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Epistemic Injustices & Children with Down Syndrome: Kindergarten
Teachers' Perceptions in Oslo, Norway

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Title:

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ABSTRACT

The study calls attention to the issue of epistemic injustices towards children with Down syndrome (DS) that can take place in a mainstream kindergarten which is supposed to be *inclusive, fair, and just* for all children irrespective of their abilities and disabilities. This study aims to answer three main research questions: (1) What are the kindergarten teachers' perceptions towards children with DS; (2) Are there any epistemic injustices towards children or children with DS; and (3) How can we introduce *epistemic justice* among the kindergarten teachers in an inclusive classroom. To answer these research questions in an extensive and thorough approach, a qualitative methodology was chosen with the help of eight face-to-face semi-structured interviews from eight kindergarten teachers in Oslo, Norway.

The main findings concerning the first research question showed that the teachers' perceptions towards the children with Down syndrome are mostly positive with few remarks on how challenging it can be at times to teach them. However, through their statements about children with Down syndrome, quite a few ambivalent remarks from most of the teachers pointed to the fact that they had conflicting, contradictory perceptions of the epistemic agency of both children with and without Down syndrome that revealed the answer to the second research question. Although the researcher received negative answers from all when they were asked about ever dismissing a child with or without Down syndrome as a knower, almost all the teachers agreed that they had seen or heard that happening from their colleagues. The main findings regarding the last research question showed there is a growing need for proper teacher training that cultivates activities and uplifts epistemic virtues as well as lessens the gap between knowledge and practices. Kindergartens need to ensure proper resources to support children with Down syndrome as the more equal they are in sharing educational resources the more access there will be available for them to the same markers of credibility.

The teachers in the current study agreed that it can be difficult at times not to differentiate between a child with and without Down syndrome as it comes up subconsciously or from empathy. Therefore the teachers agreed that it is crucial to be aware of the negative

consequences of being over-empathetic about children with Down syndrome as it can result in taking away their agency as well as create epistemic injustice for other children without Down syndrome. This study contributes to the research done where the context has been Norwegian mainstream kindergartens. As the previous research on this context has been somewhat limited, the researcher aimed to provide the kindergarten teachers with relevant information that creates awareness on the issue that is epistemic injustice, and the negative consequences of it and check if they themselves are holding any prejudices that can label a child with Down syndrome. The goal of this study was also to create awareness of how to practice epistemic virtue ourselves to create an epistemically just society.

Keywords: Children with Down Syndrome, Epistemic Injustice, Epistemic Justice, Inclusive Education, Kindergarten/Barnehage, Pedagogikk leader, Kindergarten teacher, Epistemic virtue.

PREFACE

I would like to thank my supervisor and mentor Professor Luca Tateo for providing me with the time, energy, support, and motivation I needed to complete this master's thesis. The research would not be the same without his valuable insights and feedback that I needed to keep me going.

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A special thanks to Ronde who has been the rock for me throughout my master's, leaving motivational quotes everywhere in the house to cheer me up. Also, I am grateful to have some amazing friends and family all around the world, whose support and encouragement are the reason for everything that I do. A big shout-out to my nephew 'Rushdi' in Bangladesh who inspires me every single day to devote myself to the field of special education. I am forever grateful to the people I have in my life and the people I have lost on the way because without them I would not be where I am today.

DEDICATION

To my Mom & big brother

ABBREVIATION

DS= Down Syndrome

EI= Epistemic Injustice

EJ= Epistemic Justice

UNESCO= The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

IQ= Intelligence Quotient

TOPFA= Termination of Pregnancy due to Fetal Anomaly

NSD= Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the quest of respecting human diversity, the idea of “inclusion” was born which has been giving us a yearning hope to embrace all despite their differences such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, social class, religion, ethical values system, political beliefs, even physical or intellectual ability. Among all these attributes, “physical or intellectual disability” can become often a target of discrimination and power dynamic as “diversity” is experienced differently by different persons until true inclusion is established. Physical or intellectual disability calls for special needs and among all the other special needs, Down syndrome (DS) is rather very common and is easily distinguishable for its distinct characteristics. According to Alton (1998), it is a genetic condition typically caused by an extra chromosome or an extra part of chromosome number 21. Although in the past it was seen as a disability that had a high mortality rate, the scenario has changed due to the progress of modern science. Therefore, children with down syndrome are expected to have just as normal a life as the other children as well as the same quality standard of living. Inclusion of children with down syndrome in mainstream schools and kindergarten is a must in order to ensure the standard of life, yet not an easy one. There are many factors that need to be assessed in order to ensure inclusion; the teacher’s perception of the children with down syndrome is one of the most crucial factors in play. As Children with Down syndrome are easily recognizable because of their distinct facial features, it can play a role in how the teachers perceive them. Among other physical characteristics, certain distinctive features in the human face are typically associated in people with DS such as slanting eyes, brush-field spots in the iris, round face, abnormal outer ears, flat nasal bridge, small chin, and flattened nose, which are assessed through facial dysmorphology (Cornejo, Pedrini, Machado-Lima & Nunes, 2017). Similarities in the physical appearance of people with Down syndrome have for a long time influenced the neglect of remarkable differences in their cognitive development and other psychosocial abilities and skills (Sunko & Kaselj, 2020). Hence, the generalization of their ability to contribute to knowledge is most of the time seen among people in the form of “prejudices” which may lead to epistemic injustices towards the children with Down syndrome in a mainstream classroom eventually making them feel less valuable than their peers.

Epistemic injustices occur when a person is harmed for not being acknowledged as a knower. According to Miranda Fricker (2007) who coined the term “Epistemic Injustice” or EI, this harm can be categorized into two types- Testimonial injustices and Hermeneutical injustices. Although Miranda Fricker(2007) focuses particularly on testimonial injustices resulting from racial and gender-based prejudice (Bartlett, 2018), there are many more areas on which basis a person can be prejudiced. Burroughs and Tollefsen (2016) argue that there is “widespread epistemic prejudice against children”. Moreover, according to Margaret Price(2011), children with intellectual, and mental disabilities are often victims of epistemic injustices in a school setting. Academic discourse operates not just to omit, but to abhor mental disability—to reject it, to stifle and expel it (Price, 2011). These concepts of epistemic injustices (both testimonial and hermeneutical) are essential to be acknowledged in an inclusive school setting as children with down syndrome are more likely to be prejudiced for two reasons- for being children and for having distinct facial features as well as stereotypical perceptions about their abilities in the society. In order to omit any prejudices among teachers against children with Down syndrome and work towards establishing ‘Epistemic Justice’ instead, it is important to find out first what the present situation is in classrooms as well as make them aware of this significant issue. Therefore, this research aims to identify the testimonial and hermeneutical injustices that children with Down syndrome may face in an inclusive classroom setting in Oslo, Norway. Norway is one of the most developed countries which is known for its inclusive and progressive approach towards individuals with disabilities, including children with Down syndrome as various policies and initiatives has been implemented over the years to support the well-being and integration of children with Down syndrome into society. In Norway, a child with Down syndrome have the right to equal access to education, healthcare, and social services as much as any other child as the government emphasizes inclusive education, which means that children with Down syndrome are encouraged to attend mainstream schools alongside their peers without disabilities. As the establishment of an epistemically just kindergarten can be a challenge even for the Norwegian teachers despite all the resources, the study aims to make the teachers become aware and responsible to practice epistemic virtues. The researcher decided to commence with the teacher’s perception of children with down syndrome and the epistemic injustices they face as a knower, as establishing ‘equity’ rather than ‘equality’ should be the first concern when it comes to establishing “Epistemic Justice”.

1.1 Research Aims & Objectives

Each and every research stem from a need for change and an interest in new knowledge. This research undertaking is not far from it as the interest of the researcher lies within the realm of injustices and inequalities in pedagogy and teachers' perceptions towards it.

It is quite natural for human beings to form perceptions about another even when they have very little information about the other and few of the perceptions may be based on stereotypes. As human beings, teachers are not above this trait and therefore may develop misconceptions about the student's abilities through general stereotypes without even realizing it. This can be a huge obstacle in the path of inclusion as teachers are supposed to diminish diversity by making the children feel equally embraced and not an outcast. Therefore, it is essential to find out teachers' perceptions to make them aware of this issue in order to avoid this tendency by shedding some light on their own personal lens in order to maintain objectivity in the classroom. They need to analyse their viewpoints and get a much clearer picture of how they see their students and how they really are. Teachers must be enlightened of their perceptions as well as misconceptions and how these can positively and negatively shape their expectations for the children with or without special needs as it can influence a child's performance and how he/she embraces the idea of the "school" as well as "own self". Therefore, the goal of this research is to draw the attention of teachers, special needs educators, researchers, policy-makers, etc, and help them better understand if they are holding any prejudices towards children with Down syndrome about their voices, knowledge, and abilities without them even knowing. The research aims to help children with down syndrome have just as normal educational and life experiences as their peers without any special needs by ameliorating epistemic injustices that take away their agency as a 'knower' and introducing the practices of epistemic justice among teachers.

1.2 Research Problems & Questions

For this study, the principal research questions are:

- What are the perceptions of kindergarten teachers towards children with Down syndrome in elementary school classrooms?
- Are there any epistemic injustices towards children or children with DS?
- How can we introduce epistemic justice among kindergarten teachers in an inclusive classroom?

The guiding research sub-questions are divided into two phases:

Phase 1:

- To what extent do the teachers know about Down syndrome?
- Do the teachers differentiate between a child with down syndrome and a child without any needs as a 'knower'?
- To what extent are the teachers aware of any epistemic injustices towards the children with down syndrome on their part?
- Do the teachers hold any stereotypes or labelling towards children with Down syndrome?

Phase 2:

- What attitudes and beliefs do teachers hold as a part of being supportive of the children with down syndrome in the classroom?
- What attitudes and beliefs do teachers recognize as being a hindrance to enhancing the learning experience of children with down syndrome in the classroom?
- How can we overcome epistemic injustice?
- What can the teacher introduce to promote epistemic justice in a classroom?

The aim of the first phase is to know about the present situation of teacher-children with down syndrome dynamic and possible epistemic injustices that may occur in the classroom. The aim of the second phase is to know if the teachers acknowledge the injustices as well as to make them more aware and responsible towards introducing epistemic justice instead.

1.3 Rationale

The Salamanca Statement reaffirms the right to education to every individual, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of human rights, and renews the pledge made by the world community at the 1990 world conference on Education for All to ensure that the right for all regardless of individual differences. (UNESCO: 1994).

A rationale for this research study can be best explained by the statement of Quantz, Buell, & the Editorial Board of *The Assembly: A Journal for Public Scholarship on Education* (2019), “Working toward educational justice requires destabilizing and resisting epistemic injustice through expansive views of what counts as legitimate knowledge as well as who gets to participate in the creation and exchange of knowledge”.

The aim of the study is to show how children with down syndrome can often face knowledge-based injustices in inclusive classrooms. While there has been a growing literature in recent years that uncover and elucidates the often subtle and implanted epistemic injustices children face, very few articles thus far have addressed the harmful severity children with Down syndrome may face as ‘knowers’. The focus of the study is to explore the injustices a child with down syndrome may face in the classroom by the teachers. The study will not only look at the epistemic injustices from an academic viewpoint but from a holistic understanding of teachers’ perceptions of children with down syndrome by analysing their answers to the interview questions. The aim of the study is to explore not only the actions and practices of the teachers in the classroom but also the beliefs and perceptions they hold to determine if these have a negative or positive effect on the voice of the students with down syndrome in the classroom.

Inclusive education is seen to be a way of merging all students into a unit beyond cultural, linguistic, physical, emotional as well as intellectual diversity. It may seem easier on paper to establish an inclusive classroom with no discrimination between a child with special needs and a child without. However, in practice, it becomes extremely challenging if stereotypical prejudices are not taken care of as soon as possible. The researcher developed an immense interest in researching more on inclusion in Norway as it has been a new concept for her coming from

Bangladesh. Therefore, the researcher decided to discover by herself what the real situation is among the teachers in kindergartens in a developed country like Norway, when it comes to actual implementations of inclusion.

1.4 Presentation of thesis

Chapter 2: Theoretical background.

Epistemic Injustice:

The sub-chapter will highlight the literature that has been reviewed prior as well as during the research. The parts related to these sub-chapters aim to bring to the fore the theoretical perspectives, prior research, and practical knowledge relating to the perceptions of teachers towards the students with down syndrome in the classroom and the impact it has on their epistemic legitimacy as a knower. The chapter commences with a brief introduction of the historical perspective of epistemic injustice, how the term came into being, epistemic exclusions, how was the situation before the term, few examples and cases. Following the historical perspective the types of Epistemic Injustices, the repercussions of Epistemic Injustices describing possible harms and consequences of EI, and how it contributes to exclusion will be highlighted. Epistemic injustices against children will be described in the following sub-chapter portraying how a child can be a victim of EI just for being a child and the reason for it being difficult to acknowledge a child's voice with cases that have happened before when a child wasn't heard because of prejudices with related literature.

Down Syndrome:

The sub-chapter aims to commence with a brief introduction to Down syndrome, a few features and definitions to better portray the syndrome, and how it can lead to epistemic injustices for children. It is important to know the historical perspective and how it used to be portrayed in medicine, society, and pedagogy and later development of the knowledge in this area to comprehend how this advancement can be used to bring about epistemic justice. Later on, some myths and prejudices will be pointed out to depict how these can influence our perception and judgments of down syndrome. Moreover, the present situation and understanding, new knowledge and scientific findings about Down syndrome will be portrayed as this is the

fundamental concern of this research as well as the standing of Norway when it comes to inclusion of the children with Down syndrome, the ratio of down syndrome in population, the education and inclusion policies and some reports concerning whether these are being implemented in ordinary classrooms.

Epistemic Injustices against Children with Down Syndrome:

The sub-chapter will contain in detailed discussion on how children with Down syndrome are more vulnerable to the epistemic injustices for being a child and having distinct facial features by drawing references from past literature to portray an appropriate picture of how harmful it is for them.

Epistemic Justice for Children with Down Syndrome:

The sub-chapter will contain in detail a discussion on the need for epistemic justice to solve the problem and how to introduce it by drawing references from past literature on how to ensure Epistemic Justice to achieve true inclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology.

The chapter will portray a clear description of the research context and samples that were chosen with careful detail considering all factors for the purpose of the research. The research Design is considered a non-experimental and qualitative study since consists of one-on-one face-to-face interviews. As the research depends on the willingness and availability of the kindergarten teachers as well as their acquaintances with multiple children with down syndrome to participate in the study after ethical consent was provided, it can be said that this is a convenience sampling. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen as the study aims to find out as much new information as possible as well as new ideas related to epistemic injustices from the teachers. Reliability and validity, advantages and disadvantages of the methods chosen will be noted as well as a few information about the informants while protecting the identity for example- sample size, choosing criteria, age range, educational background, the status of the schools, etc without mentioning names or locations. Introduction to the interview guide and the process of how it was constructed will be described as well as the situation faced by the interviewer and how the themes will emerge from the data for a thematic analysis. Data Analysis will explore and depict the implementation of Thematic Analysis and a concise dissertation of the fundamental findings and the comparisons across different viewpoints will be noted. Description of how ethics have

been considered before the start, during, and end of the project, the plan to store the data, its accessibility, and what will be done after the end of the project will also be presented.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Data

Inductive coding was selected to conduct the systemic analysis of the data. This chapter aims to present the findings in a systemic way.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter aims to present what can be done in the future with these findings in the light of relevant literature to promote epistemic Justice and eradicate epistemic injustices towards children with down syndrome. The chapter also aims to depict how the themes and sub-themes are connected and overlap each other as well as the profiles of the teachers.

Chapter Six: Scopes & Limitations

This chapter will illustrate what could not be done in this research and what could have been done better in order to support future studies to design better.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations

Chapter seven aims to present a few recommendations for the teachers, educational researchers, and policymakers concerning the steps teachers can take to change the prejudice they hold and turn it into a positive perception as well as programs that must be introduced and curriculums that must be adapted by the policy-makers to establish Epistemic Justice among teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Importance of Epistemic justice in ensuring equity and inclusion and teachers' role in it will be portrayed as well as the importance of teachers' understanding of Down syndrome and epistemic justice. Moreover, the need for programs promoting epistemic justice will be highlighted to draw the attention of policy-makers.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Miranda Fricker (2007) introduced the concept of "Epistemic Injustice," which has become a significant contribution to the field of social epistemology. According to Fricker (2007), testimonial injustices are the end products of prejudicial stereotypes, where "prejudice" equals a judgement that is resistant to counter-evidence due to an "affective investment on the part of the subject" and "stereotype" refers to "widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes". Whereas, hermeneutical injustice is "having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (Fricker, 2010). To men's benefit, this behavior was only understood as "natural" or "harmless play" (Dohmen, 2016). According to Fowzer (2018), children often lack the ability to defend against and recover from epistemic injustice. This inability can stem from a lack of linguistic tools, limited vocabulary, or lack of understanding that the injustice suffered is epistemic. However, she argued that it is essential to note that this inability to make sense of the injustice is not indicative of a lack of epistemic ability.

According to several declarations over the years (Education for All,1990; the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, 1994), Education is a fundamental right to all children regardless of their status or background, and hence came the concept of inclusiveness. However, children with special needs often become victims of exclusion and marginalization in inclusive classrooms because of prejudices teachers may hold against them. Especially children with Down syndrome as they have distinct facial features that make them stand out to the teachers from their peers with no special needs. Moreover, there are two overlapping features of mental incompetency associated with Down syndrome: Problems in cognitive function and adaptive behavior (Jones, Neil, & Feeley, 2014; Westwood, 2009). Therefore, it is more likely to hold prejudices against them and their intellectual capabilities. Baumtrog & Peach (2019) argued that children are often perceived to be less credible testifiers than adults and especially when this injustice is considered in combination with other inter sectional identities, it has the potential to render these children invisible. As a result, teachers often in their subconscious mind may show "truncated subjectivity" and "credibility deficits" towards children with Down syndrome in a classroom, and according to Pohlhaus (2014) it happens when those subject to

testimonial injustice are treated as subjects, but their contributions are acknowledged only as “derivative of another’s”. Those who experience testimonial injustices may lose knowledge, epistemic confidence, or virtues like epistemic courage (Dohmen, 2016). It is also likely that being subject to recurring testimonial injustices would lead one to lose, or fail to develop, epistemic virtues like courage, “the virtue of not backing down in one’s convictions too quickly in response to a challenge” (Fricker, 2007). On the other hand, those subject to hermeneutical injustice may feel themselves to be alone in their incomprehensible or incommunicable experiences, self-doubt and a lack of epistemic courage are likely consequences (Dohmen, 2016). Although the Norwegian school system emphasizes equality (Anderson & Terras, 2015; Partouche, 2018), it is crucial to look for possible epistemic injustices children with Down syndrome may face in a classroom so that it can be replaced with epistemic justice instead.

Conceptual Framework for this Research:

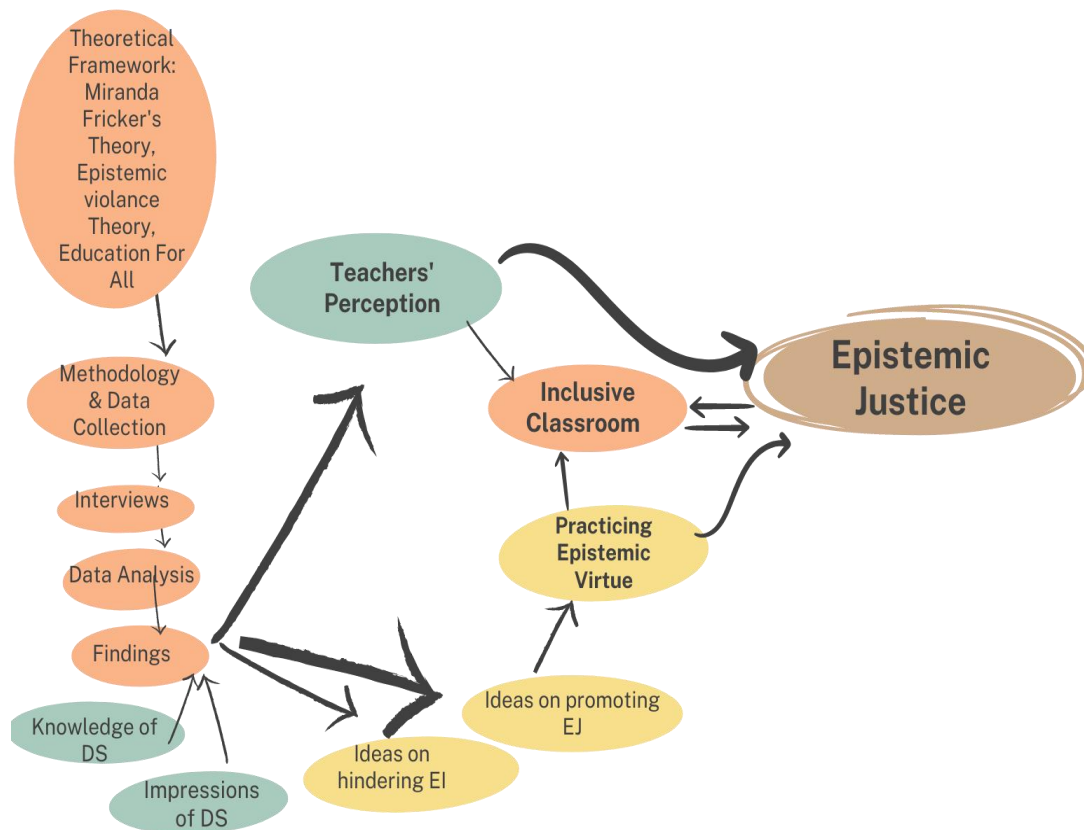


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework for The study of Teachers' Perception towards Children with Down Syndrome

2.1 Epistemic Injustice

Pursuing knowledge and information from others as well as sharing it with them makes a way for accessing resources to develop our understanding of the world and beyond. Through this process, one tries to make as well as be recognized for contributions to the shared understanding. However, when the process of mutual understanding of contributing to the knowledge is hindered it leads to epistemic injustices that are very commonly seen in an unequally-structured society. According to Collins (2000), the concept of epistemic injustice is closely related to social and power relations that determine who to believe and why. She also discussed in her book “Black Feminist Thought” how important knowledge is therefore marginalized. Fricker (2007) argues that the ability to produce knowledge and contribute to the inquiry is a fundamental part of what it is to be human. Therefore, denying one’s contribution to knowledge and thus not acknowledging the credibility of the information provided or known by the person can lead to an identity crisis within oneself.

The concept of credibility is fundamental to the sharing and imparting of knowledge, as it involves being seen as reliable and trustworthy as a knower. However, various factors can hinder one's ability to gain credibility from others. When this lack of credibility results in harm, it constitutes an epistemic injustice against the knower. Biases can contaminate the judgment of the information receiver, leading to a failure to give credibility. These biases can be explicit, where the person taking the action of not giving credit is aware of it. Alternatively, they can occur due to implicit biases, where the person is unaware of the partiality of their thoughts and judgments. This can result in a person who believes themselves to be impartial and unbiased towards a particular person or group, acting biased and driven by automatic thoughts about the extent to which people are reliable and trustworthy. Therefore, it is crucial to explore both implicit and explicit biases that can be the root of epistemic injustices.

2.1.1 Historical Perspective

Epistemic injustice has a long history, dating back to the earliest recorded human societies. In many societies, certain groups of people, such as women, people of colour, or members of lower social classes, were systematically denied the right to have credibility in knowledge, education, and information. This denial of knowledge and information was often justified through stereotypes, prejudice, and bias. During the Enlightenment period, philosophers developed new ideas about knowledge and the role of the individual in a society that was often based on assumptions about race, gender, and social status that excluded large groups of people from full participation in society.

Although the term “Epistemic Injustice” is comparatively new, the concept of causing harm to others based on prejudice has existed in human society all along. For instance, May (2014) argues that more than a century ago Cooper(1892) in her book “A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South” referenced epistemic violence and interpretive silencing. However, Miranda Fricker (2007) came up with the term and defined it as harmful to an individual specifically attacking his or her capacity as a knower. This primeval phenomenon can manifest in forms such as "gender discrimination," "racial discrimination," "religious biases," "age distinction," "favouritism," and "disability discrimination." Many philosophers and researchers have brought attention to this issue and its impact through their literature. For instance, Trudy Govier (1993) wrote a paper titled "When Logic Meets Politics: Testimony, Distrust, and Rhetorical Disadvantage" fourteen years before Fricker's book. In her paper, Govier argues that social power dynamics and stereotypes affect how we accept or reject testimonial claims. She also distinguishes between "narrow" and "broad" testimonial claims, where narrow refers to claims made by the person reporting their own experiences, and broad refers to claims made about someone by someone else. Govier's account of epistemic injustice is noteworthy as it highlights how unjust prejudices create a distinction between rhetoric and normative credibility. Normative credibility depends on a person's sincerity, honesty, and reliability, while rhetorical credibility refers to the extent to which others regard them as believable.

2.1.2 Types of Epistemic Injustices

In order to find out any possible injustices towards any minority group, not only the children with Down syndrome, it is a prerequisite to acknowledge which attitudes can be defined as injustices that can be perceived as epistemic. As the term is comparatively contemporary in the realm of educational science, defining epistemic injustices as well as their types is rather important.

Miranda Fricker (2007) in her book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, discussed two types of epistemic injustice- testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. In Fricker's (2007) words, testimonial injustice is an occurrence where a hearer attributes a lack of credibility to a speaker due to an identity prejudice. In addition, Fricker(2007) included that hermeneutical injustice on the other hand is an occurrence where a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences. These arguments put the children with Down syndrome below a focus light as they are more likely to be prejudiced for being 'children' and having been diagnosed with Down syndrome. They might be considered lacking credibility as a knower because they are 'just kids' or 'retarded'. Therefore, they become a victim of testimonial injustice. Also, only a few decades ago we have come to know the causes, treatments, interventions, and possibilities behind Down syndrome. Before that, there has been a considerable gap in knowledge on Down syndrome and all the possibilities a child with Down syndrome can achieve with proper language and other interventions. This gap of knowledge both from the side of the 'knower' and 'hearer', contributed to the prejudices against children with Down syndrome that can be categorized as hermeneutical injustices. Fricker (2007) argued that hermeneutical injustice is always structural unlike testimonial injustice as the hearers are not at fault for not being able to understand what the victims are saying. She also added that in this case, prejudice against the victims lies at the heart of the injustice as there had to be an attempt on the part of the victims to articulate their experiences, which failed due to them being prejudicially marginalized.

2.1.3 Consequences of Epistemic Injustices

According to Stanley (2015), societies characterized by unequal power relations naturally create epistemically distort environments and it results in certain epistemic distortions that are formatively debilitating for everyone- the victim as well as the offender. It can be said that the unequal power relation triggers the epistemic injustices and the epistemic injustices make sure the unequal power relation sticks around, becomes persistent, and the normative standard of that human society.

Epistemic exclusion is the notion that social position and power align with certain forms of epistemic power, that is, power over the ways in which knowledge is accumulated within, acknowledged by, and disseminated through communities, with the result that some kinds of knowledge can be kept out of mainstream sight (Scully, 2018). This epistemic exclusion of a certain group can have a ripple effect and result in many more injustices toward that group. These injustices may occur and harm different people in different ways.

Epistemic injustices from epistemic exclusion can oftentimes lead to self-appointed speaking-for when it is caused by prejudices. According to Steers-Mccrum (2019), self-appointed speaking-for occurs when one speaks on behalf of or in place of another individual or group without their authorization. Oftentimes a person with prejudicial characteristics (for example a woman, or a disabled person) may be a victim of self-appointed speaking-for by the people around him/her. By authorizing himself to speak for others, the person excludes that individual from participating in the exchange, communicating with others as if he/she is unfit to speak in this context or lacks knowledge. Silencing a person as a result of one's own prejudices can construct a permanent dominant relationship that can only continue to fuel prejudicial patterns of credibility in the future, thus continuing to harm the affected person. As a matter of fact, Cordova (2007) argues that if someone speaks for others, he/she commits 'Epistemic Theft'. Moreover, if another person other than the knower himself/herself is credited for the knowledge, the act is known as "Epistemic Appropriation". It occurs when the knower does not achieve the boost to their credibility that he/she deserves. On the other hand, it is a systemic issue as the social power

decides who to be considered as a knowledge-producer and that person gains the benefit of undeserved recognition. However, this epistemic appropriation can be both involuntary and voluntary. Although involuntary epistemic appropriation may seem more common, in reality, voluntary epistemic appropriation can be a silent self-defiling movement of losing credibility of oneself as it occurs when the knower does not believe that the knowledge or idea would be well-received if it is known to be his/hers.

2.1.4 Epistemic Injustices Against Children

In her book entitled “Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing”, Fricker(2007) mostly highlighted the biases of racism and sexism and how these can pollute one’s thought and perception in the matter of whose word should be trusted. However, there are various beliefs or doctrines other than racism and sexism that can create divisions among humans due to a few inherent differences. These differences create groups where the majority or influential claims superiority and has the right to dominate others marking them to be inferior. Therefore, this idea of superiority over other groups leads to various injustices among which epistemic injustice is notable where someone from the victimized disparaged group is not acknowledged as someone whose word is worthy of attention.

Children are recognized as having playful, fantasy-driven characteristics with over-active imaginations as well as being fearless when it comes to socializing. Other than these, children are also seen as “learners” due to the fact that they “experienced less” than adults. Beyond simply differentiating children from adults, these skills, attributes, and characteristics are also central components to the intrinsic value of childhood (Gheaus, 2015). These qualities are without doubt seen as positive attributes that most adults treasure. However, these positive and cherished attitudes can often generate explicit and implicit biases within an adult hearer when it comes to judging a testimony of a child and granting credibility as a transmitter of knowledge. Although children are known to have a heightened creativity and thirst for experimentation, it is often assumed what they say is the result of fantasy and creative imagination and thus deserves

less credibility. This belief leads to “Identity Prejudice” which contributes as the primary reason for epistemic injustices faced by children very often. An example that is commonly seen/heard, is a student who comes to school with extraordinary answers to homework questions may not be believed at first when claiming that the work is done by himself/herself without help. Or during playtime, two children get into a fight, but when both are asked who started it the white child is believed to be the victim although both accused the other. These kinds of systematic identity prejudice against children are quite subtle and seen very often in the classroom that affects not only just the natural balance and learning process but also their natural growth of self-esteem. Kotzee (2017) argues that epistemic injustice in education can impact what teachers teach, which students are admitted to which courses, who becomes teachers and scholars, which teachers students determine as credible, and who among their peers students credit as a result of children’s credibility being doubted by their teachers.

Young people have minimal opportunity to have a voice in their care, their voices are not prioritized, and their attempts to communicate their needs are often overlooked, ignored, and characterized as “attention seeking” (Cromarty et al., 2018). Thus, identity prejudice has formed the instance whenever a child’s testimony is characterized as ‘attention-seeking’. However as children are proven to be more “in need” of the adults, it can become quite detrimental when their voices are not heard because of the prejudices adults hold of them being “attention seekers” or “dramatic”. Pre-judging children without any assessment or verification is the product of identity prejudice and can only result in more mis-recognitions and injustices.

2.2 Down Syndrome

“To this date, down syndrome remains the most common genetic cause of intellectual disability” (Burgoyne et al., 2012).

Down syndrome is a condition that lasts throughout a person's life and is commonly linked to significant intellectual disability in the general population. Nevertheless, children with Down syndrome can have a happy and fulfilling life during childhood and adulthood with early intervention, education, and support. According to Van, Conan & Cohen (2006), Down

syndrome is caused by a trisomy of the whole or part of chromosome 21, present in all or some cells of the body, and associated with mental retardation, congenital heart defects, gastrointestinal anomalies, reduced neuromuscular tone, dysmorphic features of the head, neck, and airways, characteristic facial and physical features, audiovestibular and visual impairment, and a higher incidence of other clinical disorders. In the past, children with Down syndrome faced physical challenges and impairments, such as congenital heart defects and gastrointestinal anomalies, leading to early childhood death. However, recent advancements in medical science for children with Down syndrome, including neonatal care, surgical techniques, and medical drugs, have increased their life expectancy and standard of living.

Children with Down syndrome also experience some level of intellectual challenges, with slower development in both intellect and language. They typically have an intellectual disability affecting their rate of development, and their vocabulary learning is slower. On average, children with Down syndrome produce their first words at the end of their second year of life, and they reach the 50-word milestone after 3 years of age. In contrast, typically developing children reach these milestones at approximately 12 months and 17-18 months, respectively. (Næss et al., 2015; Berglund et al., 2001; Gillham, 1990; Kristoffersen et al., 2012).

2.2.1 Historical Perspective

Although Down (1866) first described the clinical aspects of the syndrome in “Observations on an Ethnic Classification of Idiots”, the discovery of a link between a supernumerary chromosome 21 and the DS phenotype was first reported in 1959 (LeJeune, Gautier & Turpin, 1959) and was an extraordinary landmark for the development of genetic medicine. This study is the first description of the chromosomal abnormality in DS. However, Esquirol (1838) was the first one in the history of Down syndrome to describe it and Garrod (1894) was the one to report the association of Down syndrome with congenital heart defects.

Infants with Down syndrome have experienced an increase in life expectancy over the years due to advancements in medical care and technology. However, even a century ago the life expectancy of a child with Down syndrome was very low. Morris, Wald & Watt (1999) reported

that a number of studies published from 1989 to 1996 found that approximately 43% of fetuses with Down syndrome were lost spontaneously between 10 weeks of gestation and birth, with a spontaneous loss rate (including stillbirths) of 23% between 16 weeks of gestation and birth. However, due to advances in the fields of science and medicine, the situation has changed. The rates of live births of children with Down syndrome are increasing (Collins, Muggli, Riley, Palma & Halliday, 2008; Shin et al., 2009). Today, the life expectancy for individuals with Down syndrome has increased significantly further, with many living into their 60s and beyond. This increase is largely due to better healthcare, early intervention programs, and improved social support systems. In addition, there has been an increased awareness and understanding of Down syndrome, which has led to better care and treatment for those with the condition.

2.2.2 Myths and Prejudices

Although the scientific progress of our civilization has prevented the low life expectancy of Down syndrome, there is still an abundance of myths and prejudices about the abilities or inabilities of a person with Down syndrome that might be the reason behind all the epistemic theft against them. According to Cologon (2012a) & Smith (2011), children with Down syndrome were mistakenly viewed as 'ineducable' in the past. The reason behind this perception is the comparatively lower Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of children with Down syndrome as IQ is known to be the traditional method of assessing intellectual ability in which the reasoning ability and power of deduction are measured. Moreover, slower language development than other children can also be the reason why they were the victim of many prejudices in the academic sector. However Cologon (2012a) & Kliever (2008) stated that there are many misunderstandings regarding reading development in children with Down syndrome and consequently, opportunities to learn to read are often unnecessarily limited. For the purpose of the study, a few widespread myths and prejudices that have often come up in some literature as well as in practice are stated above to provide an idea of how far this issue can set off:

Myth #1: Limited speech in children with Down syndrome reflects limited understanding.

Fact: Research shows that children with Down syndrome often have better receptive than expressive language skills, so the assumption that they don't understand because they can't express themselves is incorrect (Martin, Klusek, Estigarribia & Roberts, 2009).

Myth #2: Children with Down syndrome can't develop phonological awareness and decoding skills.

Fact: Many children with Down syndrome have strengths in visual and sight-word learning, and targeted language interventions can improve their ability to learn language (Fidler et al., 2005).

Myth #3: If children with Down syndrome don't learn to read in their early years, it's too late for them to develop reading skills.

Fact: Even if they don't learn to read when they're young, they can still learn as adolescents or adults with appropriate interventions (Fowler et al., 1995; Morgan et al., 2004 & 2009).

Myth #4: Children with Down syndrome struggle to understand what they read.

Fact: Research shows that children with Down syndrome can comprehend what they read (Buckley & Johnson-Glenberg, 2008; Cologon et al., 2011; Groen et al., 2006), despite past misconceptions that they only memorize words without understanding their meaning (Buckley, 1985).

Myths and prejudices that are based on inaccurate assumptions and generalizations have the ability to perpetuate epistemic injustice by limiting the opportunities of children with Down syndrome to contribute to knowledge sharing and by denying the value of their perspectives and experiences.

2.2.3 Present Situation- Norway and Inclusion

To understand the genuine circumstance of epistemic equity in kindergartens in Norway, it is essential to comprehend what is being referred to as an inclusive classroom. Inclusion is commonly known as a 'journey' or movement away from segregation and towards improvements in the quality of education and equality of opportunity provided to pupils in

mainstream educational settings (Farrell, 2001, 2004; Frederickson & Cline, 2015). According to Telhaug, Mediås & Aasen (2004), inclusion serves as social melting pots where children from different backgrounds met and worked together, schools would promote social equality and democracy, and erase social barriers. An inclusive classroom promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or abilities. When students feel accepted and included, they are more likely to participate in class, form positive relationships with their peers and teachers, and feel more engaged with their learning.

For the most part of the past century, Nordic educational policies have been directed to the aim to ensure equal education for all genders, social classes, or backgrounds. These policies concerning inclusive education have been fueled by the influence of the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994) although the idea dates far back. Since then Norwegian kindergartens have been trying to ensure inclusion of all children regardless of any differences by establishing the concept of equity. These Norwegian kindergartens or “barnehage” aim to work on various functions such as meeting up children’s social, psychological, behavioural, and pedagogical needs. According to Arnesen, Solli & Kolle (2010), the neo-liberal wave of the last decades, however, has had a considerable impact in all the Nordic countries, including Norway. The conclusion that all five Nordic countries shared a particularly strong trust in the harmony between the objectives of social equality, political democracy, and economic prosperity was expressed in manifestations of the Nordic cooperation as early as the late 1930s (Kettunen, 2001).

According to Arnesen, Solli & Kolle (2010), The Norwegian education system is characterized by the extensive provision of early childhood education and childcare, and municipalities are obliged to provide such education and care to children 0 to 5 years, and this encompassed 88,7 percent of the children in 2009/10, including children with disabilities, of which the great majority attended mainstream institutions where provision of early childhood education is mainly tax-funded, but parents pay fees up to a certain limit. According to Act no. 64 of 17 June 2005 relating to Kindergartens, section 12a, “a place in a kindergarten must be provided to all children who turn the age of one by no later than the end of August in the year in which a place is applied for”. This law has been introduced by the Norwegian government on the 1st of

January, 2009. According to Arnesen, Solli & Kolle (2010), early years education in Norway is increasingly seen as 'sites for producing predefined outcomes, introducing several strategies for early intervention including general mapping, identify special needs'.

2.2.4 Norway and Children With Down Syndrome

In Norway, the educational field has embraced the concept of "One school for all," which aims to include children with diverse identities and special needs. This approach enables children with special needs, including those with Down syndrome, to grow up in a safe and inclusive learning environment alongside other children. Kindergartens in Norway exemplify this agenda by making it mandatory for all children to attend. However, integrating children with Down syndrome has posed challenges in the past, including a lack of understanding about the syndrome, prevailing myths and prejudices, insufficient teacher training, and medical limitations.

According to data from the Medisinsk Fødselsregister (2012), Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal abnormality among humans, with 69 live births of infants with Down syndrome occurring in Norway in 2010 (1.1 out of 1000 live births). Additionally, a study on Keratokonus in DS by Kristianslund & Drolsum (2021) found that during a specific period, 4342 individuals with Down syndrome were registered in Norway, accounting for 0.08% of the country's population. This prevalence is similar to that in many other developed countries worldwide.

Advancements in science have significantly increased the life expectancy of individuals with Down syndrome, unlike in the past. However, as is the case in many developed countries, Norway provides prenatal screening to identify Down syndrome and other detectable abnormalities, allowing parents to prepare better for their child's arrival. This screening also presents parents with the choice of continuing the pregnancy. The Medical Birth Registry in Norway has been notified of every termination of pregnancy for Fetal anomaly (TOPFA) since December 1998, replacing occasional stillbirth reports (Irgens, 2002). These debates and controversies surrounding terminating pregnancies and the births of children with Down syndrome offer valuable insights into the stereotypical perceptions held against the condition.

Although individuals with Down syndrome may encounter health challenges such as heart defects, respiratory issues, and an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, proper medical care and support enable many of them to lead fulfilling and independent lives. Advances in medical fields like cardiovascular surgery and cancer therapy have contributed to a significant increase in the average life expectancy of people with Down syndrome, rising from around 35 years in 1982 to approximately 60 years today, as reported by Barnhart & Connolly (2007) and Zigman & Lott (2007).

2.3 Epistemic Injustices Against Children with Down Syndrome

The long histories of individualization of disability only indicate that epistemic subjectivity has been particularly threatened by the oppression of the disabled. Although Miranda Fricker(2007) has the most influential impact in the literature on epistemic injustice, there are other notable philosophers such as Pohlhaus, Jr. (2014), Dotson (2012), etc who tried to portray how people with special needs are often victims of epistemic injustices.

Epistemic injustice against children with Down syndrome is a product of hearer's prejudices that has been fuelled by a few attributes of them such as- Low to moderate IQ, slower language development, and restricted physical and intellectual abilities. Moreover, distinct facial features such as flat nasal bridges, short stature, low muscle tone, etc make them disparate from the other children around. Sharing information or making interpretations of mutual social experiences may become a challenge for most children with Down syndrome especially children in kindergartens. This has been often seen as a general trait among all children with Down syndrome and gradually it has become a prejudice. In the process of contriving a structural remedy of the structural problem as EI, Hänel (2020) states that instances of hermeneutical injustice in academia are deeply entangled with relations of misrecognition in at least two senses:

- (1) Injustices stem from the prior history of misrecognition i.e. hermeneutical marginalization;
- (2) Injustices result in speakers being vulnerable to future acts of misrecognition.

Hence, it can be concluded that the primary harm of being excluded from contributing to knowledge practices or having a say that is heard becomes a reflection of the self-hood of the children with Down syndrome. Being denied the proper epistemic recognition, they can become uncertain of their intellectual capacities, epistemic value, and a sense that they are equal to their peers.

2.4 Epistemic Justice For Children with Down Syndrome

Mass media and how it portrays a minor group is a powerful factor in the familiarization of them in society and the transformation of the social perception towards that particular group. Therefore, the way children with special needs are represented in the media through broadcasts such as movies, tv shows, reality programs, news, etc can shape the social perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of the audience about disability in many ways. However, it is essential to emphasize the extraordinary strengths of Down syndrome instead of the inabilities and shortcomings to establish thus illustrating their social identities. Moreover, the presentation must be made empathetic in such a way that is encouraging the idea that existing differences do not prevent social and communal integration but adds the allure of diversity.

Govier (1994) argues that the denial of rhetorical credibility occurs in the process of evaluating testimonial claims. Following this argument, a universalistic model for the evaluation of testimonial claims was presented. The model is referred “universal” as it does not rely on any specific personal attributes of the knower or hearer that may affect the judgement. Therefore, following this universalistic reflective model is bound to believe the knower’s claim.

Universalistic Reflective Model by Govier (1994):

1. A says "p".
2. In saying "p" A asserts that p.
3. A is sincere and truthful in his or her assertion that p. So,
4. A believes that p.
5. A is (in the normative sense) competent and reliable with regard to such matters as p. Thus,

6. There is good reason to believe that p.
7. There is no compelling reason or evidence against p. Therefore, probably,
8. p.

Another possible way out to the epistemic injustices especially for hermeneutical issues is to combine Fricker’s theory of hermeneutical injustice (2007) with Honneth’s theories of recognition(1995) as proposed by Hänel (2020) where she presented that to eliminate hermeneutical epistemic injustices it is vital to develop the virtue of hermeneutical justices through the practice of “alertness” and “sensitivity” to the possibility of acknowledgement. She also argues that the systematic remedy for EI can be introduced by building up a defense against misrecognition and fostering self-recognition. According to Honneth (1995), self-recognition which is a vital need that defines ourselves comes in at least three ways- respect, esteem, and love. Hänel(2020) insists that if people receive enough respect, esteem, and love, they are well equipped to develop self-recognition hopefully enough to withstand hermeneutical injustice.

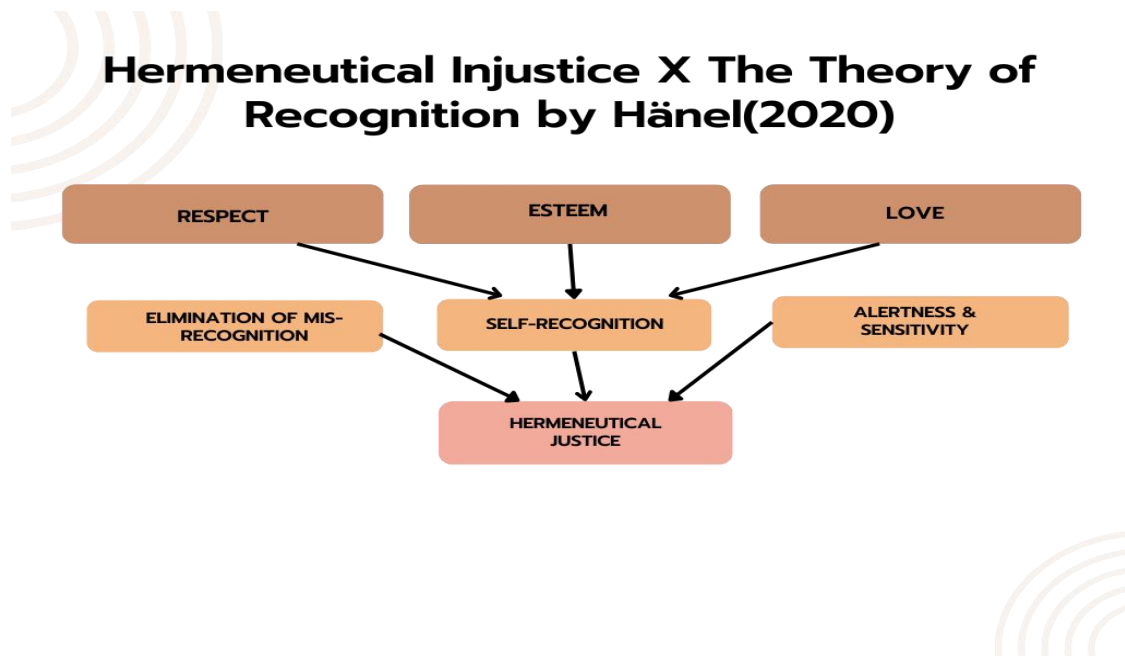


Figure 02: Promoting Hermeneutical Justice with the The Theory of Recognition by Hänel (2020).

Among these three notions of self-recognition, esteem, and love come from the individual within. However, respect is earned from others which adds moral worth to the individual. Therefore to establish EJ, recognition of children with Down syndrome must be ensured by focusing on these three notions.

Epistemic virtues are intellectual qualities that contribute to good judgement, inquiry, and communication. Some examples of epistemic virtues include intellectual humility, open-mindedness, empathy, and fair-mindedness. Practising epistemic virtue can help prevent epistemic injustices against children with Down syndrome such as stereotyping, marginalization, or exclusion based on their condition.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, a *Qualitative Method* was chosen to carry out an exploration of the topic of ‘Epistemic Injustices & the Children with Down Syndrome: Teachers’ Perception in Kindergartens of Oslo’. According to (Fischer, 2005), “Qualitative research is a multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”.

The qualitative method is chosen for this particular study as the main objective is to find deep insightful answers rather than what is visible on the surface. For this research, it is important to pursue an exploratory approach to find out new information, not just existing ideas of perceptions towards DS in inclusive kindergarten. Therefore, a semi-structured interview has been chosen to retrieve information through interviewing teachers to gain a clear understanding of the “teacher-children with DS” dynamic that might not be visible usually in other research designs. A semi-structured interview is best suited for this study as it is a flexible and powerful tool when the researcher wants new insights into the research problem. (Fischer, 2005) also states that qualitative researchers believe that one should not enter the research with preconceived notions and that the data should be free from the bias of the researcher’s prior knowledge and expectations.

This being true the research will have to take into consideration that the qualitative method of the research may not be as reliable as quantitative methods because of the small sample size. However, this type of research is more valuable if the goal is to explore the perceptions of teachers rather than generalization which can not be derived from a quantitative method. The reliability of the research was made sure by a blend of multiple kindergartens-visits as well as personal familiarity between each informant and the researcher. The researcher was able to build a trustworthy relationship with the informants through several visits and personal connections and for most interviews, the setting was, in fact, the kindergarten office itself to make the informants more comfortable.

This chapter will describe the research design and methodological approach chosen by the researcher to carry out this particular research. The chapter will also depict the outline of the sampling procedure as well as the data collection procedure and the analysis method that has fuelled the study. Ethical considerations for this research will also be addressed to complete the chapter.

3.1 Research Design and sampling methods

The research design chosen for this study is considered to be a non-experimental qualitative design since the study is based on semi-structured interviews. The sampling method was convenience sampling because the willingness, and availability of the teachers as well as meeting up with the participant-criteria were considered to select the interview participants for the study, alongside the ethical consent provided. Only one of the informants was known to the researcher beforehand. However, the rest of the informants did not have any prior familiarity with the researcher before this study which ensured the elimination of any biases and ensured remaining impartial. The goal of this qualitative research was to try to remain as much without bias as possible, as it can not be completely objective as quantitative research where hypotheses are decided prior to data collection. Familiar methodologies from prior research were explored to have a better understanding of what to expect from this research design to gain awareness of certain problems that may arise from this particular design.

The researcher aimed to gather the perceptions of kindergarten teachers by exploring how they see children in an inclusive classroom in specific relation to children with Down syndrome. Teachers' perceptions as well as experiences concerning any epistemic injustices had been focal points of these one-on-one face-to-face interviews. The interview questions also consisted of their viewpoint and ideas of how to bring about epistemic justice which would also reflect how they perceive and value the issue. Teachers' perceptions and awareness of the meaning of inclusive education were also included, as well as their knowledge of Down syndrome. These considerations allowed for the exploration of the epistemic injustice that in fact has been a new concept for them, giving the researcher key information on whether and how the children with

Down syndrome are being acknowledged as a knower as well as creating awareness about the issue among those teachers in particular.

3.2 Informants

The aim of this research has been to find out any possible epistemic injustices that can harm a child with down syndrome by not identifying the child as a ‘knower’. In order to fully explore the topic, the interview method was chosen to acknowledge the perceptions of the teachers on the topic of ‘epistemic injustices’. In an effort to find so, several kindergarten teachers were asked to participate in a one-off semi-structured interview from kindergartens all around Oslo, Norway. The sample was chosen in such a way so that the participants are from inclusive kindergartens, and not the specialized kindergartens with mostly children with special needs as the goal was to find out mainstream teachers’ perceptions as well, not just the special educators’.

Initial contacts had been made by the researcher with the kindergartens through a combination of email and in-person contact. Sending flyers as well as personal connections were also utilized to get in touch with potential informants who qualify the criteria. The informants were chosen in such a way so that there is a variance in the location of their kindergartens, for a better conclusion through comparisons. Among the informants- three were from Montessori kindergartens, three were from public kindergartens and the other two were from private kindergartens. The researcher initially structured the research to interview 12 teachers from different schools but it was not possible for time-constraint. So the sample pool was narrowed down from 12 to 8 in order to ensure

- all teachers had the same teaching experience (at least three years),
- from 19-55 of age.
- working in a kindergarten in Oslo, Norway.

The researcher wanted to have a blend of educational backgrounds and experiences with children with DS in the sample in order to find out if experiences and prior education have an effect on

their perceptions. The researcher submitted an application for ethical approval from NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata), in order to conduct the interviews. As soon as it was received, emails with applications as well as consent and information letter all together were sent to the schools clarifying the intention of conducting the research. In addition to the emails, the researcher visited the kindergarten in order to have a conversation with the teachers, and leaders to see for herself how the kindergartens operate in practice. The researcher also had a pilot interview with a friend who has been a kindergarten teacher prior to the actual interviews to make sure the interview questionnaire is able to bring out what it aims for. All informants who participated in the interviews were more than happy to take part in the interviews. A bit of introductory discussion between the researcher and participants was held right before and after the interview to gain a deeper personal perspective outside of the questions as well as to make the participants feel comfortable talking to the researcher.

The informants in this research were all females with diversity in age groups, living and teaching in Oslo and mostly European, one African, and one Asian. The education of the informants varied in terms of having prior courses in “Special Needs”, but similar in the sense that they all had higher education related to either *education* or *psychology* as well as their prior education took place in Norway. The sample of informants consists of 8 teachers of various Norwegian kindergartens, the reason for such a spread was due to the time limit and getting a more general idea than “school-based”. In order to support complete anonymity, the informants will be referred to as teacher 1- teacher 8. Two of the informants were around 50-55 years old and the rest of them were in the age range of 25-40 years old. However, all the informants teach in Norsk but they have good communication skills in English as well. Furthermore, two of the teachers (2, 6) have started to work as special educators but they have experience working as mainstream teachers as well. It is worth mentioning that three of the teachers (2,4,6) had in-depth knowledge of DS as they had higher education (Master’s) in it.

3.3 Interview Procedure

Semi-structured interview is an admired method when the aim is to get a deeper insight with the help of the freedom to ask follow-up questions if it is needed. This provides the researcher with more information, rich data as well as an exposure to come in contact with any possible *hidden/unconscious* perspective from the informants. Galletta & Cross (2013) emphasize that there are two main tasks to focus on while conducting an interview:

- (1) listen closely to the informant for points in need of clarification and further generalization of meaning, and
- (2) locate points in the interview which you may want to return to later for elaboration.

The interviews were conducted in English for the researcher's benefit. However, a few words in Norwegian came up every now and then as some of the informants' mother tongue was Norwegian. Those words have been translated later in the transcription phase to have uniformity for the analysis procedure. In order to get into a deeper exploration of sensitive issues, (such as EI and children with DS) it is essential to have a conversation with the informants before the interviews to make them feel safe, secure, and comfortable with the researcher as well as to provide them with a brief introduction to the topic *epistemic injustice*. As it is an emerging concept in the field of education, it is necessary to make the teachers become familiar with the concept so that they have a clear idea about the research. Additionally, having open-ended questions such as "Tell me about your responsibilities with the children in the classroom" allowed the interviewee to answer in-depth and allowed the researcher to ask questions when it felt necessary.

3.3.1 Interview Guide

“The idea is to explore the research area by collecting similar types of information from each participant” (Holloway & Wheeler 2010), “by providing participants with guidance on what to talk about” (Gill et al.2008).

It is a prerequisite and somewhat crucial to prepare an interview guide before starting to conduct interviews. Although semi-structured interviews leave the prospect of adding necessary follow-up questions, the interview guide must be structured so that there is a flow between the questions and each question opens the door for the next questions. However, the researcher must be enlightened about the fact that responses to the questions may have been affected by what the informants consider to be desirable. Therefore, it is necessary to look over the questions thoroughly if they can be subjected to the issue of validity. According to Cohen et al. (2018), one also needs to bear in mind that the questions can not be too limited either, since this can lead to the informants’ answers may be limited and containing little reflection of their own.

When developing the interview questions, it was kept in mind that the questions are not too limited or too complicated. The questions have been constructed in such a way that there are few leading questions to guide the interviews in order to acquire desired and valuable responses. Complicated subject terminologies have been avoided in order to make the informants reassured and confident in their responses as well as to ensure that the researcher does not leave out to capture the true thoughts and perceptions of the teachers.

Relevant, particular as well as easily understandable questions were developed, which have been through a pilot interview (see section 3.3.2). After the pilot interview, the questions were adjusted and rearranged a little bit to make certain that the interview appears as a *natural conversation*. Although the interview guide was present in all the interviews conducted, there has always been room for additional follow-up questions as needed. The researcher attempted to follow the interview guide and ask the same questions to each informant to maintain consistency in the analysis procedure. However, follow-up questions emerged as new themes and areas

developed in the conversations as different informants brought out different concerns that needed to be explored to add new dimensions to the research.

3.3.2 Pilot Interview

“Pilot studies are useful procedures as preparation of a full-scale study, regardless of paradigm” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

A pilot interview can be very advantageous for the purpose of the evaluation of the interview questions well ahead of the actual interviews. It opens up the possibility to examine if the interview questions are capable of bringing out the responses that we are hoping for or if there need to be adjustments. A pilot interview also paves the way for the researcher to discover own self as an interviewer and helps the researcher to be well-prepared for the interviews.

One pilot interview was conducted in preparation for the actual interviews in order to assess the validity of the interview questions. The participant for the pilot interview was an ex-classmate of the researcher who had years of experience in teaching children in kindergartens both in her home country and in Oslo, Norway. The interview was held on Zoom as she was unable to meet in person. Through the pilot interview, the researcher was able to re-arrange the questions to make the questions more subtle and uniform. Also, new questions had been added after the pilot as it appeared needed and later it had been noticed that the questions added after the pilot were indeed proved very useful in bringing out the reality of inclusiveness in kindergartens. For an example:

“Did you ever find out another teacher(no names) did not believe something they said simply as they are just children/children with down syndrome? Could you share an example of this?”.

This question had been added after the pilot and as it turned out, most of the informants answered *positively* that they in fact experienced other teachers ignoring the voices of children/children with DS, while the answers to the previous question were mostly *negative*:

“Would you say it is harder to believe something they say simply as they are just children/children with down syndrome? Can you give an example?”

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to be able to have a confidential conversation that concerns delicate issue as the thoughts and impressions of the informants, it is vital that the researcher takes into account the measures to be taken to make the informants feel safe in a “secured environment” preferably of the informants’ preference. Another key aspect of the interviews was “suitable time” as the informants might be occupied and the best outcome of an interview can be expected only when the informants are relaxed about the time. Keeping these in mind, two of the interviews were taken in their kindergarten settings when the informants had available time during office hours. However, the rest of the informants joined their interviews after their office hours as they felt that they would be more restful. Before the first few minutes of the interviews, the researcher engaged herself in an informal conversation with the informants giving them the chance to unwind as well as providing them the opportunity to know a bit about the researcher while at the same time, the researcher knows about them too. This added an extra essence to the interviews as the researcher wanted them to become familiar with both the researcher and the research topic so that genuine perceptions are captured rather than what is on the surface.

The researcher made an effort not to reveal the research hypothesis or assumptions in any way so that the informants are not affected by any biases. The informants were informed about the audio recorder and they showed their agreement by signing the consent letters. All the informants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the interviews at any time by contacting the researcher and their responses would be deleted, thus would not be included in the study.

During the interviews, the researcher provided undivided attention to each informant and let them speak, and attempted not to stop or divert their train of thought while they spoke. Although the researcher made sure that the interview questions are simple and easy to understand, she made sure the informants were understanding the questions right by observing their body language and at times had to repeat questions if the informants did not fully comprehend the

interview questions. Brinkmann and Tangaard (2020) stated that uncomfortable silence is important for an interview to be successful. Therefore, the researcher did her best to speak as minimally as possible only showing nods and sound gestures to show attention or agreement at times.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The study followed a qualitative data analysis procedure through thematic analysis. After collecting all the interviews as audio recordings by recording each and every interview via the app *'Diktaphon'*, the interviews were sent to the *'Nettskjema'* app. During transcription, the app *'Autotekst'* had been used for the preliminary word-to-word transcription of data. All of these apps are regulated by UiO and are known as the safest software solutions for students (that can hold up to black data) to use for data collection, storage, and regulation. NVivo software which is another app recommended by UiO for processing qualitative data had been used for color coding and thematic analysis to obtain the findings.

3.4.1 Transcription

"Transcription is a selective process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions" (Ochs, 1979)

According to Cohen et al. (2018), there is *no correct way* to conduct transcriptions, as the interview is a dynamic and interactive setting being translated into a static and frozen form. Kvale (Cohen et al., 2018) affirms that transcription becomes a selective translation as it changes its form, consequently, it is realistic to say that transcripts are, in most cases interpreted data. In the quest to properly transcribe the interviews, the researcher chose the conversational analysis method in order to construct meaning at the moment whenever it felt necessary and applicable so that the actual occurrence happening in the interaction is not forsaken in the process. Therefore, the researcher felt the importance of looking for meaning beyond verbal language to target what the teachers said as well as how they said it. As the research topic is a sensitive issue, the

researcher combined word-by-word transcription with conversational analysis so that it becomes easier to capture the authentic perceptions of the teachers and retain potential data in the translation. Cohen et al, (2018) argued that transcriptions may lead to losing data from the original encounter as the interview is translated from one system i.e. oral and interpersonal to another system i.e. written language. Therefore to ensure the validity of the research procedure, it is essential to pay undivided attention and thorough execution of the transcription phase.

In the preliminary phase of transcribing the interviews, word to word method was adopted by translating the audio recordings from nettskjema to autotekst. The autotekst software then generated the translations from audio to written documents. Afterward, conversational analysis as well as careful observation during the transcription process was maintained by listening to the recordings over and over again making sure the software had done a thorough job transcribing and if it missed out any words. Moreover, few punctuations were added to amplify the possible perceptions that were left unsaid, and thus were lost in translation by autotekst. For example:

“...” indicated a pause in the dialogue as well as thinking about what to say.

3.4.2 Analysis of Data

Thematic Analysis is a method of “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

When analyzing the data, one must stay as objective as possible when drawing out meaning from the material one has collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In quantitative research, this may not come up as an issue as a generalization from a comparatively larger sample and close-ended answers have the ability to maintain the objectivity of the researcher. However, it can be a challenge in a qualitative research where a smaller sample, face-to-face interaction, personal relationship, open-ended questions etc can have an impact on the findings. Therefore, the data analysis procedure needed to be structured and systematic to omit any biases that might affect the end results.

According to Vasimoradi, Turunen & Bondas(2013), thematic analysis can be described as a descriptive method that reduces the data in a flexible way that dovetails with other data analysis methods. Thematic analysis is an analysis method known for its theoretical adherence as well as its application throughout diverse frameworks. This analysis method is also very useful to find out specific patterns in the data that helps the researcher to compare and explore the themes across all the data sets no matter how large or small the sample size is. However, this method has been censured by many researchers as it is known to lack sufficient guidelines. On the other hand, the six-phase guide provided by Braun & Clarke (2006) can be very applicable if followed step by step and it was the framework that was pursued in this research-

Step 1: Become familiar with the data,

Step 2: Generate initial codes,

Step 3: Search for themes,

Step 4: Review themes,

Step 5: Define themes,

Step 6: Write-up.

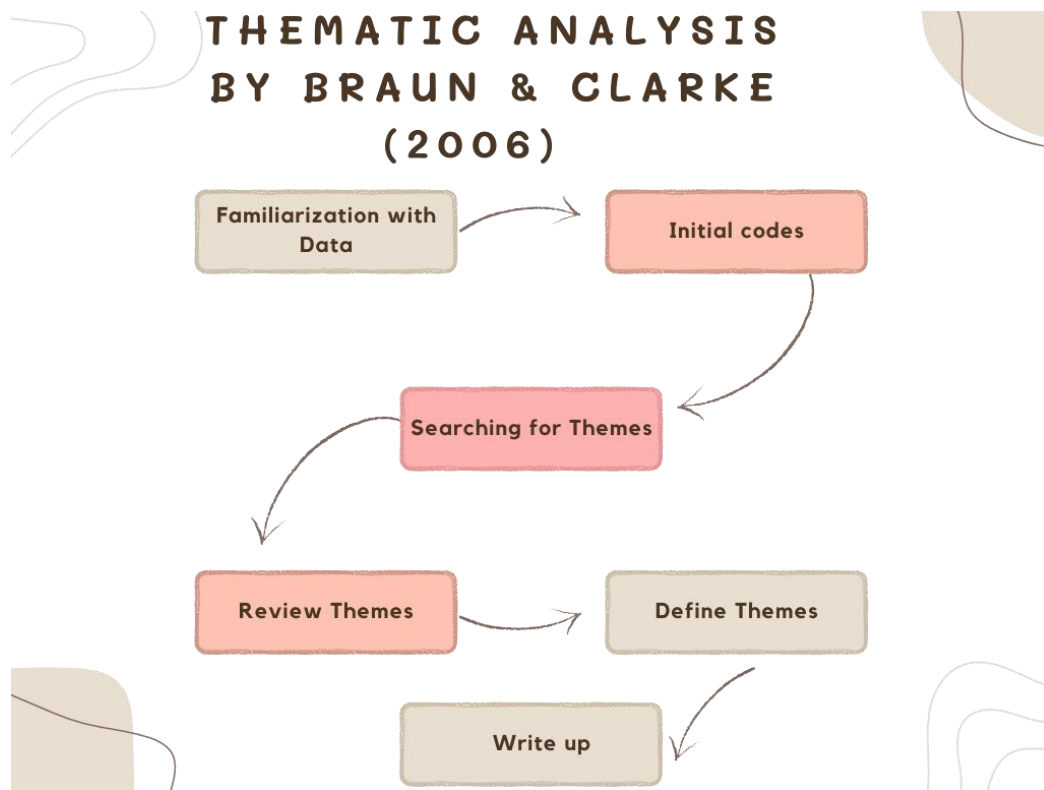


Figure 03: Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis.

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

“Ethical thinking in qualitative research goes beyond ethical decisions during data collection and analysis” (Kara and Pickering, 2017)

In this qualitative study, ethical considerations were pivotal for the involvement of the kindergarten teacher’s personal experiences, thoughts, and perceptions on the children of DS as contributors of knowledge. Therefore, all the ethical practices of informed consent and confidentiality have been strictly followed to protect both the data and the informants’ identities. The study was registered with the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), and approval was obtained from NSD before the researcher conducted interviews. Participants were informed of their rights and how their data would be used through an NSD release form. As almost all the participants were unknown to the researcher prior to the research, the researcher clarified the topic, data management policies as well as confidential policies with utmost importance before the interviews were conducted. Therefore, participants were well informed in this process that any identifying information (such as informant names, names of the schools, etc) would never be mentioned in any future publications. They were enlightened on the fact that confidentiality would be followed to protect all information collected by assigning secret code-number and they would only be referred to as teacher 01, teacher 02,... etc to avoid potential identity risks. An *information letter* portraying all the concerns the participants might have was developed and handed down to each and every participant along with the *consent form*.

The schools were initially contacted by email and sent the information letter and consent form to request potential participants for the study. The correspondence clearly stated that participation was entirely voluntary and that informants could withdraw their consent at any time without any negative consequences. On the day of the interviews, the confidentiality and data management process was reiterated both verbally and by distributing a written information letter. Participants were given two consent forms to sign, one for themselves and one for the researcher to keep. After the interviews, the participants' names were replaced with substitutes, and the data was

scheduled to be deleted once the study was completed on June 1st, 2023, to prevent any potential further exposure of their identities. The researcher was fully aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the potential risk to the validity of the research if ethical considerations were not observed.

4. PRESENTATION OF DATA

The study explores the kindergarten teachers' perception of the children with DS as *knowers* in mainstream classrooms in Oslo, Norway and the possible solutions regarding how we can ensure and promote epistemic justice for them. This chapter aims to present all the findings generated in the analysis of data provided by the teachers as the base of a discussion for the next chapter where the researcher tries to impart a few insights and potential solutions in the light of relevant literature. To start the chapter, the researcher presents the thematic codes that drove the transcribed raw data into the findings. The thematic codes were selected based on going through the transcriptions about the perceptions of kindergarten teachers using the inductive method. All the themes will be presented in discrete sections in this chapter to demonstrate teachers' perceptions of children with DS as knowers. Under each theme, there are few sub-themes that correspond to the different areas and perspectives but all are connected to the same aims and objectives of the study.

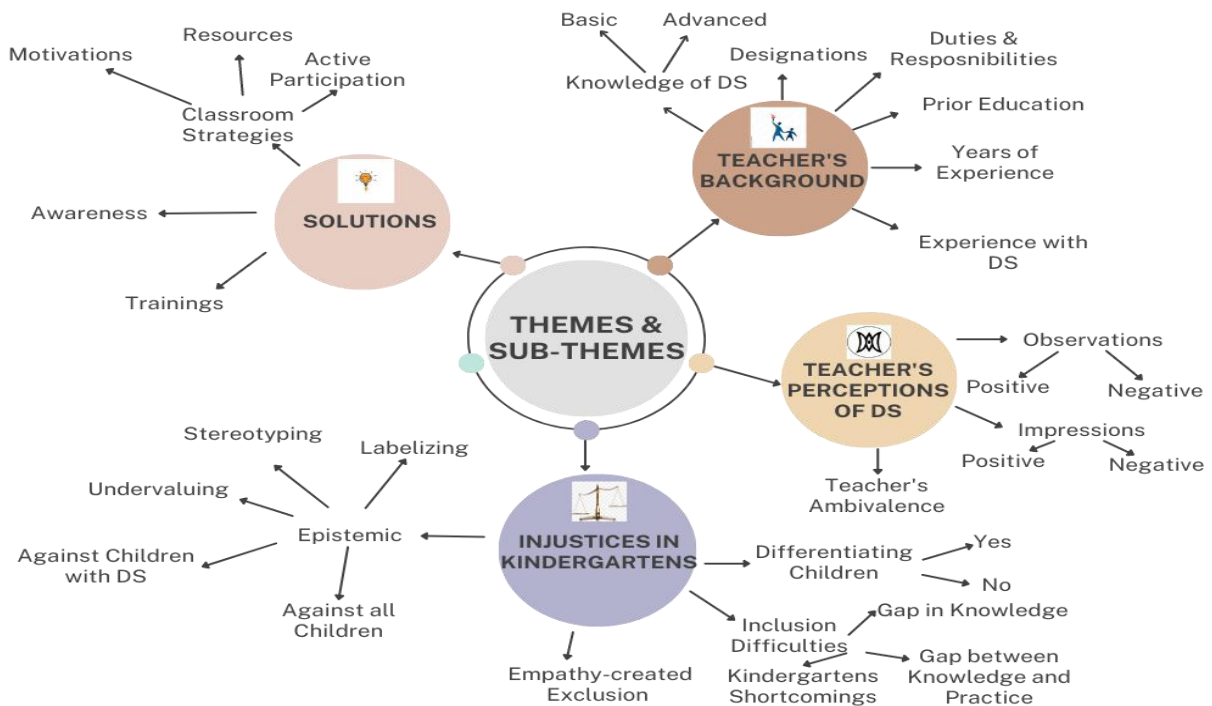


Figure 04: The relationships between the main themes as well as sub-themes found during analysis regarding the teachers' perceptions of children with DS as knowers.

4.1 Teachers' Backgrounds

Teachers' backgrounds refer to any information and inquiries about informants' education, employment, experiences, etc that help to have a better understanding of their thoughts, perceptions, and the persons. A teacher's background is needed to be acknowledged as it can impact their understanding of different cultures, histories, and perspectives, which can, in turn, affect how they teach and interact with students. Teachers with diverse backgrounds and experiences may be better equipped to recognize and challenge biases and stereotypes that may exist within the curriculum, classroom, or wider educational system. Furthermore, teachers who have experienced marginalization or discrimination may be more attuned to the needs and experiences of students from historically marginalized groups. They may also be better equipped to support students in developing critical consciousness and advocating for social justice.

Code	Age	Gender	Designation	Prior Education in Special Needs	Years of Experience	Knowledge of DS
Teacher 01	31	Female	Learning support teacher	Yes	9	Basic
Teacher 02	27	Female	Special needs educator	Yes	6	Advanced
Teacher 03	29	Female	Kindergarten assistant	No	9	Basic
Teacher 04	52	Female	Educational Leader	No	31	Advanced
Teacher 05	54	Female	Educational Leader	No	33	Basic
Teacher 06	28	Female	Educational Leader	Yes	3	Advanced
Teacher 07	39	Female	Kindergarten teacher	No	13	Basic
Teacher 08	27	Female	Educational Leader	No	5	Basic

Table 01: Profiles of Interview Participants.

Designations

A teacher's designation refers to their official job title or position within an educational institution. Different designations may reflect different levels of responsibility, qualifications, and experience. Among the informants who participated in this study, four of the teachers have been pedagogisk leder (educational leaders) and one was an assistant kindergarten teacher. Three of them were barnehagelærer (kindergarten teachers) and among them, one of the informants was at the moment working as a spesialpedagog (special needs educator) and another as a learning support teacher.

‘I’ve been a kindergarten teacher for four and a half years, but I am currently working as a special pedagogue, which is kind of like a personal assistant to a child in a kindergarten.’
(Teacher 02)

To differentiate between a kindergarten teacher and an educational leader, both have the same prior educational requirements but an educational leader has more responsibilities when it comes to planning, implementation, documentation, assessment, etc.

Prior Education

Prior education concerns informants' prior learning on Special Needs pedagogy or kindergarten pedagogy in a formal institution before working as a kindergarten teacher. The prior education of a teacher can have a significant impact on their ability to effectively teach students and contribute to a positive learning environment. Content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, cultural competence, professional development, etc are the elements of prior education of a teacher which is an important indicator of a teachers' background as well. In order to know about prior education the following question was asked-

“Did you receive prior education in special needs before starting as a teacher?”

Only one of the informants had special needs in higher education before starting work in a Norwegian kindergarten and had a deep understanding of supporting children with special needs.

“I took my master's here after a couple of years. And then I did special needs. So I do have prior education in that. Quite in deep.” (Teacher 06)

Two informants started attending special needs education as a higher study after starting as kindergarten teachers. One of the informants between them had psychology as a background that gave her the opportunity of having knowledge of learning and behavior among children.

“No, my background is in psychology. So we did a bit of developmental psychology, but that was about it. And also like a bit of learning and behavior.” (Teacher 01)

The rest of the five informants had pedagogy as their prior education. However, they had one or two courses on special needs in general and not in-depth learning on how to support children with special needs while maintaining classroom inclusion for all.

“During my training, we touched on different things about children that could happen to children. But I haven't had any extra experience or extra courses in children with extra needs, no.” (Teacher 05)

“Yes and no. Not in particular education for kids with special needs, but just like an overall knowing our responsibility to help and facilitate kids with special needs and kind of knowing the normal development of kids so that you know when you have kids with special needs. Just like a brief introduction, nothing in-depth.” (Teacher 08)

Knowledge of DS

Informants' knowledge of Down syndrome refers to the understanding, awareness, and familiarity of the facts and information about Down Syndrome. Informants' knowledge of DS was divided into two categories- Basic and advanced knowledge in order to make a comparison of what is the knowledge level of each informant based on their prior education and job position. Basic knowledge of Down syndrome has been defined as the mainstream understanding of the facts about DS that is not so up to date, detailed or there is no mention of its genetic reason. Advanced knowledge comprised contemporary information about the genetics of Down

syndrome in detail. In order to get an idea about their knowledge of DS the following question was asked-

“How would you describe Down syndrome?”

Five out of the eight informants responded to the question- “How would you describe Down syndrome in your own words?” with plain and positive replies such as children with Down syndrome can thrive as much as others with the fulfillment of extra assistance in kindergartens. It has been noted that the teachers without prior education in special needs were unable to respond to the question with detailed information regarding the genetics behind Down syndrome or what defines or causes it.

“I would say it's like a syndrome where you are kind of not super high functioning, but with the right tools and with the right support, a person with Down syndrome can function well in society. ” (Teacher 08)

“I think people with Down syndrome are more capable than people think. And they're actually able to do a lot of things if we give them the opportunity to. Not sure how else I would describe Down syndrome though. ” (Teacher 01)

On the other hand, three of the informants who had special needs education as a higher study were able to respond to the question with a much broader perspective concerning the genetics behind it.

“It's a genetic syndrome and it shows in the appearance, you can see it in the eyes, and they look kind of different. People with Downs syndrome are often affected or need follow-up. They can have a lot of physical problems, heart swelling, and stuff. They often need extra support, especially in language- language simulation, pronunciation, language production, and language understanding. But people with Downs syndrome are often very well integrated into society, in work and stuff. ” (Teacher 04)

Experience with DS

Experiences with DS concerns the prior encounters of the informants working in a close connection to the children with down syndrome in the kindergartens. Teachers with prior experience working with students with Down syndrome can play a critical role in promoting inclusive education and creating a positive learning environment for all students as it can promote better understanding as well as knowledge of down syndrome among them.

All of the informants had experience of teaching children with down syndrome.

“I have the experience of teaching same child twice. Once when they were two turning three and the second time when they were six turning seven.” (Teacher 02)

Among the informants, two of the teachers had a personal connection to it as they had relatives with down syndrome in their family and they had a strong bond with them. As a result, they felt strong positive emotions while talking about their experiences with down syndrome.

“My uncle, he had Down syndrome. I never met him but he was like a joy spreader. My dad's family had a lot of issues and my granddad wasn't very nice. But he sort of held the family together by being really loving and wonderful.” (Teacher 03)

The other informant depicted the challenges of Down syndrome from her personal perspective and experience:

“I have a cousin who has a child with Down syndrome. So I know what she has done for her child and I support her completely in that decision. And it is hard having a child maybe with Down syndrome, but you have to be able to give them as much information as possible so you can help them in any way.” (Teacher 05)

Duties & Responsibilities

Duties & responsibilities of the informants concern the tasks or actions that the informants are required to perform as part of their jobs in kindergarten that enable them to take better care of the children.

Informants thoroughly described the responsibilities and activities that correspond to their respective designations in the kindergartens when the question was asked-

“What is your responsibility with the children in the classroom?”

While narrating their general responsibilities as a kindergarten teacher most of them mentioned how these concern making lesson plans, taking care of the children, helping them acquire skills, etc.

“...to take care of the children, to teach them everything, both social and things before they start school, become independent, be kind to one another, yeah, everything. And give everybody the same opportunities.” (Teacher 07)

The informants with prior education in special needs described their responsibilities as consisting of learning sign languages, making individual lesson plans, following the children with extra support, etc.

“From a younger age, they were not able to communicate verbally, which then led me to learn some sign language.” (Teacher 02)

One of the informants concentrated on the fact that connecting with the child is essential in order to triumph at fulfilling the duties of a kindergarten teacher.

“I feel like it's a job where you have like one of the most important things is to have like a relation and a connection to the kid or like the person with the Down syndrome. So you need to invest a lot of time in getting to know the children, because even though it's a syndrome like there are still individual beings, so you have to know each child.” (Teacher 08)

4.2 Teachers' Perception of DS

Teachers' perceptions of DS include their personal observation, interpretation, and understanding as well as how they think of the various aspects of Down syndrome and the children diagnosed with it. A teacher's perception of DS can shape their attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making in

the classroom, and can have a significant impact on children with Down syndrome's learning as well as acceptance in the classroom. Therefore, it is important for teachers to reflect on their perceptions and be open to considering new perspectives and approaches to an inclusive classroom. The researcher tried to perceive teachers' thoughts and perceptions of children with DS by asking the following question-

“What is your first thought/impression when you first discover a child with down syndrome among the other children?”

Moreover, there were many statements during the entire interviews that provided the researcher with the answer to this question. In order to understand teachers' beliefs, opinions, and viewpoints on children with Down syndrome based on how things seem to appear, the perceptions of teachers were coded into three sub-themes such as teachers' observations, impressions, and ambivalence.

Observations

Teachers' observation refers to their statements based on what they have seen, heard, or noticed with children with Down syndrome. Teachers' observations were analyzed in order to get a clear idea on teachers' perceptions of down syndrome as people's observation often influences how they feel. Both positive and negative observations were noted from the statements of informants. Most of the informants mentioned children with down syndrome with positive observations such as them being truthful, showing strong emotions, sunshine, etc.

“One of them is, I think she is two and a half years old and she's like the sunshine in the room. And we're singing, she's like dancing and smiling and coming to me and sit on my lap and hugging everybody. So I think about kids with or people with Down syndrome as big smiles and positive minds.” (Teacher 07)

“They're actually able to do a lot of things if we give them the opportunity to....I actually like teaching children with Down syndrome.” (Teacher 01)

There were some remarks that pointed out a few observations that they thought could be challenging about having children with down syndrome in a classroom such as they require longer time, patience etc.

“You would want to have someone from the outside because you can't give the same amount of time.” (Teacher 08)

“Compared to a child with no diagnosis at all versus someone with Down syndrome... It might be a bit more difficult. Or at least you have to be a bit more patient perhaps.” (Teacher 03)

“It requires a lot of patience. I feel like most of them are quite stubborn. So then a lot of the kids that I work with Down syndrome, tend to just sit if they do not want to do anything. So then it takes a lot of patience to sit down and wait for them until they are ready...they take a longer time to acquire skills.” (Teacher 01)

Impressions

Impressions concern with teachers' ideas, feelings as well as opinions about children with DS, especially the ones that are formed without conscious thought or on the basis of little evidence emerged through the interviews. Most of the informants associated children with down syndrome with positive thoughts and impressions such as joy-spreader, warm, funny, etc.

“...the most warm, funny people I've met.” (Teacher 02)

“People with big smiles and big hearts.” (Teacher 07)

One of the teachers asserted the fact that her impression of children with down syndrome is that they appear to be very truthful and true to their emotions.

“When I think of them I think of joy first of all. Because it makes me smile. In a non-condescending way of course. It's just so refreshing with people who have their emotions outside. That aren't stone-faced Norwegians.” (Teacher 03)

There were few remarks that pointed to the fact that they thought are challenging about having children with down syndrome in a classroom.

“I don't see it like a problem. The only thing is that maybe demands a little bit more from you as a teacher. So it's a little bit of a challenge, but a good challenge.” (Teacher 02)

One of the teachers mentioned that she felt sad when she saw a child with down syndrome.

“I think my first impression was that when I look at the child with Down syndrome among the other children, I think it was a bit sad.” (Teacher 01)

Ambivalence

Ambivalence among teachers' statements refers to a state of mixed feelings, uncertainty, or conflicting attitudes towards a particular topic related to Down syndrome. In the context of this study, ambivalent statements from teachers reflected their conflicting beliefs or emotions about children with Down syndrome.

An ambivalent attitude is one in which the individual experiences positive and negative affective responses, cognitive representations, or behavioral tendencies with respect to the same object, person, or situation. Ambivalence can be a sign of unresolved internal conflicts or of the complex nature of the object under consideration (Giner-Sorolla, 2019).

There were in fact a few statements that were noticed as having contradictory meanings by the informants. These ambivalent statements by the teachers depicted mixed feelings about children with Down syndrome which might be an indicator of respondent bias.

“I would like to teach children with Down syndrome, but not in a big group where I also have to teach the other kids.” (Teacher 08)

When asked if they thought knowing a child had Down syndrome would affect their judgment of if the child is telling the truth or not there were several ambivalent responses that indicated teachers' mixed feelings about recognizing children as knowers.

“...I feel like children are more truthful than adults. That's the best thing about them. They do not filter things. But I can definitely think of moments when I have known that what you say is not true as well. We're all people.” (Teacher 02)

“I also would take into consideration that children in general are not the best at seeing other people or seeing other points of view. But I would think maybe the person with Down syndrome had a bit more difficulty doing that. But at the same time, I would trust them a bit more.” (Teacher 03)

One of the teachers responded with ambivalence when asked if she would like to mention anything she would not like about teaching children with Down syndrome. Although she started to answer positively about wanting to teach them, several remarks regarding how challenging it was and undervaluing remarks made the statements seem conflicted.

“I actually like teaching children with Down syndrome, but it requires a lot of patience. I feel like most of them are quite stubborn. So then a lot of the kids that I work with Down syndrome, tend to just sit if they do not want to do anything. So then it takes a lot of patience to sit down and wait for them until they are ready” (Teacher 01)

“...they take a longer time to acquire skills. But then once they acquire the skill, and also because they love routine a lot. So then, in the end, it's easier to get a child with Down syndrome to listen and follow than a regular child. Because then the regular child would talk back all the time. You have to think of ways how to respond.” (Teacher 01)

4.3 Injustices in Kindergartens

Injustices in kindergartens refer to situations or practices that are unfair, unequal, or discriminatory towards certain groups of children (children with DS or all children in general) in early childhood education settings. The study aimed to investigate any possible unfair treatment in a situation in which the rights of an acknowledgment as a knower for a child with Down syndrome were harmed. In the quest of finding any possible injustice that can hinder the

epistemic identity of children with down syndrome, other related issues such as inclusion difficulties, unequal treatment between children with and without down syndrome as well as undervaluing children even without any special needs came up the surface as well.

Differentiating Children

Differentiating between children refers to the practice of identifying and acting unfairly on individual differences among children in a classroom setting. This can involve being distinctive based on unequal perceptions, favoritism, etc of children's learning styles, abilities, interests, cultural backgrounds, and developmental needs.

Through the conversations with the kindergarten teachers, the researcher tried to find out the genuine circumstances in the kindergarten when it came to inclusion by asking the following questions-

“Do you feel that it is easier to teach a child with Down syndrome than a child without?”

“Do you differentiate between a child with Down syndrome and a child without as a ‘knower’?”

When asked if the teachers could come up with an example of differentiation between children with and without Down syndrome, both positive and negative responses were received.

Most of the teachers responded with a negative answer to the question if they themselves ever made any differentiation between the children with and without down syndrome as a knower.

“No, no. This is Pedagogy 101, you know, you can never do this. But it would probably take a little bit more time to try to understand what they do.” (Teacher 06)

“I think I would give the child with Down syndrome just as much chance as the other child as well. Give them the same possibilities because that is what they deserve.” (Teacher 05)

Teachers agreed upon the idea that every child had specific needs, no matter if it was genetic, intellectual, or other. They acknowledged that each child therefore should be approached individually, only then equity could be established.

“I wouldn't say it's easier to teach a child without it because teaching is teaching and you just have to find different ways. All children, some children without any kind of disability need really a different approach too.” (Teacher 04)

“If I were to differentiate, then I would differentiate every single child. Because I would still take into consideration what the child knows.” (Teacher 01)

On the other hand from the conversations with the teacher, a few comments indicated that there were still several circumstances where there might be some occurrence of differentiating between children.

Two of the informants argued that the comparison between children often came up even though they did not intend to do it.

“Even though you don't want to you're kind of forced to compare to children the same age because they're in the same classroom and definitely on another level.” (Teacher 02)

“In a way, even if you don't want to, I think you do it. I think you have to be aware of it, but I think it's difficult to not differentiate because you see it and you have all these things in your head like, oh yeah, you have to remember this and this and this.” (Teacher 04)

Epistemic

Epistemic injustice is the idea that one can be unfairly discriminated against as a knower based on others' prejudices about the person or a certain group of people (children, children with DS). Although the researcher initially intended to find out possible epistemic injustices specifically against the children with Down syndrome, few remarks fueled the idea that not only children could be prejudiced for having special needs, they could be prejudiced just for being children as well when they stumbled upon these questions-

“Did you ever find yourself not believing something they said simply as they are just children/children with down syndrome? Can you give an example?”

“Did you ever find out another teacher(no names) did not believe something they said simply as they are just children/children with down syndrome? Could you share an example of this?”

Undervaluing children and children with Down syndrome can lead to stereotyping particular groups which can trigger labeling that significant person or group and thus limiting their opportunities.

Against All Children: Epistemic injustice against all children refers to situations or practices in which children are unfairly denied opportunities to acquire knowledge or access to resources that are necessary for their intellectual and personal growth. Although when asked all the informants denied the fact that they themselves had ever dismissed a child as a knower. However, in most of the conversations with the informants it came up that they had in fact noticed few colleagues who did.

“I have heard teachers say stuff like that with children generally, not specifically with children with Down...I have heard teachers saying this about other children, like, oh, I don't believe this, this sounds a bit weird.” (Teacher 04)

“Yes, definitely both children in general and also children with Down syndrome. Yeah, I think that's kind of common when you work with kids you sometimes have to take things with a grain of salt but some teachers are quick to dismiss what children say.” (Teacher 08)

On the other hand, comments such as they would believe a child with Down syndrome more than a child without also created disparity as these statements were indicators of the possibilities of other children without Down syndrome being the victim of teachers' stereotyping 'against children without special needs'.

“Down syndrome kids are very concrete with everything that they say. So there are no lies and they don't try to go around things. Compared to regular children who would just not want to get into trouble and then tell a lie or something.” (Teacher 01)

“I think I would be more sympathetic with the child with Down syndrome because are they equally able to defend themselves?” (Teacher 08)

Against Children with DS: Epistemic injustice against children with Down syndrome refers to situations or practices in which these children are unfairly denied opportunities to acquire knowledge or access to resources that are necessary for their intellectual and personal growth due to their diagnosis. The interview conversations did not reveal much direct practiced injustices against children with down syndrome. However, through the lenses of scrutiny many stereotyping, labelization, and underestimation were noted from the conversations.

“I guess that depends on what they say and if you can like have a conversation about it and get to know more yeah but I guess subconsciously it comes up.” (Teacher 08)

One of the informants stated that it could be easier to teach children with Down syndrome adding that they would not ask follow-up questions. This statement itself had been a sign of not acknowledging children with down syndrome as active listeners or knowers.

“It's easier to get a child with Down syndrome to listen and follow than a regular child. Because then the regular child would talk back all the time. You have to think of ways how to respond.” (Teacher 01)

Undervaluing: Undervaluing refers to the act of assigning a lower value or worth to something or someone than they actually deserve. This can occur in various contexts, such as in the workplace, in education, or in interpersonal relationships. In kindergartens, undervaluing can occur when teachers do not recognize or acknowledge the individual strengths and needs of the children. For example, children with Down syndrome might be the victim of being undervalued when their unique strengths and needs are not fully recognized or accommodated in the classroom as well as their academic potential, resulting in lower expectations and fewer opportunities for academic advancement. Undervaluing is not just limited to intellectual, cultural, or social differences, children are often undervalued just for being children.

There were several disparaging and undervaluing remarks noted from the interviews with the kindergarten teachers which showed that although they stated mostly that they would not

differentiate between children or disregard any child as a knower, there were still certain negative perceptions that would say otherwise.

“I think maybe I would believe the person with Down syndrome a bit more. Just because I don't think they're so good at lying...I think maybe people talk over their heads and such and think that they don't understand.” (Teacher 03)

“Maybe they are shy, maybe they have a hard time expressing themselves vocally, that could be.” (Teacher 05)

“...and this is for all kids, even kids that are a little bit mentally disabled, or I don't want to say retarded, but there are slower learners.” (Teacher 06)

“It was mostly the adults that decided what the child would do.” (Teacher 01)

Stereotyping: Stereotyping is the act of generalizing someone or a group of people based on a prior assumption of that particular group. The generalization then enables the individual to create a simplified outlook to that particular group thinking that applies for everyone in it. Stereotypes are most generally defined as "beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of certain groups" (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996, p.240).

Most of the informants had a tendency to stereotyping all children with Down syndrome by speaking through a generalized point of view.

“Kids with special needs, usually don't really get to set the words for themselves, they need an adult to do it for them, to advocate for them.” (Teacher 06)

“They take a longer time to acquire skills...A lot of opportunities to learn are taken away from the child because they assume that the child will not be able to do it...They probably feel that children with Down syndrome speak too slowly. So then when it's that time when teacher is like, "okay, can somebody choose something?"- They rarely get picked because they take too long to answer.” (Teacher 01)

Stereotyping the knowledge of all the children with down syndrome can be another disadvantage for them as it stipulates further exclusion.

“I guess it comes to the knowledge like how much do you know about a child with Down syndrome and what they're supposed to know at a certain age. So yeah I guess I would expect different things just because the development is also different biologically.” (Teacher 08)

Labelizing: Labelization refers to the process of applying a label or category to an individual based on their perceived characteristics or traits. This can involve the use of diagnostic labels, such as medical or psychological diagnoses, as well as social labels based on factors such as race, gender, or socio-economic status. Labelization is the subsequent step to the issue that is stereotyping. Labelization occurs when someone attaches a label to an individual thus putting someone in a harmful classification that prevents someone to see the person in another way, thus ultimately hindering the person to develop into his/her full potential.

While stating their perceptions as well as their impressions of children with down syndrome, the informants used the words ‘cute as a puppy’, ‘sunshine’, ‘child-like’, ‘adorable’ etc which might sound like admiration but these labels also make children with down syndrome look brittle, weak, vulnerable and unable to take care of themselves.

“I find them very sweet, very cute, cuter than other kids. There's something...I just feel like I want to...You know when you see a really cute puppy or something. You just want to take care of it.” (Teacher 03)

“They're pretty childlike and they're quite adorable.” (Teacher 01)

One of the teachers stated that she would like to know a child before deciding he/she was telling the truth which indicates that her judgment was affected by prior labeling of the child. Prior labeling can be detrimental as it nullifies whatever truth the child might say in the future.

“Just like regular kids, you get to know and learn. That boy, always tells the truth and that girl, she is telling a lot of jokes. And I think it's the same with Down syndrome and not Down syndrome, you get to know them. At first, you have to trust them both and then you get to know them and then you'll see what kind of kids they are.” (Teacher 07)

Empathy-Created Exclusion

Empathy-created exclusion refers to the statements by the teachers that indicated the occurrence of excluding children of DS as a result of teachers' empathy stemming from the idea that all children with DS need help or other stereotypes. There were several instances where the researcher noticed that the informants might not be able to always maintain an inclusive classroom as a result of their over-empathy. Caring too much can lead to exclusion of the children with DS when teachers' empathy stems from the idea that all children with DS need help even if they do not or other stereotypes that make them look incapable of being independent.

An informant talked about her experience of observing a lady with down syndrome being treated differently than others which she thought was somewhat derogatory. If she was treated like a child who deserved a condescending pat on the head after every task, chances are that she was treated like that as a child as well.

“I went to a drama group with an adult lady with Down syndrome. She's very high functioning. She was very capable. But even her, the teacher was patting her on the head and being very... I don't know. I think he meant it in a nice way. But it was a bit condescending and I feel like it took a bit away from her agency power... I think it comes from a good place that they want to help. But maybe helping too much is making people less capable of things and also believe in themselves.” (Teacher 03)

There were other instances where the informants agreed on the fact that even if they do not mean to exclude or deprive the child with Down syndrome of becoming an independent individual, they often find themselves taking charge from an empathetic ground.

“Yes, even if it shouldn't, maybe. But I think it would because I would have that in my head.” (Teacher 04)

“You know when you see a really cute puppy or something. You just want to take care of it. That's what I feel. Which I understand can be a bit limiting in a way. Because then maybe I don't see their abilities. But that's how I feel.” (Teacher 03)

“I think I would be more sympathetic with the child with Down syndrome because like are they equally able to defend themselves?” (Teacher 08)

“I have experienced a thing about kids in institutions is that sometimes because the expectations are quite low, they then don't achieve as much. Or they don't like try to do the things because they feel like they can't anyway, which is very sad.” (Teacher 03)

Inclusion Difficulties

Inclusion difficulty in kindergarten refers to challenges that may arise when attempting to provide an inclusive learning environment for all children, regardless of their individual needs and abilities. During the interviews, the kindergarten teachers spoke about many barriers that had been causing problems in inclusion and support of children with DS in mainstream kindergartens with other children. Teachers stated that often it was difficult for them to include children with Down syndrome in a group of others because although children were generally very accepting in nature, some children preferred their own group. The informants focused on the importance of teachers' initiatives to ensure that children with down syndrome blend into the groups smoothly.

“Older children can be little excluding when they play as they come to a certain age where they are more yeah they have kind of certain children to play with and also maybe teachers do the same as well.” (Teacher 08)

“The child did not have a lot of friends to play with. And the adults did not really encourage the other kids to be a part of the child's life or be social with the child...I mean for us adults, it's easy for us to say, like, OK, let's form a group, and then you include the child with Down syndrome with the rest of the kids. But this was very seldom in the classroom.” (Teacher 01)

Gap in Knowledge: A gap in knowledge refers to an area or topic where there is a lack of information, understanding, or expertise. It can be a result of a lack of research, limited access to information, or simply an area that has not been explored or studied extensively.

The informants discussed the issue of how the gaps in their knowledge about down syndrome and other special needs can prevent them to support and include children with DS in kindergartens.

“Either because the teachers don't have the energy, they don't have the knowledge, or they just don't care enough. Or maybe they feel like they don't have enough, the fact that they don't have the knowledge makes them feel very uncertain about themselves and their skills, so they prefer to just either ignore it or not believe their story.” (Teacher 06)

“When you asked me about what I know about Downs syndrome, I thought maybe not as much as I thought, and how to support people with Down.” (Teacher 04)

Gap between Knowledge & Practice: The gap between knowledge and practice refers to a situation where there is a disconnect between what is known or understood about a particular topic or issue, and what is actually put into practice or implemented in real-world situations. This gap can occur for a variety of reasons, such as a lack of resources, institutional barriers, or a failure to effectively communicate or disseminate knowledge. It can also occur when there are competing priorities or conflicting values that make it difficult to translate knowledge into practice.

The researcher observed a pattern of a gap between teachers' knowledge about teaching methods and actual practice in kindergartens which indicates there is a growing need for more opportunities for practice.

“Even though I said we have two classes about this, you don't really learn how to actually accommodate children in need for a normal kindergarten.” (Teacher 02)

Kindergartens' Shortcomings: Kindergarten's shortcomings refer to the limitations and challenges that may arise within the kindergarten education system. Almost all the informants put an emphasis on the fact that most of the kindergartens did not have the resources or expertise to support or include children with down syndrome. As the proportion of children with needs is lower than the children without any, kindergartens do not seem to make an effort to make arrangements for the child with Down syndrome's individual needs. One of the informants depicted her experience in a kindergarten she previously worked and how there was a girl with down syndrome whose parents used to bring resources from home to provide the teachers.

“Every time that a kid actually needs something extra, it's like it's new for whatever kindergarten it is. And it goes a lot actually into the parents...they have to bring all these pillows, and these bridges, and these stairs, and stuff that actually the kindergarten should be able to have. It's always just one kid, you know?” (Teacher 06)

4.4 Solutions

Solutions refer to the strategies, methods, or actions taken to address or resolve the challenge and issue that is epistemic injustice against the children and children with DS proposed by the kindergarten teachers. Asking the following questions as well as through other conversations with the informants, there were quite a lot of suggestions that came up as solutions to the research problems that will help the teachers maintain the inclusion of all children as well as create a space for epistemic justice-

“Do you feel that there should be more training for teachers to support the students with down syndrome within the classroom?”

“Do you have any suggestions on how we can promote equity and justice for children with down syndrome in kindergartens?”

Teachers' thoughts and ideas on how to solve the complications in the kindergartens and create epistemic justice, inclusion, and equal rights instead were reflected mostly at the end of the interview stages as well as sometimes throughout the entire interview process. The solutions

proposed by the teachers were dissected into three sub-themes such as classroom strategies, awareness, and training.

Classroom Strategies

Classroom strategies such as general plans, special techniques as well as individual plans intended by the teachers to achieve epistemic justice, inclusion, and equity in the classroom that are sustainable and effective were discussed in the conversation. Teachers focused on effective strategies that they think could help bring a balance of equity and justice while at the same time promoting children with or without down syndrome as a knower.

When asked if they differentiated between children with Down syndrome and without as knowers and if the syndrome would affect their judgment on who is right or wrong, most of the teachers agreed that it was a good strategy to talk with the children first before reaching into a conclusion.

“whichever child it was, we would sit down and have a conversation. Everyone would get to say their point of view and then we would try to reach some conclusion.” (Teacher 02)

Informants put great emphasis on having good communication with children with down syndrome in order to build a relationship with mutual trust as a base foundation of epistemic justice. Few strategies to achieve that included having patience, being clear, using sign language, etc.

“I would have to choose what is most important. And try to not go into many different concepts. But maybe try to do it one at a time. And lots of breaks.” (Teacher 03)

“Kids have a background behind their thoughts. Maybe they don't have the exact words to put in the order they want, but I don't find it hard to believe, I just try to get to the bottom of it, to the seeds, pretty much.” (Teacher 06)

“I think you have to be more, what's it called in English, tyddelig/ clear. You have to be very clear when you say things. And maybe you have to use signs. I know big signs like singing and you have to use your body language...And maybe repeat things many times.” (Teacher 07)

Meeting with the parents as well as having a good understanding with them to know the child better as an individual was also a highlighted strategy proposed by the informants while talking about having a balanced inclusive classroom where everyone's apprehension is acknowledged.

“We have to meet with the parents, see if they need some extra help, like how we work in the kindergarten in order to support them. If they would have any questions, then we would also discuss them with them.” (Teacher 06)

Another strategy proposed to ensure inclusion in the classroom which is essential to build the children with Down syndrome up as knowers, was not to exclude them by treating them as special. It is important to provide all children the same opportunity by treating them the same and letting them be who they are.

“I think a hindrance would be to treat them in a very special way, and sometimes you can hinder these children, not just the ones with Downs when you support them too much. You can do too much help, it's not good either. You have to find the right balance to help them on the way, but not too much so you do it for them.” (Teacher 04)

Motivation: Informants agreed on how necessary motivation was when it came to building an epistemically just classroom. Motivation such as the process of initiating, guiding as well as maintaining goal-oriented behaviors can have a great impact on both classroom engagement and speaking up more for the children with DS.

Teachers specified that being positive, understanding, listening with utmost sincerity, believing in them, etc can motivate the children to speak up for their voices more and provide them with the notion that their voices matter which can also be an important step for teachers in corroborating epistemic virtue from within.

“Being positive about what they say, and even if they say something wrong, not just focus on the negative part of it, like saying, okay, I understand, but maybe you meant this. You know, without

putting the negative form, and this is very important for small children. So that they also build a very good self-picture of themselves.” (Teacher 06)

“I think for the support, if you believe in children with Downs, that they are capable of doing things, and you believe it, they can do the same things as the others, and you treat them most like the others.” (Teacher 04)

“Any child will stop speaking up if they are put down, whether they have a diagnosis or not.” (Teacher 02)

Resources: Classroom resources refer to the various materials and tools that are available to teachers and children in order to better support learning and instruction in a classroom setting. Informants focused on the importance of having a resourceful classroom in order to better support the children with down syndrome. They felt that proper resources are crucial in order to benefit the children with DS in the classrooms, whether that be a source, supply, or support. Informants put emphasis on learning more about down syndrome as well as other special needs and identified few lack of resources that can be a hindrance to support and listen to each child.

“there is not enough resources to see every single child. And sometimes you just have to move on.” (Teacher 03)

“I don't know if it's because of my background, or because I have literature. I have all the books if I need to get informed. But my colleagues surely don't.” (Teacher 06)

Active Participation: Active participation refers to actively taking part in creating an environment where children with DS have the opportunity of coming together with other people (teachers, pupils, parents) more, direct regular contacts and have an effect on each other. The informants felt the need of having children with down syndrome regularly in every kindergarten to normalize having special needs children in every classroom so that teachers as well as the pupils appreciate them as much as the other children as knowers. It has come up that exposure

can really make a difference in normalization as well as change the way we act, thought, or accept others' knowledge and viewpoints.

“I've worked with children with disabilities so much so I don't really view them differently.”
(Teacher 08)

“It's always just one kid, you know?...many actually are kept at home, and do not go to kindergartens, they go to special institutions, or special kindergartens instead. So the regular kindergartens actually do not. But it's also because there are not so many.” (Teacher 06)

“You can have as much teacher training as possible. But if you don't have exposure to the situation or exposure to a person with Down syndrome or exposure to a person from another culture, then your intrinsic thoughts kind of like get in the way of that.” (Teacher 01)

Awareness

Informants put emphasis on creating knowledge and understanding on the issue of epistemic injustices- how these exist and how we can promote epistemic justice by triggering a heightened sense of the issue among everyone connected to the kindergartens (teachers, pupils, parents) and beyond.

“Maybe promoting awareness in general and also how we communicate and talk about it with the parents as well as the other parents because children also get a lot from their parents and their home. It's also really important that the kindergarten and the parents are kind of on the same page and know the same thing about how to talk to children about it so generally more knowledge and awareness.” (Teacher 08)

“I think it's about learning more about people with Downs and sharing information with the staff in kindergartens, maybe already when they are doing their teacher education, teacher training.” (Teacher 04)

Informants focused on how important it is to talk about such an important issue and how expanding knowledge and putting emphasis on it can make a great disparity in how teachers perceive children with down syndrome as knowers.

“I think talking about it and read and learn and learning from each other, that's a very good way to start.” (Teacher 07)

“To be honest, when it comes to Down syndrome, I don't think there's focus enough. There's a lot of focus on social behavior, and a lot of focus on the social aspects. Social disabilities and speech disabilities, because that's a big problem in Norway. So they're very focused on speech and social, and they forget a lot about not only Down syndrome but cerebral paralysis.” (Teacher 06)

Training

All informants mentioned the need for proper and effective teachers' training arrangements for developing the skills, knowledge, and fitness among the teachers so that they are able to gain useful competencies about special needs in children and how to better support them without excluding them. Informants felt that epistemic injustices occur when someone holds wrong perceptions/prejudices as a result of lacking proper knowledge or idea about something (i.e. down syndrome).

“I feel like most of the degrees like the studies that we take are very general and kids are not. If there are kids with disabilities or Down syndrome I feel like there is a lack of competence in a lot of areas, especially because there are so many people working in the kindergarten that does not have the education as well.” (Teacher 08)

“I think there should be more training as well because they would not know what to do because they don't know, and there's actually not that much offer.” (Teacher 06)

“I think it starts with teacher training... I think there needs to be training in the interactions with the children and cultural inclusion.” (Teacher 01)

Informants also highlighted the issue that there was a lack of training for the mainstream teacher about supporting children with special needs and they had to depend on the special educators in that matter.

“No, I think the special needs teachers, have enough. But one day if the special needs teacher is sick or gone, then I don't think the other teachers have enough knowledge of Down syndrome and how to meet kids with special needs.” (Teacher 07)

5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher aims to depict how the findings can be related as well as perceived in light of already established theories and literature. As the analysis in this study has been data-driven, the researcher finds it essential to make the data more coherent for the readers as well as derive implications and practical solutions from it. Specific topics that have emerged along the way during the analysis stage will be discussed in a combination of literature and the researcher's opinions that will pave the way for possible recommendations for the future of an inclusive kindergarten environment.

5.1 Teachers' Background

Epistemic injustice is a concept where systematic discrimination affects how particular people are heard, believed, and valued when it comes to the matter of knowledge and information. As epistemic injustices stem from beliefs and perceptions of the person's own self, it can be said that a teacher's background and experiences are crucial to be acknowledged. Teachers' educational background, knowledge of down syndrome, experiences, etc can have an impact on their perceptions about children with down syndrome, the way they treat them as well as if they acknowledge them as knowers. Designations, prior education, knowledge of DS, experiences with DS, duties, and responsibilities- these five sub-themes were selected to define teachers' backgrounds and compare how these backgrounds can have an effect on their perceptions. Teacher knowledge comes from various sources, such as teachers' own educational experiences, teacher education, and teaching experience (Friedrichsen et al., 2009). According to the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1997/1986), the human agency works within a triadic interaction of individual, behavioral, and environmental factors. Therefore, it can be said that teachers' backgrounds hold an essential importance on their perceptions and the perceptions have an effect on their actions regarding giving credibility to the children who deserve it.

The study revealed how teachers who had an education in special needs and had more experience with working with special needs showed deeper and more advanced knowledge of the cause and effect of Down syndrome as well as how to support them. However, one of the teachers (Teacher

05) although having the most teaching experiences did not show an in-depth knowledge of either Down syndrome or any possible injustices they may face. On the other hand, another teacher (Teacher 04) with almost the same years of teaching experience and a few others (Teacher 02, Teacher 06) who had worked more with children with Down syndrome showed more advanced knowledge and interest on epistemic injustices against children with Down syndrome. Therefore it can be said that the need to gain more knowledge of Down syndrome and the possible injustices children may face is related to the prior education in special needs as well as more exposure to working with children with Down syndrome.

One of the teachers (Teacher 02) mentioned the experience of learning sign language for a child with Down syndrome that proved the teachers try as much to connect with the child as possible. Teachers without special needs educational background stated how they had few training courses on how to support children with special needs which were in fact very limited and general. However, mainstream teachers (Teacher 03, Teacher 05, Teacher 07, Teacher 08) had more of a general idea about children with Down syndrome and did not show advanced, in-depth knowledge.

In addition to their formal training and education, teachers who worked with special needs students also showed a deep understanding and empathy for the unique challenges that these children face on a daily basis. Some of them also had experiences working with students with other special needs such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism, cerebral palsy, etc, and might have developed and adapted specialized teaching strategies and techniques to help the children with Down syndrome to thrive.

Hence, from analyzing the backgrounds of the teachers in this study it can be said that the most effective teachers for children with Down syndrome are those who are able to build strong relationships with their students by understanding their individual strengths and challenges and tailoring their teaching approaches to meet the unique needs of each child. As one of the teachers mentioned that even though one can learn how to support children with Down syndrome from courses, experience is what makes teachers better at what they do. Therefore it can be said that supporting children with Down syndrome is something that requires a combination of specialized training and experience, as well as a deep commitment to working with these students and helping them achieve their full potential.

Teachers lacking accurate knowledge or understanding about Down syndrome may result in misconceptions, stereotypes, or biased attitudes toward the child resulting in the child being underestimated or marginalized based on false assumptions about their knowledge and their stand in society. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the potential sources of epistemic injustices are not only confined to the prior education or background of the teachers themselves but rather stem from systemic issues and biases within educational systems as well as societal values.

5.2 Teacher's Perception of DS

“To notice is to select, to regard some bits of perception, or some features of the world, as more noteworthy, more significant than others. Of these, we attend, and the rest we ignore—for which reason...attention is the same time ignorance despite the fact that it gives us a vividly clear picture of what we choose to notice. Physically, we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch innumerable features that we never notice.” (Watts, 1966).

To understand teachers' true perceptions of children with Down syndrome, it is thus crucial to analyse how they notice things. Hence, teachers' observations, impressions, and ambivalences—these three concepts came above the surface through their responses. These thoughts and perspectives of teachers regarding children with Down syndrome are crucial when it comes to combating epistemic injustice as children with Down syndrome often face societal prejudices and misconceptions as someone who has the knowledge, which eventually results in limiting their opportunities for learning, self-expression, and social inclusion in mainstream kindergartens as well as society.

When it comes to shaping the educational experiences of children with Down syndrome, teachers can play an essential role as their thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives about their students can influence their attitudes, expectations, and actions even in an inclusive mainstream classroom. For instance, if teachers have positive and inclusive perspectives about children with Down syndrome, it can lead to just, equitable, and inclusive educational practices. During the analysis stage, it was noticed that most of the teachers mentioned all the positive observations they notice about children with Down syndrome for example how the children with Down syndrome are

more truthful and independent than one might think. The teachers also had positive impressions of children with DS as some of them stated how they think children with DS seem very warm-hearted, funny as well as joy-spreader.

On the other hand, if teachers hold biased or negative views about the abilities or potential of a child with Down syndrome or any other special needs, it can result in epistemic injustice by limiting their opportunities for meaningful participation in the learning process and denying them access to valuable knowledge and experiences. Some teachers commented on the negative sides they observed about having a child with Down syndrome such as how they require longer time and more patience. Also, some teachers had negative impressions of them as they felt like they needed a lot of help and felt sad when they saw them.

Even though most of the time teachers had unambiguous statements about their perceptions of Down syndrome, there were also a few instances when they were ambivalent about what they were saying. According to Smelser (1998), 'ambivalence' is the coexistence of love-hate and attraction-needs in a relationship. However, Bleuler (1910) & Freud (1912) argued that ambivalence can be described as suffocating, deviant, and an unacceptable anxious mental state. These ambivalences in teachers' statements might be a result of respondent bias as the researcher noticed a pattern showing how at the beginning of the conversations there were lots of positive perceptions when after a while few negative comments came up that were completely contradictory to the former responses. Also, when asked if they ever dismissed a child as a knower all informants responded with a negative answer but when asked about if they saw someone else do it they answered positively. According to Tateo (2015b & 2017), antinomies, ambivalences, and idiosyncrasies, not surprisingly, coexist in the life course and across generations, representing both the discomforts and resources of our being humans always striving for transcending our present condition

The researcher felt the need to explore teachers' thoughts and perspectives as these often can influence how the children see themselves and others in the classroom. A teacher who recognizes, values, and embraces the beauty of diversity in a classroom is more likely to create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment where all the students feel respected, included, empowered, and most importantly "heard". Teachers' positive outlook on being able to assign credibility to the children as much as adults are entitled to can foster positive self-esteem, and motivation among all children contributing to boosting epistemic justice.

5.3 Injustices in Kindergartens

Human development is a dynamic and mutual process resulting from interactions through several environmental contexts called systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Among these systems a child has the primary connection with his/her family, and people around the home, and afterwards kindergarten. Klinenberg (2019) stated that in addition to the family and the local neighbourhood, kindergartens are seen as the most important social infrastructure in early childhood. Kindergartens are depicted to play an important role in the development of children's cognitions, values, and attitudes. Today 97% of Norwegian children between four and five years of age are attending kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2020). In fact, in Norway, it is very common to start kindergarten even from 1 year of age. Since the population of children attending kindergarten is quite large, it is even more essential to ensure that the kindergartens have proper resources to include all children regardless of their abilities. Through the interviews, it has come up that most of the kindergartens the teachers had worked or were working in did not have proper resources to support a child with Down syndrome. One teacher mentioned the reason might be that there was not enough children with Down syndrome in each kindergarten, resulting in negligence from the authorities. However, The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (UN, 2006) focused on Article 7.3 on the educational rights of disabled children that:

“...children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age appropriate assistance to realize that right.”

However, it was also noticed during the analysis that some of the teachers had the tendency to differentiate between a child with Down syndrome and a child without. Some teachers pointed out that the differentiation came up as one can always identify a child with Down syndrome and whenever it was done all the perceptions and concerns about their abilities or disabilities got into their head that could easily force a person to make comparisons in their minds, even if they did

not mean to. Some of the teachers stated a similar assertion by adding that they felt empathetic and leaned more toward a child with Down syndrome when it came to believing their statement rather than a child without. These statements specified two possible negative consequences that can disrupt harmony and epistemic justice in an inclusive classroom where all children are supposed to have equal voices-

- It can lead to empathy-created exclusion for the children with Down syndrome. Often the teachers unknowingly exclude the child with Down syndrome or other needs by stereotyping that the child needs help and labeling them without giving them a chance to speak for themselves. This action often emerges from empathy towards the child, but eventually results in taking away their agency, and independence as well as limiting their ability to speak their voice.
- It can be also discriminative of a teacher to assume that a child without needs is less believable than a child with Down syndrome as it takes away the credibility of that child when a teacher's belief is controlled by the empathy that the teacher feels towards children with special needs.

Moreover, a few other instances of epistemic injustices against children with Down syndrome were noticed in the study. However, almost all the teachers agreed that children are more often the victims of epistemic injustices just for being children, no matter if there are any special needs or not. Children in general are not only victims of testimonial injustice because of the identity prejudices of the hearers, but also they are often victims of hermeneutical injustices because of the gap in the meaning-making process. Fricker (2007) argued that these injustices may prevent them from becoming who they are. In order to practice epistemic virtue as a goal for creating epistemic justice, the teachers need to find the fine line and perfect balance between their empathy for children with Down syndrome and being open-minded, and unbiased.

5.4 Solutions

Creating a sense of epistemic justice in kindergarten teachers for children with Down syndrome as well as all children within involves building an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters their cognitive, emotional, and social development as well as providing them

credibility for these. The kindergarten teachers provided valuable opinions about what they thought was essential in order to ensure that the children feel acknowledged as knowers. They put much emphasis on having a good relationship with the children that is built on understanding, mutual respect as well as trust. Moreover being careful not to exclude the child by doing their work for them or from an empathic stand is also crucial as these can leave the door open for epistemic harms such as taking away the agency from the child. Proper training for mainstream kindergarten teachers should include a thorough knowledge of special needs, how to support them socially and emotionally, making individualized education plans as per child's individual needs while maintaining an inclusive classroom for all, etc are needed to build an environment of epistemic justice for all children including children with Down syndrome. There were quite a few statements that indicated the need for proper resources for the support of children with Down syndrome which is crucial for their sense of belonging in their classrooms.

To combat epistemic injustice, it is needed that teacher training as well as seminars should consist of plans to build up epistemic virtues among the teachers. According to Fricker (2007), an individual who possesses the virtue of testimonial justice will be disposed to critically reflect on the possible operations of prejudice on her credibility judgements, and discount her own credibility judgements to counteract her prejudices. Moreover, Fricker added to the proposal that promoting the virtue of hermeneutical justice is what is needed to correct hermeneutical injustice which consists of a disposition to attribute the inarticulate struggles of speakers to make sense of their experiences to hermeneutical injustice rather than to innate epistemic deficiencies, and thus to guard against prejudice in assessing what they say or in dismissing the speakers. Fricker(2010) later added three proposals on how to tackle any cognitive biases in the way of building up epistemic virtue. Following practices can be developed according to the proposal of Fricker(2010) to boost epistemic virtue in academia:

- Self-training to use the cognitive dissonance between their prejudicial perceptions of credibility and their conscious endorsement of nondiscriminatory norms of judgment as a resource to trigger critical reflection on and discounting of their perceptions.
- Practicing virtue to be habitual and automatic, so that it does not tax cognitive resources.
- Deploying structural remedies (such as blind reviewing) to prevent bias.

According to Anderson (2012), not only individual practice and training but also structural group integration are needed for developing institutional epistemic virtues. Gaertner and Dovidio (2000)

focused on a truly inclusive classroom to build epistemic virtue as a group by adding that when social groups are educated together in terms of equality, they share equally in educational resources and thus have access to the same markers of credibility and whenever they engage in inquiry together on terms of equality, members of disadvantaged groups can gain epistemic favor in the eyes of the privileged by taking advantage of ethnocentric biases. Therefore, it can be concluded that an inclusive classroom where epistemic virtues are practiced is a concrete base for creating an epistemically just future for children with Down syndrome.

5.5 Reflections on the interviewees

Reflecting on the interviewees' statements in a research study is an important step toward ensuring that the research is inclusive, respectful, and relevant to diverse audiences and stakeholders as well as informing future research and practices.

Teacher 01 had many years of teaching experience in kindergartens where she worked with several children with Down syndrome. Although she had a degree in special needs, she did not show advanced knowledge of what Down syndrome was. Although she repeatedly mentioned that she actually liked teaching children with Down syndrome and believed that they were more capable than one might think, she also showed some ambivalent perceptions by stating that they might be stubborn, childlike, and adorable as well as that she felt sad for them. She mentioned how it was easier to teach a child with Down syndrome as they did not tend to talk back or ask questions, which implied she might not like it when children try to have a conversation with her. Listening to the child is an essential step towards epistemic justice and although teacher 01 stated she would believe more what children with Down syndrome were to say because other children were more likely to lie, just indicates that she might have a reluctance to take into account children's epistemic agency.

Teacher 02 conveyed advanced knowledge of genetics and abilities of Down syndrome. Since she had both an education in special needs and lots of experiences with children with Down syndrome, she was able to empathize with them more while acknowledging their abilities as well as challenges. She accepted that the comparison between a child with and without Down

syndrome came involuntarily, although in her opinion epistemic justification needed to be explored thoroughly before reaching a conclusion about who is right or who is wrong.

Teacher 03 did not have prior education in special needs although she had some experience in teaching children with autism and down syndrome. She had a very positive perception and emotions towards Down syndrome as she had a personal connection(uncle diagnosed with Down syndrome) to it. She mentioned some challenges with teaching children with Down syndrome but also stated how she found them “very cute, puppy-like, cuter than other kids, not good at lying” which might imply labelling, empathy created exclusion as well as being biased/unfair towards other children. Although teacher 03 showed her preference for children with Down syndrome over other children from time to time, through the conversation with her the researcher realized that teacher 03 actually tried to acknowledge the issue that is epistemic injustice.

Teacher 04 had experience teaching in kindergartens for 31 years and showed deep understanding and advanced knowledge of Down syndrome even though she did not have prior education in special needs. She conveyed a positive attitude towards children with DS and showed genuine care about how to better support them. She accepted that comparisons between a child with and without Down syndrome could come subconsciously and added that it came because she cared to give every child what they needed. She also showed interest in the issue of epistemic injustice and talked about how she would like to know more about Down syndrome and how to better support the child.

Teacher 05 had the most experience(33 years) in teaching, although she did not have many courses or prior education in special needs. She responded to the questions with very generic answers such as We should support all children with or without special needs by finding their strengths and needs etc, although did not show advanced knowledge or clear idea about Down syndrome and supporting them. When asked about any incidents of ‘not believing or hearing the voice of the child’ teacher 05 acted quite defensive. Although her statements pointed out that she believed in an inclusive classroom with equity for all, the researcher felt that she was reluctant to acknowledge the issue that is epistemic injustices against children.

Teacher 06 although only worked 3 years in kindergartens, had in-depth knowledge and understanding of Down syndrome as she had prior education in special needs. She acknowledged that having a degree in special needs gave her an advantage to support children with DS better than her colleagues. Teacher 06 agreed that epistemic injustices towards both children with or without DS existed and showed authentic curiosity to learn more about it to prevent those.

Teacher 07 did not have prior education in special needs, although had experience working in kindergartens for 13 years. She also had a music group in the kindergarten where she taught piano to two children with DS among other children. She had a positive attitude towards teaching children with DS and stated how they were like ‘sunshine’ and with ‘big hearts’ etc. However, she mentioned that she would like to know the child before deciding if he/she was someone who lied or not. The statement went against the idea of epistemic justice as it indicated that the teacher relied on her pre-assumed judgement about someone to decide who was right or wrong in the future.

Teacher 08 did not receive a degree in special needs but had a few general courses on how to support children with special needs. Although she had it difficult to portray what DS was, she acknowledged that she needed and wanted to learn more about it. When asked about challenges with children with DS, she stated ambivalently that she liked teaching them but would want a special educator there as she did not think she could give enough time that the child needed. Moreover, she mentioned she would be more sympathetic to the child with DS than others as she thought they were not able to defend themselves. These ambivalent statements might stem from the teacher holding both positive and negative perceptions of the children with DS that are related to ‘labeling them as someone helpless’ and ‘being over-empathetic’.

6. SCOPES & LIMITATIONS

As the study contains a small-scale sample, the findings cannot be speculated as a fair representative of all the kindergarten-teachers in all of school settings in Oslo, Norway. As a matter of fact, it also cannot be representative of the real-life experiences of children with Down Syndrome. As a result of the unconscious underestimations towards children with Down syndrome found in findings, it can be said that participants might be subjected to “Respondent Bias” such as social desirability bias and sponsor bias. Social desirability bias occurs when the participants tend to answer to the interview questions in such manner to present themselves as favourable or likeable to others including the interviewer. Moreover, sponsor bias can occur if the participants feel the urge to answer in such a manner that they feel the interviewer wants to hear or may benefit the research.

While the sample size is small, it is not intended to be generalized to all kindergarten teachers. The aim was rather to find the existence of possible epistemic injustices in inclusive teaching-learning environments as well as the possible solution according to the participants thereby allowing stakeholders to explore more subjective patterns of personal experiences. The aim of this study has been to get the thoughts, perspectives, and experiences on the concept of EI and EJ from teachers and also to get an in-depth and broad overview from individuals on the reality of the challenges of teaching children with DS and how the challenges can be in fact influenced by their perceptions of DS. Irrespective of the small-scale sample, and different levels of personal experiences of the kindergarten teachers in Oslo, the researcher has been able to get a large number of information that helped the research hopeful that the study will represent valid and reliable both positive and challenging aspects of the perceptions kindergarten teachers hold toward children with DS and how to establish and Epistemically Just inclusive practice in kindergartens.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Epistemic justice refers to the fair distribution of knowledge and expertise in society. When it comes to special needs children, bringing epistemic justice involves ensuring that they have equal access to education, resources, and opportunities for learning and development. There is a need to increase awareness and understanding of children with Down syndrome and their unique challenges as well as consequences when their voices are not heard among educators, policy-makers, and the general public. This can help reduce stigma and discrimination, and promote a more inclusive and supportive environment for these children. Children with DS require specialized teaching methods and approaches. Providing mainstream educators with the necessary training and resources can help them better understand and support their learning needs. Ensuring that these resources are widely available and accessible can help reduce the barriers to learning for them. Collaboration between parents, educators, healthcare providers, and community organizations can help create a more coordinated and holistic approach to supporting them the way they need. Policies that support the rights and well-being of these children can help ensure that they receive the support and resources they need to thrive. Advocating for policy changes can help promote greater epistemic justice for these children.

The focus of this study has primarily been on unveiling mainstream kindergarten teachers' thoughts, perspectives, and actual practices when it comes to acknowledging a child with DS as a knower. This study opens up doors to many possible further research purposes that can be explored within epistemic injustice. For instance, are the children with down syndrome aware of the injustices that occur to them? Can these feelings result in less engagement in kindergarten activities as well as school refusal behavior? Is it possible that epistemic injustice can result in other forms of injustice, such as environmental epistemic injustices that disproportionately impact children with Down syndrome (or other special needs) due to climate change policies being implemented without taking into account their perspectives? Future research on epistemic justice can also cover the role of introducing strong protagonists with Down syndrome in movies, tv shows, plays, advertisements, and books in normalizing Down syndrome, diminishing labelling, and thus establishing epistemic justice. It could also be essential to listen to what the children with Down syndrome have to say about what they think of epistemic injustice and their

experiences in kindergartens as well as other institutions as well. Hence getting multiple perspectives on how to build an epistemically just society is critically important, especially listening to the voice of the children. Moreover, it could be interesting in the future to carry out phenomenology research in mainstream inclusive schools (grunnskole) to study the perspectives and thoughts of children without any special needs in order to understand their take on epistemic injustices as well as how to bring about epistemic justice for all children with or without special needs.

Bringing epistemic justice for children with DS requires a collaborative and multifaceted approach that addresses the unique challenges they face in accessing education and resources. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society that values the diversity and potential of all children.

8. CONCLUSION

The notion of the "epistemic voice of Down syndrome" suggests that individuals with Down syndrome have their own unique perspectives, insights, and life experiences that deserve recognition and consideration in decisions and discussions that affect them. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that individuals with Down syndrome have the ability to contribute valuable knowledge as much as another individual and should not be disregarded or excluded based on preconceived notions or biases about their abilities. However, it is rather important to find the right balance between 'empathy' and 'underestimation' in order to provide them with the right amount of epistemic agency they are entitled for. The beliefs and assumptions of teachers about individuals with Down syndrome can shape their expectations and actions, perpetuating negative stereotypes and exclusionary practices that hinder the intellectual and social growth of children with Down syndrome, ultimately affecting their overall well-being and quality of life. As the study revealed that although kindergarten teachers confirm that they do not differentiate between children and believe what they say, significant amount of comments from them suggested otherwise. These ambivalent remarks indicate that there still exist stereotyping and underestimating perceptions towards not only just children with Down syndrome but also other children. While investigating epistemic injustices against children with Down syndrome, this study revealed that there are significant injustices against all children solely based on their status as "children" when it comes to recognizing them as 'knowers'. Therefore, it is crucial to introduce epistemic virtues among kindergarten teachers and incorporate them into their daily activities. This should be made a compulsory part of teacher training to raise awareness, promote respect, provide equal agency, and advocate for the epistemic independence of all children, including those with Down syndrome. Taking these steps is important not only for kindergarten teachers but also for every individual in society, as it is necessary to combat epistemic injustices against all children. This begins by setting aside preconceived notions related to age, diversity, and disabilities when children express themselves, and recognizing them as unique individuals deserving of equal respect and agency, just like anyone else.

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10. APPENDICES

10.1 Interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Question: Teacher's Perception towards children with down syndrome in mainstream kindergartens of Oslo.

Summative Questions:

- Do the teachers differentiate between a child with down syndrome and a child without as a 'knower' ?
- What can the teacher introduce to promote epistemic justices in a classroom?

Sub questions:

- To what extent the teachers know about down syndrome?
- To what extent are the teachers aware of any epistemic injustices towards the children with down syndrome from their part?
- What attitudes and beliefs do teachers hold as a part of being supportive for the children with down syndrome in the classroom?
- What attitudes and beliefs do teachers recognise as being a hindrance for enhancing the learning experience of children with down syndrome in the classroom?

Interview Questions:

Face to face semi-structured interview with the kindergarten school teachers in Oslo.

1. Do you have any children with down syndrome in the classroom? How much is the approximate ratio to the children with down syndrome and children without?
2. What is the responsibility of yours with the children?
3. How much do you know about down syndrome? How would you describe it?
4. Did you receive prior education in special needs before starting as a teacher?
5. What is your first thought/impression when you first discover a child with down syndrome among the other children?
6. Do you feel that it is easier to teach a child with down syndrome than a child without?
7. Do you differentiate between a child with down syndrome and a child without as a 'knower' ?

8. Did you ever find yourself not believing something they said simply as they are just children/children with down syndrome ? Can you give an example?
9. Did you ever find out another teacher(no names) did not believe something they said simply as they are just children/children with down syndrome? Could you share an example of this?
10. Do you think children with down syndrome are facing injustices because of their appearances?
11. What attitudes and beliefs do you recognise as being supportive for enhancing the learning experience amongst children with down syndrome in the classroom?
12. What attitudes and beliefs do you recognise as being a hindrance for enhancing the learning amongst children with down syndrome in the classroom?
13. Do you feel that there should be more training for teachers to support the students with down syndrome within the classroom?
14. Do you have any suggestions on how we can promote equity and justice for the children with down syndrome in kindergartens?

10.2 NSD approval



[Notification form](#) / [Epistemic Injustices towards the Children with Down Syndrome i...](#) / Assessment

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number
355203

Assessment type
Standard

Date
09.11.2022

Project title

Epistemic Injustices towards the Children with Down Syndrome in Oslo: Teacher's Perception in Kindergartens of Oslo

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Universitetet i Oslo / Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet / Institutt for spesialpedagogikk

Project leader

Luca Tateo

Student

Taposi Rabeya Islam

Project period

01.01.2023 - 01.06.2023

Categories of personal data

General

Legal basis

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 01.06.2023.

[Notification Form](#)

Comment

ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT

Data Protection Services has an agreement with the institution where you are carrying out research or studying. As part of this agreement, we provide guidance so that the processing of personal data in your project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation.

We have now assessed the planned processing of personal data. Our assessment is that the processing is lawful, so long as it is carried out as described in the Notification Form with dialogue and attachments.

DUTY OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Please note that teachers are bound by a duty of confidentiality. It is therefore important that the interviews are conducted in such a way that confidential information about individual children is not gathered. Please note that this is not limited to just names, but also background information such as age, gender, date/time, and specific events that can identify a person.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION

The project will be processing general categories of personal data until the date documented in the Notification form.

LEGAL BASIS

The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing general categories of personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

We find that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

As long as the data subjects can be identified in the data material, they will have the following rights: access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), data portability (art. 20).

We find that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

We presuppose that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

If you use a data processor (online survey tool, cloud storage or video interviewing platform) the processing must meet requirements under arts. 28 and 29. Use a data processor that your institution has an agreement with.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify us. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified: <https://www.nsd.no/en/data-protection-services/notification-form-for-personal-data/notify-changes-in-the-notification-form>

Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

We will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

10.3 Information Sheet & Consent Form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

“Epistemic Injustices towards the Children with Down Syndrome: Teachers’ Perception in Kindergartens of Oslo”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to **find out if the teachers are holding any prejudices towards children with down syndrome without them even knowing and help them by introducing epistemic justice instead**. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The goal of this research is to draw attention of the teachers, special needs educators, researchers, policy makers etc and help them better understand if they are holding any prejudices towards children with down syndrome without them even knowing. It aims to help children with down syndrome have just as normal educational and life experiences as their peers without any special needs by ameliorating epistemic injustices and introducing the practices of epistemic justices among teachers.

For this study, the guiding research question is:

- What are the perceptions of teachers towards the children with Down syndrome in elementary school classrooms?

The sub-question of the research question is:

-To what extent are the teachers aware and responsible about their prejudices and actions towards children with down syndrome?

The aim of the second phase is to make them more aware and responsible towards epistemic injustices as well.

It is a master’s thesis project for the final semester of special needs education master’s program at University of Oslo and the collected data will not be used for any other purposes or projects.

Who is responsible for the research project?

University of Oslo, Department of Special Needs Education is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The goal of this research is to find out the teacher's perception towards children with down syndrome in kindergartens of Oslo. In order to get the in depth perception, the researcher decided to conduct 08 interviews- from different kindergartens in Oslo, Norway.

What does participation involve for you?

One-to-one interview will be conducted with participants, lasting up to 30 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of later transcription and data analysis. After the completion of the dissertation, these recordings will be eliminated. If necessary, I may contact you for clarification of ideas after the interview.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will be made anonymous. Therefore, any comment will not affect you in any possible way. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the personal data.
- No unauthorized persons are able to access the personal data as names and any details will be replaced with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. The data will be stored on an encrypted research server.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on June 1st, 2023. Digital recording, as well as codes related to personal data will be stored until the completion of the project. All data as well as recordings will be deleted after the project ends.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with University of Oslo, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- University of Oslo via
Taposi Rabeya Islam (Researcher of this Master's Thesis Project)
Department of Special Needs, University Of Oslo
Email: taposiri@student.uv.uio.no
Phone: +47 96723706

- Professor Luca Tateo (Supervisor of the Project)
Department of Special Needs, University Of Oslo
Email: luca.tateo@isp.uio.no

- Our Data Protection Officer: Roger Markgraf-Bye
- Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

If you would like to participate in this study, please sign the attached form. Thank you for your involvement it is greatly appreciated, without which this study may not be conducted.

Yours sincerely,
Taposi Rabeya Islam.

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project Epistemic Injustices towards the Children with Down Syndrome: Teachers' Perception in Kindergartens of Oslo''and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- have read the information sheet regarding the research;
- are clear about your rights in the project;
- agree to participate in the research.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx June 1st, 2023.

(Signed by participant, date)

10.4 Invitation Letter

Invitation Letter for a Qualitative study by University of Oslo titled:

Epistemic Injustices & the Children with Down Syndrome: Teachers' Perception in Kindergartens of Oslo

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

This letter is an invitation to take part in an interview for a research project which is conducted by the researcher as a partial fulfillment of a master's program. The goal of this research is to draw attention of the teachers, special needs educators, researchers, policy makers etc and help them better understand if they are holding any prejudices towards children with down syndrome without them even knowing.

As a kindergarten teacher in Oslo you are in an ideal position to give us valuable first hand information from your own perspective. The interview takes around 30 minutes and is very informal. The researcher is simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a teacher who has at least two students with down syndrome. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of epistemic justices for the children with down syndrome in the field of pedagogy.

If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. My phone number is +4796723706, email: taposiri@student.uv.uio.no and I will be happy to discuss with you any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Taposi Rabeya Islam,

Department of Special Needs Education,

University of Oslo,

Norway.