THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM – A CLOSING OR OPENING KEY TO INCLUSION

PEDER HAUG

Volda University College
Faculty of Education
Norway

Abstract: The main idea behind this title is to present the situation in Norway. In our National Curriculum (from 1997) inclusion is formulated as a basic idea for school, for teaching and for learning. I want to present the experiences we have had with this ideal, mostly based on research done to evaluate this National Curriculum, published 2003 and 2004. One main result is that inclusion has strong verbal support in Norwegian education. In practice however, there is a noticeable variation between schools and classes in how this is done.

Keyword: inclusion, inclusive education, Norwegian education, compulsory school

The concept of inclusion

Norway has a long and strong tradition concerning national curriculum. The National Curriculum consists of both general directions for teaching and learning as well as relatively detailed subject syllabus. School in Norway has been and still is very strongly state-controlled and directed by the state and one important tool for this has up now till been the national curriculum. You should also know that the Norwegian school system during a 40 years period has changed from being relatively strongly differentiated into becoming a common and integrated unity for all students. This was formally decided in 1975. These developments have been accompanied by a parallel movement from traditional teacher oriented towards student centred teaching. The main reason for these developments has been a political wish that school shall be a common unity. School shall give all students the same opportunities, content and challenges, irrespective of their abilities, interests, where they live, and who their parents are in terms of wealth and positions. This is what often is referred to as the school for all.

The introduction of inclusive education in the National Curriculum from 1997 to replace integrated education that was the formulated ideal up till then could be the next step in the development towards the school for all. To teach all children together under the concept of inclusive school is a most basic as-