical position is still far away from reality but is used in a polarised discussion among some scientists. According to Emanuelsson, Persson and Rosenquist (2001, p. 313) the idealistic position of the relational perspective lies in its suggestions and guidelines for a long term development of instruction and school in general. On the other hand, the categorical perspective (another name for individual or compensational), though useful in understanding the nature of the functional deficiency, has a tendency to present remedial measures not easily applicable in the classroom.

3.2 Criticism of SEN research

Although all these perspectives have their weaknesses, the greatest weakness lies in their reductionism. According to Ahlberg (2013) only the relational perspective is exempted from reductionism. This phenomenon means that the complexity of the SEN in schools is explained by means of the simple models: individual, organisational, societal. Although they explicate the cause for the particular entity, these models are respectively presented as if they were the phenomenon itself. The other danger of reductionism is “information overload” which happens when the “sub-sub-sub disciplines” start becoming the bottlenecks in the information flow (Gallager & Appenzeller, 1999). Transferred to teaching, Nilholm (2012, p. 90) explains what happens when teachers have to make a choice among numerous teaching methods with positive effects although the combination of these different methods is not studied: “Lärare riskerar att drunkna i mängden av metoder/arbetssätt.”

Another criticism in SEN research concerns the demand of evidence based research. It has entered the pedagogic arena together with the influence of medical research. The function
of evidence based research is to coordinate the use of new knowledge in school practice and to incorporate educational observations and questions into scientific hypothesis and field research. Our experience should be “tested, shared and documented” (Ahlberg, 2013, p. 12) in order to qualify for the evidence based research. That is why the Education Act (Skollagen, 2012, 5§) states that teaching should be based on the scientific research and proven experience. The importance of tested experience becomes apparent in daily practical work. However, Nilholm (2012, pp. 88-90) finds seven reasons why evidence based research of pedagogy is problematic. Its research is limited to some educational goals (reductionism). The effect of the same pedagogical method is changeable. Numerous teaching methods can have negative effects for teachers. There are methodological problems in evidence based research. There are differences between the contexts of the research studies and the context where their results are to be applied. Teachers’ professionalism is seen as narrowed in these studies. Finally, there is no evidence that it is effective -evidence based paradox. That is why evidence based research can be seen as a limited contribution to SEN practice which should always consider democratic and ethical issues (Ahlberg, 2013, p. 63).

3.3 My theoretical choice

Bearing in mind that the set of questions of this study concerns communication and cooperation between the school staff and the parents/custodians, I can identify two general areas of theoretical interest: communication and organisation.

In the summary of the SEN research, Ahlberg (2009, pp. 24-25) explains the platform formulated at the department of education at the University of Gothenburg in 2006. Three main scientific areas in SEN were recognised: conditions and opportunities for participation, communication, and learning5. Opportunities are studied in relation to active participation, communication, and education in the educational institutions. Conditions are studied in relation to the individual and/or, in relation to the educational organisation and the contents of education. Although these areas are intertwined they need to be separated in the analytical research process. Participation is their common denominator.

This platform is the ground for a communication, relations-based perspective (KoRP)6 as presented by Ahlberg (2013). The research interest of this perspective is directed to school’s institutional organisation, its social practice, and particularly, its practice towards pupils.

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5 I feel that the term –learning- for the Swedish term – lärande- fits better in this context than a broad term - education.
6 This is my translation of “det kommunikativa relationsinriktade perspektivet” which is abbreviated as KoRP. I use the Swedish abbreviation in the text.
Thus, both the structural aspects are studied as well as the individual pupil’s learning and participation. These different aspects are put in a relation and are studied at the same time. The SEN actions are seen as an integrated part of the school activities. School is studied both as a learning environment and as a social arena.

KoRP is about how schools are run, how SEN educators and teachers organise their work and, how the school policies are implemented in their social practice (Ahlberg, 2013, p. 114). The relation between individuals and their environment becomes central in this research. The meaning of the school’s social practice is found in both, in the knowledge and experience of the individual, and in the set of norms and values which are mutually developed in the social relations of all involved.

There are three main terms mentioned in the KoRP. Participation is seen as pedagogic participation and a social participation (Jakobsson, 2002). Pedagogic participation refers to the involvement of pupils in the same activity or it refers to such an organisation of the work in the classroom which allows pupils to be involved in different activities. Another aspect of participation mentioned in literature is for a SEN pupil: to be in; to be beside and to be between the learning process (Alexandersson, 2007). To be in explains those situations when the teacher has managed to lead the class in their activities in such a way that both he/she and the other pupils are supportive to the SEN pupil. To be between is a situation of ambivalent and insufficient support from the teacher or from other pupils. A SEN pupil is uncertain of understanding the actions of the others and is thus undecided whether to participate or not. To be beside explains the situation where a SEN pupil’s physical and verbal signals for need of social interaction with other pupils are misinterpreted and thus no reciprocity in interaction is present. Without reciprocity, there is no participation.

Communication in a written form, a verbal form and in an action is a basic condition for school’s existence. It can be formal and informal (Ahlberg, 2009). Formal communication follows certain rules and patterns (parents meetings, staff meetings, meetings of the Pupil Health Team) while informal communication happens spontaneously. Both are important for forming relations. Learning happens in the interaction between people within the context they belong. Relations are central for the learning process of a child. They are crucial for the collaboration on all levels: individual, group and organisational level (Ahlberg, 2013).

To sum up, my position in getting a deeper understanding for how educators and parents of children diagnosed with dyslexia experience their collaboration is from a communication, relations-based perspective.
4. Methodology

4.1 Data collection

The strategic concerns of this study were resolved in deciding to perform a *case study* with a number of *semi structured in-depth interviews*. Case studies are descriptive, multi-layered and explanatory (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 103). My aim with this case study is to get a detailed depiction of the processes of collaboration from the perspectives of the participants. Descriptions illustrate the complexity of the collaboration, how the passage of time has formed the relations and, which different perspectives and opinions are involved in this process. I have used multiple data collecting methods (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003 p. 52) such as interviews, email, telephone contacts and documents. On two occasions, I participated in the classroom activities of the forth and the sixth form.

4.1.1 Strengths and Weaknesses

With no purpose of drawing generalisations from my research participants and conscious of the subjectivist assumptions of this qualitative study, I will focus on the individual experiences of the participants and the interpretive data analysis. Finally, I hope that the strength of this case study will not differ from the strength of other similar studies. Their strength lies in “their detail, their complexity, and their use of multiple sources to obtain multiple perspectives” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 104).

Ahlberg (2013, pp. 113-144) describes two studies to show how, due to their obvious empirical grounds, these differ from other SEN research. One took place in the mathematics classroom activities. The other was on the SEN educator’s guidance of a teacher. Both studies were longitudinal and involved participatory action research. Numerous aspects involved in these processes were analysed. I would have preferred to have conducted a similar study with a focus on the communication points between the parents and the school staff. The starting point would have been in the classroom where the participation of their children would be observed. Furthermore, I would have chosen some particular moments in the communication to analyse the meanings different participants give to those moments applying a discourse analysis. Similar questions are answered by sociocommunication studies which “look for meaning in words, gestures, texts and signs” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 99). However, since the complexity of the collaboration between school and parents cannot be presented in any number of interviews, I hope to find some characteristic aspects of the process using KoRP.
4.1.2 Participants and procedures

The idea of conducting this study was conceived during a conversation with a ten-year old boy who had a dyslexia diagnosis. In his story of dyslexia related problems, he often mentioned his school and parents. He thought he had the best teachers and parents he could possibly get. The thought of finding out how teachers and parents cooperated in providing good conditions for the children with this diagnosis led me to contact the boy’s school.

On the school’s web site I found the information about the school and how to contact the headmaster. The school is situated in the south of Sweden and has about 500 pupils in years 1 to 9. A non-compulsory school for the six-year old children and an out-of-school care are organised on the school’s premises. A large number of school staff, more than 130 is explained by the dual function of the school. It is an ordinary elementary school and an elementary school for children with intellectual disabilities. The management of the school organisation is divided among three headmasters: one for the years 1 to 3 of the elementary school, one for the years 4 to 9 and, one for the elementary school for children with intellectual disabilities. During the interviews taken in the school and during my classroom visits, I have noticed that the school environment offers opportunities for meetings and working in groups or individually. The good working environment has been confirmed by all the participants.

Bearing in mind that most bureaucracies have policies and regulations about the access to anything concerning their organisations, I mailed the headmaster considering him to be a gatekeeper, a person who enforces these regulations (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 160). In the e-mail I explained the nature of the interview and we arranged to meet. He further suggested I interviewed two of his SEN educators. One of the SEN educators named a teacher of the Swedish language with whom she had daily contacts, and suggested I contacted her. The Swedish language teacher sent my mail to the parents of the children in her class. One of them contacted me by phone. The snowballing process or the chain principle was established, too. It is a: “form of purposeful sampling that typically proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled” (Creswell, 2012, p. 209).

Finally, the number of interviews was determined during the course of the study based on data saturation which meant that “new categories, themes or explanations” stopped emerging (Marshall, 1996, p. 53).

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7 The text of this mail can be read in the appendix A.
It is typical in qualitative research to study a few individuals or a few cases. This is because the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site. One objective of qualitative research is to present the complexity of a site or of the information provided by individuals (Creswell, 2012, p. 209).

The interview participants from the school have all been working in their present professions for more than five years. One SEN educator and teacher of Swedish had previously worked as after-school teachers. The Swedish teacher has a specialization in SEN which was a part of her teacher education. The other teacher started as a kindergarten teacher, became an elementary school teacher and finally a SEN teacher. The headmaster had a SEN education, too.

The number of interviewed parents was three. All the parents were mothers with a different educational background: one had a secondary vocational education, one had a graduate university degree and the third one had a doctoral degree. Their children were all boys in the middle stage of elementary school. All three families had a history of dyslexia. Two fathers in the two families and the mother in the third family had dyslexia diagnosed in different stages of their lives.

The interviews were conducted in different places as desired by the participants. The school personnel had no difficulty in finding an empty classroom, a group room or an office (the headmaster). Two mothers chose to come to my home where I provided conditions for undisturbed interviews. The third one decided on my visiting her. Each of the interviews was introduced by my explanation of what the study was about, followed by reaffirmed confidentiality, and asking for permission to record the interview. The lengths of the interviews were from 30 to 45 minutes. The recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed.

The two classroom observations were a part of the invitation of a Swedish language teacher as a demonstration of an “inclusive” classroom. On both occasions my participation in the classroom activities was felt as natural since my position of a SEN student was explained to the pupils. Both lessons lasted 60 minutes. The fourth form had 23 pupils. The sixth form had 24 pupils.

4.1.3 Formulation of interview questions

In the semi-structured interviews the educators were asked key questions about the communication and collaboration with the parents, in the same way as suggested in literature (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003 pp. 110-137). Although they were slightly adapted to the different
roles of the educators, the questions mainly followed the three categories about the professional roles of the educators in the matter of SEN: school routines and policies: communication and collaboration with parents; and possible future changes in these relations. Even the questions for parents followed the same logic. However, while excluding the questions about their professional roles, they included the question about the parental rights in the matters of school and dyslexia.

The questions I asked can be explained in terms of cognitive anthropology as structural, descriptive and contrasting questions (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 186). Structural questions discover the basic units in the knowledge of the participants about the phenomena such as routines, policies and dyslexia. Descriptive questions most commonly refer to the description of particular event or feeling while the contrasting ones elaborate the meaning of the various terms they might use. The questions did not have to follow the order on my list since they ensured I covered all the areas of my interest. Finally, their open end offered exploration opportunities for this study descriptive (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 172).

4.1.4 Ethical considerations

Good ethics make good science - is my understanding of the term trustworthiness (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 60). However, it is a manifold issue which involves different interest areas. Researchers and peer reviewers are concerned with the credibility of methodological framework of a study. The results were validated by triangulation and member checking. Triangulation as a process of multiple sources of information was applied between the two populations (school and parents) and within the population (school vs parents) as well as to some extent by the observations of two Swedish lessons. This ensured that I did not study only a fraction of the complexity I wished to understand (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 65). Prolonged engagement or, spending sufficient time with the participants to ensure one’s presence in one’s research environment, contributes to trustworthiness. Thus, I decided to send a mail thanking each mother for her participation and expressing a wish to continue our contact. In the case of the prolonged engagement with the school staff, besides writing a thank-you letter, I visited the staffroom and talked to the interviewees after observations. Member checking or participant validation was done with the emerging analysis results. Two copies of my summaries of the results were sent to one mother and a Swedish teacher for further elaborations, corrections or arguments. Their response was positive.

Ethical consideration includes an approach to the research participants. Following the instructions of Ritchie and Lewis (2003, pp. 66-67) informed consent with information about
the research and a guarantee of confidentiality were applied. The right to participate or stop participating in the research was explained. The purpose of using research data only for research purposes and not commercially was guaranteed.

4.2 Data analysis procedures

4.2.1 Documents

While planning this study, I had in mind to analyse the documentation that was exchanged between educators and parents. I had hoped to see some mail exchange and action plans of provision. However, during the interviews, all three mothers showed some reluctance when talking about documentation and I changed my mind. Instead, I read the school’s annual information booklet and an anti-bullying policy document.

4.2.2 Classroom observation

I showed my interest in the class organisation where the children with dyslexia were included in the reading and writing activities and I received an offer to visit such classes. Instead of concentrating on the detailed description of the events in the classrooms, I am going to add my observations to those parts of the interviews where they either confirm or deny a certain statement. Since I was involved in the lessons and, thus performed a small scale participant observation, I cannot claim objectivity but rather my impressions and interpretations. According to Ritchie and Lewis participant observation is the one: “in which the researcher joins the constituent study population or its organisational or community settings to record actions, interactions or events that occur” (2003, p. 35). In this way, additional insights are added by experiencing the phenomena.

4.2.3 Interviews

The collected material was then transcribed and analyzed. According to Creswell (2012, p. 511) all the qualitative research can be segmented into themes. The identification of the themes delivered both the complexity of the relation between the school and the parents and showed the depth of the insight about understanding the individual experiences. My interview transcripts were already partially segmented due to the areas of interest presented by the questions but a lot of overlapping was present due to digressing. Then, there were quite a number of repetitions and returning back to some issues the interviewees remembered later.
The codes I got from the raw material were then thematised. This process of data coding was visually described by Creswell (2012, p. 511).

All the names used in the result reporting are changed (for mothers) or obscured by using a title for the educators (Headmaster, teacher, SEN educator 1 and SEN educator 2).

5. Results

5.1 School documents

The school’s annual information booklet names an Open School Forum. It is a meeting opportunity offered to all parents, personnel and the headmasters to discuss the news and other current events concerning the school life of the pupils. This forum takes place once a term. Among other material, the respective expectations from parents and from teachers are listed in school’s current anti-bullying policy document (Likabehandlingsplan):

Pupils and parents should expect from us, personnel to: meet the pupils’ needs and conditions; work to create a peaceful and good working environment; preset good role models; have a good dialogue with their home; reinforce the schools rules and regulations and react with the braking of these; and inform parents regularly about their children. We, the personnel of this school expect that: your child should come on time; come to school with the equipment and the clothes he/she needs for the day; you participate actively in your child’s education; and, you participate in the information process with the school.8

Further on, one can read that a Pupil’s Health Team (elevhälsteam- EVT) meets regularly once a fortnight. In the annual booklet, one finds out that EVT consists of a headmaster, SEN educators, a school nurse, a school psychologist, a welfare officer and a school secretary.

8 My translation
5.2 Interviews:

The result of coding led to discerning the following scheme for my further analysis:

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5.2.1 Routines

Opportunities for education are studied in relation to active participation, communication, and education in the educational institutions (Ahlberg, 2009). Education policies try to implement these opportunities through a formulation of routines to be followed in schools. The headmaster is well informed about his position in securing the SEN routines (Lgr 11 pp. 18-19). The function of routines is seen as a way of realising the idea of “learning organisations” (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996). By “standardising work processes and worker behaviour” schools should secure the structural reform designed by the ideological concept of the educational policies (Skolverket, 2014). The headmaster points out that the whole process
of determining what kind of measures should be taken starts as soon as the subject teacher, or anyone else in school, has noticed any difficulty the pupil has come across. In case of dyslexia these difficulties are connected to their reading and/or writing problems. The first attempt to help is made by adapting the classroom environment, teaching material and methods to see whether these might lead to any improvement. This process is not a one-act process. The interdisciplinary team of specialists with the different knowledge skills, start their collaboration (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996). Analysis and redoing are sometimes needed before the professionals reach a conclusion that the ordinary classroom measures are fruitless. So far, the routine reminds of that described by Myrberg and Lange (2006) but then, the differences follow. The conflicts between parents and teachers mentioned in their study are avoided by creating the continual dialogue and introducing SEN technical and professional help. The contact with the parents is sustained from the moment the problem is noticed throughout the whole adjustment process, investigation process, and continued later when necessary. The headmaster explains:


SEN educator 1 clarifies her part in the process:


The Swedish teacher’s part is described:

När den [basutredningen] är färdigt så kallar vi in en specialpedagog, svensklärare brukar vara med, och föräldrarna och barnet. Så går vi genom: hur gick det till, visar vilken typ av uppgifter har man gjort på de här testerna, vilken resultat har det gett. Och kan det vara så att man ligger väldigt lågt på vissa grejer, och så är det nästan alltid, och då säger vi att vi rekommenderar att vi går vidare med det här så att man får se vad det bero på.

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The headmaster explains that with an EHT, which meets once a fortnight, a school psychologist becomes involved in the investigation process. In order to gain access to a speech therapist, a referral needs to be issued: “när då psykologen kommer in i bilden för att göra en insats på barnet, då måste ju föräldrarna godkänna detta. Läs och skriv utredning kan vi göra utan att föräldrar godkänner detta men, vi har alltid dialog med vårdnadshavaren”. However, the whole investigation process, including that with the speech therapist can take up to six months and the teachers do not wait passively for the results. As soon as a subject teacher has noticed some reading and/or writing difficulty the teaching staff are informed and they have to take measures: “så måste varje pedagog fundera på utifrån hur det får konsekvenser i min undervisning och då har specialpedagog också i uppdrag att visa saker som man kan tänka på när man jobbar med barn med dyslexi (rektor)”. As a part of the routines, the headmaster finally mentions working on relations: ”och så jobbar vi med relationer”.

Classroom work for SEN pupils also involves a number of routines. For the Swedish teacher, the routine is: ”Barnet får sin egen dator och lär dem lite enkla programmen: att lyssna på texter, lyssna på sina egna texter, Stava Rex. Succesivt introducerar vi hjälpmedel som vi har”. From a relational perspective the special responsibility of SEN educators is seen in the understanding the type of difficulty the pupil is facing and in finding the support measures which would involve all levels of school organisation. The SEN activity is a part of the ordinary classroom life. "Det är lite självmant att vi är ute i klassrummet” says SEN educator 1. This view is shared by her SEN colleague 2:


How do the parents experience the same routines? Mia, a mother of a boy in the sixth form describes: ”Det kom i trean, så var det en specialpedagog som tyckte att man borde utreda det, och sen fick han en tydlig diagnos med tydlig nedsättning i en specifik avkodnings del, så att säga att kasta om bokstäver”. Cilla has two boys in the sixth and fifth form, and two different stories. After showing some difficulty in reading and writing at the very start of his education, her elder son received intensive reading and writing practice both at school and at home. The training was organised by his class teacher and the parents were involved. At the beginning of
the third form, his reading and writing skills were not different from the others’ in his class. Some form of intervention has been applied and the RTI was successful (Høien & Lundberg, 2013, p. 189). A year younger son, although showing difficulties, did not receive any organised additional training and it was not before he came to the fourth form that his difficulties were seriously approached. Cilla was happy when the investigation was initiated. Jana, a mother of a sixth form boy, had a similar experience:

När han börjar fyran, då tog de tag i det. Då hade han en speciallärare som var med i klassen. Hon satt och jobbade med honom, och de testade massa saker, avkodningsövningar, och sådant och det blev ju bättre, men fortfarande inte. Och så bestämde de sig. Nej, men det är lika bra att vi kör i gång en utredning.[…] under tiden, istället för att vänta, så fick han en dator han fick jobba med. Han har fått mer tid och fått svara muntligt och fått de här hjälpmedlen som Stava Rex och lite sådan.

What practical implications for the teacher does working with pupils with dyslexia mean? When the Swedish teacher explains, she chooses to talk about the pupils with reading and writing difficulties since it is the broader term and the adaptation to working with these children is the ”more or less” the same as for the children with the dyslexia diagnosis:

Då gäller att förbereda sig, alltid tänka på att de här barnen finns i klassen. Mycket av de grejerna som jag gör till de barnen med läs- och skriv svårigheter, har andra barn också nytta av. Tydlighet, struktur, att vi läser genom saker tillsammans. Den klassen som jag har som är sexan nu, där är ju sju barn med läs-och skriv svårigheter, och de har sin egen dator var och här är det så naturligt så att … när härömdagen satt de och renskrev texter som de hade jobbat med, mina elever med särskilda dator program, de satt och lyssnade på sina texter, då vill alla lyssna på sina texter. Så att det för positivt med sig för de andra barnen.

Jakobsson (2002) comes to the similar conclusion as a Swedish teacher. When in class, the practical implication of dyslexia diagnosis or any other learning disability is about finding the SEN solutions that give results. Further, the Swedish teacher confirms Nilholm’s statement that it is difficult to tailor a SEN method which would exclusively suit a specific diagnosis group with the rare exception for those with sight and speech disabilities: “Men tumregler verkar vara att den pedagogik som fungerar för alla elever också fungerar för elever som har svårigheter att nå målen och att den pedagogik som fungerar för elever som har svårigheter att nå målen också fungerar för alla elever” (Nilholm, 2012, p. 111). SEN educator’s involvement and an access to a compensatory toolkit cover a range of actions to be undertaken by the teacher without her giving much consideration to specific diagnoses.
During my observation in the two forms (fourth and sixth) I could notice a clear structure in the teacher’s work starting from a short repetition of the previous work, continuing with writing and reading short instructions of the day’s tasks from the white board and, finally, holding an assembly five minutes before the end of the class when a summary of the lesson and a plan for the next was presented. In the fourth form the pupils received a list of questions clearly related and marked with the chapters of the book they had read together. They were instructed to cut and stick these questions in their notebooks. The answers were to be written under the questions. Scissors were used for multiple purposes: to help them organise their answers, to make them concentrate on one question at a time and to develop fine motoric. All the pupils worked in their own tempo. Pair-work was encouraged. At the beginning of a class, a SEN educator was present in the classroom. She was moving among the five pupils with the open computers on their desks to check how they were progressing in using their Stava Rex programmes.

My observation in the sixth form confirmed the teacher’s words. In their classroom seven opened computers were a sign to me that some kind of SEN was in process while the class was writing a composition about a day on the spacecraft. The heterogeneity of ethical and cultural backgrounds combined with the different performance abilities were united by the same place, task, language and teacher. It reminds of “dyslexia friendly schools” described by Norwich et al (2005) with a diversity of children with all kinds of needs: dyslectic difficulties, other SEN, Swedish as an additional language, and those without any additional needs. The difference was that while Norwich et al wrote about the headmaster’s commitment, I could witness the commitment of the Swedish teacher. The commitment of the headmaster consisted in securing the routines. Further, the observed classroom situations have confirmed the assumption that the heterogeneity leads to finding flexible solutions necessary for inclusive schools (Heimdahl Mattson, 2002).

Det är mycket individuellt arbete och kommer man in så kan man uppleva det som oroligt och stöktigt därför att de gör olika saker, och vissa samarbetar och andra sitter med ryggen mot, och vissa sitter med...
In both observed classes I experienced inclusion which meant more than a physical presence (Lindstand & Brodin, 2007). The pupils could be seen in two interaction situations (Alexandersson, 2007). The majority were participating -in- the same act of writing. Some could be seen as -beside- for a short while when they were irresolute how to proceed. This was visible by the signals they sent to other children, to the teacher and to me. They received help they needed from either their teacher, from their desk mate or me. I did not notice any child in the -between- position. Thus, I concluded that participation as a condition for inclusion existed in the observed classes.

Routinely, as the subject requirements grow, so does the need for the teachers’ collaboration in the process of assessment. Thus, every teacher needs to know the statutory rights of the SEN pupils: “Man har rätt till muntliga prov, eller vi skannar in prov i förväg så att de kan lyssna på frågorna i stället för att någon ska läsa upp de frågorna, så att de kan bli lite självgående (Swedish teacher)”.

Further, routines involve the sharing of the experiences and knowledge among teachers. This is where SEN educators and teachers themselves are active. According to Jana a mathematics teacher has found a way to make a choice of text tasks, copy them and organise their reading via her son’s computer programme. After completing a number of tasks, he would be rewarded with a five-minute break. The teacher has managed to divide the tasks into manageable chunks. Such a simple measure has given great results in a better grade and a motivation for mathematics. Jana is positive about her experience of the classroom routines. She confirms the Swedish teacher’s claim that the flexibility of working forms stimulates cooperation and innovation:

The Swedish teacher explains that the classroom routines involve a constant formative assessment to ensure the efficacy of SEN: "Vi mäter ju hela tiden mot kunskapskraven, man ser ju: läsningen blev bättre, flytt kanske, skrivandet, uppnår kanske en godkänd nivå".

However, in the conversation with all the participants it became obvious that most of the SEN is organised from the fourth form upwards. Why not previously? Cilla mentioned that a successful training of reading and writing had helped her elder son reach average grades. In the same school, another teacher from early stage (year one to three) said to her about her other son: "och, han måste lästräna, och, han måste lästräna, och ni måste lästräna!" Jana has similar experience with another early stage teacher: "Men i ettan till trea, så ville man inte adressera det [diagnosen] utan klassförståndarens inställning var att han borde träna mer. Han behövde läsa mer. Han behövde starta motorn, som hon sade”. She noted that the situation at home got from bad to worse due to: "Så han [hennes son] fick extra uppgifter så att han ska läsa en kvart om dagen minst hemma, och han skulle skriva dagbok så att han övade sig flyttet på att skriva. Och det var utöver läxorna- för han behövde ju öva mer!” SEN educator I explains that it can take time to notice dyslectic difficulties if they are not very clearly expressed. She confirms that this usually does not happen before the fourth form when the knowledge goals are more complex, the number of teachers and subjects is larger, and the pupils are often obliged to change classrooms. However, both the headmaster and the Swedish teacher are more critical to the routines at the early stage. While the headmaster expresses it with: “I wish it were different”, the Swedish teacher is more explicit:


Van der Leij (2013) states that the first grade teachers can easily recognise children at risk but the teachers cannot be sure about the reason for their poor performance. The genetic risk can be combined with the bad conditions for developing the necessary skills at home. However, with all three children of the participants a FR was present. The answer must lie in the school’s early stages organisation of SEN. Roll-Pettersson and Heimdahl Mattson (2007) confirm how important it was for the seven mothers they had interviewed to obtain the diagnosis and understand the individual needs of their children. They mention the prevalence of “wait and see” attitude as described by Myrberg and Lange (2006). This attitude seems to
have a different form at the early stage of this school. One could name it: “You must read, read, read!” However, without a clear strategy of how and what to read the outcome is the same: no progress in reading or writing is made.

Routines try to cover all the school activities. However, it becomes obvious that, due to the financial limitations, prioritizing of SEN has become a routine, too. The need of SEN is impossible to meet in the way the SEN educators and the Swedish teacher believe would suffice. SEN educator 1 feels uncomfortable with a term “priority”. However, she consciously uses the background information about the parental involvement when choosing priorities.

Om man är specialpedagog på fyran-sexan och man har många klasser och det är ju många behov så att man måste täcka in de största, alltså man hjälper alla, men att man måste se till att de som behöver allra största behov- får hjälp. Det hörs lite hemskt att säga det, men jag ska inte säga att vi prioriterar, det gör man inte men… de som behöver väldigt mycket- man kanske är väldigt mycket i den där klassen än de som man säger- men de klarar sig, de får stöttning hemma… Där är nog föräldrarna mer med att de vill att man ska vara med på flera lektioner. Om man tänker sig som föräldrar så kanske man skulle tänka sig också.

Her colleague, SEN educator 2 is more explicit in this matter. Apart from admitting to prioritizing she also sees the need for more SEN educators at school at the moment:

Behovet är mycket, mycket större så att det gäller att prioritera och göra det man kan. […] Men oftast i en så här ren vardag är det oftast akuta behov […] att släcka elden. Pengarna har ju alltid med det att göra.

Hade man haft det bra ställt med pengar så hade man kunnat anställa tre till specialpedagoger.

The Swedish teacher has a similar view on the amount of work. However, instead of money, she names a lack of time: ”oftast räcker tiden inte till”. Because of the lack of time she discerns two types of priorities. The first priority is that the six formers have an advantage to the fourth formers: “Om det är någon misstänkt dyslektiker som vi inte har gått vidare, utan vi har provat massa andra saker, eller föräldrarna har varit emot … då måste vi göra något nu. Då prioriterar vi den sexan förre än fyran”. Priority number two is:

Om man har en klass där det kanske finns ett barn, med läs- och skriv svårigheter, och resten av klassen är ganska högpresterande och ganska självgående, då kan jag säga- ni behöver inte lägga så pass mycket specialpedagogs tid på den eleven, därför att jag har mycket tid att sitta med den eleven.

Parents are conscious of the financial limitations and express their concern in their wishes that: “Det är bara att hoppas att de har resurserna, utrustning de behöver, lärare som har
kompetensen för det. Det är framförallt det viktigaste- lärare som har förståelse för att eleverna har olika behov (Jana)

Finally, the communication routines were clearly established due to the school policy. None of the participants mentioned any discrepancy or difficulty in this matter.

To sum up, from the position of KoRP which is about how schools are run, how SEN educators and teachers organise their work and, how the school policies are implemented in their social practice (Ahlberg, 2013, p 114) I can conclude that school routines for action are clearly formulated and followed. Every participant in these routines is confident in his/her actions. The headmaster is well informed about the latest educational policies which he manages to apply in practice through clear information, task delegation and maintenance of the routines. Teachers are well informed about their responsibilities in the SEN both in their function as subject teachers as well as form teachers. They know when to turn to SEN educators and the headmaster. The routines about the SEN are discussed formally in the staff teams together with the SEN educators. Informal discussion is common in the school’s open climate. A prompt action for SEN is pointed out by all the participants. Organisational routines are directly reflected on the classroom routines where flexibility is recognised as a prerequisite for inclusion and a successful education of all the children including those with dyslexia. Formative assessment is a constant marker of SEN success or a need for further measures. Priority is seen in: dealing with the acute problems, the older pupils have advantage to the younger ones and the classes with more SEN have advantage to those of less. The failure of some early stage teachers to address the SEN in an appropriate way is recognised.

5.2.2 Relations

Educators and pupils

SEN work is predominantly done in the classroom with a SEN educator involved. Thus, the pupils are used to their presence. During my observation in the fourth form, the teacher explained: ”Ja, det kommer specialpedagog att jobba med dem som behöver lite extra hjälp”.

This is how Jana understands the good relations between her son and his teachers:


The Swedish teacher illuminates that the initial moment of the recognition of the difficulty the pupil is in, is very important for building relations:

Relations are built in special adjustments made to include the SEN pupils in all the activities in the class. Jana’s previous description of a successfully applied SEN method in mathematics for her son is confirmed by Cilla’s example of self-efficacy building applied by the Swedish teacher: ”Om jag ber dig läsa det här biten av texten så tränar du på det innan för att du inte ska känna dig utanför i klassen”. Cilla is aware of how important it is for her son to understand that he must practice a lot if he wishes to perform like the children without dyslexia. He needs to understand his responsibility for his learning. In order to compensate for his academic achievement weakness, he has to make a conscious effort. In this aspect, the teacher’s role is vital (Ridsdale, 2004) and a success is a best ingredient for good relations.

Jana’s story follows:

När han började fyran och fick nya lärare, pedagog där, så har det hänt jätte mycket! Ganska nyligen ringde han mig på jobbet. Han var jätteglad! De har [en skolplattform] med sina bedömningar och allting. Och han har hela tiden legat på i svenska, att det krävs extra insatser för att nå målen. Så ringde han och sade: fröken har ändrat det i [skolplattformen] så nu står det godtägbar kunskap, han var jätteglucklig.

Teachers who cooperate and try to find new, unconventional solutions, who do not ignore the problems, who show interest, who are fair and goal-oriented are considered to be the good teachers in Mattson Heimdahl and Roll-Pettersson’s study (2007, p. 247). I prefer to use a term “show good pedagogic handling” as suggested by Nilholm (2012, p. 109). The open school climate in the SEN process stimulates positive relations among teachers which are inevitably reflected on their relations with their pupils and their parents.

Educators and parents

According to the school routines, it is the form teacher who contacts parents first. However, a subject teacher or a SEN teacher can do that as well. All the participants from the school underline the importance of good relations with parents. The headmaster points this out in: ”då jobbar vi med relationer”. Gustafsson (2009, pp. 139-147) underlines the importance of parental involvement at the earliest possible stage, if they are to be helpful in SEN. Both SEN educators and the teacher agree on this point. SEN educator 1 adds that good relations need a face and that she prefers meeting parents in person first: ”Då brukar jag ta dem in på samtal för att det är mycket lättare än att ta det via datorn. Man vill ha kontakt och träffas. Jag blir då ansikte för dem och jag vill ha ansiktena på när jag mejlar”. This face is often a face of a
mother. Although, I had never stated that I had a wish to interview mothers of dyslexic children, the three interviewees turned out to be mothers. This complies with the other literature on mothers’ involvement (Buswell Griffiths et al, 2004; Roll-Pettersson and Heimdahl Mattson, 2007).

The Swedish teacher stresses how important a good relation with a SEN pupil is for the good relations with their parents: ”att de förstå att man vill deras barn bästa, att man bryr sig om barnet. Och om barnet sänder ut en signal hemma att jag gillar min lärare, då brukar föräldrarna också vara positiva”. Good relations with parents are conditioned by having a constantly open dialogue about the difficulties of dyslexia. The teacher initiates the communication with the parents by pointing out the positive sides of the pupil’s work and asking for the parents’ experience of their child’s education so far. This opening usually leads to establishing a dialogue. She wishes to hear their side of the story. Even Gustafsson (2009) warns that many a bad relation between school and home is caused by the differences in their perception of the child. The teacher’s position in this dialogue can be seen as a form of extended professionalism (Buswell Griffiths et al, 2004). The teacher would provide extra support to families by being “sensitive to parental concerns about their learning process, emotional and behavioural adjustment and well-being” The open dialogue is beneficial for all the sides involved: “Man ska inte dra saker under mattan, både för föräldrarna och för barnet”. By extending her professionalism, the teacher will get crucial information about the pupil which is important for their specific SEN. For SEN to be effective in the context of the school situation, communication and cooperation within school and with the parents are more important than the diagnosis itself (Jakobsson, 2002).

First, parents will be freed from the guilty feeling of being inadequate. Later, hopefully, they will collaborate in providing the best of SEN conditions for the education of their child.

I början ska föräldrar förstå att de inte har gjort något fel. Det är samma som med barnet, det med självförtroendet. […] även om du nu är nyinlyttad från ett annat land, eller om du har det tufft, alltså alla bakgrunder, alla vet när deras barn har det inte så lått med inlärningen i skolan, så att inte skuldbelägga och att inte ösa över ansvaret på föräldrar (svensklärare).

Cilla describes when relations do not function as they should:” att det var nästan vårt fel att han inte kunde läsa. Och det kändes jättejobbigt för att vi gjorde ju jätte mycket men det gav inga framsteg”.

Homework is mentioned on few occasions during the interviews. Its importance for children with dyslexia is seen in providing additional training for the work done in class.
However, mothers mention spending more time in arguments before doing homework than in doing the actual homework (Roll-Pettersson & Heimdahl Matsson, 2007, p 418). In this situation, by pointing out the strengths of their children to the parents, the educators can reduce the conflicts at home which can improve relations between all the family members. This reinforces the good relations between home and school. SEN educator 1 says:

För att jag tycker att det är så viktigt att man underlättar för föräldrarna, att vi kan få ta striden här för att jag har det inte det personliga med föräldrarna som eleven har. Alltså det handlar väldigt mycket om det här att det blir så jobbigt och så stort hemma. Ibland är de förtrivvlade- hur de ska kunna göra. Barn kan säga att de inte vill göra läxorna, att de blir jättearga, alltså de blir mycket bråk, då tänker jag liksom, hur skulle vi kunna underlätta för dem?

The importance of getting an official dyslexia diagnosis is stressed by SEN educator 2. In the first place it is important for the relations with a pupil but it also helps in creating good relations with parents:


Cilla’s version follows: ”Då kändes det för mig rätt så bra för att då fattar man att det inte vi som har varit dåliga föräldrar utan att han har någon typ av… som inte vill sig, alltså som det var mening…” The statements from mothers comply with the findings in literature which point the value of the diagnosis in releasing from “guilt” of being stupid or lazy (Norwich, Griffiths & Burden, 2005; Buswell Griffiths, Norwich & Burden, 2004; Long & McPolin, 2009; SBU, 2014). As named in the same literature, a SEN educator 2 notices that some parents distinguish a “hierarchy” of learning difficulties. Dyslexia is seen in a more positive light than the difficulties across different areas of learning.

Further, it becomes quite clear that the relations with teachers can function differently. Some teachers show more interest and have more competence than others. Mia, who used to work as a secondary school teacher, consciously tries to take a bigger part of responsibility for her son’s education. As a part of her efforts she wishes to teach him to use his SEN rights at school:
Finally, at one point Mia complains about the form teacher’s lack of interest but she points out the confidence in her relation with the Swedish teacher: “…det känns som att hon [klassföreståndare] inte bryr sig så mycket om det. Därför mejlar jag svenskläraren ibland för att kolla av det”.

**Parents and their children**

All three mothers have a recollection of the difficult times at home, constant rows and desperate trials to train reading and writing. Their relationship with their children deteriorated rapidly with the start of school. Jana clarifies:

Det var inte så roligt hemma då. För då var det en konstant kamp att få honom läsa och skriva. Man kunde sitta och prata med honom och fråga honom- ja vad har du gjort idag och han berättar gladligen och sen bara: ok, då skriver vi det, då skriver vi tre meningar. Och i samma stund som han fattat pensan så ser det ut som han drar ner gardinen, så han blev helt tom och kunde verklig inte komma på en enda mening han skulle skriva! Ändå så skulle han öva mer!

The Swedish teacher has her explanation why the relations between parents and children can have a negative effect on child’s education:

Och finns det läs och skriv svårigheter, så är det jätte svårt för föräldrar att jobba med det. Eftersom det finns det så mycket motstånd hos barnet som de kanske inte, när de sitter med en professionell människa, med en lärare eller en SP eller så, så ger de inte uttryck för alla de negativa känslorna som de har till läsningen för då skärper de sig lite, det är ändå för någon utomstående. Men mot föräldrarna visar de alla de känslorna och då blir det bara konflikt.

The three boys are described differently: two as very active physically, both successful in their sports. The third boy has always been clumsy and uninterested in any physical activity. However, he has always been very eloquent, has loved to listen to stories and has shown a vivid imagination. Cilla expresses a paradox of dyslexia noticed in the ability of her child to compensate for this deficiency: ”men vi är ju väldigt lyckligt lottade för han är ju kunnig. Alltså han kan och han maskerar ju det jättebra för han har inget problem i skolan”. The change has come with the definition and identity of dyslexia. It has allowed mothers to see the intellectual capabilities and potential of their children (Buswell Griffiths et al., 2004). Mia
mentions her son’s good results in English, Jana is proud of her son’s achievements in mathematics and Swedish and, Cilla names geography and mathematics.

Even the relation between the parents has been influenced by the difficulty of their children. In Mia’s case, her husband was adamant that their son should not be diagnosed since he solved his dyslectic difficulties by training reading and writing: “Han är lite rabiat med det att det ska övas, övas bort. Det försökte vi ju i början men det gick absolut inte, absolut inte. Det blev bara bråk!”

Cilla, who has dyslexia herself, tried to explain it to her husband: “Han kan ju sätta sig in i det för han är ju kodare så han kan läsa en kod och inte förstå. Det är som någon hade skramlat eller något och sen ska du läsa. Vad står det? ”As a result of this understanding, the father shows a lot of patience in helping his son with homework: ”så han har ju mer tålamod i den bemärkelsen att han kan läsa med honom och han tar sig tiden och så, men jag ser ju när hans [sonens] svårigheter tar över och då börjar han gnälla och pipa”.

Jana is separated from her husband and tries to compensate for the weeks her son spends with his father occupied with the sports activities. Since the father has dyslexia himself, it could be the explanation why father and son refrain from practicing reading and writing since they do not wish to see themselves as failures (Taube, 1997).

Working with self-esteem of their children, besides helping in organising homework and learning the subject matter, is what all mothers think is important for their children. Their expectations are cautiously expressed in a wish that their boys would find their professional interest. Jana expects her son to get a good education and cannot stop hoping that he will find pleasure in reading. With a disappointment in her voice she admits: ”Jag hoppas hela tiden att han bara ska vakna och bara- Ah, det är jätteroligt att läsa!! Men det gör han väl aldrig”.

To sum up learning happens in the interaction between people within the context they belong. Relations are central for the learning process of a child. They are crucial for the collaboration on all levels: individual, group and organisational level (Ahlberg, 2009). Every participant has pointed out the importance of the good relations. Good relations need a face. An open dialogue with involvement of parents in the SEN is necessary for good relations. Otherwise, a turbulent family situation, feelings of guilt and disappointment are inevitable. Different relation between teachers -parents and teacher- pupils are formalised in the school routines. The professional role of teachers is important in controlling the negative emotions evoked by frustrations. These emotions are less controlled at home. The moment of recognition of the pupil’s difficulty is very important for the relations. So is getting the dyslexia diagnosis. SEN activities in the inclusive classes are positive for self- efficacy
building. This leads to success which further leads to better relations between all sides involved. Disappointments are inevitable in all relations: some teachers will show more interest and more competence than others; some children will not be as successful as their parents hope and some parents will not be as cooperative as the teachers might hope.

5.2.3 Communication

Contacts
There are different types of contacts between school and parents. They differ from the set of circumstances surrounding each SEN pupil. However some traits are common for each of the parent-school contacts. They take place regularly, promptly if needed, and in different forms: parent-teacher meetings, telephone calls and most commonly by e-mail. It is common that the teacher initiates the meeting but the opposite is welcome, too. The constant communication as specified by the school policy (Lgr 11, s 16) is secured by the school’s platform which, besides providing information about the pupil’s school situation, provides an option to contact every subject teacher and the headmaster of the school. SEN educator 2 says:

Om det funkat bra så har vi haft samtal några gånger per termin och möten med alla lärarna i uppstarten, kommunikationen via nätet, på [skolans plattform]. […] så kan någon ha koll på läxor och annat. Täta mejl med läxor och annat som behövs extra, mellan mentorn och…

Cilla has met her son’s form teacher, his Swedish teacher, SEN educator and the school psychologist: ”Men vi har ju inte behövt pusha på något sätt utan det har kommit väldigt självmant i fyran”.

When Mia talks about the times she has meetings at school, she reveals a certain disappointment at the form teacher’s unwillingness to talk about the SEN of her son. She e-mails to her, but, although the formality of the contact is established, the desired communication between the mother and the form teacher is not. Further, Mia confirms that the headmaster is easily approached and willing to respond to her appeals. At the beginning of the fourth form her son got a form teacher who was in the class only 40 minutes a week: “Det var inget problem att säga till och sen så byte han [rektorn] till en mentor som han [hennes son] träffar ofta”. She takes initiative to contact her son’s Swedish teacher:” Hur går det till för att bara kolla läget, vad ska vi tänka på?” Apart from formal communication, Mia mentions informal communication (Ahlberg, 2009). An accidental meeting in the park has led to establishing good relations between her and the SEN educator so she feels free to ask for help.
Jana concludes: "Vi har bra kontakt med hans specialpedagog. [...] bra kontakt med hans lärare i klassen, hon uppdaterar när det går bra. Hon kan ringa ibland när det har hänt liksom något som är liksom bättre”.

**Documentation**

With reference to Skolverket (2014) the headmaster talks positively about the action plans for provision (APP) as a documentation of particular measures: "… vilken veckan ska det utvärderas, hur det ska utvärderas och när ska man följa upp det. Så den har blivit väldigt mer formaliserad, mer detaljstyrda”. At the same time he concludes that by formalizing SEN to include one to one instruction and a group instruction out of class, SEN has become more excluding than it used to be before the latest Education Act (Skollagen, 3 kap 8 §). On the other hand, he underlines the improvements: ”samtidigt har vi större frihet att ta särskilda anpassningarna som görs inom undervisningens ram och kan hålla på så lång tid. Man får jobba med det väldigt länge utan att man ska behöva komma till ett åtgärdsprogram, med särskilt stöd utanför klassrummet”.

The novelty of the school policy document (Skolverket, 2014) formulation for APP is mentioned by the SEN educators. SEN educator 2 thinks that APP should be authentic. It should be applicable and not excessive if unnecessary administration is to be avoided. Since all the measures undertaken in the classroom can be considered to be ordinary instruction, the freedom of APP interpretation is left for negotiation in school. SEN educator 1 thinks that the APP are formulated in relation to the scale of actions involved in SEN of a pupil:

> Vi har friheten att tolka hur mycket stor och omfattande det är, och är det inom ramen [för klassesundervisning] eller inte. [...] År det så att jag måste vara där varje mattetimme och alltid med denna individ och att det är annat material eller, då är det åtgärdsprogrammet. Men vi måste dokumentera vad vi gör i [skolans plattform].

The Swedish teacher finds a new version of APP useful:

> Vi skriver inte ett åtgärdsprogram för att en elev med dyslexi får en dator. Men om eleven har en elevassistent eller att eleven har saker som gör att den inte kan delta i undervisning i vissa situationer, utan vi måste anpassa utanför ordinarie undervisning: att den inte kan vara med på idrotten, eller att den inte kan var i klassrummet så många timmar.

APP are often considered a bureaucratic expression. SEN educator 1 is against APP as a form of documentation of difficulties: “På gott och ont. Själv tycker jag att åtgärdsprogrammet, det är att man liksom… där är det något fel. Man vill påpeka att barn är … eller när man lägger fram att: ditt barn uppnår inte kunskapsmålen”. However, she thinks it is a good idea to be
able to follow the progress after six to eight weeks: “Har det hänt någonting, har det gått framåt och tänk att bara säga- Det har gått framåt! Nu kan vi lämna det bakom oss för att nu har vi uppnått det.” The ambivalent attitude towards these documents is seen in the mothers’ statements:


I trean hade min son, två sådana här varianter, vi var på möten och pratade och han ska få papper och det lät så himla fint men så sade de – vi [skolan] skulle läsa med honom men ni var tvungna att läsa med honom mer. Och båda gångerna vi skrev på de här åtgärdsprogrammen, så uppnådde han inte målen efter. Vi hade haft åtgärderna men det blev inte andra åtgärder än de samma som innan.[…] Nu har de tagit hand om det själva och inget åtgärdsprogram kom ju (Cilla).


Another document mentioned in the interviews is a written medical diagnosis which parents receive from the speech therapist and which they often show to the SEN educators or to the form teachers. The Swedish teacher explains: “Sen får de en diagnos och då får föräldrarna någon form av sammanställning, om de får diagnos, barnet har de här och de här svårigheterna och behöver upplästa texter, dator, hjälpmedel, program”.

Information about the rights of children and parents

All the interview participants are acquainted with their children’s rights to compensatory means including using computers and computer programmes. A right to different classroom strategies is considered a normal teaching procedure. A longer time for testing and a possibility to use a computer instead of pencil and paper are mentioned. Further, receiving a diagnosis infers that moving from one stage of elementary school to another or, moving from one school to another, would be coordinated. The concern of reliance on parental involvement in the information process about the rights of their children in the changed set of circumstances (Roll-Pettersson & Heimdahl Mattson, 2007) is expressed on one occasion when Mia names a possibility that a substitute teacher might not be informed about her son’s dyslexia and might ask him to write a test without a computer.

The parents were informed about their rights at the first meeting with the form teachers and SEN educators. The Swedish teacher was initially informed about the rights of pupils
with dyslexia during her teacher education. She updates her knowledge by following the school policy documents and during her regular contacts with the SEN teachers:


The issue of the children’s rights is approached differently by mothers. Mia explains the way she has been informed about the rights, Cilla sees the ethical dimension of using the rights and Jana states her need of being updated. She would prefer a form teacher to be more informed about dyslexia including the rights it infers.

Jag själv har gått genom gymnasielärarutbildning och där pratar man ju rätt mycket om vilka rättigheter eleverna har. […] Så dataprogram, dator, extratid. Det är skolan som är i princip skyldig att erbjuda eleven allt de behöver för att de ska bli godkända (Mia).


Vi fick ju rådet från logopeden att det är någon skolpsykolog som bloggar om dyslexi. […] Jag hade nog pratat mer med hans klassföreståndare först men jag förstår att de inte är helt uppdaterade (Jana).

To sum up, the contacts between school and home are most commonly initiated by the school. They take place regularly and promptly when needed. Contacts are established formally at parent- teacher meetings, by telephone calls, and most commonly by e-mail. Constant communication is secured by the school’s platform. Informal contacts can improve communication. Action plans for provision have become more specific in defining the type of measures to be applied. APP accept exclusion in SEN practice. Drawing APP demands exactness in formulation. SEN educators and a Swedish teacher interpret the need for the drawing of APP in proportion to the number of actions involved in SEN of a pupil which sums to financial means either literary or in the form of time involved in SEN. A medical diagnosis of dyslexia specifies the weaknesses and suggests compensatory measures. Mothers’ attitude towards APP is ambivalent. They accept the drawing of APP but do not rely on the written documents. It is the deeds and relations that count. Both teachers and parents are informed about the rights of their children in different ways. Rights to longer testing
times, to using computers and specific computer programmes are named. Moral issues of dyslexia diagnosis and the rights inferred by it are also brought up.

5.2.4 Collaboration

Parents and teachers collaborate when they have a dialogue. It is crucial that the teachers understand what is needed for this dialogue. The Swedish teacher shows a great understanding for the situation the family is in:

Under resans gång så får man prova sig fram i varje familj: hur ska vi jobba med läsningen, eller med skrivandet och vill ni hjälpa till hemma eller vad vill ni göra och så får vi ha regelbundna träffar och SP med på utvecklingssamtal till exempel. Och så sätter vi kortsiktiga mål. Många av de här föräldrarnas har jag mer kontakt med men inte alla. Då bestämmer vi på utvecklingssamtalet, nu gör vi så här med läxorna om det är det som är svårt. [...] Vi får känna oss fram, och prova och komma överens, och man ska hela tiden har barnet med sig.

Jana quotes her son’s form teacher: ”Det är vårt jobb att utbilda honom! Man måste kunna vara hemma och vara med sin familj också utan att hela tiden ska fokusera på skolan”.

All three mothers talk about how they work at home. These activities are a direct consequence of the communication with teachers where the parental knowledge of their children is also considered (Buswell Griffiths et al, 2004). Jana says: ”Vi fick göra konkreta grejer: dela upp till små uppgifter, inte tänka för mycket. Vad gjorde du 8 i 9 idag? Koncentrera dig på de små detaljerna där istället att tänka över hela dagen. Det hjälpte honom lite grann”. Cilla is involved in helping with homework:” läxan är detta, då ska du göra så här. Jag har ju fått en dialog med lärarna istället för att han ska göra som de har bestämt att alla ska göra. Han får göra lite annorlunda”. Mia’s experience follows:


However, the collaboration is not always established. Apart from Mia who had experienced a fruitful collaboration in the early stage, the other two mothers share a negative experience of unsuccessful collaboration at the previous school stage. Jana mentions a futile attempt to talk to the early stage teacher:
This situation of the professional power abuse in the parent-teacher meeting can be recognised in what Nilholm (2012, pp. 122-123) describes as inability of children to have the same rights as the grown-ups on the grounds of their limited life experience. By offering the “democratic voice” to such a young child, the teacher has found the way to shift the responsibility from her/himself to an ignorant child and his parents who have the right to be ignorant, too. Cilla describes a similar experience:” Vi hade en lärare som vi tragglade: Han måste lästräna och han måste lästräna och ni måste lästräna! Det var det enda hon tjatat om i trean. Hon la skulden på oss att vi inte läste så mycket med honom”.

An explanation for Mia’s successful collaboration with an early stage teacher might lie in an unusually high verbal ability of her son which did not correspond to his reading performance. This signaled a possibility of dyslexia. A method of combining his good vocabulary and syntactic/grammatical skills with his phonological difficulties, can lead to his arrival at the correct reading (Muter, 2004, p. 105). His mother keeps on working in this direction. The other two boys, with a more modest verbal ability, appeared lazy to their teachers.

However, reading with their mothers, without previous instructions from the professionals, did not help the three pupils. When Topping (1984) introduced his method Paired Reading, parents were instructed to read with their children over a longer period of time which had a positive outcome. What went wrong with the reading at home of the three families? Literature on interventions such as paired reading infers that it is effective only when applied by trained staff or trained parents (Rack, 2004, p. 187). This calls for even closer collaboration between school and parents than that covered by the school routines. SEN educator 2 thinks that the reason for the absence of collaboration between school and home lies in bad communication: ”Det är oftast så här att kommunikationen brister, att vi inte når till varandra. Och då är det ofta att föräldrar inte är nöjda och då har det ju slutat vid något enstaka tillfälle att man flyttar sitt barn härifrån”. An unsuccessful collaboration can thus be explained by an unsuccessful communication.

To sum up, an open dialogue plays a crucial role for any progress of the pupils with dyslexia in a specific school context. Jakobsson (2002, p. 214) claims: “Especially important is a working communication between home and school”. This working communication is what I call collaboration. When established, collaboration usually implies a clear set of
instructions for children’s homework and a constant testing for the methods which might give better results. Parents recognize the importance of collaboration for the learning progress of their children. SEN organisation needs to be analyzed for preventing unsuccessful collaboration in all cases but especially in the first three years of elementary school.

5.2.5 Expectations

Expectations from school are expressed by both parents and teachers. Most of them match the list named in the document for enforcing prohibitions against discrimination and degrading behaviour, and for promoting equal treatment (Likabehandlingsplan). Some are more specific about fulfilling the rights that a diagnosis and the school policy documents infer. Extra time for doing tasks, not reading aloud in front of the class is mentioned by mothers. Jana expects her son to get an extra preparation time and a loud reading of mathematics tasks. She expects teachers: “att kunna hjälpa mig på traven.” All three mothers expect further help from teachers. They have realized that “further development of reading does not happen automatically once that threshold is reached⁹, rather, direct teaching strategies and provision of structured opportunities for practice is needed” (Rack, 2004. p. 193). A lack of resources, compensatory equipment but mostly a lack of competent teachers is feared. The mothers with the negative experience from the early stage of elementary school explicitly named the need for teachers with a SEN competency. This expectation of the expert knowledge could have been shared by the early stage teacher in believing themselves not to be skilled enough for dealing with dyslexia. Thus, they might have underestimated different teaching approaches by expecting expert involvement in teaching (Reid, 2005). The third mother, who has pointed out that she considers her son’s education to be mostly her responsibility, mentions only the rights of pupils with dyslexia. Her attitude is the one described by Zetterquist Nelson (2003, p. 277). She accepts her responsibility to compensate her son’s individual difficulties while the school should provide him with extra help and her with advice.

The teachers believe that the expectations of parents are mostly realistic and imply all support possible as well as spreading the necessary information to all teachers involved. However, it sometimes happens that parents have unrealistic hopes and need help in coping with the expectation that a “healing of the disease” in the medical sense, is available. This hope is often awakened during the evaluation process” (SBU, 2014). “Vissa kan nu förvänta

⁹ Refers to children’s acquisition of the reading skills.
The SEN educator 2 and the Swedish teacher expect changes in the education policy and practice. The Swedish teacher expresses her belief that: "Vi har bara de pengar vi har. Jag tror att mycket av skolans problem hade kunnat lösas om skolan hade två pedagoger i klassrummet. Det behöver inte vara mindre klasser än 20-25". She is also critical with the national testing policy where the pupils with dyslexia have to read the texts without help of the reading aids: "De skulle ha rätt att använda sina hjälpmedel när de gör sina nationella prov också! De får inte ha texter upplästa på det svenska provet när man ska testa läsförståelse. Fast vi har barn som inte klarar att läsa!"

SEN educator 2 expresses the need to discuss inclusion openly. What happens with those pupils who can never reach the curriculum goals?

Vissa kommer aldrig uppnå målen och då kan vi erkänna det. Men, sen kommer vi aldrig ge upp, att låta dem vara kvar i det här att aldrig uppnå målen. Då tycker jag - de har sitt eget material och då ska de gå vidare och utvecklas. Så ibland tycker jag - det är en skola för alla och sedan ska alla uppnå kriterierna jag hade velat ha skola i skolan, du kommer ut och har också betyg.

By expressing her belief that the parents of SEN pupils expect much more from school than they can get, SEN educator 2 is critical of the municipal financial policy:


The discrepancy of interests and responsibilities between parents and teachers where parents are only concerned with the provision of help for their child, while teachers have to think about organising work and help for all children is noticed by Buswell Griffiths et al (2004). However, SEN educator 2 does not see any discrepancy of interests in "the school for all". She sees the lack of resources.

Finally, parents are expected to maintain a continual communication, especially via the school platform since that is where they get the information about the school activities, projects and homework. SEN educator 2 sums it up: "Jag förväntar meg faktiskt att det man
kommer överens om att det här gör vi här i skolan och sen det ska ni följa upp det hemma- att man gör det”. By doing this the collaboration is expected to function.

To sum up, conditions and opportunities on all levels- societal, school, group and individual, are created in the teamwork of the parents/custodians, teachers and pupils (Ahlberg, 2009). Although a positive development is mentioned, there is still a lot to be done. Most parents have realistic expectations from the school to fulfil the rights inferred by the diagnosis and the school policy documents. They also expect that all the teachers involved in the education of their children should be informed about the SEN of their children. Some parents have unrealistic expectations that their children can be “healed” for dyslexia. The educators expect that the inclusion should be openly discussed. Having two classroom teachers is suggested. The educators expect the parents to be more active in claiming the rights for the better educational conditions of their children. They expect the parents to fulfil their part of the mutual agreements about their children’s SEN. In order to maintain and develop a future collaboration, a continual communication is expected.

6. Discussion and conclusion

When I started this case study, I wished to find an answer to a number of questions which would best show the mechanisms of SEN practices in one school seen from KoRP. How do parents and school communicate their expectations for the remedial measures of children who are diagnosed with dyslexia? How does their cooperation function in the wake of the changes brought about by the newest school policies?

The ruling ideology in a society is clearly reflected in its political actions and its legal formulations. Schools are the obvious areas where the ruling ideology is reflected in their policies, organisation and practice. My assumption that the school routines would best show the position of SEN practices for dyslexia, have been verified. By following the clear instructions of Skolverket (2014) a clear division of responsibility has been installed in the school. Routines have found their place on all levels: organisational (school); group (class) and individual (with the SEN pupil). This formal setting can be seen as a “learning organisation” (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996) with a clear collaboration of professionals with different knowledge and skills but of equal importance in the mutual work. These formally organised teams communicate both formally and informally (Ahlberg, 2009) on all three levels: organisational school level (in EHT, in staff teams), group level in the class (SEN educators & teachers) and on individual level (SEN educators/ teachers & pupils/parents).

This learning organisation has understood the importance of prompt action, open dialogue
with parents, flexibility in the heterogeneous classroom (Heimdahl Mattson, 2002) and in communicational forms (School forum, parent-teacher meeting, all means of communication including the school platform). An interesting point is that the school has managed to define key-role teachers whose extended professionalism lies in “appreciating parental knowledge and responding to their concerns with sensitivity and respect” (Norwich et al, 2005, p. 163).

In the first place these key teachers are the form teachers but the SEN educators offer their support, too.

This school also learns about recognizing its weaknesses. The main one lies in the unclear SEN routines of the early stage. Why is there no transfer of the positive experience from the later years to the earlier ones? Is it due to the different headmasters, bad communication or ignorance, as feared by the Swedish teacher, or any combination of these? This is yet to be answered. Early intervention is in its cradle (Høien & Lundberg, 2013, p. 216), but the time it takes for implementation is a time lost for “the garden of poor readers (Snowling, 2004, p. 78)” including those with FR who would certainly develop dyslexia and manage to hide it for a while. These children can and should be identified by a rapid automatized naming test (RAN) and early intervention should become a reality at the early stages of all schools. That would require even greater collaboration between school and home. I find it hard to believe that schools have or are going to have the means in any near future to provide SEN in that amount, or in that variety to suit the individual needs of all the pupils with SEN including those with dyslexia, without involving parental engagement. Thus, I believe that both, parents and early stage teachers, would need to undergo training sessions in order to develop suitable skills for training reading and writing of SEN. And who is better equipped to run such work than SEN educators? This is where I see the crucial importance of SEN educators- in spreading knowledge and working actively in provision for dyslexia and SEN. By doing so, they would work proactively in providing the early stage teachers with the necessary SEN knowledge. Sooner or later, these teachers will come to the same conclusion as Nilholm (2012, p. 111) that the whole class has much to gain by SEN.

The organisation of the school in my study is specific since it includes an elementary school for children with intellectual disabilities. This implies that the majority of teachers have some form of schooling for SEN. They sit in the same staffroom and communicate both formally and informally which broadens their perspectives on SEN. The important moment for the school routines is that it works inclusively with the pupils of different SEN in the same class/classrooms (Norwich et al, 2005). As the headmaster observed, the performance results of pupils from the school are not the highest, but there is less bullying than in other schools of
the same municipality, and the academic results are quite average anyway. The results from
my study make me wonder what SEN organisation looks like in other schools where SEN
knowledge is more limited and where there are fewer SEN educators. I have seen engaged
teachers and SEN educators in the classrooms of 23/24 pupils and heard that there is always a
constant fight with acute problems. Proactive measures have never been named. Visiting
pupil’s homes by their form teachers and organising parents’ networks for SEN pupils within
the school (Gustafsson, 2009), might be the some measures which could add an extra
incentive to the parents’ participation, better communications and better relations.

There is a timid mention of school’s prioritising in SEN. The interesting formulations of
the lack of money or time are a commonplace excuse for the weak pressure on the political
bodies for a better distribution of resources. Technical resources cost less than employing
competent school staff including more SEN educators and, though both are needed, many
school leaders pressed by the tight budgeting in the municipal educational bodies, opt for the
technology. Thus, they act from the compensatory perspective of SEN. This is even
expressed in the mothers’ expectations for the future. A SEN toolkit is necessary but
understanding and competent educators are irreplaceable. I agree with the SEN teachers that
the parents’ voice is not heard enough in this respect.

Relations are decisive for any cooperation. Although communication is secured in many
ways, the most appreciated one by the mothers and the educators in this study is -the one
where they meet face to face. The complex interaction between educators, parents and their
children is irreplaceable by any compensatory toolkit. The therapeutic approach to reinforcing
the self-esteem of both parents and their children with dyslexic disabilities is the initial
moment in establishing good communication. The relations between parents and teachers
built by this approach are stable, trustful and can last even when relations with the other
teachers do not function. Good relations can facilitate an individualised approach to SEN
which does not promise a cure for dyslexia. Instead, it promises more work and involvement
on the side of the parents/or mothers in this case. It is the beginning of the dual process of
“dyslexia knowledge gaining and sharing” and “requiring a solution through individual
teaching and learning” (Buswell Griffiths et al, 2004, p. 431). I believe that the social side of
this process “dyslexia knowledge gaining and sharing” could be further facilitated by
organising the above mentioned parents’ network for SEN within the school routines.

Further, from the KoRP, APP have more sense for the administration of resources and
following the undertaken measures on the school’s behalf than they have any impact on the
parental actions in my study. While the dyslexia diagnosis is experienced as an explanation of
the primary difficulties, a spurring moment for handling (Zetterqvist Nelson, 2003), and possibly a useful juridical tool in the future, APP is seen just as any other set of promising notes which might give positive results or not.

Finally, there is no clear division between SEN educators and SEN teachers in this school. Inclusion is seen as erasing the limits between these two professions. By employing staff with the SEN knowledge, and by offering more freedom in manoeuvring before APP, the school environment becomes more adapted for inclusion. This means spreading and applying the knowledge of SEN.

To conclude, the results of this small scale case study cannot be generalized but some positive and negative outcomes can serve as an inspiration for practical actions and further research. It is no doubt that a functioning communication is a prerequisite for establishing good relations between all the sides included in enabling participation. Good relations are vital for learning of any child, not the least the child in a difficulty and with SEN for dyslexia. It has become clear that good routines can offer opportunities to form and maintain good relations. Competent teachers are a great support not only to their pupils with dyslexia but also to the parents of these pupils. However, there is still a lot to be done in this school before the collaboration with parents of children with dyslexia is seen as an asset in the proactive domain. To achieve this, I believe in giving a mandate to SEN educators to work with the organisational issues, while SEN teachers remain in the classroom. In this way, the differences between the early school years and the rest of the school would be bridged and a better collaboration with parents would be provided.
References


Hej!


Om du skulle vara intresserad att delta i min lila forskningsarbete, kontakta mig direkt via e-mejl eller telefon.

Tack i förväg! Ser fram emot ditt svar.

Med vänliga hälsningar,
Lidija Lazarevic
Bilaga B

Frågor för rektorer:

1. Hur ser du på din roll som rektor när det gäller frågan om särskilt stöd i skolan?
2. Hur organiseras arbete med barn som har en dyslexidiagnos och är i behov av särskilt stöd i skolan?
3. Hur ser du på styrdokument som berör barn som har en dyslexidiagnos?
4. Beskriv din roll i samarbetet med föräldrar till barn som har en dyslexidiagnos.
5. Vilka förväntningar på skolan upplever du att föräldrar har?
6. Vilka förväntningar på föräldrar har du?
7. Fungerar samarbetet med föräldrarna?
8. Hur vet ni att samarbetet med föräldrar fungerar?
9. Hur tänker ni kring åtgärdsprogram på skolan?
10. Hur vet ni att stöd som sätts in på skolan har uppnått positiva resultat?
11. Vad skulle du vilja förändra i samarbetet med föräldrar till barn som har en dyslexidiagnos?

Frågor för specialpedagoger/lärare:

1. Hur ser du på din roll som specialpedagog/lärare när det gäller stöd till elever som har en dyslexidiagnos?
2. Hur organiseras stödet till elever med dyslexi i skolan?
3. Hur förhåller du dig till styrdokument när det gäller föräldrars rättigheter i frågan om stödet?
4. Kan du beskriva hur du samarbetar med föräldrar?
5. Vilka förväntningar på dig som specialpedagog/lärare har föräldrarna?
6. Vilka förväntningar på föräldrarna har du?
7. Vad upplever du som positivt/ negativt i samarbetet?
8. Hur tänker du kring åtgärdsprogram?
9. Hur vet du att stöd som sätts in på skolan har uppnått positiva resultat?
10. Finns det något du skulle vilja förändra i samarbetet? Vad i så fall?
Frågor för föräldrar:

1. Beskriv hur det gick till när ditt/ert barn fick dyslexidiagnosen?
2. Hur får du/ni information om föräldrars rättigheter i fråga om vilket stöd som erbjuds i skolan?
3. Hur organiseras stödet till ditt barn i skolan?
4. Vad gör ni hemma för att stödja barnet?
5. Vilka av skolpersonalen har du träffat/ haft korrespondens med angående organisering och genomförandet av stödet till ditt barn?
6. Hur upplever du/ ni kontakterna med dem?
7. Vilka förväntningar har du på rektor/ specialpedagog/ lärare?
8. Vilka förväntningar upplever du att har skolan på dig/er när det gäller samarbete med skolan angående stödet?
9. Vad tänker du om åtgärdsprogrammen?
10. Hur vet du att stöd som sätts in på skolan har uppnått positiva resultat?
11. Vad skulle du förändra i samarbetet med skolan?