

Students in Need of Special Support

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Foreword

In this report the National Agency for Education gives an account of its findings on the situation of students in need of special support in the spring of 1998. This is the first in a series of reports on current themes in the Swedish school system which the National Agency for Education plans to publish.

The report is based on the results and experiences from the National Agency for Education's follow-ups, evaluations and supervisory roll, but also on research and evaluation reports made by other institutes. The report gives a general, national picture and does not illustrate specifically the school situation for children with various functional impairments or local differences. The situation for children in child care is discussed only peripherally, since the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare recently published a study on this subject.

A project group in the National Agency for Education, consisting of Directors of Education Eivor Carlsson, Ewa Hallberg, Lena Hammarberg, Eva Josefsson, Fredrik Wikström and Birgitta Lidholt, is responsible for the work. Margareta Rosenqvist, Librarian, has contributed reports and literature. The report was written by Lena Hammarberg. Special thanks are addressed to all inside and outside the National Agency for Education who have read and commented on the report step by step.

Students in need of special support are prioritized in the Education Act as well as in the curricula and the government's development plans for the school system. How well the school succeeds in giving satisfactory support to the students who, temporarily or more permanently, are in need of this support is an important gauge of the quality of the school system. Hopefully the report will contribute to a discussion of the scope and design of such support in Swedish schools.

Stockholm, April 1998

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Summary of Assessments

During the spring of 1998 criticism against monetary cuts in the school system has at times been strong. Confidence in the school system's possibility to give special support to students in need of such support has decreased substantially among the public and even among the schools' own teachers. At the same time as the proportion of students in need of special support is reported to be increasing, the extent of investment has gone down and is now at approximately the same level as 1980. After an increase in the 1980s, the teaching hours for all students in the compulsory school [7-16 age group] have now gone down to slightly more than five percent below the 1980 level. Special teaching in ability groups grows as well as measures which increase the segregation. There is a risk that the gap between the school system's official goals and the teaching practice in the schools is increasing.

Support for students in need of special support has a long historical tradition of segregation. In connection with the investigation of the school's inner work in the middle of the 1970s, the official approach was changed, and in the Compulsory School Curriculum, Lgr 80, an integrated approach was put forward. These principles, on the whole, remain in Swedish school policy. An equivalent education implies special support for those students who for different reasons have difficulties in reaching the goals of education. Furthermore, the teaching should be adapted to every student's abilities and needs. In practice this means that the teaching can never be the same for everyone. Preferably, the support should be given within the framework of the class or group of which the student is a part.

The right to receive support is unconditional, but there are no clear guidelines on how the support should be designed. The local authorities have the responsibility to design the measures, which give a large scope for local initiatives and assessments. Special education or other support can include anything from a few hours to the student's entire time in school. The need for support for many students can be temporary, and the school's general teaching and/or environment can either eliminate the need or even create it. There is a great need for the local authorities to consistently follow and to evaluate the developments in these areas.

The question raised is: Has the large scope of action in combination with the savings in the school area, which most of the local authorities are forced to, meant a return to segregation in school? Peder Haug, an educational researcher in Norway, believes that these traditions are suspended as "frozen ideologies" in the school world, easy to resort to in crisis situations.

A good, general quality of teaching, care, physical and psychological environments provides excellent conditions for all children and in particular for children in need of special support to reach the goals. This kind of school system means that many students can obtain help in their ordinary setting. In addition certain students need special support in the teaching and/or in student welfare. The National Agency for Education's evaluations disclose that there are many schools which have found innovative and creative solutions, but there are also schools where neither good, general teaching, nor decent support, can be provided in a satisfactory manner. Certain children who need support do not receive it, other students receive unsatisfactory support. The hopelessness which many teachers and parents feel today about the

school system's possibilities of helping students must be taken very seriously and lead to reappraisals by the local authorities.

In the school plans there are statements which indicate that the local authorities consider this a prioritized area. The impact of these positive statements must be carried out practice. Support should be started as early as possible which, among other things, should lead to more long-term planning by the local authorities, for example, preparation of support systems which are common for both child care and schooling. In addition to their own provisions for handling and solving school-linked problems, schools must also develop cooperation with other institutions and organizations in order to make available more effective support through the utilization of necessary competence.

If a student needs special support measures, a plan of action should be drawn up. It has been difficult for plans of action to become generally accepted in the schools' teaching practice, but during the most recent school year such plans of action to a larger extent than earlier began to be used. However, the programs are still used far too little as a means to give students and parents an influence over problem-descriptions, design of the actions and evaluation and follow-up of the support. Plans of action must also be characterized by a holistic view of the students, with a focus on the school's actions.

The National Agency for Education's studies bring up the questions of qualifications. A situation with diminished personnel resources puts greater demands on the qualifications of the personnel. Within childcare, larger groups of children and fewer adults have resulted in the local authorities employing more preschool teachers instead of child-minders than previously. By these means the local authorities have partly given the activity a more distinct educational emphasis, partly acquired for themselves better conditions to handle problems which have arisen in connection with the reductions.

There are far too many examples that qualifications as far as special support to students is concerned, have decreased in the schools. Student welfare personnel of various categories have taken over tasks from each other, tasks for which they have certain but sometimes inadequate qualifications. Student assistants are used to replace teachers. Teachers with a "general" teacher education and insufficient continuing education are used when there is a lack of special education teachers for special education tasks. The examples are many and put together they give a distressing picture. Obviously analyses are required for qualification needs, but also for continuing education, another utilization of existing qualifications, and recruitment of special education teachers.

A school for everyone means that all students should have access to and receive an equivalent education. In order for children and adolescents to cope with difficult problems, it is necessary to take advantage of and further develop the strong points which all children and adolescents have. Firstly, this requires a good learning environment, which creates a desire and a curiosity to learn. But, in addition, children and adolescents who have difficulties need special help. Above all, they need to be seen, heard and acknowledged. They also want to remain in their own group and participate in the group's activities as much as possible. In this work teachers and other specialists need to help one another. Analyses can sometimes be necessary to provide the schools with a starting point from which they can plan and give

adequate support to children with complicated school problems. With the help of experts, children's problems can be made comprehensible and manageable for the school's teachers, but in the end the school's personnel has the full responsibility for the design of the education.

Children need support - a picture of the situation in the spring of 1998

A simplified picture of the school system's efforts for students in need of special support is given in this report. The report takes for granted some premises, which will be discussed. The first is that support to students in need of special support in school is based on a historical tradition which still characterizes today's teaching practice. The second is that there are signs that separation and segregation are increasing in the school system for certain groups of students. The third is that the increasing number of students in need of special support, which is reported from many sources, to a great extent depends on the fact that the schools place greater and/or more distinct demands on the students today through new curricula, a new grading system and an adjustment to a new world. The fourth is that reductions of school resources call for prioritizing and for standtaking with consequences for this student group, but that the connection between resources and results is unclear.

The report does not illustrate the school situation of specific disability groups, nor is it focused towards special school difficulties such as reading and writing difficulties or concentration difficulties. Instead, the school's work with students in need of special support is regarded from a general perspective.

Premises

The design of support to students with difficulties at school raises questions about democracy, equality and justice in school. This is especially obvious in times of reduced resources. On a structural level, for example, the questions deal with how the distribution of resources should be made, which students are considered to be entitled to support and in which forms this support is to be given. How these questions are answered affects the teaching and the student's situation. The value foundations of the school system are based on political guidelines on different levels, and from knowledge and attitudes among school personnel.¹ The value foundations have their premises in a democratic social outlook, but they are also based on features from traditions and history. The right to equivalent education as well as equal access to uniform education concerns students in need of special support to a great extent. Assessments of which students are considered to be eligible for special support depend, among other things, on how we define normality and deviation. The special or the needy always have points of comparison, which contain ideas on the adjusted, healthy, normal or sound. Discussions about which students are judged to be deviating can be said to be made in a struggle over definitions, a conflict which is seen differently in various time periods and contexts.² There is a long tradition of separating students who do not fit the usual pattern in the Swedish school, but there are also periods when integration or inclusion - in any case talk about it - has dominated. Peder Haug thinks that these traditions and ways of thinking still exist in the consciousness of people as "frozen ideologies," and they can be aroused and lead to a reconsideration of the practices, for example, in times of tension and new problems.³

History

There is a contrast between the struggle for the elementary school as a basic school for all children and the practice of separation which, side by side, grew up and which was accepted by the predecessors of the basic school idea. The most likely explanation for this contradiction is that the separation of those in various ways different children was a prerequisite for the elementary school's popularity and attractiveness among broad groups in society.

In 1842, when the decision on the elementary school was made, it was not a school for all children. Children of those who were worst off in society often did not go to school at all. They went to poor people's schools or went to elementary schools to a limited extent, and the well-to-do parents chose schools other than the elementary schools for their children. Five years after the implementation of the elementary school, slightly more than half of the children went to this school, and it was not until around 1915 that practically all school-children, slightly more than 94%, went to an elementary school. During this time the possibilities and obligations of the elementary school to be responsible for the education of children with what we today would call special needs were brought forth gradually. In this process the boundaries for the prevailing views on normality were also crystallized. Epileptic, children with tuberculosis and with other medical illnesses and even mentally retarded were taught privately or in smaller groups in Stockholm in the latter part of the 1800s and onwards.⁴ Disabled children had their own institutions for education and treatment, and the mentally deranged, imbecilic and mentally retarded, began around the turn of the century and thereafter to be sorted out and sent to institutions, boarding schools and remedial classes.⁵ This development took place in cooperation with philanthropically inspired, voluntary working people and government institutions. The strong interest in science and new possibilities for psychological tests created the conditions for the "objective" assessments which legitimized action.

In larger cities still another level in the elementary school, the remedial class was established during the 1910s. However, this provoked protests among the elementary school teachers in Stockholm. Opponents thought that this would imply a new principle in the elementary school, namely, *classification of normal children* into better and poorer gifted students. There were also those among the advocates who believed that children could be divided into four groups: 1) the mentally retarded, 2) the physically and mentally weak, 3) the lazy and slow, and finally 4) the physically and mentally normal. Through "separating" these groups from each other, one would give all groups the best conditions. *The separation should take place on completely objective, physical, psychological and educational foundations, in cooperation between the teacher and the physician.*⁶ Even later on, under-achieving classes were a controversial issue among elementary school teachers. Rolf Helldin cites a debate in Gävle in 1924, under the auspices of the Elementary School Teachers Association, where a speaker pointed out that separation as well as the opposite, "preferential treatment," in such early years could harm the children. The speaker thought that solidarity and responsibility for those less well equipped in the same class, should be, instead, an educational factor.⁷ In Stockholm in the 1930s, about 7% of the students went to remedial classes in the schools where they were organized.⁸

Even children with social problems, so-called maladjusted or neglected children, were separated from the elementary school. For these children, sorted out after an assessment of the degree of defect or negligence, institutions or boarding out were arranged. For mobility-impaired children, compulsory school attendance was first introduced in 1962. As with other groups, motives were clearly expressed in terms of the benefit to the individual as well as to society. Through exclusion of the "bad elements," i.e. the different and those with special needs, prerequisites were created for giving these special children the care they needed and at the same time the teaching of the normal students was made easier. To separate the child from his home was seen as a prerequisite for the individualized and specialized re-education which would be able to bring good results. The family situation and poverty were most often seen as reasons for the origin of the problems. How to make protesting parents understand what was best for their child was discussed among the representatives of society.

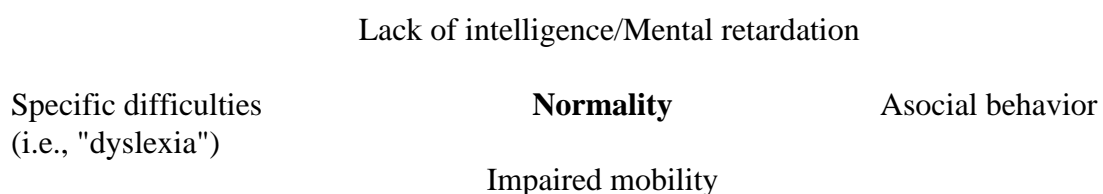
Separation for the student's best

The great interest in institutions for various disabled and maladjusted children, which existed in the beginning of the 1900s, was founded on an educational program which was intended to lead to a change in people. Perhaps one can say that here an ideal solution had been found - a solution which was seen to benefit the special students as well as the school's needs. With the help of natural science, the system would be made impartial and reliable. The ambition to differentiate could be based upon scientifically tested instruments and did gradually find strong support in the increased interest in the 1920s and 1930s in heredity and racial hygiene. However, the institutions in practice led to expulsion and isolation.⁹

In the 1940 School Commission, the school's differentiation task was strengthened. Each student should be prepared to fulfill "*his*" purpose in society.¹⁰

This tendency to see separation as a measure in the student's best interests is prevalent in the school system: Special education has always been motivated and is still motivated as a social benefit which the student has a right to and which should contribute to leveling out the differences between various students.¹¹ However, a supplementary motive which was to create a good educational situation for the rest of the class, is more seldom pointed out today, even if in the teaching practice it plays a large role.¹² However, there are still possibilities, with the support of texts in a government bill from 1990/91, both to place children at another school than that which is situated nearest and to move some students to another school in order to maintain the educational quality for the other students.¹³

To sum up, the separation of children on medical and social bases was made in close cooperation between physicians, headmasters and teachers. The physician's authority and knowledge were prerequisites for the realization of this program. Consequently, the medical-biological approach was dominating, paired with a social approach. The classification of children can be illustrated by the following sketch which still has certain current interest¹⁴:



The adaptation of the school system to the students

As a result of the 1962 Curriculum, a dramatic expansion of special education took place. Resources were doubled over ten years. In 1972 more than one third of the schoolchildren in an age group received special support for shorter or longer periods during their school time.¹⁵ The representatives of society began demanding research and appraisals which would show the results of such spending on special education. During the 1970s a new, “relative disability” concept began to take effect as a replacement for “the absolute”. Disabilities were thought to arise in the encounter between the environment and the individual with his/her predispositions. From such a point of view it became natural, first of all, to impose demands for the adaptation of the surroundings to the environment. In the Government Commission on the Internal Work of Schools (SIA), general measures in the school system were recommended instead of individual, specific measures. Instead of *students with school problems*, the SIA spoke of a *school system with educational difficulties*.¹⁶ In the SIA Commission, the school's working environment established the fact that special education had come to represent both methodology and organizational form, and principally had become another name for special services hours. The various studies of special education by the SIA Commission came in many ways to influence the design of the 1980 Compulsory School Curriculum (Lgr 80).

In 1983 the National Board of Education (SÖ) and the National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges (UHÄ) were commissioned by the government to analyze the needs and prepare suggestions for special measures for students in need of support as well as the need for education of the teachers involved. A revision of this report resulted in Report DsU 1986:13 where, among other things, it was asserted that the introduction of new teacher education and continuing education would result in need for special education being markedly reduced. In the ministry's paper, it was thought that approximately half of the procedures then performed by special education teachers could be taken over by teachers with the regular basic education. Herein was a suggestion for new and changed teacher education with extensive elements of special education.

In the Government Bill 1988/89:4 -Management and Control of the School System-which to a great extent builds on the above-mentioned DsU 1986:13, the government formulated its vision of a new role in teaching special education, more in line with a *consulting model*. To be sure, the minister noted that the opinions of the bodies to which the proposed measures had been referred were divided in their estimations of future needs of special education teachers, and there was an obvious fear that students in need of support would get jammed in the system. Nevertheless, the Government chose in principle to take the line of the Commission. In short, it can be said that the fundamental parts of the proposal consisted of a smaller number of more qualified teachers working in more consultative and guiding ways, in combination with an increased number of resource centers spread over the country. These centers would work with investigative studies and further education for the target groups of students, teachers and parents - depending on the tasks.

The 1980 Compulsory School Curriculum (Lgr 80) was also the start of the decentralization of the school system, which took more distinct form during the 1990s with the transfer of responsibility to the municipal authorities plus the new 1994 National Compulsory School Curriculum (Lpo 94) and the 1994 National Voluntary School Curriculum (LPF 94).¹⁷ In

connection with the transfer of decisions to the municipal government, decisions about the distribution of resources, the employment of teachers, and which students should be entitled to special support were transferred to the local authorities and often to the individual school. Behind this division of responsibilities lies the assumption that resources are best allocated on the local level.

The conflict between medical/psychological and educational expertise

The Government Commission on the Internal Work of Schools (SIA) signified a break with the traditional view, both when it dealt with the causes of the problems and their solutions. But the question is to what degree this perspective -the relative disability concept and the new view of the role of the special education teacher- has penetrated the teaching practice in schools. Assessments point out that teaching practice is moving slowly in this direction; see below. But in the approach which was introduced by the SIA Commission, and which in many ways is still valid, there is an ambition to extend the concept of normality to apply to almost all children. With a special education teacher/educationalist as a consultant, emphasis is placed on supporting students within the ordinary framework of student groups, and on individualization along with variation of methods, something which benefits all students. Physicians and parents of children with functional impairments, however, are critical. They think that this approach has contributed in practice to the negligence of actual difficulties, an inattention to the need for special competence and knowledge of functional disorders, and a lack of specific measures. In the debate during more recent years, a group of school physicians, pediatricians and special educationalists have brought up the need for diagnoses and assessments of the children's possible neuropsychiatric illnesses, symptoms of anxiety, concentration difficulties, and reading and writing difficulties. Consequently, there is today on one side a move to a biological/medical evaluation of the children's school problems with the help of expert reports by physicians and psychologists. On the other side, sections of the teaching profession and educational researchers defend the assessment of the needs of children with the aim of normalization, in the spirit of the SIA Commission and the Lgr 80.

That which is thought provoking, in a historical perspective, is that even the frequency of (at least certain) medical illnesses and their occurrence have a sort of epidemic characterization.¹⁸ While fainting, hysterics and neurasthenia were frequent symptoms and illnesses before the turn of the century, anorexia, bulimia and concentration difficulties, for example, are the illnesses and symptoms, which today's youth "use" to express their problems.

Assessments of the deviations are also influenced to a great extent by the prevailing culture and environment. An example of this is that mental retardation is less frequent in preschool, as well as in adult years, than in school. Even if this can be attributed to the fact that mental retardation is easier to determine at school with all children present, the school system's insufficient ability to adjust to the educational needs of these groups in a satisfactory way must be included in the assessment.¹⁹ Another example is that in the United States 75% of the mentally retarded are estimated to be mild and 25% serious or moderate, while in Sweden the proportions are the opposite.²⁰ Similar reasoning can probably be applied to reading and writing difficulties - what is assessed to be within normal limits in one school can be understood as a deviation in another, depending in which social environment the school is situated.

Approaches and concepts

In this section, we will discuss today's official outlook on students in need of special support as well as various concepts which are used, and the gradual shifting in the use of them.

In principle, the fundamental approach which the SIA Commission established remains in Swedish school policy, even if it has not wholly and consequently been implemented. The equal value of all humans, solidarity with the weak and vulnerable, and active protection for students subjected to harassment are principles which the school should convey to the students in the teaching as well as put into practice in the school's workday through daily procedures. An equivalent education presupposes special support for those students who for special reasons have difficulty in reaching the goals of education. According to legislation and regulations, students who need special support have an unconditional right to receive it. In the first place, support should be given within the framework of the class, but special teaching groups can also be arranged.

Despite this reasoning, designations, which focus on individual problems, are used. In legislative texts, two expressions are used: *students with special needs* and *students who have difficulties with schoolwork*.²¹ There are no closer definitions of what is meant by special needs or difficulties. In the Education Act, Chap. 2a, however, which treats the preschool system and school child care, one talks about *children who need special support*. This is an expression, which was earlier used in the Social Services Act.

The 1968 Preschool Commission originally used the concepts of children in need of special support and children with special needs. Included were both physically disabled children and children with psychic, emotional, social and linguistic disorders. A similar division is common in the literature, which deals with this area. When older children are concerned, one talks about learning difficulties, principally reading and writing difficulties, as well as mathematical difficulties. Designations such as behavioral disturbances and concentration difficulties are often used today about children who deviate from the current pattern of behavior. As such, compulsive and aggressive children as well as extremely silent and passive children are counted. During recent years the neuropsychiatric conditions such as MBD/DAMP, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome and autism have received a large space in the discussions about the school's support measures.

In the Reading and Writing Committee's Report, the concept of "students *in* need of special support" was used to accentuate the temporariness of the need.²² This expression has been chosen in this report. Children with or in need of special support can not be - and should not be - a homogeneous or clearly demarcated group. Problems with children can be temporary and of short duration. Conditions in childcare and in school can both augment and prevent difficulties in children. All children need support in preschool and school; some need special support during certain periods, while others during their entire preschool and school time. These outlooks in fact concur with the United Nation's environmentally related concept of disability.

Discussions on the forms of support include the concepts of *integration* and *segregation* as well as *inclusion*. Integration can be physical, functional, social or political. Integrating can

also be seen as a process, which should lead to integration, a condition where non-segregation and normalization are prevailing. In an OECD Report on the integration of students with special needs, the concept is defined as the "process which maximizes interaction between disabled and non-disabled students."²³ A usual interpretation of the concept of integration is that a student should live at home and go to his regular school and get his education there. The teaching of the student can be organized so that the teaching is more or less separated from the ordinary class teaching. The principle for the support is an individual student's need, which the school can compensate for in the form, for example, of certain remedial hours or a separate teaching group. Consequently, integration of students can look very different and in practice deal with a segregated type of teaching. *Inclusion/including* is a new expression, which approximately means to participate in the whole.²⁴ According to the proponents of inclusion, teaching instead should occur within the framework of the ordinary class; the social feeling of solidarity and time together are highly prioritized. Differences between children are accepted and respected. In this perspective, differences between remedial teaching and ordinary teaching are small and demand in principle that all teaching personnel have sufficient knowledge in order to teach all children. This way of thinking lead to the concept of integration also being criticized, because in principle it meant that those who had been on the outside were now admitted.²⁵

The increase of students in need of special support - reality or ...?

The number of children and adolescents with physical functional impairments and mental retardation is rather stable. If you disregard this group, it is with the above-described, vague definition quite difficult to determine how many children the schools have to support.²⁶ The local authorities' and the schools' data are based on more or less broad estimates. During 1995 one fourth of the country's local authorities reported that they had worked out a definition of the student groups in need of special support. The definitions varied and included particularly extensive concepts such as learning problems, social problems and behavioral problems. This is an example of such a definition in a local authority:

Students who in any way are prevented from fully participating in the teaching because of psychic, physical or social limitations as well as different forms of learning difficulties which entail that the work procedures and teaching methods need to be especially adjusted.

From a number of sources, it is now reported that the number of children in need of special support has increased. That is, for example, the case in the National Agency for Education's Report of Conditions, which some years ago showed that a majority of the interviewed heads of administration and headmasters were of the opinion that the number of students in need of special support had increased during the period 1991-1994. This increase continues during 1997. It concerns primarily children with reading and writing difficulties, students with concentration difficulties, and students with compulsive behavior problems. The assessment in the schools is somewhat lower than in the local authority. According to the headmasters'

understanding, the increase the last two years is as large in the compulsory school as in the upper secondary school, while the 1995 investigation showed that the increase was largest in the upper secondary school.²⁷ This increase in upper secondary schools is based on a questionnaire and interview study, where special education teachers, headmasters and teachers were interviewed.²⁸ The Bureaus of mental care/psychiatry for children and adolescents (BUP/PUB) also report a tangible increase in the number of schoolchildren who seek help. In independent schools, the situation is somewhat better. In a 1997 questionnaire, slightly more than half of the independent schools report that the number of students in need of support has increased during the latest school year.²⁹ In the most recent measurement of attitudes by the National Agency for Education, two thirds of the teachers in the compulsory schools and half of the teachers in the upper secondary schools thought that the number of students with concentration difficulties and functional disabilities had increased.³⁰

The number of registered students in the compulsory-level school for the mentally impaired has increased with close to one fifth between the years 1992/93 and 1996/97. In the upper secondary-level school for the intellectually disabled the student increase is 11%. There are large variations between the municipalities, but nearly 60% of them have reported an increase in the number of students in the compulsory-level schools for the mentally impaired. The figures are somewhat lower for schools for children with severe intellectual difficulties and upper secondary special schools for the intellectually disabled. Even in the special schools, the number of registered students increased by 3% between the years 1995/96 and 1996/97 and with 15% over the latest five years. This can be compared with the student increase in the compulsory school, which was 2% respective 8% during the same time periods.³¹

What lies behind the increase?

In the first place, the increase must be seen in relation to the vague and varying definitions, which make a quantitative assessment uncertain. General, shared definitions of what is meant in a local authority by students in need of special support are uncommon. But allowing for this, interpretations should be looked for in several directions, interpretations that have less to do with the child than with the environment.

Changes in society influence the picture in several ways. Information about an increase of psychic and psychosocial problems among adults, especially among manual workers and the unemployed, indicates that a certain real increase exists even among schoolchildren.³² To have parents who are unemployed, suffering from divorces or having economic and social problems imply that the home environment for many children can be quite difficult. However, the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Committee, which estimates that at least 5-10% of all children and adolescents suffer from psychiatric problems, believes that it is difficult to say whether the problems have increased or not. Therefore, the Committee suggests frequent measurement of the mental health of children in order to get a more certain picture.³³ For example, if success in reading and writing is partly dependent on what the child's environment looks like, then perhaps increased "inequalities" in social development also take expression in school.

Another factor is that the demand for knowledge, for example, the quality of reading and writing language abilities has increased in society and consequently also in school. Social changes impose demands on changes in schools and confront children with new contents and

new working methods. Among other things, these processes have begun through the new curricula, but accomplishment is a long-term process. The upper secondary school reform involves a greater place for abstract and symbolic contents in the programs for vocational subjects. The new grading system and the demand for approved grades for the transition between the compulsory school and the upper secondary school implies that the school system's ability to arrange education for all students is focused in new ways. It can be an advantage that the need for support in these ways becomes clear. At the same time, the demand to reach approval is a new stress factor. In the 1997 Attitude Study by the National Agency for Education, one fourth of the students report that they feel stressed in school. The problem is greatest in the upper secondary school's general programs.³⁴

The changed labor market today also means that almost all adolescents go to the upper secondary school, even students who are poorly motivated to study. In the spring of 1995, approximately one fifth of the students in Grade 9 (last year) of the compulsory school reported that they would rather work, and in the most recent study of attitudes given to the schools in 1997, every fourth student in the upper secondary school answered that they would rather work than go to school.³⁵

Another factor influencing the increasing number of students in need of special support is the municipalities' financial cuts to schools, contributing to students' problems being more visible than earlier, when these could be handled easier within the framework of existing resources. In a situation with a dependable amount of resources, fewer students need special support.

The tendency to diagnose students' problems more and the new diagnoses, which during more recent years have caught on, are resource generating in themselves and can give a general impression that problems have increased. Even in the upper secondary school, a majority of the schools today make analyses and individual diagnosing of the difficulties of the students.³⁶

As for the increase of students in special schools for the mentally impaired, several explanations have already been pointed out. The transfer of schools for the intellectually disabled to the local authorities has made them more accessible and attractive for parents. As a result of the integration of the school for the intellectually disabled into the compulsory school, registration in the special schools is played down. Another way to express this is that separation is easier to accept if it occurs in an integrated context. Registration in special schools for the mentally impaired is still at a reasonable level in proportion to the expected number, slightly more than 1% in the whole country, but variations between municipalities are great.³⁷

Another reason can be that when support to students with special needs decreases in the compulsory school, special schools for the mentally impaired stand out as an alternative for students who earlier could be accommodated in the compulsory school. It is noteworthy that poorer economics is given as the reason - or one of the reasons - by 19% of the local authorities. An assessment of the transfer of schools for the mentally impaired to the municipalities in Halland shows that the main explanation for the increase of registered students in the schools for the mentally impaired is that reductions in other municipal

activities lead to more students' in need of support through special legislation in order to meet their needs.³⁸ A basic question might be: Is there any connection between reducing the special education teachers' hours in the compulsory schools and the increase in the number of registered students in schools for the mentally impaired.

The increase by 15% in special schools during the last five years (1991/92-1996/97) can probably be understood to mean that the resources of the local authorities and their willingness in offering more satisfactory education in the local compulsory school have decreased for the functionally disabled. For students with functional impairments, it means that possibilities of getting an education in their home area have become limited.

Shifting of the concept of normality?

There are no reasons to doubt that the number of children in need of special support has increased, according to the National Agency for Education's understanding. However, assessment of the reasons and the size of the increase are uncertain. In a study of children in need of special support within child care, the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare writes that it is difficult to say if the proportion of these children increased during the 1990s, since repeated investigations over time are almost entirely lacking. In certain geographical areas, however, substantial increases have occurred.³⁹ The reasons for the increase must first be related to the school system, society and the demands placed on adolescents. Cuts in spending also come into play. There is strong reason to study more closely the ability of municipalities and the schools to respond to needs and to also be observant of the displacement of the normality concept, which the increase can be an expression for. Has the threshold for what is characterized as normal been raised? There is also possibly good reason to reflect on how quickly word of this increase has spread. At the same time it is important to remember that talk of increasing violence, anxiety and students with concentration difficulties in schools is not a new phenomena, but is rather recurrent.

Worries about the development of adolescents and the decadence of the times have throughout history been quite usual, from ancient times onwards. During the 1700s and 1800s, there were worries about children who begged on the streets; begging was considered a moral problem. At the turn of the century, recurrent discussions were conducted about the wild behavior of adolescents, male gang problems and juvenile delinquency. During World War I, juvenile delinquency increased in the country, which caused concern among legislators and youth welfare workers. During the 1950s, car thefts, adolescent prostitution and addiction were discussed. In the 1980s a debate on norms took place. A recurring interpretation is that the maladjustment, immorality and the tendency for violence are becoming worse and worse, compared with the past. If we don't do something now, the problems will increase like an avalanche and represent a great public danger.... There is a tendency for each adult generation to think that they stand at the edge of the bottomless pit when they look at younger people in society compared with conditions during their own adolescence. Research on adolescence is divided when assessing the reasons for adolescent problems. While certain researchers believe that society today finds itself in a new phase and that adolescent problems are different and more serious than before, others indicate that the adult world during the last 150 years has reasoned in the same way.⁴⁰ There is also a tendency to generalize, so that all adolescents are judged alike, without consideration to the differences in groups and

individuals. One can also safely assert that adolescents in certain respects have become more conscientious, more serious, etc.

Remedial teaching has decreased

Assessment of the extent of support is based on statements by teachers, headmasters and local authorities. It is no less interesting to look more closely at the extent of support from the student's perspective. However, it is clear that reductions in support have occurred during recent years, regardless of perspective. On the other hand, it is not as obvious how the extent of today's support should be regarded - resources can be seen as insufficient or relatively good, depending on the points of comparison. This will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

In a longitudinal study - the so-called UGU Study - groups of "student panels," born with five-year intervals, have been followed. Among a group of students born in 1977, four out of ten boys and three out of ten girls received support at some time during the intermediate or upper levels of the compulsory school. Support was more often given in Grades 3-6 than during Grades 7-9, more often to children of unskilled workers than to children of salaried employees, and more often to students who were taught in Swedish as a second language.

Thirty-five percent of students in a later age group (born in 1982) had some form of supporting measure at some time during Grades 3-6, during the years 1991-1996. More boys than girls received remedial teaching; in the sixth grade every fifth boy got special help compared to every tenth girl. However, a comparison with earlier student panels shows that the number of students who received remedial teaching over several years has decreased. Supporting measures in 1995 were back at the same level as in 1980.

The comparison in the figure below shows supporting measures for four different student groups who were studied in the sixth grade, with five-year intervals.

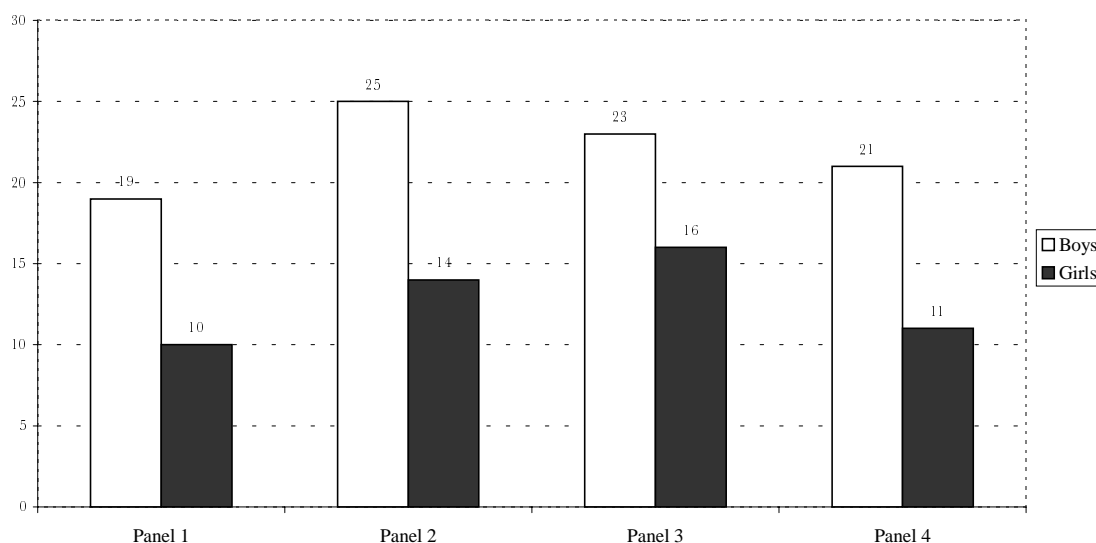


Figure 1. The proportion (%) of girls and boys who received special help in year 6. Student panel 1 (1980), panel 2 (1985), panel 3 (1990), panel 4 (1995). UGU Study, SCB 1998.

Many still receive support, despite budget cuts

The figures shown in the UGU Study are approximately at the level which was presented by the Government Commission on the Internal Work of Schools (SIA Commission) in the 1970s and which then were considered very high and which contributed to a reappraisal of the view of remedial teaching. If one looks at the reduction of resources for remedial teaching during recent years in this perspective, one can state that despite reappraisal of the forms and size of special education, it has continued to be high. During the years 1985-1990 a peak was reached, subsequently to return to the level of 1980. The differences between boys and girls remain constant.⁴¹

The proportion of students who received support in the upper secondary school in school year 1996/97 varied between a few percent and one fourth of the students in the examined schools, according to a questionnaire and interview study by the National Agency for Education. The median value was six percent. Students with visible and diagnosed needs received support easier, while students with more diffuse problems of a social character, concentration difficulties or insufficient motivation were reported to be more difficult to treat.⁴²

In the 1992 and 1995 studies, students in compulsory schools have been asked if it is easy to get help in school. The proportion of students who think that it is not so easy to get help has increased, and the proportion of students who think that they almost always get help in the learning of reading skills has decreased somewhat. "One must manage all by oneself." "It does not seem as if the school cares very much about those who have difficulties." More students chose these answer alternatives to the question of getting the help they need in school in the later investigation.

The National Agency for Education's 1997 Account of Conditions supports these negative shifts in opinions. Slightly more than half of the consulted schools state that they do not at all or can only partly manage to give students in need of special support the help they are entitled to. Recurrent problems, which are mentioned by the local authorities and the schools, are the lack of resources and competence, as well as difficulties to help children and adolescents with unconcentrated and/or compulsive behavior.⁴³ Approximately one fourth of the compulsory schools state that the proportion of students who have had their needs met has decreased since 1995.

Confidence in the school system is being reduced

According to the National Agency for Education's 1997 Attitude Study, confidence in the school system's abilities to support students in need of special help has decreased among the public, the parents and the teachers, but not, however, among the students. When students are asked if they have noticed any savings during the most recent years and, if so, it has led to poorer support possibilities, 18 percent concur. This can be compared with a corresponding proportion among parents, which is 40 percent and for teachers as high as 85 percent. These numbers are clearly higher than in a corresponding investigation in 1993/94.⁴⁴ The lack of confidence on the part of parents can, of course, also be linked with their placing greater demands on the schools today and thereby experiencing greater disappointments. But it is still alarming that parents of more than 100,000 schoolchildren feel that the school system does not have the means to give their children the support they may need.

The question can be raised about what should be regarded as a reasonable level of expectation. One answer to this is obviously the students' experiences of not receiving adequate support as well as the predominant consensus of teachers, head teachers and representatives of local authorities that the number of students in need of special support is increasing and that the support is insufficient. As earlier pointed out, the upper secondary school's new role as "a school for everyone" has implied a new teaching situation. Is the support designed in a way, which meets the needs of today's students? Is more remedial teaching the answer for the obviously great and increasing need becoming more apparent today? How should an optimal balance between improving the general environment and improving remedial teaching look? How do the local authorities carry out this responsibility? What are the connections between resources, special measures and results?

Directing, planning and distribution of resources

Almost all the local authorities have formulations about students in need of special support in their school policy. The subject is less prioritized in the documents at the individual school level.⁴⁵ According to the National Agency for Education's latest measurement, action plans are beginning to be put into practice more generally in schools. These phenomena are touched upon in more detail in this section. In addition, we will discuss the principles of the local authorities as concern the distribution of resources.

According to the National Agency for Education's Account of Conditions in 1997, almost all local authorities (90%) prioritize the subject of students in need of special support. Decisions to take action are often the result of dialogues between politicians, administrators and representatives of the schools. The subject in general receives good response from politicians, who see these students as a priority group. Proposals for measures are usually drafted by administrators and supported by politicians, for social and ideological reasons. To satisfy the needs of the students costs money and requires discussions about which resources can be made use of and how the distribution should look. Another question is how the legislation should be interpreted.⁴⁶

It is still usual to have funds earmarked for students in need of special support and that resources for these students are managed centrally, despite the general tendency that decisions and distributions of resources are delegated to the school level. Smaller municipalities tend more often than the larger municipalities to control the resources centrally. In a case study in eleven local authorities, where principles of the distribution of resources were studied, there were two main alternatives:

- * Resources for students in need of special support are distributed on the administrative level to the schools after separate negotiations with each school.
- * Distribution occurs in the budget process according to calculation principles established in advance. Two main principles can be perceived:

- "basic resources" with "supplementary" resources according to an individual student's need
- social weighting for each school in relation to the socio-economic character of its recruitment area. School recruitment areas with a low socio-economic status are given a greater weight than other areas.

In practice a number of variations and combinations of allocation principles occurs. All of the local authorities in the study have special resources intended for students in need of special support. In eight of the eleven local authorities, the whole or part of the means for students in need of special support was handled centrally. Many local authorities state that they prioritize resources to students in need of special support. The prioritization does not imply more money, but instead that fewer savings demands are placed on measures for this student group than on other activities. Weighting is used in order to allocate the resources in the best way. Such factors as social background, sparse population, number of children with single or poorly educated parents, etc. are weighed. It also happens that teacher salaries are higher at schools with heavy social disadvantages.⁴⁷ An ongoing study at the National Agency for Education indicates that schools with poorer social-cultural conditions are compensated by more resources.⁴⁸

In the study of support in 46 upper secondary schools, 20 schools were especially studied. In the municipalities where the schools were located, all the school plans had their own picture about students in need of special support. Half of the plans also contained principles for how the distribution of resources on the central level should be made. Almost as many plans, but not always the same, include the distribution of resources at the school level. Every other school plan contains statements about special personnel for children/students in need of special support. One example:

In childcare and school, there should be access to personnel with special qualifications, for example, welfare officers, psychologists, study and vocational counselors, special educators, speech therapists, teachers of the hearing-impaired, physicians and nurses.

In approximately half of the school plans, there are statements of individual plans, action plans, various study tempos or ability groupings. In the local work plans which were studied (the drop-out rate was 50%), there are as a rule formulations about students in need of special support, but they are relatively general and abstract. Some schools have special work plans for students with reading and writing difficulties. In certain cases, there were special student welfare plans with measures of principally medical, social or psychological character. Other types of plans, which occur, are bullying plans and crisis plans.⁴⁹

Many more now establish action plans

The obligation of the local authorities to draw up action plans for students in need of special support has existed since the 1980 Compulsory School Curriculum. Today there is an obligation written into the Compulsory School Ordinance, Chap. 5, while the upper secondary school does not have the same obligation. On the other hand, individual syllabi

are to be drawn up for every student. The headmasters have the responsibility to draw up action plans. By means of the process of assessing the need, formulating individually adapted goals, planning and carrying out the program for each such student, the school, the student and the parents can establish a common starting point for the cooperation and continuity in the measures taken. Action plans also give a starting point for follow-up and assessment of the efforts. Almost all parents think it is very important to take part in and decide upon their own child's help in the school, yet only slightly more than every fifth parent thinks that they can take part in making such decisions about this.⁵⁰ Supervisory investigations also show that parents participate to a lesser extent in drawing up action plans.

According to Bengt Persson's study, action programs are missing in approximately half of the schools, and the National Agency for Education's assessment also shows that action programs are a commodity in short supply at many schools.⁵¹ According to the National Agency for Education's case studies of 12 compulsory schools, action programs were drawn up at less than half of the schools for students with needs of special support. The rest of the schools have plans to draw up routines for action programs, but the interest is relatively low. One school thought that there was no interest from students, parents or teachers.⁵²

Opposition to the action programs seems to stem from several factors. Sometimes the reason can be lack of resources; if the student still cannot get support, it seems meaningless to draw up a program. Teachers sometimes think that the agreements need not be written down. Action programs "are in their heads". Other reasons are ethical - it feels difficult and/or wrong to put the students' problems on paper. Teachers also think that action programs can be an obstacle in their work by padlocking efforts instead of flexibly adapting them to changing needs. Another reason for opposition is that discussions in connection with the drawing up of an action program can mean a critical, open examination of the teachers' efforts up until now for the students. Colleagues can have difficulties giving each other criticism and thus action programs are avoided.⁵³

According to the supervisory studies made by the National Agency for Education in 19 municipalities during 1997, there were some shortcomings in almost all municipalities concerning the schools' method of drawing up action programs. In several of these municipalities, no action programs were drawn up at all, and the contents of those, which were, did not always meet with the requirements.

The Account of Conditions, which was made the same year as the supervisory investigations, however, gives another picture. Almost all schools, 90%, answered that they drew up action plans, against 43% in 1995. Only two percent state that they did not. The vague definitions of which students are in need of special support imply a difficulty in interpretation of the results. One interpretation is that the local authorities and schools now discovered the usefulness of action plans. It is also possible that they now realized the Government's great interest in drawing up action programs, and thus they comply.

Another question is what focus do action programs have. In a dissertation about immigrant students' action plans, Pirjo Lahdenperä shows that it is easier for teachers to describe the characteristics of individuals, students and parents than to describe the factors of the environment, for example, relationships, communication, teaching or the class as a group.

Lahdenperä discusses if this can be related to the fact that the knowledge of groups and organization is a less observed area in teaching and in the continuing education of teachers.⁵⁴

There are reasons for the local authorities and schools to revise their routines for drawing up action plans. In which context and with whom are the analyses and planning of measures made? What focus do the programs have: Are the students' difficulties related to the influence of the environment, relationships and other factors? To what extent do the parents and students participate? How frequently are the action programs revised and from what type of follow-up?

Resources

- not only a question of money

Even if the local authorities in their policy statements are anxious that students in need of special support should get it, this is not equally apparent in the distribution of resources. The overall formulations often lack a continuation in concrete strategies, with accompanying distribution of resources. The budget cuts in the school system are discussed below. By way of introduction, however, we will problematize the concept of resources.

The discussions on resources in the school are frequently focused on money and personnel. A certain measure of quantitative resources is clearly necessary for maintenance of quality. But resources for students in need of special support can refer to many things. In the first place, it should deal with the students' own resources which must be taken advantage of, developed and brought out. In this work, the quality of the teacher's teaching is central. Quality can refer to the number of years' experience as a teacher, the ability to create a good teaching situation for all students, or establish a relationship, which stimulates students to learn. It can also refer to making moderate demands, to control a broad repertoire of educational means which can be individualized to fit different students, to have knowledge of the students' situations - their possible functional disabilities and specific needs, etc. Schoolmates and support from parents are also important student resources. Students from homes without a tradition of studying have more difficulties with schoolwork than other students. Parental support and interest in schoolwork is important for the students' success in their schoolwork.⁵⁵ Positive expectations on the students, cooperation with the parents, an effective utilization of the teaching hours, and an emphasis on basic skills are factors which according to investigations demonstrate the interplay with good results.

The ordinary school environment can be designed so that it favors or obstructs learning. Even school meals, student welfare and school buildings belong to those resources, which are expected to have importance. In the work to create a favorable school environment, the school administration, as the educational leader responsible for the school's organization, is a crucial resource.⁵⁶ At a school that develops networks with other institutions nearby, it is easier to individualize and give adequate support. Coordination and cooperation between various activities are of much greater importance when dealing with children and adolescents with greater problems.⁵⁷

Consequently, the size of the quantitative resources measured in teaching periods and economic terms is not decisive. In a study of 15 upper level compulsory schools, the National Agency for Education analyzed the connection between economic resources, the students' socio-economic situation and the results. The study did not reveal any connection between the economic resources of the schools and the results of the students. However, there was a distinct connection between the results of the students and their socio-economic background - the higher the average educational level of the parents, the better results among the students.⁵⁸ Erik Hanushek, who examined the connection between resources and the results of students, does though, point out the importance of a well reasoned prioritizing of resources at a school.⁵⁹

In a study of how local authority cuts affect students in need of special support, two local authorities which carried out savings in the school area were compared with two which did not. From the preliminary results, it can be concluded that education in schools is to a great extent dependent on their individual traditions and perceptions about what are good solutions. This seems to be decisive, irrespective of the distribution of resources. For example, if the prevailing opinion at a school is that small groups are educationally valuable, that school concentrates on maintaining these even if the resources are reduced.⁶⁰

One possible explanation for the difficulty in supporting the connection between economic resources and results with examples is that a small addition to an activity with relatively large resources does not result in any measurable improvement in the results. The same, of course, goes for reductions. But presumably there is a critical point beyond which reduction of resources leads to a proportionally greater deterioration of the results. Current studies at the National Agency for Education seek to further illustrate the relationship between resources and results.⁶¹

Utilization of resources in compulsory and upper secondary schools

During the 1980s the proportion of special teaching in the compulsory school increased in relation to the total number of teaching hours. The cuts in the most recent years have affected teaching more than other activities in the school and possibly also the students in need of special support more than other student groups. In any case it is true for students with fewer visible needs. During the 1990s the investments in the compulsory school have decreased by approximately 10%, while teaching costs have decreased almost doubly (19%), both calculations in fixed prices. In practice this has meant more students per teacher than earlier. In the first place, remedial teaching hours, teaching in one's mother tongue and Swedish as a second language have been affected. To a lesser extent, ordinary teaching has been affected.⁶² It is possible that reduced resources for teaching in mother tongues and Swedish as a second language will lead to increased needs of special education teaching.

In a study where 11 compulsory schools' organization of special teaching was compared in 1985, 1993 and 1995, cuts had occurred during recent years, but there were no proof of cuts affecting the weakest students the hardest. However, most of the schools were of the opinion that the group of students with medium-sized difficulties, who earlier received support, had no priority now.⁶³

There are several studies, which conclude that these so-called gray zone children seem to be the losers. The schools think that it is difficult to support even children with complicated problems such as DAMP, Asperger's Syndrome and social problems.⁶⁴

The savings mean that many schools lack positions for special education teachers today.⁶⁵ When positions disappear the teachers frequently stay, but in new roles such as class teachers or subject teachers. The question is if this is, for the schools, an optimal utilization of their qualifications. Teachers with special education training qualifications imply a strengthening of the function of the class and subject teaching, but their knowledge in the forms of support to students and colleagues does not seem to be utilized. During the 1990s, some hundreds of special educators have been trained with the new education, but to what extent they are made use of as supervisors and consultants is unclear.⁶⁶

The upper secondary school is in another phase than the compulsory school. Many new upper secondary schools have opened, the programs are all 3-year and new upper secondary school programs have started. This means that local authorities in many cases have concentrated extra resources on the upper secondary schools. Generally, however, the number of teachers per 100 students has decreased somewhat.⁶⁷ Even in the upper secondary schools, mother-tongue teaching has diminished sharply, while teaching in Swedish as a second language has increased.⁶⁸

In the upper secondary schools, there is access to special education teachers in slightly more than half of the schools.⁶⁹ In the National Agency for Education's study of the upper secondary schools' special education work, the resources for students in need of special support had increased in 40% of the schools, but in one fourth of the schools they had decreased. At the same time, a majority of both the headmasters and special education teachers thought that the present supply of resources was insufficient. This harmed students in programs with vocational subjects, weak students in the natural science and social science programs, and students with less articulated needs.⁷⁰

Variations in the extent of support in upper secondary schools are remarkable, even considering that upper secondary schools look very different. Upper secondary school teachers' qualifications are subject-oriented, but their education gives to a less degree any preparation to give support. A further problem is that the special education teachers in the upper secondary school usually have teacher qualifications, which are aimed at lower ages.

Special schools and special schools for the intellectually disabled

The costs of special schools increased by 10% in fiscal year 1995/96, compared with the previous fiscal year. All schools contributed to the increase. In crowns, the teaching added most to the increased costs. Even at the special schools, the staff ratio has been reduced somewhat during the 1990s. The staff ratio was at its lowest in school year 95/96; since when we have seen small increases.⁷¹

The costs per student in the special schools for the intellectually disabled were relatively unchanged in a comparison between years 1995 and 1997. There were big differences in costs in different municipalities, primarily depending on the number of registered students. Staff ratios in the special schools for the intellectually disabled continue to be reduced, while

the number of teachers with pedagogic education increased somewhat between school years 1995/96 and 1996/97. Half of the teachers in special schools for the intellectually disabled had received some sort of special education training.⁷²

Student welfare personnel are reduced and centralized

Student welfare personnel is the category of adults in school who enjoys the greatest confidence of students if they have problems in school. Seventy percent of the students should feel be able to turn to, for example, a school nurse or a school welfare officer if they have problems. For students who play truant a great deal or quite frequently, the student welfare officer is especially important. Approximately half of the teachers think they lack special knowledge in social work for students.⁷³

It is against this background that one should see the cuts of school welfare personnel which have been carried out during the most recent years and which have primarily affected school physicians and psychologists. However, variations between the local authorities are great, and all personnel categories have probably felt the reductions to a certain extent.⁷⁴ For example, the reduction of psychologists and physician hours probably meant a greater workload for the remaining occupational groups. Furthermore, their tasks change content by taking over tasks from physicians and psychologists. This can also be a partial explanation of why students go to BUP/PUB (mental welfare services for children and adolescents) to a greater extent than before.

Student assistants are a group, which began to develop in the 1970s in order to make it possible for functionally disabled students to follow teaching in ordinary schools. A pilot study, which the National Swedish Agency for Special Education (SIH) made of student assistance in school, indicates that the number of student assistants in the local authorities increased to a great extent. At the same time the assistants' role is unclear. Few students who have a student assistant have continuous support of a special education teacher. Neither is it usual for a special education teacher to perform the function of a supervisor for the student assistant. Instead, the student assistant proceeds by trial and error together with the student and, to a great extent, the student will have to try to "keep up with" in the class.⁷⁵ Accordingly, a question, which can be raised, is if student assistants in certain cases have replaced special education teachers and if so, are they an adequate support for the student.

A phenomenon, which appears in more and more municipalities, is the central resource team. The team can consist of special education teachers, psychologists, physicians, counselors and sometimes also school nurses and other experts. In many local authorities the team is an independent financial unit whose services can be bought by the schools, also sometimes by the child care system and social services. The teams function in different ways: Makes analyses, guides or gives consultations to teachers and headmasters, gives individual support to students, participates in continuing education, etc. The reasons behind the introduction of the resource team can vary. A fundamental idea can be that the school first of all should be adapted to the student. The team's focus is to support the personnel by guidance, and to a lesser extent function as an investigator or support for students. This organization can be a long-term strategy in order to change the view on children in need of special support.⁷⁶

In other cases the reason can be a desire to strengthen the municipalities' specialist qualifications in investigating and treating, for example, children with neuropsychiatric problems. In the STUDS Project, which is carried out by the local authorities and the county councils in the southwest Greater Stockholm area, resource teams with specialists are built on a base of an infrastructure in the schools. The schools' basic resources of student welfare personnel and special education teachers are seen as the basis for joint action.⁷⁷

Sometimes, resource teams are set up as an economy measure. One possible result is that resources are taken from the school and thus the conditions for quickly solving school-related problems become worse. It becomes more difficult for the students themselves to take contact. For a centrally located team, replacing a psychologist and a counselor at the school, it is no less difficult to have knowledge about the environment and conditions at the school. There is a risk that the problems have time to worsen than they would have if solved quickly by personnel on the spot. Schools with meager resources can put off from buying the team's services until an acute situation occurs.⁷⁸

The National Agency for Education and the Swedish State Inheritance Fund have provided economic support to resource centers for dyslexia/reading and writing difficulties in a number of municipalities with such particular qualifications. Even children with MBD/DAMP and similar learning disabilities have received support. During 1995, nine resource centers were supported. Since the area of reading and writing development is not specifically discussed in this report, we will not go any further into this activity. However, it can be pointed out that the workload at many centers is often so great that long waiting times for analyses of students are created. Furthermore, there are indications that there is a long delay before students' difficulties are given attention.⁷⁹

To sum up, it can be said that budget cuts in the school system have occurred through rationalization in the organization of the teaching and the support of specialists. The consequences are larger groupings in both ordinary teaching and remedial teaching alternatively maintenance of smaller groups at the expense of remedial teachers. Other consequences are that more students are registered in special schools and special schools for the intellectually disabled. One tendency is that the specialists flow out from the schools and are centralized in support teams, with the entire municipality as an area of operations.

How do schools give support today?

One of the ideas behind this report was that separation from or inclusion in one's own group is an issue, which continuously is discussed in connection with questions about special education and other forms of support. How is this problem solved today? The principal impressions of available assessments and research give a mixed picture, but there are tendencies for the "homogenization" of classes and groups. Homogeneous groups are brought about, for example, by ability groupings, both in the compulsory and upper secondary schools. Roughly speaking, it can be said that headmasters are facing a goal conflict between concentrating on the general resources, which implies smaller classes and fewer teachers for all children at the expense of special resources, or concentrating on specific efforts with proportionately more remedial teachers and larger groups. One of these two principle paths

seems to be chosen more because of the school's tradition than rational considerations and access to resources. However, special education accommodates many efforts, which can vary in form as well as content and can be carried out more or less segregated or integrated.

Another important question is teachers' qualifications. A majority of the teachers, three out of five in the National Agency for Education's Attitude Measurements 1997, think that they are good at discovering and showing consideration for students with special needs. However, there is a dividing line between compulsory and upper secondary school; at the upper secondary schools 43% think that they cannot adequately meet the needs of students in need of special support.⁸⁰ **Ovántat slut på formel**

Some recent examples from assessments and research are given below. We start with some headmasters' attitudes to solutions, which greatly determine how the school day takes shape for students in need of special support.

Headmasters and remedial teachers are key people

In the above-mentioned study where the development of the organization of support teaching at 11 schools in 1985, 1993 and 1995 was compared, it was shown that remedial teachers and headmasters are two key persons, and the roles they occupy have great importance for the design of remedial teaching. In broad terms, remedial teachers can function either as a support resource, consultant and/or specialist. The general impression in the latest investigation is that work with making an inventory of the students' needs has increasingly become a concern for student welfare personnel in the school system and that headmasters in general have a stronger role in deciding how different resources are prioritized. There is a clear tendency for local authorities to give up some of their powers to direct resources and delegate prioritization to the schools instead.⁸¹

Headmasters' attitudes to the work with students in need of special support have varying consequences for the student. In a case study, the National Agency for Education has made a simplified categorization of these attitudes. With an *individual-focused* attitude, the headmaster starts from the student and his problems and tries to apply measures to solve the problems. From the start, the measures are aimed at the student. With such an attitude, *another headmaster starts from the personnel* she has at her disposal. "We must first calculate how many students the remedial teacher can take and then place the limit just there." The students' problems are defined, broadly in terms of the accessible resources, and these resources are the remedial education personnel already at hand or can be brought in. Another attitude is *preventative and environment-focused*. The entire school is seen as a collective resource; the headmaster's ambition is to spread knowledge on working with students in need of special support to as many as possible. Instead of employing remedial teachers, the entire personnel are taught remedial education and every class has both class teachers and stand-by specialists. The attitude is inclusive: the ambition is that all students be able to remain in their groups and that the support be given where the students are. There are also headmasters who concentrate greatly on *developing a cooperation network* with other institutions in the municipality. In one such municipality, a support team is centrally placed for consultation and support; school nurses have developed cooperation with each other, and the schools have working contacts with police, social services and voluntary organizations.⁸²

Large variations in various support forms

In the study where remedial education in 1985, 1993 and 1995 was compared, certain schools in 1995 chose to increase basic staffing, i.e. to generally form smaller teaching groups, while at the same time the remedial teaching itself was diminished. At other schools they did exactly the opposite, i.e. increased both the class size and the amount of remedial teaching. A general finding in the study of how remedial teaching changed over time was that remedial groups now were considerably larger than ten years ago. The investigators report that remedial groups sometimes were allowed to become so large that the work could no longer be considered meaningful.⁸³ An ongoing study of the teachers' work in the compulsory school supports the observation that certain schools have such large remedial teaching groups that it is difficult for teachers to help the students who need help most. The size of the ordinary classes also means that students with less obvious problems can not be taken care of.⁸⁴

The UGU Study shows that few students, some 2%, attend remedial teaching groups of the permanent kind, which according to the regulations should be decided by the school's board. This figure is constant for the student panel, which was followed during the school years 1991-1996. Most of them belonged to such a group only during one school year and then continued with remedial teaching in another way for at least one other school year. However, the use of remedial teaching groups has diminished in comparison to earlier student panels. The most usual measure for students born in 1982 was "support teaching in other ways," which 20% of all students in Grade 3 received. Remedial teaching is more usual in younger years and sinks to 14% by Grade 6. Adjusted curricula of studies occurred hardly at all. Support was more often given to students with home-language instruction than to other students. The UGU Study does not contain information as to what extent remedial teaching was organized in other ways, in the form of, more or less, temporary or permanent teaching groups, or in the classroom environment.

Table 1. The proportions of students in remedial teaching groups and the proportion with remedial teaching. Percentage, UGU Study. SU = remedial teaching group. Specuv = remedial teaching in another way.

	<u>Grade 3</u>		<u>Grade 4</u>		<u>Grade 5</u>		<u>Grade 6</u>	
	SU	Specuv	SU	Specuv	SU	Specuv	SU	Specuv
Students born 1972 (83-87)	2	16	2	18	3	17	2	18
Students born 1977 (86-90)	4	23	4	22	5	19	2	18
Students born 1982 (91-95)	2	20	2	18	2	19	2	14

From other studies, however, the National Agency for Education has information that the number of remedial teaching groups has increased, not least for "rowdy" children and adolescents. This is not remedial teaching in a strict legal sense.⁸⁵ Even in childcare the proportion of local authorities with special departments has increased since 1991. Most often special departments are being set up for children with autism, mental retardation or multiple-handicaps, as well as refugee children.⁸⁶

The National Agency for Education's supervisory evaluations and case studies describe several forms of help. It is usual that remedial teachers are in the classroom or teach groups or individual students outside the class. It is also usual that a portion of the support resources is used to conduct smaller classes. An example of such supervision is that classes for Grades 1-5 are small, with limited access to remedial teachers, while in Grades 6-9 the classes are larger with easier access to remedial teachers.

Ability grouping often occurs and can imply that groups with various study tempos have been formed. The grouping is made by examinations and other assessments, and the students are placed in or choose a group from the level which suits them best, for example in Swedish, English or mathematics. Ability grouping is most common in Grades 7-9. Often the groups with students who need more help are smaller, and these students study at a slower tempo. Sometimes the school has recommended flexible solutions and that groupings should not be static. Even work procedures and teaching methods should be developed gradually in order to meet the students' varying needs. However, in practice it can be difficult for a student to step up from one group with a slow study tempo to another with a higher tempo, because the students in this other group have come further along in their studies.

In a case study of how compulsory schools offer support to students, schools who set up remedial classes were compared to schools, which chose to give support primarily in the classroom. The definition of remedial classes was made by the schools themselves and could vary, but commonly it dealt with a permanent group.⁸⁷ There were, with only one exception, more remedial teachers/educationalists per student at the schools, which had remedial classes. However, in practice the differences in work procedures were relatively small. Even at schools without remedial classes, temporary smaller groups, and special arrangements for those students who needed special support, were created. Group members kept changing all the time, depending on the subject studied.

One of the case study schools has about 500 students in Grades 7-9 and is an example that multiple solutions can be used within one and the same school. There are five remedial teachers for Grades 7-9, one for Grades 4-6 and two teachers for Swedish as a second language. There is a very heterogeneous student group with 25 different languages spoken at home. Support to students with school problems varies from several hours a week to full time attendance in a remedial group. This permanent group has nine students; in the more open group there are 20 students who get 2-12 hours remedial teaching per week. In addition there is a remedial teacher offering extra instruction for students with dyslexia, and also a remedial teacher with groups in mathematics. The fifth remedial teacher at the

school has 8-10 students who receive extra support in Swedish, social subjects and English, which means that every student gets 10-12 hours of special help each week.⁸⁸

As illustrated above, school support was designed on the basis of students' shifting needs of support in specific subjects, as well as more general school difficulties.

In practice, however, the difference is smaller than the organizational form reported by the schools gives reason to assume. At certain schools the groups are called "clinics," a linguistic usage which has long been used and which gives connotations of patient and treatment. There are also examples of a "study courtyard" which is always open to all students and consequently not only for students who by the school are defined as needing support. The study courtyard is strategically placed in the school's center with teachers available for help. There was also an example of a remedial class where the teacher is principally responsible for all teaching of his students and where strong social ties between the teacher and students are formed. The teachers state that the most important reason for remedial classes is that there are students who would not manage in a large class. But there are other advantages such as students with difficulties do not need to meet so many students and teachers. The interviewed students describe their concentration difficulties in the classroom with many students and a highly intensified tempo. The teachers also think that it is easier to get a "comprehensive perspective" of the student, i.e. an assembled impression from various subjects, closer parental contact, contacts outside the classroom, etc. The separation solution gives the school system possibilities of compensating for failed efforts. This compensation involves closer teacher contact, use of computers and individual solutions.

Those schools, which have chosen not to organize remedial classes, do emphasize the importance of a rational structure of classes, and several of them concentrate instead on small classes. By reducing the class number to 16-17 students, a school tries to create a good learning environment for all students. The teachers think that it is easier to detect students with difficulties, increase the activity of the students, and to individualize the teaching. Another important reason is the avoidance of labeling students.

(Assistant headmaster, remedial teacher):

When you are a teenager you want to be like all the others and not pointed out as an outsider. Those who have attended a small teaching group have felt great in many ways, but they have missed a large social element. We have also understood that they weren't stimulated because they are together with each other all the time; it is only the teacher who can give them kicks.

Remedial teachers at these schools work in the classroom as well as separately with students during special hours.⁸⁹

Upper secondary school tests various forms of support

The National Agency for Education assessments of support in the *upper secondary school* show that a standard solution seems to be ability grouping, which usually is based on the

evaluations of the students' knowledge in English, mathematics and Swedish.⁹⁰ The program work focuses primarily on efforts to stimulate the students' reading and writing ability. Study courses given at a slower speed are also a method, which the schools think effective. Students with greater problems are in certain schools offered an individual program, while other schools try to support students within the framework of the national program. (In Sweden, upper secondary school offers 16 national programs with their different national goals.) In the fall of 1996, there were approximately 16,000 students in individual programs, which meant 5.2% of the total student population. More than one third proceed the following year to a national program. Students with an immigrant background are the largest group in individual programs.

Teachers of subjects with a psychosocial content, such as teachers in nursing, child and recreation programs, are often successful in teaching students with school difficulties. In these programs a culture is developed from an overall perspective, which has parallel processes in the student groups, with the result that the students often remain in their classes.

The best with child and recreation programs, I think, is that one gets help and keeps together and helps or receives help if needed. All the teachers are not so good, but those in child and recreation subjects are really okay. Our homeroom teacher was truly someone you could talk to about anything. (Student, Grade 3)

Adolescents themselves are, generally speaking, better motivated to accept support than when younger in the compulsory school's latter part. This is true in particular when the students have been accepted in a program they have chosen to follow and are motivated to study. A key problem is that 40 percent of the remedial teachers lack formal remedial teaching/special education. Cooperation between teachers occurs to a lesser extent around students in need of remedial support. It is evident mostly in lack of cooperation between teachers in subjects as English, Swedish and Mathematics on one hand and the more specifically vocational subjects on the other hand. Remedial teachers are usually utilized as "support teachers" who give extra lessons to students outside the framework of the classroom, and they sometimes also function as advisers.⁹¹

Students with immigrant backgrounds

Occasionally a larger percentage of students with another mother tongue than Swedish are in groups in need of remedial support. The Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Committee points out that children and adolescents with an immigrant background have a greater occurrence of psychic and social problems than Swedes of the same age, and the Committee sees the concentration on the mother tongue and Swedish as a second language as important factors for their sense of well-being and health.⁹²

Today no less than one fifth of the children in Swedish schools have a foreign background. With the large number of students with immigrant backgrounds, it naturally is a very heterogeneous group. The needs therefore look completely different depending on, among other things, from which area in the world the student comes, how long the student has been in Sweden, etc.

Many children have traumatic experiences from war, flight and separations behind them and live a long time with the uncertainty of whether they can stay in Sweden. The new country can also mean clashes with their own family's culture and traditions. This sometimes makes these children particularly vulnerable. It is, however, desirable to see the students' culture as an asset in the schoolwork. The students who arrive here just before puberty, in the ages 8-11, have the easiest time learning Swedish. Second generation immigrants who are born in Sweden do not greatly differ from Swedish students' in performance at the completion of compulsory school. Social class membership is no less for immigrant students the most important determinant of school success.⁹³

In the School Committee's interim report "Collision or meeting," two ways of handling culturally heterogeneous classes are described.⁹⁴ Many teachers start from the various cultures in the classroom and look upon the students' different experiences as tools in working towards a better understanding of the common realities. According to the Committee they pursue an inter-cultural teaching. Another approach is to take advantage of that element which unites the heterogeneous teaching groups, namely the Swedish culture. The Committee also points out that a teacher in a multiple-culture school often develops another teaching role, which is described as more personal, open and even confidential. According to the American research, which the committee refers to, teaching which is directed towards inter-cultural understanding does not, however, improve school results for the minority groups who traditionally have had difficulties in school. However, successful models are thought to be *bi-cultural education/bi-lingual education*, where teaching the schools' subjects assumes both the students' own language and society's major language. The second successful model is the *culturally responsive education*, which introduces the minority culture as part of the syllabus and as a teaching style. However, these models are not a support for all minority groups, and it is still an open question why certain groups are successful while others are not.⁹⁵ One conclusion, which can be drawn from these research results, is that concentration on mother tongue instruction is of great importance. Obviously this need varies depending on interest and how well the student is in command of his/her mother tongue.

Can one see results of remedial teaching?

For several reasons it is very difficult to measure results of remedial teaching and other support to students with special needs. The result is dependent on conditions in the form of various resources, which we have discussed above, as well as the teaching process. For example, it must be related to the student's and the school's conditions, work procedures and to the influence of other factors, which are difficult to determine. The concept of remedial teaching is also multi-faceted and can, as above discussed, include support in many various ways. Measured in time, remedial teaching can vary from a few hours per week to all the student's school years. Government regulation of this area is small, which gives the schools a greater scope of action, and which makes comparisons more difficult. Where remedial teaching is fully included in the ordinary program of teaching, these operate in union and are difficult to assess separately.

Research has emphasized certain factors central to successful remedial teaching. By way of example, Ingemar Emanuelsson stated in his 1974 dissertation that support during the first years in children's schooling is of very great importance for their development. If adequate resources are invested in this phase, there are excellent possibilities to avoid or at least lessen

problems later in life.⁹⁶ The UGU Study indicates that schools primarily work according to these principles. Traditionally, remedial teachers are deeply rooted in the compulsory school and most often recruited from the teachers at the intermediate and junior level of the compulsory school, while few have their background as special subject teachers.⁹⁷ However, there are signs that the new testing and grading system shift remedial efforts to older children, something that should be studied more closely.

With increased cooperation between childcare and school, an important task is to determine what support, coordinated between preschool and school, can mean for the child.

The importance of class size for schoolwork in general has been the subject of extensive studies. A research survey by Kjell Granström shows that the concept of class is awkward, since it is a term which is increasingly being replaced by other concepts and since frequent reorganization is going on in the schools.⁹⁸ However, there is no correlation between students' performance and class size until it comes down to a group size of about 15 students. But a reduction solely of class size did not give results unless the teacher at the same time changed his/her way of working. Educational methods seem to be more important than both class size and school subjects.

However, the size of the teaching group has a decisive importance for the *teacher's* well being and experience of doing a good job. An example of this was given in the National Agency for Education's case study where teachers at a school voluntarily undertook to increase their teaching load by a few hours per week in order to have smaller classes.⁹⁹ According to Granström, an increase in class size leads to risks of stress, resignation and burnout among teachers. Since the teacher, surely, is the most important factor from which the students benefit in teaching, Granström thinks that in the long run larger classes are a threat even to the students and their chances to get a good education.¹⁰⁰ The combination of fewer remedial teachers and larger classes/groups increases the certain risk of stress.

Haug points out that the relationship between resource efforts and results from remedial teaching are unclear and that opinions differ. For some students, remedial teaching functions excellently, for others it makes no difference, and for still others it is a catastrophe. The OECD has made a new and updated analysis of the international research on integration, which shows how difficult it is to find unambiguous effects of this method.¹⁰¹ This contrasts with a number of research results through the years, which point out that performance of students is better if they attend ordinary classes rather than remedial classes.¹⁰² This efficiency paradox, i.e. that students who are placed in specially adapted learning environments with extra support learn less than in an ordinary classroom environment, has been analyzed by Stangvik, among others, who found that the groups, most of all, had differences dependent on the demands placed on the students, and which status the group had. Stangvik even thinks that teaching in a remedial group in the long run creates an educational disadvantage.¹⁰³ Murray's research also shows that it is crucial for the students' self-image that remedial teaching is carried out in "the mainstream," i.e. that separation is applied as little as possible.¹⁰⁴ Placement in a remedial class impedes more than it strengthens the student's level of knowledge, adaptation and self-image. When the level of ambition and demands is lowered, the students learn to regard themselves as different, according to the so-called labeling theory.

Even for students outside these remedial teaching groups, such groups may function negatively since "average students" develop a pattern for sorting out deviating schoolmates. However, the research shows, no doubt paradoxically, that students often feel better in a remedial teaching group because the weight is placed on social relations and personal development.¹⁰⁵ In an assessment of special schools, the National Agency for Education asks the question whether groups can be too small. More students per teacher may perhaps contribute to a more profitable social learning process for the students.¹⁰⁶

With the starting point in the above research results, it is important to closely follow the results of schooling both for the children who are today diagnosed and separated, as well as the effects of the ability groupings which seem to increase in popularity both in the compulsory and upper secondary schools.

In childcare it has long been held that children with special needs should attend "ordinary" children's groups. The 1968 Commission on Nursery Provision was the first to point out that child care should be accessible for all children, even those with difficulties and functional impairments. That childcare should be accessible for all children was seen as a means to implement the goals of equality, democracy and solidarity in the Social Services Act. The picture which a survey of the research gives is, even in this area, difficult to interpret. Integration does not happen automatically, but demands planning, qualifications and active efforts of the personnel. Otherwise, there is a risk for the child to become isolated. Another result points out the importance of children's groups not being too large, as well as that education and guidance for the personnel must be provided for.¹⁰⁷

Grades, tests and support

Grades and examinations are gauges of knowledge and are thus often seen as a measurement of the schools' teaching. However, an important factor, which influences the results of examinations and grades, is the student's socio-economic background. Schools with the highest average grades are in areas where a large number of post-secondary educated Swedish citizens live. However, there are also schools which are more successful than expected, i.e. schools that are successful despite less favorable conditions in this respect.¹⁰⁸ The school as a social organization has great importance for the students' performance and social adjustment. Positive expectations and assessments of the students, homework which is followed up, effective use of lessons, and a great deal of encouragement are more frequently recurring factors in successful schools.¹⁰⁹ Correspondingly, assessments show that students who cut short their studies are dissatisfied with the teaching situation.

Consequently, the value of grades as a gauge of the schools' support to the students is uncertain. On the other hand, examinations and grades give indications of the need for support. Grades also influence the direction of the support; today the minimum passing grade is in central focus. For a more detailed presentation of the grading results, we refer to the reports from National Agency for Education.

The National Agency for Education has investigated how standardized achievement tests and grades differ as a measurement of knowledge in mathematics among Swedish students.¹¹⁰ The study shows that there is a strong correlation between grades and test results on the school

level as well as on the individual level. Girls tend to get higher grades than can be expected from the test results. Boys achieve better results on the standardized achievement tests, while girls receive higher average grades. However, boys seem to have better self-confidence than girls. Despite the fact that there are not any achievement differences between boys and girls in Grade 3, girls estimate their capacity to be less.¹¹¹

In a smaller study of the new grades in 50 compulsory schools, the National Agency for Education has studied the distribution of grades in various subjects and the number of students who do not reach the basic goals. On average, there are almost 7% who do not receive grades in various subjects. For example, 6% of the students have not received a grade in Swedish for the autumn term in Year 9, and 8% have not received a grade in English. (There are three grades in the grading system of compulsory school: Passed, Passed with distinction; Passed with great distinction. Students, who do not reach the basic goals in the subject, do not receive a grade in the subject.) The grades have improved from Grade 8 to Grade 9, but the proportion of students not receiving a grade has not changed. We still neither know if it is the same students who lack grades in various subjects, nor which support measures were put into effect for students with differing grades. Continued analyses will throw light on these and other questions.¹¹²

In a preliminary survey of final grades in the upper secondary school, these grades were compared with a study, which had been made after five terms. It shows that the final grade improved considerably, compared with earlier grades. The number of failures (IG) was consistently lower, while the proportion of passed with distinction (VG) and passed with great distinction (MVG) were approximately the same. Several reasons can be found for this improvement. The schools had put in remedial measures and students who had failed have now improved their grades after newer testing, a procedure which is in accordance with the upper secondary school reform. Another explanation is that those students who had the greatest difficulties dropped out of school during their last school year.¹¹³ Very likely all of these factors are valid.

From an interview study among students who had broken off their upper secondary school studies, came the explanation that the interruption lies in the teaching situation. The adolescents felt that they had too little influence; for example, they were not able to determine study tempo in terms of their own experience. This meant that many slipped behind and had difficulties catching up. They did not receive the stimulus or the information they wanted. The majority of those interviewed had not talked with a teacher or headmaster about their problem. The school refers the adolescents to a study and careers counselor to discuss their study situation. The solution, which the school most often offers, is an individual program or smaller program. In this way the school system pushes the students into a different organizational solution instead of tackling the problems where they are found.¹¹⁴ The proportion of students who complete their upper secondary school studies in four years has diminished from 86% among the students who started autumn 1992 to 80% among those who started autumn 1993. One of several reasons for this is that more students cross over to individual programs where the study tempo is slower.¹¹⁵

In the National Agency for Education's case study of the compulsory school, students and teachers think that great weight is attached to students getting Passing grades. The students

perceived this as taking a great deal of energy, and many teachers believed that the new grading system itself forces the focus of help measures on meeting the grading criteria, in order for the students to go on. Teachers felt it could sometimes be better to start from the student's strong points and go on from there. The advantages of the new grading system are that at the same time it stimulates newer support measures. Never the less, it became apparent that demands were lowered as a result of reducing the educational content. The teachers felt it was difficult to encourage students to struggle and then be forced to give failing grades.¹¹⁶

-Kalle often talks about education as just one big "test". But that seems quite natural. His struggle lies in getting "Passed" and unfortunately I am afraid sometimes that the struggle is interpreted as being approved as a person. And there is very little comfort I can give those who have several failures - "Yes, but you are a nice fellow." It does not really matter to him how nice he is, if he does not reach "Passed".¹¹⁷

Summary of the discussion

Taken into account our opening historical review, the 1970s and the SIA Commission can be seen as a break with an earlier tradition of separation in the school system. The SIA's approach was implemented in the Lgr 80, and its emphasis on a "school for everyone." The question was raised as to what extent this approach has been put into practice. Effects of special education are difficult to assess. Inclusion, as a method of working in the school system, is supported by ethical arguments, and also by a number of research results through the years, which in particular involve students whose needs are not so obvious. During the 1990s, decentralization has transferred responsibility to the local authority and school. This, together with the new curricula, has created conditions for increased decision-making on the local level, thereby permitting greater variations between schools and local authorities. In the curricula the school system's values, goals and guidelines for activities are formulated, which are intended to make clear the school systems' tasks and create an equivalent basis from which variations are possible. According to this, the school system has a particular responsibility for those students whom for various reasons have difficulty reaching the goals of education. Equality and freedom of choice are two mutually conflict-filled values, which the school system must deal with. How the schools succeed in answering the students' need of special support can be said to be a gauge of how well the school system succeeds. Students in need of special support have an absolute right to receive support, but the school system has the freedom to choose to what extent and how it should take place. Curricula or background texts do not give any guidance. Haug thinks that in the problem-filled situation which local authorities find themselves in the 1990s, the schools have too easily reverted to the old traditions of separation, which we described in the introduction.¹¹⁸

Plans and realities

There is an interesting discrepancy between formulation and implementation in this matter. Wordings in school plans and working procedures show that this is a prioritized area, while experiences from studies of the educational practices and the teachers' experiences today give a mixed picture. In many places new ideas and solutions flourish, while other schools

and teachers show signs of resignation. There is a consciousness and an interest in the area on the level of the local authority, which is not always combined with resources and measures. The cuts, which are put into effect, seem often to have led to a reduction, or a failure, to support students in need of support. It is still too early to say if the additional governmental resources which the local authorities received in the autumn of 1997 mean improved support for schoolchildren. In the National Agency for Education's inquiries in the autumn of 1997 to all local authorities, only a few reported that this addition meant a change for the better, but the National Agency for Education will return with a follow-up on this issue.

Today there is a great need for well reasoned strategies by the local authorities. Such strategies can give answers as to how the support to students with various needs should be designed, as well as to how the supervision and further training of personnel can take form in the municipalities. There is a need for developing suitable working structures and methodology for support for the individual child, where the action plan is a starting point for joint planning by student welfare personnel, parents, students and teachers. Coordination with childcare should be utilized for developing a joint support system.

The teacher's qualifications

Qualifications and competence of teachers and other school personnel, when dealing with functional impairments, support and remedial teaching in general, is a major question, in particular in the upper secondary school. Today we know too little of the extent to which special education consultants and supervisory roles have penetrated the school system. Increased qualifications in special education, especially for educators, are important. Through extended cooperation between the schoolteachers and experts in various branches of learning, including the SIH's consultant organization, continuing education at work can take place.

In a system with consultants, a reduction of the number of remedial teachers would in principle be logical. However, the model is built on the other teachers possessing a good level of knowledge on supporting students with school problems, a situation which according to the teachers' own assessment is generally not the case among upper secondary school teachers. If we accept the need of 1-2 special education teachers per school, this would mean a need for 5,000-7,500 such educators, solely for the compulsory schools. Today, according to the estimates of the Swedish Association of Municipalities, there are only some hundreds.

One of the greatest gains with this model is that focus can more easily be expected to shift from the individual student and his/her difficulties to the group, the teaching methods, the school environment and the surroundings and how they, taking *the student as a starting point*, can be restructured in order to support the student. The focus on solutions, presuming that the students themselves are the problems, which the National Agency for Education has observed in its assessments, can partly be a consequence of a lack of continuing education, both among remedial teachers and other teachers. Many times the problems are about interplay between the student and his/her surroundings. If the interest is focused on those who experience the problems, it becomes obvious that the teacher and headmaster can often have difficulties and/or that the student's environment can be problematic for the student. Then the teaching processes and the school's work environment come into focus.¹¹⁹

There is a risk that the lack of reflection and the lack of continuing education, in combination with today's hard-pressed economic situation, will lead to a stronger segregation separating the "rowdy" and resource-demanding students. The need to create homogeneous classes through differentiation of the students can increase when classes become larger and teachers fewer. An example of this is the utilization of ability grouping and the increase in registration in special schools as well as schools for the intellectually disabled. Differentiation and segregation of students, as the historical survey has shown, have been found even in other times, for example, in the 1960s when school resources expanded. Consequently, special education is not solely a resource question, but just as much a question of approach and qualifications of the teachers and those responsible for the school system. In this connection it is interesting to compare the support given to children in childcare. That support is most often given within the framework of the child's ordinary group, since development of the child's social qualifications is one of the goals highly prioritized, with every child being given the opportunity to learn in preschool. But even there, large children's groups in later years have meant that local authorities have created special groups for children in need of special support.¹²⁰

Examples of teachers who work with an innovative approach are those described in the National Agency for Education's study of how resourceful teachers work. They control a broad range of methods and have as a goal to create as good a general environment for all students as possible. They combine purposeful teaching with great flexibility in planning and implementation. They strive to involve parents as well as allow the students to be in on the planning and take responsibility for their tasks. An important goal for the teachers is to awaken the students' desire to learn.¹²¹

The new diagnoses

Historical development shows both a certain stability and a real change in the school system's assessments of which students should receive support. The groups which, irrespective of point in time, clearly emerge as in need of support are those with various types of functional impairments. But it is also obvious that diagnoses in the 1990s have begun to be used to a greater extent, in order to obtain the assessments of experts primarily for students with hidden functional impairments, but also probably in order to get "objective" measurement of the dysfunction. The diagnoses are made by physicians as well as by psychologists, special educators or other specialists. The increased interest of parents in demanding investigations and diagnoses of the child's problems can probably be connected with the resources going to diagnosed students. In a tight economic situation they have seen the need for fighting for support for their children. This means that the school's personnel to a lesser extent proceeds from the *needs* which are revealed in the classroom and the school and depend more on the experts' reports on the *conditions*. This can be a reaction to a situation where students with support needs were experienced as being so many that they look for other criteria than their own assessment as grounds for prioritization. An interesting question is what the diagnoses lead to in the teaching. For parents, teachers and students it also means that the diagnoses are often a relief, because they give an explanation for the behavior which had created feelings of guilt and anxiety.

However, the diagnosis often does not lead to other efforts being put into effect than those, which already are available. In some cases resources are missing for recommended measures. Another consequence can be that the so-called gray zone children will be without support

because prioritization is passed over to an expert. The ability of the school system to live up to an equivalence goal is put to a test. Furthermore, the classification of the students has equality and democracy repercussions. It is important to be on the alert for a tendency to dictatorial language which is exercised in relation to weaker groups, for these groups themselves seldom get the chance to speak up.

It is difficult to comment on the results of special education in the school system. The research gives evidence of the importance of avoiding labeling and separating students. Students who for a longer time are placed in remedial classes tend to lower their levels of ambition, do not go further to higher levels of studies, and more easily end up unemployed. Therefore, special support efforts should be given as far as possible within the framework of the ordinary class, as well as that one must give consideration to certain students who require special solutions. Investigations and diagnoses are, if correctly performed and utilized, valuable in giving the school a starting point for planning and providing adequate support for complicated school problems. Medical, psychological and social expertise can make the children's problems comprehensible and manageable for teachers, but the school system's personnel has responsibility for the design of the pedagogical activities and must be on the alert for increased segregation.

Handicap researchers, practicing teachers and others point out that children, for example, with DAMP, Asperger's Syndrome and autism must be given the possibility of an individually adapted teaching situation, where sometimes small, calm groups with a clear structure for the work and perhaps a student assistant are needed.¹²²

Another lesson from the National Agency for Education's assessments of this area is that teachers think there are certain, although very few, children for whom a small group is required, even when the classes are small.¹²³ Research on and evaluation of the effects of the schooling of these children are urgent.

Stukát has developed some thoughts on inherent paradoxes of special education, which we think summarize this survey very well.¹²⁴

- * Methods in special education require special education, although there are no teaching principles unique for students with difficulties.
- * Students with difficulties should have their teaching in a normal school environment, in other words not segregated, yet learning and development conditions can in certain cases be more advantageous in a homogeneous grouping in an adjusted environment.
- * Special education teachers represent special education knowledge, never the less the entire team of teachers is assumed to possess special education understanding.
- * The school system, in the first place, has educational tasks, but reasons for the students' difficulties often lie outside school and require efforts beyond purely educational ones.

Finally, the goal of the school system's efforts for students with school problems is, borrowing from the Reading and Writing Difficulties Commission's report, to build on the children's and adolescents' strengths in order to help them manage their difficulties. The primary need is a good learning environment with good access to materials, which awaken desire and curiosity. But materials are not enough; interaction shared with others is also needed. To be seen and heard are decisive. All children and adolescents who have difficulties want to have help, special help. But they also want to remain in their ordinary class, to be heard in their group and to participate in the group's activities.¹²⁵ In this work educators as well as specialists need to help one another.

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- ¹ Danielsson & Liljeroth 1996 give the following definitions of the concept of attitude: "...an individual's thoughts, conceptions and ideas, and the central function is thinking...." The concept of attitude is influenced by an individual's experiences, knowledge, evaluations, feelings, relationships, the ability to communicate and everything else which exists in one's personal life history and which is conveyed by important people but also universal to society and culture.
- ² Börjesson 1997, p. 47.
- ³ Haug 1977 Memo. The National Agency for Education, with reference to Liedman. Peder Haug is a Norwegian researcher.
- ⁴ Protocols of the Elementary School Board of Directors in Stockholm, 1880-1930.
- ⁵ The concepts of mentally deficient and imbecilic, like others such as idiots, vicious, etc., are examples of time-bound points of view and definitions of divergence. Compare Börjesson 1997, pp. 22-23.
- ⁶ 1912 Annual Report of the National Board of Stockholm (my italics).
- ⁷ Helldin 1997, p. 49.
- ⁸ 1927 Protocol of the Elementary National Board of Directors in Stockholm.
- ⁹ Qvarsell in the Swedish Government Official Report 1993:82, p. 225.
- ¹⁰ Börjesson 1997, p. 28.
- ¹¹ Börjesson 1997, p. 25.
- ¹² Persson 1995, p. 128.
- ¹³ Proposition 1990/91:115, p. 60.
- ¹⁴ Börjesson 1997, p.43
- ¹⁵ Emanuelsson Memo 1997.
- ¹⁶ Swedish Government Official Report (SOU) 1974:53, reference by Börjesson, p. 57.
- ¹⁷ Compare Emanuelsson Memo 1997.
- ¹⁸ Börjesson 1997, p. 14. Within constructivism a tradition has been developed to raise questions about the history of normality. It deals with problematizing the political as well as the scientific actors' claims to formulate the nature of man.
- ¹⁹ Solheim in Rygvold (Ed.) 1993, p. 80.
- ²⁰ Tideman 1997, Report 3, p. 159. A correspondingly large group of mildly mentally retarded existed in Sweden, but up to now has managed without special care.
- ²¹ Education Act: Chap. 1, § 2; Chap. 5, § 1.
- ²² Swedish Government Official Report (SOU) 1997:121. Leave school with a straight back.
- ²³ OECD. Integrating students with special needs into mainstream schools, 1995.
- ²⁴ Rosenqvist in Rabe & Hill (Eds.) 1996.
- ²⁵ Compare Haug Memo, The National Agency for Education 1997-11-20. See also the Book on Integration, Rabe & Hill (Eds.) 1996.
- ²⁶ According to the Commission on Parental Education, there are about 35,000 children and adolescents, ages 0-19, who have need of society-supported measures because of functional disabilities. SIH estimates about 14,000 students as its target group: 3,000 students with mobility disabilities, 1,000 visually disabled, 3,500 with defective hearing and 4,200 with multiple disabilities in special schools for the intellectually disabled, 1,000 children with impaired vision, and 1,300 deafblind adults. SIH's Annual Report 1997.
- ²⁷ The 1995 and 1997 National Agency for Education's Account of Conditions. Eighty percent of the local authorities reported that the number of students in need of special support increased 1991-1994. The same number, 80%, believe that the increase continues during 1997. Seventy percent of the schools make this assessment.
- ²⁸ Internal Report of the National Agency for Education, 1997. "I will probably cope with the program...".
- ²⁹ Oral information by Rolf Ornbrandt, the Follow-up Committee for the Division of Resources for Independent Schools. Slightly more than 53% of the independent schools report that the number increased, while 42% reported the number was unchanged.
- ³⁰ National Agency for Education, Report No. 144, p. 133. Seventy-one percent of the compulsory schools and 50% of the teachers in the upper secondary schools were of this opinion. Many even thought that these students had increased considerably.
- ³¹ National Agency for Education, working material. Consequences of changed responsibility for the special schools for the intellectually disabled and schools for intellectually disabled and adult education for the

intellectually disabled, 1998. Evaluations of the national special schools. National Agency for Education Diary No. 97:01591. During the school year 1996/97 there were a total of 789 students at the special schools and 9,872 students were registered in compulsory-level schools for the intellectually disabled. National Agency for Education Report No. 135. For deaf/gravely hearing impaired who need a sign language environment, however, there is no alternative to the special school.

³² 1997 Public Health Report.

³³ Final Report of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Committee, Swedish Government Official Report (SOU) 1998:31.

³⁴ National Agency for Education Report, No. 144, p. 54.

³⁵ See also "Guaranteed career?" by Marianne Blomsterberg on the role of the upper secondary school in the struggle against adolescent unemployment.

³⁶ Internal Report of the National Agency for Education, 1997. "I will probably cope with the program...."

³⁷ Tideman 1997, ref. to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Committee, the National Agency for Education, working material. Consequences of changed responsibility for the special schools for the intellectually disabled and adult education for the intellectually disabled, 1998.

³⁸ Tideman 1997, p. 157.

³⁹ The National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare 1997:7, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Olsson & Swärd 1994, Chaps. 1-3.

⁴¹ Statistics Sweden, the UGU Study. Supporting measures in schoolwork. The study is made in connection with the National Agency for Education, Statistics Sweden, the Stockholm Institute of Education, the National Agency for Higher Education, and the Educational Research Department at the University of Gothenburg.

⁴² Internal Report, National Agency for Education. I will probably cope with the program, 1997. The study included 46 schools and follow-up interviews were made in 20 schools. The natural science, vehicle, industry, child care and recreation, and social science programs were studied.

⁴³ About 60% of the compulsory schools and 50% of the upper secondary schools cannot at all or only partly manage to give students the support they are entitled to.

⁴⁴ National Agency for Education Report No. 144, p. 31.

⁴⁵ The 1997 Account of Conditions shows that 90% of the local authorities write about student groups in their school plans, while 68% of the compulsory schools and 55% of the upper secondary schools treat the area in their working plans.

⁴⁶ National Agency for Education interim report from the project, How do the local authorities steer the schools, internal memo 1997-12-15, p. 39.

⁴⁷ National Agency for Education Report No. 96:246.

⁴⁸ National Agency for Education, Samba working material, 1998.

⁴⁹ Internal Report of the National Agency for Education, 1997. "I will probably cope with the program..."

⁵⁰ National Agency for Education Report No. 144, p. 97.

⁵¹ National Agency for Education Report No. 140. About half of the schools drew up action plans for certain students, but closer to 15% on the whole drew up no action plans. Persson 1997.

⁵² National Agency for Education Internal Report, GUBS working material, 1998.

⁵³ Compare Persson 1997, National Agency for Education Report No. 140.

⁵⁴ Lahdenperä 1997, p. 136.

⁵⁵ Grosin 1991; Löfgren & Löfqvist 1989.

⁵⁶ National Agency for Education, Samba working material, 1998.

⁵⁷ Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Commission, Swedish Government Official Report 1998:31.

⁵⁸ National Agency for Education Report No. 57.

⁵⁹ National Agency for Education, Samba working material, 1998, with reference to Hanushek 1986.

⁶⁰ National Agency for Education. Study of discussions and considerations on different levels in a local authority in connection with the changes of resources, working material, 1998.

⁶¹ National Agency for Education, working material Samba, 1998.

⁶² According to the National Agency for Education's comparative figures in 1998, teaching hours for special education have decreased by 28.6%, while in 1991/92-1997/98 the teaching hours for mother-tongue and Swedish as a second language have decreased by 38.5% resp. 40.3% during the same time. These figures should be compared with the ordinary teaching which increased by 1.7% during the same time. The teaching hours per student in the 1996 compulsory school were slightly more than 5% lower than in 1990..

In the school year 1991/92, there were 9 teachers per 100 students, while in 1996/97 the number has been reduced to 7.7. During the years 1995/96-1996/97, the number of students in the compulsory school increased by 8%. While special education teaching hours increased by 1% during 1996/97, they declined again by 2.3% during the last year, 1997/98.

⁶³ National Agency for Education, Steering and responsibility in a decentralized school. Order No. 97:319.

⁶⁴ The development of resources and results in the school sector after the deregulation in 1991 - a national study, National Agency for Education Account of Conditions, 1997, Students in need of special support. A picture of the 1996 situation for the National Agency for Education.

⁶⁵ According to the National Agency for Education Report No. 140, whose investigation covers the 1995/96 school year, one fifth of the schools were without special education teachers.

⁶⁶ Swedish Association of Local Authorities, stencil 1997-08-18. Between the years 1991-1996, the number of yearly workers among special educationalists increased from 1 to 230.

⁶⁷ From 7.7 school year 91/92 to 7.4 year 96/97, according to the National Agency for Education's comparative figures 1998.

⁶⁸ National Agency for Education's comparative numbers 1997. While the teaching hours were totally reduced by 4% in years 1991/92-1996/97, the reduction in mother-tongue teaching hours was as much as 60%. However, the teaching hours per week in Swedish as a second language increased by 22%. Teaching costs in years 91-96 have diminished by 12%, while the total costs were reduced by 1%.

⁶⁹ According to the National Agency for Education's Account of Conditions in 1997, 37 (60%) of the schools state that they have special education teachers, but most likely there are more.

⁷⁰ Internal report of the National Agency for Education, 1997. "I will probably cope with the program..."

⁷¹ National Agency for Education. Assessment of the national special schools, Diary No. 97:01591. Descriptive Data on the 1997 Activities for the School Sector, p. 25. The increase of teaching hours per week was 5% between 1995 and 1996, which should be related to the increased number of students. According to the National Agency for Education's comparative figures, the number of teachers per 100 students in school years 92/93 was 38.0, 95/96 was 34.6 and 97/98 was 36.6.

⁷² National Agency for Education Report No. 135, p. 29. In school year 94/95 there were 30.1 teachers per 100 students, while the number for school year 96/97 was 26.8.

⁷³ National Agency for Education Report No. 144, pp. 53, 63. Even teachers enjoy a great confidence. Sixty-five percent of the students find it very easy or quite easy to turn to some teacher with a school problem.

⁷⁴ According to National Agency for Education comparative figures 1997, the student welfare costs decreased by approximately 2%, i.e. 25 SEK per student 1995-1996. However, during 1991-1994 the costs increased by 8%. The definition, then, of student welfare was different; thus comparisons cannot be made. According to the National Swedish Association of School Nurses, the number of students per school nurse during 1997 was 844. See also the stencil from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, National Agency for Education Report No. 53, 1994.

⁷⁵ SIH, National Swedish Agency for Special Education, Gadler 1997.

⁷⁶ National Agency for Education internal report, How do the local authorities steer schools? 1998.

⁷⁷ Hellström, STUDS Project, stencil. STUDS stands for Cooperation for Early Detection, Diagnosis and Remedial Efforts for Children with Neurological Development Deviations.

⁷⁸ National Agency for Education Report No. 140, SOU 1998:31.

⁷⁹ National Agency for Education, Diary No. 95:344.

⁸⁰ National Agency for Education Report No. 144, p. 65.

⁸¹ National Agency for Education, Steering and responsibility in a decentralized school. Order No. 97:319.

⁸² National Agency for Education Report No. 140.

⁸³ National Agency for Education. Steering and responsibility in a decentralized school, Order No. 97:319. In the 1986 study, Löfqvist found that schools could be categorized in four models based on their work with inventorying needs, prioritizing and mobilizing resources. The models were called the headmasters model, the working team model, the student welfare model and the greyhound model.

⁸⁴ National Agency for Education, Teachers in the compulsory school, working material.

⁸⁵ National Agency for Education. Students with needs of special support. A picture of the situation, internal report, 1996.

⁸⁶ The National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare, 1997:7.

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- ⁸⁷ The study did not follow the strict definition of remedial classes which is used in the Compulsory School Ordinance, Chap. 5, § 5 and which demands that the school board decides on the placement of a student.
- ⁸⁸ National Agency for Education, GUBS working material, 1998.
- ⁸⁹ National Agency for Education, GUBS working material, 1998.
- ⁹⁰ Internal report of the National Agency for Education, 1997. "I will probably cope with the program ..." and National Agency for Education Reports Nos. 89 and 149. Mapping of all the students' reading and writing abilities are usual; two out of three schools do this.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² The Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Committee, Swedish Government Official Report 1998:31, p. 116.
- ⁹³ National Agency for Education, Samba working material, 1998, reference to M. Similä 1994.
- ⁹⁴ Swedish Government Official Report 1996:143.
- ⁹⁵ Swedish Government Official Report 1996:143, with reference to John Ogbu 1992: Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning, in Educational Research, Nov. 1992, Washington, D.C. American Educational Research Association, pp. 5-14.
- ⁹⁶ Emanuelsson in Persson 1995, p. 15.
- ⁹⁷ Persson 1995.
- ⁹⁸ Granström Memo, November 1997.
- ⁹⁹ National Agency for Education, GUBS working material 1998.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁰¹ Haug 1998, printing in progress, with reference to Gjessing 1974, European Journal of Special Needs Education No. 3, 1993.
- ¹⁰² Persson 1997, with reference to Stangvik 1979, p. 28.
- ¹⁰³ Emanuelsson 1998, with reference to Österling 1967, Emanuelsson 1967 and Stangvik 1979.
- ¹⁰⁴ Murray 1994, p. 131.
- ¹⁰⁵ Haug 1997 with reference to Blatchford and Mortimor 1994, Österling 1967, Stangvik 1979, OECD 1995, Gunnarsson 1995.
- ¹⁰⁶ National Agency for Education Report, Evaluation of the national special schools - organization and results, 1997.
- ¹⁰⁷ Larsson-Swärd 1994, Chap. 3, Piltz-Maliks & Sjögren Olsson 1998
- ¹⁰⁸ National Agency for Education, Diary No. 94:1908, project Effectiveness in school activities in a local perspective.
- ¹⁰⁹ Grosin (Ed.) 1991, pp. 1-15, Grosin, Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research Vol. 37, No. 4, 1993.
- ¹¹⁰ National Agency for Education. To use standardized achievement test results in the follow-up of the local government.
- ¹¹¹ National Agency for Education. Samba working material, 1998. National Agency for Education Diary No. 94:2147.
- ¹¹² National Agency for Education report. Grades in Class 9, autumn term 1997, memo 1998-02-17.
- ¹¹³ National Agency for Education report. Final grades in the upper secondary school, 1997 memo 97-11-10.
- ¹¹⁴ National Agency for Education Report No. 85.
- ¹¹⁵ National Agency for Education Report No. 146.
- ¹¹⁶ National Agency for Education, GUBS working material, 1998.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁸ Haug memo 97-11-20.
- ¹¹⁹ Didactica Minima, Lahdenperä 1993.
- ¹²⁰ According to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare Report 1997:7, there were special departments for preschool children in a third of the country's local authorities. Special departments were more common in local authorities with a low personnel population. See also Piltz-Maliks & Sjögren Olsson, R & D Report 1998:1.
- ¹²¹ National Agency for Education Report No. 71.
- ¹²² Hellström 1995, p. 109. National Agency for Education, working material Samba, 1998.
- ¹²³ National Agency for Education. GUBS working material, 1998.
- ¹²⁴ Reference to Bladini 1991, p. 344.
- ¹²⁵ Swedish Government Official Report 1997:108, Chap. 4.