Anna Björk Sverrisdóttir

Inclusive education in relation to social justice at the upper secondary level[1]

1 Introduction

In this chapter focus will be paid to inclusive education on the upper secondary level in Iceland and how inclusive education is conceptualized and implemented at this school level. The content discussed in the chapter is part of the findings of the author's doctoral research which focused on the education of students with intellectual disabilities at the upper secondary level from the perspective of disability studies in education (DSE). The research focused in part on the challenges for inclusive education in relation to programmes for students with intellectual disabilities and these challenges will be presented and discussed.

Although the core idea of inclusive education and its human right based approach to education is usually accepted, the policy and its implementation is challenged and disputed, and the term is understood in different ways. Disabled students and their placement in schools is more often than not the issue when debating inclusive education, which reflects a narrow understanding of what inclusive education is about. Inclusive education is about all students, and it is a philosophy of acceptance, meaningful participation and belonging.

2 The upper secondary level

Upper secondary schools are the third school level for youngsters from 16–19 years old. After graduation from compulsory school level most students enrol straight away into upper secondary school. The role of upper secondary schools in Iceland is to educate students for democratic citizenship (EDC) and prepare them for life in general as well as to prepare them for further education and/or labour – market (Upper Secondary Education Act No. 92/2008). Upper secondary school can be divided into three main types of schools with different programmes, traditional grammar school, vocational school, and comprehensive school (see table 1).

School	Type	Preparation for
Grammar school	Matriculation examination programmes	Further education, EDC, and life
Vocational schools	Vocational, art, academic, programmes and programmes for disabled students	Depending on programme: labor-market, further education, EDC, and life
Comprehensive schools	Vocational, art, academic, programmes and programmes for disabled students	Depending on programme: labor-market, further education, EDC, and life

Table 1. Types of upper secondary schools and programmes in Iceland (Ragnarsdóttir, 2018)

[1] Originalbeitrag der deutschen Übersetzung „Inklusive Bildung in Bezug auf soziale Gerechtigkeit in der Sekundarstufe II" aus dem Sammelband „Inklusive Bildung in Island – Grundlagen, Praktiken und Reflexionen", open access und print 2024 bei Beltz Juventa erschienen unter der Lizenz CC BY-SA.

Original contribution of the German translation of this article from the anthology "Inclusive education in Iceland – basics, practices and reflections", open access and print 2024 published by Beltz Juventa under the licence CC BY-SA.

In 2017, 3,799 16–year-old students enrolled into upper secondary school (Statistics Iceland, 2021). In 2015, academic programmes within upper secondary schools changed from a four-year programme to a three years programme. This change had the most effect on the traditional grammar schools which only offer matriculation examination programmes (Iclandic: stúdentspróf, German: Abitur). The majority of schools are organized around a secondary school credit-unit system, which offers flexibility and ease between programmes (not directly connected to the Bologna system), but some of the traditional grammar schools have age related classes (Blöndal et al., 2011; Jóhannesson & Bjarnadóttir, 2016, Ragnarsdóttir, 2018). At the upper secondary level there are about 100 different programmes, including 87 occupational and vocational programmes, which differ in length (Blöndal et al., 2011). In contrast to preschools and compulsory schools being administrated by municipalities (see Hinz in this volume), upper secondary schools are organized and financed by the national government and are not mandatory (Blöndal et al., 2011).

In recent decades, the Icelandic school community has undergone significant changes. Iceland, among other countries, agreed to the Salamanca Statement in 1994, in which the necessity to provide education for all children is recognized. The statement urges for education for all disabled children and calls for inclusion to be the norm (UNESCO, 1994). Slowly the focus has been shifting away from special educational settings towards including students. Today, the official school policy is inclusion in Icelandic schools as stated very clearly in article 17 in the Compulsory School Act No. 91/2008: "Pupils are entitled to have their needs for education met in a *regular, inclusive, compulsory school*, regardless of their physical or mental abilities" (italics added by author). This clear reference to inclusive education cannot be seen in other laws relating to education, although it may appear in regulations relating to education. According to the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools (MoESC, 2011a), general education encourages individuals to perceive their own personality and competence, and therefore their capability to fulfil their role in a complicated society.

Study programmes at the upper secondary level are designed according to four qualification levels. By ranking them as qualification levels, different requirements for students' skills upon graduation are highlighted. The qualification levels thus form a framework for the different requirements at the end of a study programme, regardless of whether the programme is academic, artistic, or vocational. When students graduate from compulsory school, they begin their studies either on the first or second competence level, depending on the requirements of each course and the competence of the student (MESC, 2011a).

- The first level applies to students who do not pass 10th grade's compulsory school qualification. Among them are students with disabilities who gain admission to a segregated study programmes for disabled students. The studies are eight semesters long and entail general education with an emphasis on comprehensive development and participation in a democratic society (MESC, 2011a).
- The second qualification level involves "short specialization that mainly aims at professional preparation for further studies or employment that require the employee to show responsibility and independence within a certain framework" (MESC, 2011b, 90) and is organized over three to four semesters. Graduation from the second qualification level entails credentials for certain jobs and the right to study on the third qualification level and other final exams (MESC, 2011a).
- The third qualification level involves a final exam from upper secondary school, qualifications for certain jobs or other exams. The studies are organized over five to eight semesters (MESC, 2011a).

- The fourth qualification level is organized as a continuance of the third level. The programmes are defined as additional studies at upper secondary schools and involve increased professional specialization or deepening studies in connection with progress and innovation (MESC, 2011a).

2.1 Programmes for disabled students

Programmes for disabled students, which are on the first qualification level as stated earlier, are provided in various upper secondary schools all over the country and the number of enrolled students in such programmes was around 370 (in the whole country) in 2011 (MESC, 2012), however in 2020 the number increased to 521 students (Government of Iceland, 2020).

The first study programmes were established in 1996, when new laws for upper secondary schools (No. 80/1996) were introduced. At that time, these programmes were called the special education division (I. sérdeild) and were at first a two-year study programme (MESC, 2000). In 2004 the programme was extended from two years to four years and the name of the programme was changed from special education division to the study program for disabled students (I. sérnámsbraut), although some have also been named career programmes for disabled students (I. starfsbraut fyrir fatlaða nemendur) (MESC, 2005). The most recent name for these programmes is the multidisciplinary program (I. fjölnámsbraut) (Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð, 2023).

The programmes differ between schools in relation to student composition, but these programmes are only available for those who have been labelled as disabled, based on various medical diagnosis. The purpose of these study programmes is to provide individual learning opportunities as well as to strengthen confidence and promote independence. It is also stated that connection between these special programmes and other general education programmes in the upper secondary schools, attended by nondisabled students, is to be endorsed even though students with intellectual disabilities will mostly be taught in segregated divisions (MESC, 2005). The studies in these special programmes were, for many years, divided into three programmes of education.

- The *special education programme 1* was intended for students who had been in special education or special divisions in compulsory school and did not have the prerequisite to study in other programmes.
- The *special education programme 2* was intended for students who had required considerable support in their studies, had been in special education or in special school and were considered by certified psychological analysts to deviate so much in development that they qualified for exemption from certain core subjects.
- The *special education programme 3* was intended for students with severe intellectual disabilities (MESC, 2005).

This has changed and today the focus of these programmes is on general and practical knowledge, independence, and daily life skills and the studies are individualized in such a way that it considers students' skills and interests. Learning focuses on strengthening students' academic, professional, and social status, as well as communication skills and self-confidence (MESC, 2020; Þorsteinsson, n.d.). Hence, the studies consider both subjects such as mathematics, languages, and other subjects but also daily skills teaching, such as independent living and communication. According to the Upper Secondary Act (2008), upper secondary schools shall draw up course descriptions and submit them to the Minister of Education for approval. Curriculum descriptions of upper secondary schools that have been approved by the

Minister are thus part of the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools, this also applies to programmes for disabled students.

As previously mentioned, students who study in the study programmes have a right to be offered support to study alongside their nondisabled peers. In a report published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (2012) in which study programmes in upper secondary schools are being evaluated, is stated that even though this resource is currently available for students there are still obstacles that hinder full participation. These obstacles are described, for example, in teachers' views towards students with intellectual disabilities, but they sometimes need special permission from the teachers to sit in their class. The lessons and the material are not adjusted to the student's needs, and they undergo the same requirements as any other student. This reduces their ability to participate in regular classes. This also reduces their opportunities to social participation among nondisabled peers and the report reveals that social participation in the general school settings during and after school is very limited (MESC, 2012). In 2022–2023, there were 24 study programmes available for students labelled with intellectual disabilities in 23 out of 30 upper secondary schools in Iceland. These programmes are based in various upper secondary schools across the country (Menntamálastofnun [Directorate of Education], n.d.).

3 The study

The study was framed within disability studies in education (DSE) which rests on the foundation of disability as a social construct. It views disability as an instinctive form of human variations and thus challenges medical and psychological models of disability (Gabel & Connor, 2009). The theories and concepts that inform data analysis stem from Foucault's (1978a, 1978b, 1982) theories of discourse, power, power relations, and resistance; Deleuze and Guattari's (1978) theories about line of flight and becoming; and Young's (1990) theories of five faces of oppression and social justice. In this chapter focus will be paid to the concepts of social justice and discourse and power.

The data used in this study comprises interviews and official documents in relation to the education of students with intellectual disabilities at the upper secondary level. In total interviews were conducted with 22 participants, eleven students age 17–21 (four males and seven females), five mothers, two school administrators and four supervisors of programmes for disabled students (Islandic: yfirmenn starfsbrauta). One student was 17 at the time of the research and hence, the students' parents were also contacted in relation to consent.

The sampling in relation to participants was both convenient and purposive. Purposive in the sense that requirement for participation was the criteria of having studied in a programme for disabled students in upper secondary schools, being a parent of a student or administrator within the school/programme. Convenient in the sense that participation depended on participants willingness to take part (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

4 Theoretical context

This chapter outlines the theories that inform the part of the findings presented later in the chapter.

4.1 Social justice

Social justice and inclusive education are intertwined concepts. Some scholars see special education as a form of social justice even though the field is criticized for its institutional structure that promotes the segregation of students (Connor, 2013, 2014). Inclusion is a principled requirement in promoting social justice (Gabel & Knopf, 2004) and social justice is an important element of the DSE paradigm which stresses the importance of including *all children* in discussions about inclusive education (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011; Connor, 2013; Connor et al., 2008; Connor & Valle, 2017; Gabel, 2010, Gabel & Connor, 2009). Within the DSE there is concern about the inequities that exist for disabled people in society and how cultural values, beliefs, and ideas about difference, and the effect of these issues, can be disabling. The goal of DSE is to ensure equal access to opportunities offered to their non-disabled peers within the school community by pointing out ableist structure, practices, and beliefs within the system (Gabel & Connor, 2009).

Many social theorists have focused on the distribution of justice (see Ackerman, 1978; Rawls, 1971), but focusing on the distribution narrows the understanding of justice and places emphasis on persons as consumers and possessors and the provisioning of things and material. Through the years, more emphasis has been placed on the politics of recognition, which highlights that assimilation to leading cultural norm is no longer sufficient since that does not earn people equal respect. This has resulted in a polarized approach to social justice, either the focus is on distribution, or it is on recognition, which means choosing between class politics and identity politics (Fraser, 1998). Nancy Fraser (1998, 2007), however, offers a two-dimensional conceptualization of social justice which includes both approaches, i.e., redistribution and recognition. In relation to social justice in education growing emphasis has been placed on encompassing both approaches to enhance parity participation (Keddie, 2012), which is the notion that Fraser's (2007) conceptualization centres around.

For parity participation to work two conditions need to be fulfilled: First, the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants' independence and 'voice.' Second, the institutionalized cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem (Fraser, 1998, 10). The former condition relates to excluding forms and levels of economic dependence and inequality that hinder parity of participation (Fraser, 2007). The second one can be related to institutionalized structures that produce and reproduce inequality which is an inseparable aspect of the former condition.

Young (1990) affirms that an enabling understanding of justice should refer to institutional requirements needed for an individual to grow and develop to the fullest and for shared communication and collaboration to prosper. Hegemonic paradigms on inclusion and social justice tend to ignore group differences since the belief in promoting justice and equality relies on non-discrimination, i.e., everybody is treated the same. That means ignoring social, sexual or racial differences among people. It has been argued that this blindness to difference is part of the reason as to why inequality is maintained within society and that promoting equality requires attending to these group differences instead of ignoring them.

Young's (1990) theory assumes social groups to be subjects to oppression and in her discussion, she states that our identities are formulated and defined in relation to how others identify us. Their opinions are shaped by already existing groups that are associated with specific norms, characteristics, and stereotypes.

4.2 Discourse and power

Discourse can be understood as language in action, but Foucault believed language to be the most significant influence in shaping our experience (Danaher et al., 2000). Through discourse we make sense of things and ourselves through discursive formation, which are historically situated fields of knowledge that has allowed some statements to become more valid than others (Rouse, 1994). Discursive formations are not only defined by what lies within them, but also what lies outside them and as time passes these discursive formations change and what lied outside ends up on the inside (Danaher et al., 2000).

The most powerful and effective discourses in our society have strong institutional foundations, such as in education. These institutional settings are locations of debates where dominant discourses and practices are constantly being challenged (Weedon, 1987). Hence, production of the discursive norm has its roots within institutional structures and disciplines that are the bearer of discourse. Within the discourse carried through these disciplines there is a rule to be found, and although it is not a rule as in laws, it is a natural rule that is considered to be the norm and its effect is normalization (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). Foucault (1978a, 1978b) argues that discourse can generate, transmit, and fortify power and that it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. Discourse, intermingled with knowledge and power, "serves to control not just what but how subjects are constructed" (Pitsoe & Letseka 2013, 24).

When we are born, we are all referred to normative social categories that are, according to Foucault (1982), the result of the connection of power and knowledge which are established through their role of expertise in discourses. The power of the discursive norm involves identity normalization that affects all of us and has the effect that those who deviate from the norm are likely to be seen as abnormal. Thus, our cultural identity is linked to dominant discourses and power which plays a significant role in how people see us and respond to us (Clarke 2008, Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014).

4.3 Inclusive education

According to Allan (2012) inclusive education is a process, and the emphasis on inclusion as a reform was supposed to enhance students' possibility to belong and participate. It was intended to shift the focus from the placement of students by removing barriers to children's participation whether they were environmental, attitudinal, or structural. In relation to this it is important to point out that the structure of mainstream schools, although inclusive to some extent, may not support *full* inclusion in practice. Within that structure, students are partly being taught outside of general education classes and segregated based on medical diagnostics (Kavale, 2002).

Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2018) point out a conceptual change in thinking about inclusive education which entails shifting the focus from viewing inclusive education through the lens of students with special needs to viewing it as inclusive schools and inclusive learning environment for children with different social background and physical attributes. This is important and leads to the point about inclusive education being about participation and belonging. This crucial point needs to be approached as a social justice issue and not just from the perspectives of inclusion because by doing that we are considering inclusive education from a wider perspective than just the placements of students with disabilities (Goodley, 2007). It would, furthermore, be helpful to abandon the binary preoccupation able/disabled, general/special and even medical model/social model as encouraged by critical disability studies (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Goodley 2007), because within the realm of binary one side is usually considered more valuable than the other (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011).

5 Challenges in relation to inclusive education

In this chapter the main findings in relation to challenges will be discussed and put in theoretical context.

5.1 Conceptual confusion

Findings reveal a conceptual confusion about inclusive education and support, both of which can be regarded as fundamental concepts of social justice in education. This confusion is detectable in the discourse and is further established through structural processes that contribute to, rather than hinder, social inequality.

Inclusive education. In recent years discussions about inclusive education have been shifting away from focusing merely on students with disabilities to focusing on other groups of students who are also being marginalized (Magnússon, 2019; Naraian, 2011). In its simplest term, inclusive education does not seem all that complicated, but because of its multi-layered texture in relation to both policy and practice, confusion reigns over what inclusive education really means and what best practices should entail. The lack of a clear definition has been greatly criticized in Iceland since it leads to various interpretations of the concept, depending on where you are situated in the school system equation (European Agency, 2017). This is not only bound to Icelandic reality since the term is also disputed internationally (Ainscow & César, 2006; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011; Haug, 2017; Messiou, 2017).

The discourse in official documents reveals how inclusive education is only attributed to students with disabilities (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020). Furthermore, the term inclusive education has, from the onset of its appearance in the Salamanca Statement, been translated as school without segregation (I. skóli án aðgreiningar), linking the discussion to students with disabilities and placing emphasis first and foremost on the segregation (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011). This translation has led to the misunderstanding that students are not to be educated in small groups, all children should be together, all the time. This is an example of how conceptual confusion affects the infrastructure of schools. The infrastructure continues to be a fixed frame, because it still assumes classrooms with certain number of "normal" kids and youngsters. The regular classroom is for those who are able (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020). Those who deviate from that norm are rather seen as attachments to this fixed frame (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022, 2023), and hence, special education continues to exist. This is a barrier and removing it is a challenge. Diversity within the classrooms calls for a different mindset and it requires everybody to step out of "normal" and into difference (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

Support. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which was supposed to ensure equality for students with disabilities, can in a way, be viewed as the source for the challenges that the system's structure faces. With the Salamanca Statement, the education of students with disabilities entered the discourse with more force than known before and the discussion revolved, more often than not, around students' placement within schools. Hence, at the onset of discussions about inclusive education, special education acquired its legitimation in the discourse (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011; Danaher et al., 2000, Foucault, 1978a) and as a result, through its knowledge production within the institutional structure, formed the discursive norm of special education (Foucault, 1978a; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014), which was supposed to support students in their education.

In national documents relating to the upper secondary level support for disabled students, is never defined as such and discussion about it is very silent. Instead, it is stated that schools are allowed to establish special programmes for disabled students to meet their needs (Regulation on students with special needs in upper secondary schools No. 230/2012; Sverrisdóttir &

Jóhannesson, 2020). Hence, students need to apply for special programmes if they want to receive the support they need (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023). One can therefore assume that these special programmes are to serve as support for students. This overemphasizing of support in the form of special education puts the placement of students in the foreground and serves as a barrier when implementing inclusive and socially just education for all students. One can also speculate whether viewing students as static beings, with little to no potential of becoming (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022), disturbs the effort put into conceptualizing and implementing classroom support. Furthermore, this structure has left the term of inclusive education open for interpretation which leads to confusion about what inclusive education system really requires to function well for all children (EA, 2017; Magnússon, 2019).

Implementation. The application process for students who have been labelled as disabled is a perfect example of the confusion that exists about both inclusive education and support in the Icelandic school system. Firstly, they are not part of the main application process (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023), and yet Iceland has an inclusive system according to public policy, although it is rather hidden in official documents (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020). Second, students apply for a segregated special programme for disabled persons (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023), which in its essence is not inclusive. However, they are in the same school building as others, they use the same cafeteria, they can interact with others, and they can even attend classes with other students – if they choose to do so (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022, 2023). So, one could say that they are included, but only if being physically present can be counted as being included. This is, perhaps, where the discourse about inclusive education goes off-road in Iceland; inclusive education is not supposed to be only about students who have been labelled as disabled (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004; Connor & Ferri, 2007; Naraian, 2011) nor should it circle around the placement of students. In national documents relating to education of students on upper secondary level in Iceland, however, inclusive education is, as previously mentioned, only attributed to students with disabilities (MESC, 2011b; Regulation on students with special needs in upper secondary schools No. 230/2012; Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020). Such an understanding of inclusive education is a challenge when advocating for social justice in education, since social justice encompasses all children, not just some groups of children (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

5.2 Structural challenges

The labelling process, i.e., medical diagnosis, starts often as soon as a student enters compulsory school (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022), because in order to receive the support needed the student has to have a valid diagnosis (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020; Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023) and in order to gain admission into special programmes on the upper secondary level they have to define themselves as disabled (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023). In relation to social justice this is a matter worth discussing because when students enter upper secondary schools, this requirement has significant consequences for students in real life, not only those who are labelled as disabled but also those who need more support than is provided within general education (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023).

According to Young (1990) the focus on distribution of justice, when addressing social justice, tends to disregard the social and institutional context, which, however, often helps to determine distributive patterns. Persons that are categorized in a structural manner, as done in the Icelandic system, face greater obstacles in their pursuit of life interests or ambitions. A structural inequality can be viewed as a group-based injustice because it ignores equal opportunities and it affects both class politics and identity politics, and thus diminishes potentials of participatory parity (Fraser, 1998, 2007). The Icelandic system can be said to

foster ableism by portraying students as independent and able as is done in official documents relating to the education of students on the upper secondary level. This sort of ableism places emphasis on normative abilities which are then reinforced by categorization through medical diagnoses (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020), but by categorizing students who do not fall under the parameter of *the independent and able student* the system produces and maintains inequality (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023).

This can be connected to Foucault's ideas on the discursive norm (Foucault, 1978a, Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). The way that the discursive norm of special education affects the structure of the system is a challenge that needs to be addressed since it not only produces inequality but also maintains it through its bureaucratic function in relation to special education and funding, which according to many stakeholders in the Icelandic school system serves as a barrier to inclusion (European Agency, 2017). Generalizing the majority group's experience and making it the norm has the effect that some people are being marginalized because they do not fit in this socially constructed frame, and hence a group of Other is created (Young, 1990), as can be seen within the structure of the Icelandic education system.

Discourse in national and school curriculum documents suggests that students with disabilities are not necessarily seen as part of the whole school community (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020), which underlines the othering of these students. To no surprise the phrase *every student* was very common in the documents. However, on some occasions the word "every", in every student, was either underlined or capitalized, indicating that it really meant EVERY student, including students with disabilities whose affairs are usually addressed in different chapters or under different tabs on the web. It is disturbing to see this deep-rooted discrimination in the documents, i.e., when we say every student, we do in fact only mean those who fall under a certain category of human beings. This is, however, the reality and probably one of the major challenges we need to address in relation to inclusive education.

Furthermore, the way the system defines the concept of disability affects the way the system responds to students who need support. By relying on the medical model (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020; Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022, 2023), the system still views and responds to children and youngsters as the "problem" that needs to be fixed and assumes that the deficit exists within children themselves (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011, Barnes and Mercer, 2001). According to DSE, however, disability should be conceptualized as social construct, it is not something fixed (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011; Gabel, 2010) and its creation is closely connected to socio-cultural context at any given time.

5.3 Constructing the static "special education" student

Analysis of official documents on upper secondary level indicate that students who have been labelled as disabled are seen as fundamentally different from other students. They are seen as less able (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020) which can result in lower expectations towards their ability in education (Bergsdóttir et al., 2007; Biklen & Burke, 2006; Bjarnason, 2004; Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022, 2023). This view is rooted in the medical approach to individuals who need support and drives students into special education programmes within the schools, which constructs the otherness of some students and sustains normalcy for others (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004; Baglieri & Lalvani, 2020; Connor, 2013; Connor et al., 2008; Degener, 2016).

Foucault (1978a, 1982) outlined three forms of power: 1) sovereign power, 2) disciplinary power, and 3) biopower (see also Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). Disciplinary power can be related to the education system through which students with intellectual disabilities have been

categorized and normalized as such. Disciplinary power is the bearer of discourse, according to Foucault (1982), and the form of power that normalizes and makes subjects. This form of power can also, in the study's context, be interpreted as an effect of biopower, which is a technology of power that has the purpose to instigate, reinforce and control subjects. Students with intellectual disabilities are being segregated based on IQ tests and support needs (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023) under the premises that it is done to better meet their needs, i.e., reinforce them as human beings (Foucault, 1978a). It is then through disciplinary power and normalization, that they are constructed as special education students in need of support. Normalization has the effect that special education students are seen as static entities, something that just is (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022). The way students with intellectual disabilities are marginalized (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2023), constructed as different (Sverrisdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2020), and responded to as static beings (Sverrisdóttir & Van Hove, 2022) through the structure of the system produces inequality in the long run for these students (Young, 1990).

6 Concluding remarks

The establishing of programmes for disabled students, in 1996, was a giant step in the right direction for students with extensive support needs to be included in education at the upper secondary level. But that step was taken quarter of a century ago and since then things have progressed extensively, not least with the advent of CRPD in 2006. Hence, it is time to take another giant step towards inclusive environmental settings in education where each student is supported within general education.

The next step should entail a shift of focus and mindset. Instead of focusing on students with special needs and their placement within schools, it is important to examine the structure of the school system and understand how it produces and maintains injustice. Although the labelling process is sugar coded as being for the benefit of the student it has, nevertheless, a serious negative impact as well. The students that are labelled are seen as less able and they are marginalized, not only physically but also mentally. However, these students are also privileged, because this process also affects students who do not have the right labels and may, because of that, be deprived of the support they need to be successful. Having a multi-layered support system is challenging and complicates things and does not necessarily benefit all student. All students need support at some point in their education and there is no way to predict in forehand what kind of support they will need. Because of that, support should not be classified and defined by labels; support is a basic structural strategy and should be viewed as an inherent part of education.

References

Ackerman, Bruce (1980). *Social justice and the liberal state.* London: Yale University Press.

Ainscow, Mel, & César, Margarida (2006). Inclusive education ten years after Salamanca: Setting the agenda. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *21*(3), 231–238. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03173412

Allan, Julie (2012). The inclusion challenge. In Thomas Barow & Daniel Östlund (Eds.), *Bildning för alla! En pedagogisk utmaning* [Education for all! A pedagogical challenge] (pp. 109–120). Kristianstad: Kristianstad University.

Armstrong, Derrick, Armstrong, Ann Cheryl, & Spandagou, Ilektra. (2011). Inclusion: by choice or by chance? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *15*(1), 29–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2010.496192

Baglieri, Susan, & Knopf, Janice H. (2004). Normalizing difference in inclusive teaching. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*(6), 525–529. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194040370060701

Baglieri, Susan, & Lalvani, Priya (2020). *Undoing ableism. Teaching about disability in K–12 classrooms*. New York: Routledge.

Baglieri, Susan, Valle, Jan W., Connor, David J., & Gallagher, Deborah J. (2011). Disability studies in education. The need for a plurality of perspectives. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(4), 267–278. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932510362200.

Baglieri, Susan, Bejoian, Lynne M., Broderick, Alicia A., Connor, David, & Valle, Jan (2011). [Re]claiming "inclusive education" toward cohesion in educational reform: Disability studies unravels the myth of the normal child. *Teachers College Record, 113*(10), 2122–2154.

Barnes, Colin, & Mercer, Geoff (2001). "Disability Culture: Assimilation or Inclusion?" In Gary L. Albrecht, Katherine D. Seelman, and Michael Bury (eds.,), *Handbook of Disability Studies*, (pp. 515–534). London: Sage.

Bergsdóttir, Birna, Marinósson, Gretar L., Logadóttir, Hrund, & Sigurjónsdóttir, Særún (2007). Hvernig bar framkvæmd saman við stefnuna? In Gretar L. Marinósson (Ed.), *Tálmar og tækifæri* (pp. 268–287). Reykjavík: University Press.

Biklen, Douglas, & Burke, Jamie (2006). Presuming competence. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *39*(2), 166–175. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680500540376.

Bjarnason, Dóra S. (2004). *New voices from Iceland. Disability and young adulthood*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Blöndal, Kristjana Stella, Jónasson, Jón Torfi, & Tannhauser, Anne-Christin (2011). Drop out in a small society: Is the Icelandic case somehow different? In Stephen Lamb, Eifred Markussen, Rrichrd Teese, Nina Sandberg & John Polesel (Eds*.), School dropout and completion. International comparative studies in theory and policy* (pp. 233–251). Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007=978-90-481-9763-7_1

Clarke, Simon (2008). Culture and identity. In Tony Bennett and John Frow (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of cultural identity* (pp. 510–530). London: Sage.

Compulsory School Act No. 91/2008.

Connor, David (2009). Breaking containment. The power of narrative knowing: countering silences within traditional special education research. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *13*(5), 449–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110701789126.

Connor, David (2013). Who "owns" dis/ability? The cultural work of critical special educators as insider–outsiders. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 41*(4), 494–513. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2013.838741.

Connor, David (2014). Social justice in education for students with disabilities. In Lani Florian (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of special education* (pp. 111–129). New York: Sage.

Connor David, & Ferri, Beth A. (2007). The conflict within: resistance to inclusion and other paradoxes in special education. *Disability & Society 22*(1), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590601056717

Connor, David, Gabel, Susan, Gallagher, Deborah J., & Morton, Missy. (2008). Disability studies and inclusive education — implications for theory, research, and practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *12*(5-6), 441–457. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802377482.

Connor, David J., & Valle, Jan W. (2017). Rescripting crips: Reclaiming disability history and a disability studies perspective within public school curriculum. In Oliver Musenberg (Ed.), *Kulture – Geschichte – Behinderung / culture, history, disability* (pp. 201–220). Berlin: Humboldt University Press.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006

Danaher, Geoff, Schirato, Tony, & Webb, Jen (2000). *Understanding Foucault.* London: Sage.

Degener, Theresia (2016). Disability in human rights context. *Laws, 3*(5), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.3390/laws5030035.

Deleuze, Gilles, & Guattari, Felix A. (1987). *Thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*, (Trans. Brian Massumi). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

European Agency (for Special Needs and Inclusive Education) (2017). *Education for all in Iceland. External audit of the Icelandic system for Inclusive Education.* Odense: EA.

Foucault, Michel (1978a). *The history of sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel (1978b). Politics and the study of discourse. *Ideology and consciousness*, 3, 7–26.

Foucault, Michel (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry, 8*(4), 777–795. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181.

Fraser, Nancy (1998). Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, participation. *Open Access Repository.* ideas.repec.org/p/zbw/wzboem/fsi98108.html.

Fraser, Nancy (2007). Feminist politics in the age of recognition: A two-dimensional approach to gender justice. *Studies in Social Justice, 1*(1), 23–35. https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v1i1.979.

Gabel, Susan (2010). A disability studies framework for policy activism in postsecondary education. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 23*(1), 63–71.

Gabel, Susan, & Connor, David (2009). Theorizing disability: Implications and applications for social justice in education. In William C. Ayers, Therese Quinn & David Stovall (Eds), *Handbook of social justice* (pp. 377–399). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gabel, Susan, & Knopf, Janice H. (2004). Normalizing difference in inclusive teaching. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*(6), 525–529. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194040370060701.

Goodley, Dan (2007). Towards socially just pedagogies: Deleuzoguattarian critical disability studies. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 11*(3), 317–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110701238769.

Government of Iceland [Stjórnarráð Íslands] (2020, November 18). *Composition of students in upper secondary schools: 31% of students in internships* [Nemendasamsetning í framhaldsskólum: 31% nemenda í starfsnámi]. https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2020/11/18/Nemendasamsetning-i-framhaldsskolum-31-nemenda-i-starfsnami/

Haug, Peder (2017). Understanding inclusive education: ideals and reality. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, *(19)*3, 206–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/15017419.2016.1224778.

Kavale, Kenneth A. (2002). Mainstreaming to full inclusion: From orthogenesis to pathogenesis of an idea. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 49*(2), 201–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/103491220141776.

Keddie, Amanda (2012). Schooling and social justice through the lenses of Nancy Fraser. *Critical Studies in Education*, *53*(3), 263–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2012.709185.

Lilja, Mona, & Vinthagen Stellan (2014). Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance? *Journal of Political Power, 7*(1), 107–126. https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2014.889403.

Lopez, Violeta, & Whitehead, Dean. (2013). Sampling data and data collection in qualitative research. In Zevia Schneider, Dean Whitehead, Geri LoBiondo-Wood & Judith Haber (Eds.), *Nursing and midwifery research: Methods and critical appraisal for evidence-based practice.* (4. ed., pp. 124–140). Amsterdam: Elsevier Health Sciences.

Magnússon, Gunnlaugur (2019). An amalgam of ideals – images of inclusion in the Salamanca Statement. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23*(7–8), 677–690. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1622805.

Meekosha, Helen, & Shuttleworth, Russel. (2009). What's so "critical" about critical disability studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, *15*(1), 47–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2009.11910861.

Menntamálastofnun [Directorate of Education]. (e.d). *Framhaldsskólar sem bjóða upp á starfsbraut* [Upper secondary schools that offer programmes for disabled students]. https://mms.is/framhaldsskolar-sem-bjoda-upp-a-starfsbrautir

Messiou, Kyriaki (2017). Research in the field of inclusive education: time for a rethink? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *21*(2), 146–159. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1223184.

Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð. (2023). Fjölnámsbraut [Multidisciplinary programme]. https://www.mh.is/is/namid/skipulag-nams/namsbrautir-mh/sernamsbraut

MESC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) (2000). *Námskrá fyrir sérdeildir framhaldsskóla. Starfsbrautir*. https://brunnur.stjr.is/mrn/utgafuskra/utgafa.nsf/SearchResult.xsp?documentI=2D562E94B387CEE2002576F00058D54A&action=openDocument.

MESC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) (2005). *Námskrá fyrir starfsbrautir framhaldsskóla: Sérdeildir*. https://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/utgefid-efni/namskrar/nr/3962.

MESC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) (2011a). *The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools. General section* [Aðalnámskrá framhaldsskóla. Almennur hluti].

MESC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) (2011b). *The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools. General section* [Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla. Almennur hluti].

MESC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) (2012). *Mat á starfsbrautum framhaldsskóla. Unnið fyrir mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2011–2012.* Háskóli Íslands, Félagsvísindastofnun.

MESC (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) (2020). *Tækifæri ungs fólks með þroskahömlun og skyldar raskanir að loknu námi á starfsbraut Tillögur verkefnahóps*. Stjórnarráð Íslands.

Moore, Caroline, Gilbreath, Debra, & Mauiri, Fran (1998). *Educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms: A Summary of the research*. https://interact.uoregon.edu/wrrc/AKInclusion.htm/.

Naraian, Srikala (2011). Pedagogic voicing: The struggle for participation in an inclusive classroom. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 42*(3), 245-262. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41237258.

Pitsoe, Victor, & Letseka, Moeketsi (2013). Foucault's Discourse and Power: Implications for Instructionist Classroom Management. *Open Journal of Philosophy, 3*(1), 23–28. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2013.31005.

Ragnarsdóttir, Guðrún (2018). *School leaders' perceptions of contemporary change at the upper secondary school level in Iceland. Interaction of actors and social structures facilitating or constraining change*. (Doctoral dissertation). Reykjavík: University of Iceland.

Rawls, John (1971). *A theory of justice.* Boston: Harvard University Press.

Regulation on the enrollment of students in upper secondary school [Reglugerð um innritun nemenda í framhaldsskóla] No. 1150/2008.

Regulation on students with special needs in upper secondary schools [Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir í framhaldsskóla] No. 230/2012.

Rouse, Joseph (1994). Power/knowledge. In Gary Gutting (Ed.), *The Cambridge comapanion to Foucault.* (2. ed., pp. 95–114). London: Cambridge University Press.

Statistic Iceland. (2021). New students at upper secondary school level by sex, age, type of study, background and form of teaching 1997 - 2017 [Nýnemar á framhaldsskólastigi eftir kyni, aldri, tegund náms, bakgrunni og kennsluformi 1997 – 2017]. https://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Samfelag/Samfelag__skolamal__3_framhaldsskolastig__0_fs Nemendur/SKO03109.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=8fccbb80-25de-4d3b-8fe9-c0dbed28428d.

Sverrisdóttir, Anna Björk, & Jóhannesson, Ingólfur Ásgeir (2020). Medical approach and ableism versus a human rights vision: discourse analysis of upper secondary education policy documents in Iceland. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *24*(1), 33–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1449905.

Sverrisdóttir, Anna Björk, & Van Hove, Geert (2022). "We Kind of do not dare to tell everybody that we are in a program for disabled Students, because some are afraid that they will be made fun of." Mapping students' power relations and resistance within the discursive norm of special education. *Journal of Disability Studies in Education 2*(2), 158–181. https://brill.com/view/journals/jdse/aop/article-10.1163-25888803-bja10012/article-10.1163-25888803-bja10012.xml.

Sverrisdóttir, Anna Björk, & Van Hove, Geert (2023). Segregated and yet inclusive? the application process for upper secondary school in Iceland for students labelled as disabled through the lens of social justice. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 31*(1), 203–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2021.1900344.

UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO.

Upper Secondary Education Act, No. 80/1996.

Upper Secondary Education Act, No. 92/2008.

Weedon, Chris (1987). *Feminist practice & poststructuralist theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Young, Iris Marion (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. New York: Princeton University Press.

Qvortrup, Ane, & Qvortrup, Lars (2018). Inclusion: Dimensions of inclusion in education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22*(7), 803–817. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412506

Þorsteinsson, Arnar (n.d.). *Næsta skref*. Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins. https://naestaskref.is/nam/starfsbrautir/