Class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans in the Finnish and Norwegian primary schools

*A comparative cross-cultural survey study*

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Class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans in the Finnish and Norwegian primary schools

A comparative cross-cultural survey study
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Abstract

In this cross-cultural research, the focus is on the experiences and views that class teachers have on the use of Individual Educational Plans, IEPs, in Finland and in Norway. In this comparative study the Finnish and Norwegian participants represent two different basic educational systems. The first research problem in this study was to find out what kind of experiences these class teachers have on the planning, implementation and assessment of IEPs, and what kind of effects the implemented IEPs have on their teaching. Secondly, the aim was to investigate how these class teachers view the use of IEPs as a tool for special educational support in an inclusive class. The objective was to investigate whether or not these teachers support the use of IEPs, and also what positive and negative aspects they relate to the use of IEPs. Finally, the overall objective was to find out if the experiences and views represented within the samples differ in these two national education systems.

Finland and Norway are both Nordic countries that have generally very similar societal and cultural starting points for organizing basic education. Both countries share many similar values and objectives for the education, such as equal possibilities for life-long learning. Many differences can, however, be pointed. Previous comparative research shows some fundamental differences on special educational practices, the educational systems’ approach to inclusion, the number of pupils receiving different forms of special education and the results of international educational quality evaluations. In the light of previous research these countries seem to be different in many educational aspects, which provides an interesting framework for comparing the special educational practices even further.

Individual Educational Plans, IEPs, are central educational tools, which are used to direct the educational support for the learners with special educational needs. The IEPs are used somewhat similarly in both country contexts, but the related processes, such as the process of getting an IEP, are somewhat different. Nevertheless, the general objectives and the use of the IEPs are quite similar in both countries. Both in the Finnish and the Norwegian context, the IEPs are drawn up for pupils with special educational needs and their objective is to function as individual framework plans for organizing the education, either within mainstream or special classrooms. With the IEPs it is possible to plan the mainstream class instruction so, that the pupil with special needs and her or his individual objectives, are considered. The IEP provides both a pedagogical and an educational tool, and at the same
time it functions as a legislative document demanded in the national education act. The use of IEPs can be seen as an inclusive practice ensuring everyone’s right to receive beneficial and appropriate instruction primarily in the mainstream setting together with their peers. For further understanding the IEP work can be discussed also in the light of Vygotsky’s theory on learning and development, where the proximal zone of development forms an essential and central concept when it comes to planning, implementing and assessing the IEP in an appropriate way aiming to efficient learning, and therefore also leading to development. These issues provide further aspects to this comparative research.

In this comparative, cross-cultural survey study, one sample of primary class teachers was collected from each country. The samples were collected from the metropolitan areas surrounding the capital cities of the focus countries using the convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling was chosen over random sampling mainly due to time limitations that were set to this project. The research problems were approached partly with mixed methods, but the main approach in this study was quantitative. The data was collected mainly in numerical form using an online questionnaire that was self-designed and carefully translated into two languages to best fit in the purposes of the current research problems and the target groups. Survey method and the questionnaire for the data collection were suitable choices for this cross-cultural study, trying to find out answers to the research problems mainly at the sample level.

Unfortunately, the samples turned out to be very small, and the results were therefore not generalizable to the population. However, the samples were otherwise quite representative and could be compared with each other. Only a few differences could be pointed. Based on the samples, the experiences and views of the class teachers in these national contexts are generally very similar. The class teachers had exhaustive professional experience on the IEP work. Their experiences on the IEP planning processes were generally very positive, but the use of IEPs was sometimes experienced time-consuming or difficult. The effects the IEPs had on teaching were quite similar in both samples, but also some differences could be pointed. Most of the participants support the use of IEPs and view the IEP work mainly positively. However, also negative aspects related to IEPs were pointed, and these aspects were emphasized differently in the two national respondent groups. Further research is needed to find more fundamental explanations for these results and to gather data that can be generalized to the whole population.
Foreword

This Master’s thesis was written for my Master degree in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo during the academic year 2013-2014. Personally, this comparative cross-cultural master research was very interesting for several reasons.

As a native Finn, I have myself been through the Finnish school system from kindergarten all the way to tertiary level university studies and my first Master degree completed at the University of Helsinki in 2008. Being a qualified subject teacher in Biology and Geography, I have experienced the Finnish school system also from the point of view of a teacher. I have lived in Norway since 2010, and gained working experience also within the Norwegian education system. In addition, I have gained experiences as a Master student at the University of Oslo. As a mother of two small children I have also had the opportunity to follow closely the Norwegian kindergarten life.

During these active Oslo years, I have become more and more familiar with the Norwegian language, culture and way of life. All of a sudden, I have found myself as a mother of two bilingual children, even though the language we use at home has always been Finnish. I have also found myself preparing and eating the Norwegian dishes that I first found so suspicious, introducing some Norwegian concepts in my family’s everyday Finnish conversations, going out on “Sunday nature hikes” and during the snowy winters coaching my children’s cross country skiing activities – like a true Norwegian. In short, I believe that during these years I have found the basic keys to get – at least at some level – an “insider view” also to the Norwegian society and educational culture.

I value greatly many aspects of the Finnish basic education. While living in Norway as a Finnish expatriate, I have also learned to look at the Finnish education system from the outside, and recognize such features, that I have previously left unnoticed and taken for granted but that seem special from the outsider’s point of view. On the other hand, the Norwegian education system was first all new to me. I had to acquire knowledge and experience for learning about it. Often, I faced issues that seemed special and different compared to my previous experiences. However, learning more on these aspects, also made me understand more. I have learned to respect greatly especially the Norwegian attempts to develop the school system to an inclusive direction.
Most of all, this Master research experience has allowed me to learn. I have learned about my own native culture as well as the Norwegian culture. I have learned about the educational practices of my native country but also of those in my current home country. I have learned innumerable new things and viewpoints to life from all the children and youth that I have had the pleasure to teach in both contexts. I have learned so many new perspectives for the teaching work from my university professors, co-students and also working colleagues during the past years. I have learned about myself as a student, as a “researcher”, as a teacher, as a (future) special educator, as a mother, as a person. Personally, this project and experience has therefore been very successful. I hope I can offer something interesting and new to learn also to the ones that read this master thesis.

Anna-Maria Vuohelainen
Oslo, 18th of April 2014
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I want to express my gratitude to all the helpful respondents that took part in the pilot research and all the Finnish and Norwegian class teachers that participated in the actual survey by taking time to submit the questionnaire during their undoubtedly already so busy autumn terms. Special thanks shall be addressed also to my helpful Norwegian friends Merete Glorvigen and Eilen Bøe Wethal for revising the necessary Norwegian translations with me, and also to my dear friends Elina Pietola and Jenny Reiniö, who kindly offered their revision help and comments on the written work in the final phase of this project. I thank also my other friends, my parents and other family members who have encouraged me along the way.

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1 Introduction

In this Master research, my aim is to explore some differences between the education systems of Finland and Norway by investigating whether the local primary school class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individualized Educational Plans differ in these two national contexts. Individual Educational Plans, or IEPs, are individualized study programmes tailored for the pupils with individual special needs that can be related to one or several study subjects. They are used in somewhat similar ways in both of the focus systems. The IEPs are central tools when providing instruction to individual students with needs for special educational support and adaptations – such needs that demand more consideration than just the general support measures in the frames of the ordinary education. Often, the aim is that the IEPs drawn up for pupils with special educational needs direct and adapt the general instruction in ordinary classroom settings and thereby making it appropriate and beneficial for these pupils. In that way, the IEPs considered by the side of the general instruction are a way to promote inclusion. The aim of implementing the IEPs is to include also the pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream group, while ensuring that they receive the needed individual support for learning and development.

The IEPs are especially important tools for the class teachers working daily with a group of children who have a variety of educational needs. Even if the pupils with special needs would receive part-time special education in a separate setting, most of the instruction is usually provided in the ordinary classroom with the general class teacher. Therefore, the class teacher can be considered as “the actual worker in the field”, who often has a central role when planning, implementing and evaluating the IEPs used in the inclusive classroom settings. Previous research (see e.g. Berry, 2011; Lee-Tarver, 2006; Mislans, 2010) suggests that the role of the general class teachers has become more important in the IEP processes compared to the old situation where the special needs educators played a more significant role. The primary class teachers form a suitable target group for this comparative research between Finland and Norway, because their profession and tasks can be considered quite similar, therefore also better permitting the cross-cultural comparisons.
1.1 Previous comparative research as the leading framework

During the past years, the Finnish school system has been internationally recognized for its success in the international evaluations of the quality of education (e.g. Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2014). Educational researchers from many other countries have found it interesting to compare different aspects of their own national education systems to the successful Finnish practices. This has been a trend also in Norway, and some interesting comparative scientific articles are already available (e.g. Hausstätter & Takala 2008, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012; Takala, Hausstätter, Ahl, & Head, 2012).

The Norwegian and Finnish school systems, especially when focusing on special needs education, seem to be very different (e.g. Hausstätter & Takala 2008, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012; Takala & al., 2012). During the recent years, there has been more students receiving special education in Finland than in Norway, but in both countries the numbers are increasing (Grunnskolens informasjonsystem [GSI], 2014; Hausstätter & Takala 2008, 2011; Takala & al., 2012; Statistics Finland, 2013d). Many researchers have suggested that Finnish special education has an effect on maintaining the high quality of the Finnish education and on keeping Finland in top positions for example in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranking (e.g. Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & al., 2012). Also, it has been suggested that the Finnish special education is a tool towards inclusive education because it is ensuring the “right to learn” for all students – also the ones facing challenges (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008, 2011; Takala & al., 2012). In Finland, the students with special needs or challenges are supported either by part-time special education in an integrated setting or by full-time special education (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008, 2011; Takala & al., 2012). The part-time solution is the commonly used option; it has usually been functioning as a shorter-term additional support, often taking place during the first grades of the elementary school – a phenomenon where also the Finnish emphasis on early intervention can clearly be seen (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & al., 2012). Part-time special education provides supplemental teaching for students with identified needs for additional support, and neither an IEP nor a special diagnosis or other additional evaluation is necessarily required for receiving it (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala, Pirttimaa, & Törmänen, 2009; Takala & Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2012). It has been pointed that the Finnish special educational structure
really has a positive effect on learning outcomes as also the pupils with special needs do relatively well, and the differences between the high-performing and the low-performing pupils are relatively small in the PISA evaluations (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011).

In Norway, the special educational practices differ clearly from the Finnish ones, and so do the results from the PISA evaluations - Norway showing relatively weak success in the quality evaluation (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; OECD, 2013d). Inclusion plays a dominant role in the Norwegian schools and the Norwegian understanding of inclusion emphasizes the “right to participate” (e.g. Hausstätter & Takala, 2008, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012; Takala & al., 2012). The number of students enrolled to special education is lower than in Finland (GSI, 2014; Hausstätter & Takala, 2008, 2011; Statistics Finland, 2013d; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012; Vislie, 2003) and also the distribution of students receiving special education according to age groups differs clearly: the number of pupils receiving special education is increasing steadily over the school years in Norwegian schools (Fasting, 2013; GSI, 2014; Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Statistics Finland, 2014;). In Norway, the full-time special education is normally given only to students with severe mental disabilities or severe social and behavioural problems, and it is a relatively rarely used solution (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). The segregated solutions are seen in critical light in Norway because they are in contradiction with the nationally emphasized humanistic aims of inclusion. This criticism and cultural tradition has also been transferred to part-time special education resulting in a situation where the schools try to avoid the special educational interventions as long as possible rather than risking the child’s “right to participate” in the mainstream education (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011).

However, the Finnish model of emphasizing early intervention is gaining more and more recognition in the educational field in Norway too (e.g. Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). In Norway, all children have a legal right to be taught within the public school system, and the pupils who cannot benefit from ordinary instruction have the right to special education (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008). An IEP has to be supplied for all the Norwegian students that are enrolled to special education, whether full-time or part-time (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012). The process of enrolment to special education seems to be more bureaucratic and time-consuming in the Norwegian setting compared to the Finnish practices (Takala & Hausstätter, 2012). Takala and Hausstätter (2012) conclude that the different ways of defining children with special needs are a clear cultural difference between these two
Nordic countries. According to them, the planning process of an IEP has more steps and it involves more external professionals (e.g. the representatives of the Educational Psychological Counselling Service) in Norway, and this is not ideal for early intervention but rather leads to delayed intervention. Therefore, the starting points for the use of IEPs in teaching are quite different in Finland and in Norway.

Although Finland and Norway are geographically and culturally very close to each other, many differences in the school systems and organization of the special educational support can be pointed. The approach to inclusion in these countries has had a different emphasis for the past decades. In the international comparisons, the educational results have been strikingly different between these countries. Many frame factors of the basic education, like the expenditures invested to basic education, the teacher training and legislation differ between the countries. Also, different practices are followed considering the special needs education that is provided in the framework of these two Nordic basic educational systems. However, the basis for the use of IEPs when providing educational support for the pupils with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms seems to be generally quite similar in both countries. The experiences and views about the use of IEPs form therefore an especially interesting area for comparisons. It is interesting to investigate, whether the differences of the educational systems, especially those found in the special educational support practices, will be reflected in the experiences and views of primary class teachers’ working in Finland and in Norway.

1.2 Research problems

In this Master study, I have two main research problems:
1. What are the Finnish and the Norwegian primary class teachers' experiences on the IEPs?
   Sub-questions:
   • To what extent are the primary class teachers involved in the planning processes of the IEPs?
   • What are the main effects that an implemented IEP have in their teaching in an inclusive class?

2. How do the Finnish and the Norwegian primary class teachers view the use of an IEP as a tool for special educational support in an inclusive class?
   Sub-questions:
• Do the Finnish and the Norwegian elementary class teachers support the use of IEPs in inclusive settings?
• What positive and negative aspects of the use of an IEP can be found in the Norwegian and the Finnish context?

In the first research question, I will try to clarify what are the experiences that the Finnish and the Norwegian class teachers have on the use of IEPs. Have they themselves been involved in the planning process of an IEP? Do they currently have a student with an IEP integrated to the mainstream class they are teaching? If so, how does the implemented IEP become visible in their teaching? By answering these questions both in the Norwegian and the Finnish context, it will be possible to compare the way IEPs are used and experienced by the primary class teachers in these two countries.

In the second research question, I concentrate on the views that elementary class teachers have on the use of an IEP as a tool for special educational support for students with special needs. Do they support the use of the IEP as a special educational tool? Do they think mainly positively or negatively about using IEPs in these two different national contexts? What positive and negative aspects about the use of IEPs the Norwegian and the Finnish primary school class teachers point out and are there different trends related to the national contexts? How do the experiences of the teachers reflect on their views on the use of IEPs?

By finding answers to these questions, I will be able to enlighten how IEP, a central special educational tool, is experienced, used and viewed by the class teachers in these two national contexts that seem to have differences in many frame factors, and also to emphasize somewhat different approaches in special educational practices. This information might offer new useful perspectives for additional or further research, if the investigated class teachers’ experiences and views can be considered to reflect the previously discussed differences in the local practices. Although some very interesting educational research articles comparing Finland and Norway have been published during recent years, my understanding is that in these two countries the teachers’ experiences and views on the use of IEPs have not yet been investigated from a comparing perspective. This is an especially fruitful focus and starting point for comparisons, because despite of many differences in the systems, in both of them
IEPs seem to be very central special educational documents and their implementation, use and evaluation can be expected to involve somewhat similar processes.

1.3 Introduction to the research strategy

The research strategy will be based mainly on quantitative design. A cross-sectional survey will be used for the data collection. The data will be collected using an online questionnaire tailored for the national groups and therefore the questionnaire is translated into two different languages (Finnish and Norwegian). The online questionnaire will be carefully planned to provide (mainly numerical) information that will help to find answers to the previously presented research questions focusing on sample groups (one sample being Finnish primary teachers and the other Norwegian primary teachers) rather than individual participants. The questionnaire is an appropriate instrument for data collection in this study because the geographical area in focus is relatively large, covering the metropolitan areas around the capitals of two different countries. With this choice efficient and economical data collection can nevertheless be ensured. The contact will be built to the participants by emailing the principals working in the primary schools of Helsinki and the surrounding metropolitan area and respectively in Oslo and the surrounding metropolitan area. The aim is to motivate the principals to give their permission to the participation by promising a short summary of the school-specific results during this school year if at least five teacher participants from the given school voluntarily indicate the name of the school while submitting the questionnaire. The methodology and the steps in data collection will be described in more detail in the Methodology chapter.
2 Literature review

In this chapter, the aim is to provide a thorough description of the national contexts that are in focus in this comparative study. Investigating the structural differences based on the national legislation and curricula, the already available comparative information based on the wide international educational comparisons (such as the comparative reports of the OECD) or information databanks (such as European Commission’s European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems [Eurypedia]), and previous scientific research articles will form a fundamental basis for the comparative perspective chosen for this study. Finally, the focus will be narrowed down to the IEP practices followed in each of the described focus contexts. The use of IEPs will also be viewed from inclusive and learning theoretical (Vygotskian) aspects.

2.1 Introduction to the Finnish school system and some relevant frame factors

Finland is a democratic, parliamentary republic. It is one of the Nordic countries, and a member state in the European Union. The current population is around 5,4 millions. Finland is a relatively sparsely populated country where a remarkable part of the population is concentrated to the Southern urban regions surrounding the capital city of Helsinki. Finland, like the other Nordic countries, is a welfare state ensuring high level of social security and access to education to all the residents (e.g. Eurypedia, 2014a; Haagensen, 2013) and the main objective in the Finnish education policy is to provide equal opportunities for high quality education for all the citizens (Finnish National Board of Education [FNBE], 2004, 2014a; Eurypedia 2014a). In the societal level, education is seen as a key to competitiveness and wellbeing and it is considered as having an important intrinsic value (FNBE, 2012, 2014a; Eurypedia 2014a).

According to the Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998, the compulsory basic education starts at the year during which the child turns seven years old, and it encompasses nine years, gathering all the children and youth between 7-16 years of age. Before this, parents have the possibility to choose if their child attends to communal day care (Eurypedia, 2014a) and
According to the Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2013 (edited by Haagensen, 2013) this option is chosen for about 75% of the 3-6-year-olds. Pre-primary education (in the year preceding the school start) is currently gathering 99.7% of the 6-year-olds, although it is non-compulsory (FNBE, 2014a). However, according to the current plans pre-primary education will turn compulsory in 2016 (FNBE, 2014a).

Normally the municipal authority addresses the nearest school to the pupils according to their living district. In Finland, there are currently about 520 800 pupils within basic education studying in about 2 600 active comprehensive schools, and many of them are relatively small (Statistics Finland, 2014b). The number of schools providing basic education has dropped considerably during the past five years, and many small schools have been combined with other schools (Statistics Finland, 2014b). Majority of the comprehensive schools are municipally administered (Statistics Finland, 2014b). In Finland, all pre-primary education (for the 6-year-olds), basic education and most of upper secondary education are fully free of charge and covered from public funding (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2014a).

All Finnish comprehensive schools follow the National Core Curriculum for basic education. Together with the Basic Education Act 628/1998 it functions as the main framework for the local curricula and is determined by the Finnish National Board of Education (2004; Eurypedia, 2014a). The Core Curriculum is currently under renewal and a new one will be implemented in 2016 (FNBE, 2014a). In addition to the objectives and core contents of different subjects, it describes the underlying values and mission for basic education, and offers other fundamental guidelines for everyday schoolwork (FNBE, 2004). The principles for pupil assessment, special needs education, pupil welfare and educational guidance are also addressed in this document (FNBE, 2004). The assessment is based on the subject specific objectives, criteria and general guidelines provided in the Core Curriculum, and subject-specific grading is often part of the assessment (FNBE, 2004). In Finland, almost all the children (99.7%) complete the compulsory education (FNBE, 2014a).

Finnish teachers are highly educated and all the qualified teachers in general basic education have accomplished a Master’s degree at the university level. Subject teachers have accomplished specializing studies in the teaching subjects while the class teachers have completed a more interdisciplinary programme. Teaching is a popular and highly appreciated
profession in the Finnish society. There are constantly many more applicants to the teacher education programmes than the intake number the universities accept, leading to highly motivated teacher students. In primary school, a class of pupils is usually receiving teaching mainly from one class teacher. In addition to this, specialized subject teachers might provide some lessons. Usually, the pupils are divided into classes based on their age and school year. Some schools form the pupil groups more flexibly and co-teaching offers an alternative method in some primary schools. (FNBE, 2013, 2014b; Eurypedia, 2014a)

Pupil welfare is an important part of the basic education, and usually every school has a multi-professional and multidisciplinary pupil welfare team coordinating it (FNBE, 2004). The overall objective of the pupil welfare is to provide a safe and appropriate physical, psychological and social framework for learning (FNBE, 2004). As a part of the pupil welfare in basic education, for example free warm meals are offered daily to all the pupils in pre-schools and schools (FNBE, 2008).

In Finland, immigration rates have been significantly increasing since 1990’s. The percentage of foreign citizens in Finland was 3.6% in 2012. The number of people of foreign origin living in Finland was about 280 000 in 2012. About 15% of them were immigrants by second generation, many of them being children. In 2012, there were 8.4% of foreigners in the population of Helsinki, which was slightly more than the country average. Great majority of the Finnish families speak Finnish as their first language, and the percentage of the families, in which neither of the parents speak one of the national languages (Finnish or Swedish) is relatively small. (Statistics Finland, 2013a, 2013c, 2014a).

2.2 Introduction to the Norwegian school system and some relevant frame factors

Norway is a constitutional monarchy. It is one of the Nordic countries. It is not a member state of the European Union (EU) but amongst other international relations (for example in United Nations [UN] and North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]) it is in close contact with the other European countries e.g. due to its membership in the European Economic Area (EEA). Norway has around 5.1 million residents (Haagensen, 2013). Norway is a relatively sparsely populated country and the population density is highest at the coastal regions and especially surrounding the capital city of Oslo. Norway is a very rich country, mainly due to
the large oil and natural gas reserves, and the related petroleum industry. Like other Nordic countries, Norway has a social welfare system that ensures high social security and access to education to all the residents (e.g. Eurypedia, 2014b; Haagensen, 2013). Some central educational principles are to provide high level of general all-round education with equal access to the entire population, decentralization of the education ensuring equally high quality of education well adapted to local circumstances everywhere in Norway, and taking into consideration both the shorter and the long-term requirements for education set by the labor market, the society in general and the personal development, knowledge and skills of the individuals themselves. (Eurypedia, 2014b).

The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has the main responsibility for education and the kindergarten sector. The administration and different educational responsibility areas are decentralized so that the responsibility is divided between three levels: Higher education is administered by the state, the upper secondary education by the counties and the compulsory basic education together with the kindergarten sector by the municipalities. (Eurypedia, 2014b).

In Norway, most of the children under school age attend to pre-primary institutions, generally referred to as kindergartens, for full-time basis before the compulsory school age (Eurypedia, 2014b; OECD, 2013b). In 2012, 96 % of the 3-5 –year-olds and 80 % of the 1-2 –year-old toddlers already attend to non-compulsory kindergartens (Eurypedia, 2014b). Compulsory, comprehensive basic education starts during the year the child turns six years old and it encompasses ten years, gathering all the children and youth between 6-16 years of age (Eurypedia, 2014b). The age for starting the compulsory basic education was changed from 7 years to 6 years in 1997. The basic education is financed by grants from the Ministry of local government and regional development and the municipal tax revenues (Eurypedia, 2014b). The basic education, including the learning materials (but usually excluding meals), is free of charge (Eurypedia, 2014b).

The Norwegian basic education is regulated by the Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, the National Curriculum (Norwegian Board of Education, 1997) and the Knowledge Promotion (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [NDET], 2005) including among others guidelines considering the quality, objectives and assessment of the education, as well as the framework for lesson distribution between the school subjects (Eurypedia, 2014b).
Norwegian primary schools, the pupils are assessed only verbally and no numerical grading is provided related to the study subjects (Eurypedia, 2014b). The grading starts usually in lower secondary level (Eurypedia, 2014b).

Today there are about 615 300 pupils receiving basic education in Norway (GSI, 2014). Most of the Norwegian comprehensive schools are public and administered by the municipalities (Eurypedia, 2014b). In 2012, there were in total 2 800 basic educational schools, and many of them are relatively small (Eurypedia, 2014b). Usually the pupils attend to schools that are closest to their homes (Eurypedia, 2014b).

In Norwegian schools students are not necessarily divided into pupil groups based on their term class or year. Since 2004, the term class has been replaced by the concept of a group (in Norwegian “gruppe”): it might be larger than the previously existing term class and – depending on the size of the school and the group itself – it might be taught by two or several teachers in co-operation. One of the teachers is still the main “contact teacher”, taking responsibility for the traditional tasks of a class teacher. (Eurypedia, 2014b)

The Norwegian primary and lower secondary teachers are usually trained at university colleges (in Norwegian “høyskoler”) in 4 year study programmes (Eurypedia, 2014b). The new 4-year-teacher training programme was introduced in 2010 and now the teachers specialize to teach in different levels (Eurypedia, 2014b). Currently some relatively low entrance requirements are set to the teacher candidates (Eurypedia, 2014b), but there is still little or no competition related to the intake numbers. In 2012, majority (82,7 %) of the teachers in primary and secondary schools had completed lower tertiary level degree with pedagogical studies from a university or a college (Statistics Norway, 2013). Only 5 % of them had a higher university degree with pedagogical studies and even a larger share (6,7 %) had completed just the upper secondary school or another lower degree (Statistics Norway, 2013).

The number of immigrants has more than doubled during the last decade, corresponding currently about 12 % of the population (Statistics Norway, 2014). About 9,5 % of the residents represent foreign nationals (Statistics Norway, 2014). In Oslo, the immigration rate is already around 30 % of the population (Statistics Norway, 2014). The pupils in the schools of Oslo are very multicultural (e.g. Pihl, 2002) and according to the Country overview of
Norway in Eurypedia (2014b), in the primary schools of Oslo more than 200 countries are represented among the pupils. It is clear that the rapidly changing, more and more international society structure has provided new kinds of challenges to the Norwegian schools, although the population at least outside the largest cities can still be seen as quite homogeneous (Fasting, 2013).

2.3 Special education and the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) in Finland

2.3.1 Support measures and special education in the Finnish basic education

As mentioned, one of the basic principles in the Finnish basic education is to provide equal rights for education and balanced development for all the children and youth (FNBE, 2014a; Eurypedia, 2014a). This must be considered also when supporting the primary and lower secondary pupils to progress successfully in their studies. According to the National Core Curriculum (FNBE, 2004) pupils whose prerequisites for growth, development and learning have been weakened by a disability, sickness or deficit, or pupils who need psychological or social support based to other reasons, need special educational support. Also, pupils whose development can be considered to face risk factors affecting the learning are entitled to receive free special-needs support (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004).

The objective of the special education is to provide longsighted support for learning and equal opportunities to complete the basic education together with peers. This can be reached using various support methods. The most appropriate support measures for overcoming the learning challenges must be weighed considering the quality and extent of the individual needs of the pupil. The foremost aim is to achieve the objectives following the general syllabus, but with a decision of special-needs support, individualizing the syllabus in one or several subjects is also possible if seen appropriate. Sometimes a pupil might be excused to complete the syllabus in one or several subjects. (FNBE, 2004).

The importance of early recognition of learning barriers or difficulties, and early commencement of the support measures are emphasized in Finnish education (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998, § 30; FNBE, 2004). A new system for organizing support in the
Finnish basic education was implemented in 2011 and current system has three categories for support: general, intensified and special-needs support (Eurypedia 2014a; Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2014a; Thuneberg & al. 2014). This system has been implemented in the Finnish municipalities in partly different ways and paces, but a previous research shows that generally speaking the special educational system has been improved to the intended direction (Thuneberg & al., 2014).

**General support** for learning and development shall be offered to all the pupils within basic education (FNBE, 2004). This category includes a wide variety of support measures used daily in teaching-learning situations. If a pupil has temporarily fallen behind in studies, or for other reasons needs short-term support for learning, she or he should receive remedial teaching (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998). As a general support measure, also temporary part-time special education might be provided for a pupil with difficulties related to learning or schooling (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998). In addition to these measures, providing a *learning plan*, using assistance services in the classroom, differentiating teaching, changing groups flexibly and co-operating with other teachers create possible ways of providing general support for individual pupils in the classroom (FNBE, 2004).

**Intensified support** shall be given to the pupils who need support in learning or schooling in a more efficient and long-term basis, if the general support is not seen as adequate (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004). While planning to step to the intensified support level, a *pedagogical assessment* must be done to the pupil, and based on it a *learning plan* is devised (FNBE, 2004, 2014a). Usually these documents are handled and planned by an internal multi-professional group responsible for pupil welfare work in each school (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2014a). Intensified support aims to ensure especially the opportunities for part-time special education, individual educational guidance, flexible pupil grouping and co-operation between home and school (FNBE, 2004). The methods for intensified support must be regularly revised, updated, and if necessary ceased, according to the student’s development and possible changes in her or his needs (FNBE, 2004).

A pupil is entitled to *special-needs support* if the objectives set for growth, development and learning have not been sufficiently fulfilled with the general and intensified support measures.
Special-needs support decision entitles the use of the whole variety of support methods, including fulltime or long-term special needs education (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004). When planning the decision on special-needs support, the pupil herself/himself and her or his guardians must be heard (FNBE, 2004). In the planning phase, a *pedagogical statement* will be provided and based on it the education provider (the school management) may take the official decision of the special-needs support (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004, 2014a). If the need for special-needs education is evident (e.g. due to delayed development, illness or disability), the decision of special-needs support can be done directly without the preceding steps, also before starting the basic education (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998). Following the decision of special-needs support, an *individual educational plan* (in Finnish “Henkilökohtainen opetuksen järjestämistä koskeva suunnitelma” directly translated as “a plan on individual teaching arrangements”) shall be drawn up for the pupil (FNBE, 2014a). A more detailed description of the IEP and the related documents will be provided later in the text (p. 15).

Currently almost every Finnish mainstream school has at least one permanent special education teacher (Takala & al. 2009). The special-needs support within the schools is usually provided by these trained professionals. Special education can be provided either in co-teaching with the mainstream class teacher (“in-class”) or partly or totally in a separate facility (“out-of-class”) (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; Saloviita & Takala, 2010), but the most common way is still to follow the “out-of-class” measure (Takala & al., 2009).

During the recent decades, the number of Finnish pupils receiving special education has been constantly increasing (see for example Lintuvuori, 2010). The current system of three support levels is aiming to offer a better tool for finding the appropriate support for schooling to all the pupils. In autumn 2013, 6.5 % of all the Finnish pupils in basic education were receiving intensified support for their studies and 7.3 % of the pupils were given the decision of special-needs support (Statistics Finland, 2013d). About 5 500 of these pupils were studying in total 105 separate special schools (Statistics Finland, 2014b). The number of pupils receiving either intensified or special-needs support has slightly increased from the previous year (Statistics Finland, 2013d). In 2012, slightly more than half of the students receiving special-needs support were studying at least 80 % of their school week in a separate special
group (Statistics Finland, 2013d). Most of the pupils with the special-needs support decision are in primary school (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & al., 2009).

2.3.2 The IEPs in Finland

In Finnish basic education, two kinds of individual plans can be drawn to the pupils. A learning plan (in Finnish: “oppimissuunnitelma”) can be provided if seen necessary during the general support. It must (on legislative basis) be drawn up during the intensified support, when it is based on a pedagogical assessment. In the pedagogical assessment the teachers describe holistically the pupil’s situation, abilities and special needs in learning and schooling, the general support that has been provided for the pupil previously and its effects and a qualitative and quantitative consideration of the suggested future arrangements for supporting the pupil. (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004)

The objective of the learning plan is to describe how the pupil will manage to reach the objectives in the general syllabus and complete her or his study programme. Learning plan provides important information also to the pupil and her or his guardians. Possible individual adaptations (e.g. remedial teaching or part-time special education) used in the framework of the mainstream education can be written in the learning plan, and it can provide useful guidelines also when assessing the pupil’s achievements. (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004)

If the intensified support does not provide satisfactory support for learning and development, preparations for providing special-needs support might start. Prior to the decision of special-needs support a pedagogical statement must be drawn up to the pupil (Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004). The possible previous pedagogical assessment and the learning plan used during the intensified support may be used as the basis when starting to draft the pedagogical statement (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004). The pedagogical statement contains:

1) a reviewing statement of the learning progress from the teachers responsible for providing instruction for this pupil, as well as

2) teacher’s description of the pupils progression together with a description of the pupil’s overall situation prepared in multi-professional co-operation in the
pupil welfare team, and an assessment for the need of special-needs support and/or individualisation

3) The two mentioned statements will then form a basis for an assessment on the pupil’s needs for special-needs support, which the education provider will prepare.

The pedagogical statement can be, if necessary, further accompanied by e.g. a psychological or medical statement. (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004)

Finally, in order to implement the decision of special-needs support made based on the pedagogical statement, an Individual Educational Plan, IEP, must be drawn to the pupil. It is then replacing the possible learning plan. An IEP is a written pedagogical document that is devised in co-operation with the pupil, her or his guardians, the teachers and possibly other necessary professionals (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004). The IEP describes the education and support measures that shall be provided to the pupil according to the decision of special-needs support and the pedagogical statement. It is a comprehensive and detailed description of the pupil’s situation, and the planned support measures, subject contents and teaching methods that shall be provided for the pupil during the special-needs support. The objective of the IEP is to function as a target plan for persistent support measures for the pupil’s individual development and learning. The IEP describes also the principles for monitoring and assessing the pupil’s progress. The decision of special-needs support must be reconsidered whenever the needs for support are considerably changing, and a new pedagogical statement must be drawn prior to the decision of continuing or terminating the current support measures (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004).

2.4 Special education and the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) in Norway

2.4.1 Support measures and special education in the Norwegian basic education

According to the Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, one of the central aims of the Norwegian education is to provide education that is adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of each individual pupil – whether with or without special needs. However, if the pupils need more adaptations than it is possible to provide in the framework of the mainstream education,
the pupil is entitled to special education (NDET 2013a). According to the Section 5-1 of the Norwegian Education Act (61/1998): “Pupils who either do not or unable to benefit satisfactorily from ordinary tuition have the right to special education.” The phrasing leaves the law open for several interpretations of where the limit of a sufficient learning goes, and it might be understood somewhat differently by the many municipalities, schools as well as individual teachers and other school personnel (eg. Haug, 2000). Special education is used to ensure that these students receive the best possible benefit of the instruction – to replace the unbefitting situation that existed while the pupil was following the mainstream education. Nevertheless, the emphasis on individually adapted education together with the very few and general specifications on special education in the Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, creates a somewhat confusing guideline of how and with which emphasis the education should actually be organized (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008).

The initiative for investigating the possible needs for special education can be given from the part of the pupil, his guardians or the teachers. The teachers providing the instruction to the given pupil shall first together consider and test adaptive measures in the frames of the mainstream education and then finally consider if a further assessment is necessary (Norwegian Education Act 61/1998). Even if the initiative for this comes from the school’s part, the parents’ consent is needed before an expert assessment can be carried out (Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-4). Each Norwegian municipality or a county has a body called the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service (in Norwegian Pedagogisk-Psykologisk Tjeneste, often referred to as PPT), which is responsible for these expert assessments (NDET, 2006, 2013a; Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-6). The objective of the PPT’s work is to help the schools in developing the competence related to special education and to secure that the education is suitably and holistically adjusted to the pupils with special needs (NDET, 2013a; Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-6; Skårbrevik, 2005). Most of the PPT professionals are special needs educators or sometimes psychologists (NDET, 2013a). When needed, the representatives of PPT visit the school for several times in order to make the necessary expert assessment. Usually meetings with the pupil, teachers and the parents are all part of this process.

According to the Section 5-3 of the Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, the expert assessment shall describe:

- learning outcomes gained so far while attending to the ordinary education,
• learning challenges or other related special issues which are important considering
the education of the pupil,
• realistic objectives for the pupil,
• assessment on whether or not it is possible to provide help to the observed problems
in the framework of the mainstream education, and
• description of the instruction that is considered appropriate for the pupil.

The expert assessment shall be available to the pupil or her or his parents, the issue should be
discussed in collaboration, and their views shall be heard before a decision is made
(Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-4). Finally the expert assessment will function as the
basis when the education provider makes the *individual decision* whether or not there are
satisfactory grounds for the pupil to be entitled to special education (Norwegian Education
Act 61/1998, § 5-3). If a decision of special education is made for a pupil, an *Individual
Educational Plan* (in Norwegian “individuell opplæringsplan”) shall be drawn to her or him
in co-operation with the pupil and her or his guardians (Bergen kommune, 2014; Norwegian
Education Act 61/1998, § 5-5; Oslo kommune, Utdanningsetaten, 2014). The IEPs used in
the Norwegian context will be described in more detail later in the text (p. 19).

Approximately 8.6 % of the pupils attending to basic education in primary and lower
secondary level received special education based on individual decisions during the school
year 2012-2013, meaning in total 52 723 pupils (NDET, 2013a; Statistics Norway, 2013).
The number of pupils receiving special education decreased from 2012 (Statistics Norway,
2013), but the related percentages have not changed significantly for the past three years
(NDET, 2013a). In longer scale, the trend has been increasing (NDET, 2013a). The
proportion of pupils receiving special education increases steadily when progressing from
year to year towards the end of the lower secondary school. In autumn 2012, 4.3 % of the 1st
year primary pupils were enrolled to special education while this considered as many as
11.6 % of the 10th year pupils (Statistics Norway 2013; NDET 2013a). The percentage of the
students in special education increases most during the primary school’s 2nd to 5th year
grades, but the number is largest in lower secondary school (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011;
NDET, 2013a).

The special needs education can be organized in several ways (NDET, 2013a). The pupil can
be studying primarily in the mainstream classroom or she or he can be placed to a specific
special educational department, which can either be part of an ordinary school or a special
school (NDET, 2013a). Also pupils studying primarily in special educational departments might nevertheless take part in general education in some subjects (NDET, 2013a). During the school year 2012-2013, the 49 Norwegian special schools gathered together only about 0.3% of all the basic education pupils who were entitled to special education (Eurypedia, 2014b). However, these numbers should not be considered as measures of segregation (or integration), because they do not include those pupils without a preceding individual decision on the enrolment to special education (but who have probably followed the special education path in segregated institutions for their whole education history) (NDET, 2013a). Also, it is worth noting, that despite the relatively low and stable number of special schools, there has been a clear growth in the number of students receiving special education in segregated settings, such as special groups or special classes, during the past decade (Fasting, 2013).

The number of given special teaching lessons per pupil varies remarkably between the municipalities. This might reflect either clear differences in the students’ needs in different municipalities or then locally differing tendencies in special educational practices (NDET, 2014). In addition to this, a large variation also in the number of pupils with special education can be indicated and the related percentages can vary between 2–23% within Norwegian municipalities (Aarnes, 2008; NDET, 2013a). The numbers in the largest cities are often slightly below the country average, but within the smaller towns the number of pupils with special education can vary considerably (Aarnes, 2008; NDET, 2013a). According to Skårbrevik’s (2005) study on the quality of special education, the Norwegian mainstream schools in different municipalities vary also in what kind of financial resources they have for special needs education. There is a reason to state that the Norwegian pupils with special needs living in different municipalities do not necessarily have prerequisites for the same quality of (special needs) education.

2.4.2 The IEPs in Norway

In Norway, the practice of preparing individual educational plans, IEPs, for pupils in need for special educational support started to rise in 1990’s and became a legislative obligation (following an individual decision of special education) in 1998 (Bergen kommune, 2014; Buli-Homberg & Ekeberg, 2009; Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-5; Oslo kommune, Utdanningsetaten, 2014). The IEP should contain the educational contents and objectives
(related to the subjects or areas the pupil has challenges in), and a description of how the instruction should be provided (Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-5).

The objectives should be expressed in a concrete and practical way and they should be considered to be realistic for the given student based on the expert assessment and the individual decision of special education (Municipality of Oslo 2014). The IEP can then function as a basis and a tool for planning, implementing and assessing the special education in order to make sure that the pupil receives education that can be considered beneficial for her or him (Hausstätter, 2012; Oslo kommune, Utdanningsetaten, 2014). The pupils should be assessed in relation to the objectives mentioned in the IEP and therefore the pupils with an IEP might well be assessed otherwise than the mainstream pupils (Bergen kommune, 2014; Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-5). Once a year, the school must prepare a summarizing report describing how the pupil’s education has been organized and how the pupil’s development has progressed, which is then sent both to the pupil’s parents and the municipal or county authority (Norwegian Education Act 61/1998, § 5-5).

2.5 Comparison of the school systems and the special educational procedures between Finland and Norway

2.5.1 Summarizing comparison

Finland and Norway are geographically about as large, relatively sparsely populated countries, having about the same population size. Finland and Norway are both welfare states with a comprehensive social welfare system ensuring e.g. equal health care services and education opportunities for all the citizens. As neighbouring Nordic countries they share many cultural similarities such as the same dominant Lutheran Christianity related history and many of the same human and social values functioning as ground principles in the societies and thereby also affecting the educational practices (Helgeland, 1992; Tuunainen, 1994). Norway and Finland share many central objectives in education. Although these countries can be considered to have somewhat similar societal starting points for the basic education some differences can nevertheless be pointed.

The non-compulsory early childhood care-centres, or kindergartens, are much more popular in Norway. There are clearly more children (in age 3-6) attending to kindergartens in Norway.
(more than 95 %) compared to Finland (about 75 %). In this aspect Finland differs from all the other Nordic countries. The kindergarten services are largely publicly funded, and the monthly parental fees are relatively small and related to the family income in both of the countries. (Eurypedia, 2013a, 2013b; Haagensen, 2013; OECD, 2013a, 2013b).

The basic education systems of these countries share many similarities. The compulsory school system is currently one year longer in Norway gathering all the 6-16 –year-olds (compared to the Finnish system gathering all the 7-16 –year-olds), but in Finland the preschool education (for the 6-year-olds) will be changed compulsory in 2016 thus soon making the compulsory education similar in duration (e.g. Eurypedia, 2014a, 2014b; FNBE, 2014a). In both countries the basic education (including the special education) is free of charge and publicly funded, and the majority of the schools are public (e.g. Eurypedia, 2014a, 2014b). Norway, gathering also all the 6-year-olds to the basic education, has slightly more students and schools in basic education than Finland, but generally speaking the numbers are quite similar. There are more pupils with immigration and otherwise international backgrounds in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2014). The same phenomenon exists also in Finland, but at least currently in a much smaller scale (Statistics Finland, 2013a).

The teachers’ educational background, relative salary income and societal status are different in these countries. As in Finland a higher tertiary level education is required from the teachers (Eurypedia, 2014a; FNBE 2013, 2014b), in Norway general teacher education comprises of a lower degree (Eurypedia, 2014b). The teacher profession is relatively appreciated in the Finnish society and only the highly motivated and succeeded candidates pass the entrance exams to the teacher training programmes (FNBE, 2013, 2014b). The situation is different in Norway, where the entrance requirements are low and there is not much competition when entering to the programmes (NDET, 2005). The Finnish teachers gain relatively better salaries than their Norwegian colleagues (OECD, 2013a, 2013b).

Finnish primary and secondary teachers have in average larger pupil groups to teach compared to their Norwegian colleagues. While in Norway there were in average only 10 pupils for each teacher in primary level, in Finland there were in average 13 pupils per teacher. However, the Finnish teachers provide less annual teaching hours compared to the Norwegians. (OECD, 2013a, 2013b).
Norway is a wealthy country, and it is one of the countries least harmed by the European economic crises (OECD, 2013b). Finland has suffered a considerable drop in the GDP during the past three years and the influence of the global recession is clearly visible in the Finnish society (OECD, 2013a). Nevertheless, Finland has even increased its expenditures on education (OECD, 2013a). Norway uses more financial resources on education per pupil than Finland (Table 1.). Also when looking at the investment related to the GDP Norway has a larger share (9 %) than Finland (7 % – the OECD average being 6%) (OECD, 2013a, 2013b). Despite of the large educational investments, Norwegian schools do not offer all the same welfare services as Finnish schools, for example a daily warm lunch, to their pupils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual expenditures on education</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>OECD average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USD 10 157 per pupil</td>
<td>USD 14 081 per pupil</td>
<td>USD 9 308 per pupil</td>
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Table 1. Annual expenditures on education (OECD, 2013a, 2013b).

Some differences can be pointed related to the organisation of the special education. In Norway the related legislation is written in more general terms leaving more room for different interpretations (see e.g. Haug, 2000; Hausstätter & Takala, 2008). The Finnish newly implemented special educational strategy provides a relatively detailed framework for this (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004). Currently, individually adapted education is emphasized in both Finnish and Norwegian special educational systems (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). In Norway, the assessment process of the individual pupils prior to the decision of special education is more complicated and includes an external expert body (the Educational and Psychological Counselling Service). In Finland, this assessment is usually done mainly using the professionals (special needs educators and other teaching personnel) within the given school. In addition, in Norway a parental consent is required for such assessment (Norwegian Basic Education Act 628/1998), while there are no such requirements in the Finnish legislation. Takala and Hausstätter (2012) concluded that the special educational systems are different firstly when looking at how the students in need for support are identified, secondly also on how the IEP programs are developed and in addition also related to the contents of special educational curricula.

In Finland, there are about twice as many special schools as in Norway and the percentage of pupils receiving special education in segregated settings is much higher in Finland (NDET 2013a; Statistics Finland, 2013d, 2014b; Statistics Norway, 2013). In both countries the
number of pupils receiving special education have been increasing during the recent decades (e.g. Lintuvuori, 2010; NDET, 2013a; Statistics Finland, 2013b; Statistics Norway, 2013). However, the comparisons of numbers between the countries must be done cautiously because of the differences in the statistical methods used when gathering the current data. Yet, based on the statistics it is still possible to conclude that during the recent decade there has been considerably larger share of pupils receiving special education (both in part-time and fulltime basis) in Finland than in Norway, and this difference is especially clear related to part-time special education (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012; Vislie, 2003). According to Hausstätter and Takala (2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012), a natural explanation for this is that in Finland part-time special education does not necessarily require an IEP or other bureaucratic decisions, but it can be given to a student also as a part of general support when needed. Furthermore, in their comparative research Hausstätter and Takala (2011) pointed out that the Finnish special education is given most intensively during the early years of primary school, while in Norway the largest numbers of students in special education are in lower secondary school. They also found differences when investigating the reasons for giving special education: whereas in Finnish special education a remarkable emphasis is given to reading and writing, mathematics and speech related challenges, in Norway speech problems cover a relatively small area of special education and the largest emphasis is in challenges related to mental and physical disabilities (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). Hausstätter and Takala (2011) point out also that there are many more pupils with behavioural problems in Norwegian schools. The authors suggest that this phenomenon might actually be explained by the lack of early intervention related to speech problems in the Norwegian schools.

Furthermore, the Finnish education system can be seen as quite competitive, while the Norwegian school system has rather aimed to develop in the opposite direction. In Norwegian schools the focus has not been on the effectiveness of the education, but more on humanistic and inclusive aims to create a school for all where everyone have the same opportunities for individual growth and development, without any stress of grade assessment during the whole primary level or even necessarily passing the required programs. (Takala & Hausstätter, 2012).
2.5.3 Differences between the Finnish and Norwegian IEPs

Although the process of getting an IEP differs between the countries, the basic principles and function of the IEPs are similar. In both countries, the IEPs are developed based on comprehensive assessments and decisions done prior to the enrolment to special needs education. The pedagogical objective of the IEP is to function as the framework for providing individually adapted education that takes into consideration the special needs that the pupils have in one or several study subjects. The IEP guides the teacher/s in choosing appropriate teaching methods, flexible pupil grouping strategies, materials and aids. It also sets the frames for the use of assistance or special education inside or outside the regular classroom depending on the pupil’s needs. In Finland, the main objective of the IEP from a pedagogical view is to define the subject/activity area related objectives in order to plan the contents of the instruction and to do the assessment according to them. At the same time, IEP is a document that aims to fulfil the legislative obligation of providing equal opportunities for learning to all Finnish citizens (irrespective of e.g. their special needs). In Norway, one of the main objectives of the IEP is setting frames to special education so that it provides satisfactory prerequisites for the learning of the individual pupil with special needs – to replace the unsatisfactory situation observed previously within mainstream education (e.g. Hausstätter, 2012). However, in addition to this educational or pedagogical function it has also a legislative or administrative function as an official document describing what the guardians and the school have agreed on the individual education for a certain period of time (Buli-Holmberg & Ekeberg, 2009; Hausstätter, 2012; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012).

Even though the basic functions and objectives of the IEPs are generally very similar, the Finnish and Norwegian IEP documents cannot be directly compared. One fundamental difference is that in Norway all the pupils receiving special education, also have an IEP, while in Finland as many as almost every third pupil in basic education has received special education in temporary part-time basis at some point of their compulsory schooling and usually without having an IEP (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012). It must be kept in mind that the legislative framework and the contents of these documents are still somewhat different (although the general objectives are related) and – all in all – these plans are not totally comparable because the cultural context for this concept is different. Certain carefulness must therefore be exercised when comparing the phenomena
structured around the IEPs in these two school systems. Such conceptual and also statistical challenges are faced often in comparative educational research.

2.6 What does PISA tell about the (special) education in Finland and Norway?

The OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) findings provide an interesting basis for further reflections on the differences between the focus countries. Five PISA investigations have been conducted since these assessments first started in 2000. Finland has been among the best performing countries in PISA investigation ever since. Norway’s performance has usually been near the OECD average. In their comparative research, Hausstätter and Takala (2011) discussed the PISA 2006 investigation in relation to the differences and cultural orientations of the special educational systems in Finland and Norway.

Hausstätter and Takala (2011) raise many differences between the Finnish and Norwegian performance in PISA 2006. In the Finnish results the standard deviation was very low (below the OECD mean), indicating that also the poor performers do relatively well in Finland. Hausstätter and Takala (2011, p. 272) conclude based on these findings and the Finnish excellent rating positions (first in Science and second in Reading and Mathematics) that: “…the Finnish school system is not only the best school of the world, but also the best ‘school for all’ in the world”. In Norway, the standard deviation was much broader (and over or close to the mean), therefore indicating that the gap between the high achievers and the poor performing pupils is larger (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). In both countries, the standard deviations reflect differences mainly within schools and not between the schools indicating that the education systems have succeeded in providing a school network with relatively little variation (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). The socio-economical background played a relatively limited role in both the Finnish and the Norwegian results compared to many other countries, but in the Finnish context it had even less effect (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). The authors pointed that there is an evident reason to believe that the commonly used part-time special education helps the Finnish system in keeping the difference between the low- and high-performers relatively small. In Norway, the instruction that is organized as part-time special education in Finland is not defined as special education but it is included as “extra support” in the ordinary teaching and can be considered quite normal (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011).
Nevertheless, considering the discussion related to PISA 2006 results within these countries, one might conclude that the Norwegian “extra support” does not seem to be beneficial enough to the pupils’ learning compared to the Finnish support measures (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011).

The latest findings from the PISA 2012 showed that Norway performs around average in Mathematics, above average in Reading but below average on Science (Table 2.) (OECD, 2014). Norway’s performance has been quite stable during the past ten years, and when looking at the mean results there are no significant differences between the results of 2003 and 2012 (OECD, 2013d, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>OECD average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The scores and standard deviations (Sd) of Finland and Norway in PISA 2012 (OECD, 2014). *PISA 2012 investigation had 65 participating countries. (The table is constructed according to the structure used by Hausstätter & Takala, 2011, p. 272).

However, the Finnish PISA success has declined during the years but especially the latest results show a clear change to worse. The focus in PISA 2012 was in Mathematics, and compared to the previous assessment with same focus, PISA 2003, the Finnish results have fallen considerably (Kupari & al., 2013). The national average score in Mathematics dropped as much as 25 points during these nine years. The percentage of the Finnish low-performers has increased (from 7 % in 2003 to 12 % in 2012) and on the other hand the percentage of the top-performers has declined (from 23 % in 2003 to 15 % in 2012) (Kupari & al., 2013). The Finnish results in Reading are still among the top performing countries. However, in contrast to the PISA results from 2006 that were discussed by Hausstätter and Takala (2011), the standard deviation in the Reading results is now much wider among the Finnish pupils. While it was only 81 in 2006, it was as large as 95 in 2012. Even though the Finnish results in Science place Finland among the top five best performing countries in the ranking, when considering the results in the national context, the standard variation has increased (from 81 in 2006 to 93 in 2012) meaning that the gap between the top-performing and the low-performing students is growing wider (Kupari & al., 2013).
The Finnish PISA performance has declined considerably, but the overall results are still clearly better than the Norwegian results. As shown above in Table 2., also the standard deviations are smaller than in Norway. This means that the same conclusion that Hausstätter and Takala (2011) made based on the PISA 2006 results can still be done in a revised way: The Finnish performance is still clearly better and the Finnish school is still a better “school for all” than the Norwegian one. However, the difference between the countries especially related to the standard deviations is not as striking anymore. Furthermore, if the growing standard variations are reflected in the light of the discussion of Hausstätter and Takala (2011), the Finnish part-time special education has no longer managed to maintain the high level of Mathematics, Reading or Science skills, as well as before.

### 2.7 Inclusion and the IEPs

#### 2.7.1 Finnish and Norwegian aspects to inclusion

In June 1994, representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations, including both Finland and Norway, gathered in Salamanca to draw up a statement and practical guidelines promoting educational inclusion. The resulting document, called the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994), has then become a remarkable stimulator for changing educational practices in many countries. One of the inclusive principles is for example the right for all children, also those with individual needs or adjustments, to attend school with their peers, and receive quality education that is meaningful for each of them (Skjørten, 2001; UNESCO, 1994; Vislie, 2003). The starting point for the process towards inclusion differs in different school systems and the process is all the time surrounded by the historical, cultural and societal framework characteristic to each country. Even in the national debates, the concept of inclusion can be and has been understood and interpreted in several different ways (e.g. Hausstätter, 2013). Tarr, Tsokova and Takkunen (2012, p. 691) summarize this well:

“*When it comes to inclusion, there are perhaps more questions than answers: is it a goal, a process, a tool or a product? Is it a right, a political discourse, a dilemma or a resolution? There are multiple approaches to addressing these questions which produce complex, multilayered outcomes.*”

Hausstätter (2013) suggests that in order to develop a more inclusive school, inclusion should be understood more broadly as an unfinished process, not a state nor something that can be reached with finished solutions.
In Finland the inclusion was left out of the educational discussion for many years despite signing the Salamanca Statement, and the number of pupils receiving special education has continued its constant increase (Saloviita, 2009, 2012). Inclusion is still relatively rarely mentioned in the Finnish documents and research reports (Tarr & al., 2012). Saloviita (2009, 2012) criticizes the Finnish educational policy for not actually having raised inclusion to the discussion. According to Saloviita (2009, 2012), in Finland inclusion has been understood as a state that was already achieved. According to him the attempt to explain why Finnish education is still promoting segregated special educational practices, has been done by changing the meaning and definition of inclusion – by understanding the term inclusion as something else than inclusive education for all. Saloviita (2009) claims that educational authorities, among them Halinen and Järvinen (2008), have an increasing tendency to change the meaning of the inclusion as a concept: they are not defining it as desegregation, but are looking at it like it meant some kind of good instruction in general.

Halinen and Järvinen (2008) see the Finnish inclusion development from a different angle. According to them, the Finnish school can actually be called inclusive, and the Salamanca statement’s effects can be seen for example in the educational legislation and the National Core Curriculum. The rights for every child to attend the nearest ordinary school and to receive individual support are emphasized, multi-professional co-operation shall be used, and it is underlined that the whole school community and learning environment shall be developed rather than putting the focus only on learning challenges of an individual student (Halinen & Järvinen, 2008). Halinen and Järvinen (2008) point to the recent research suggesting that actually the Finnish part-time special education has played an important role promoting inclusion, rather than doing the opposite. Many researchers have suggested that part-time special education can be seen as the Finnish way to promote inclusion: a way to guarantee everyone’s right to learn in a meaningful way and, on the other hand, a way to make the special education accessible for everyone when they are in need for it (e.g. Halinen & Järvinen, 2008; Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Kivirauma & Ruoho, 2007; Takala & al., 2009). However, Halinen and Järvinen (2008) also admit that for example the challenge of reorganizing the current segregated special educational fulltime instruction in a more inclusive way still exists.

In Norway, the most essential principle that has been followed already for about 40 years, is that the educational, health care or social services to children should be organized such that
the children can live and grow up with their families (Helgeland, 1992; Skårbrevik, 2005). This policy principle has on its part influenced to the inclusive development of the Norwegian school system, where the students with special needs are always primarily placed in the mainstream classes instead of special educational institutions (Helgeland, 1992; Skårbrevik, 2005). The anti-segregation movement has been very strong in Norway already since the 1970s, both within special educational research and in the political climate (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011). The original push towards this thinking was the so-called “Blom report”, a white paper introducing the integration principle (Johnsen, 2014, in press). As a consequence of that some radical, inclusive changes considering the Norwegian educational legislation were done in the 1970s (Johnsen, 2014, in press). Therefore the Salamanca Statement did not really bring anything very radical or new to the national inclusion discussion in 1994. Most of the pupils with milder disabilities are now placed to mainstream schools (Helgeland, 1992). However, same kind of questions concerning the inclusion might be raised in Norway as in Finland: If the pupils needing special education are receiving most of their education in separate settings either in smaller groups or individually (even though they are placed in the ordinary mainstream schools or classes), is inclusion really achieved? Skårbrevik (2005) states that the placement of the pupils with special needs in ordinary classes does not necessarily promote social inclusion in the schools. According to Fasting (2013), the provision of special education provided in segregated settings has become more usual in Norway as the number of special groups or classes in ordinary Norwegian schools are increasing – even though the number of special schools has stayed on the same level during the past decade.

In Norway special education is generally seen as an agent promoting segregation, because it is seen as risking the social and humanistic aims of everyone being able to participate and to be included (Hausstätter, 2012; Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & al., 2012). As a consequence of this, special educational interventions are rather avoided as long as possible while more emphasis is focused on the right for all the students to receive individually adapted education (Hausstätter, 2012; Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & al., 2012). The Norwegian practice of avoiding special education is in clear contradiction with the Finnish practices of promoting early intervention and using part-time special education as a general support measure with an easy, less-bureaucratic access whenever needs for additional support for learning rises (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012). However, inclusion is a relatively frequently discussed issue in the Norwegian educational research and
it is seen as a very central principle when developing the Norwegian school system: it forms for example a central basis also in the special teacher programmes and the attitudes towards inclusion are mainly positive (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008; Takala & al., 2012). Based on the long traditions of integration and the relatively low number of special schools, inclusion seems to be clearly more emphasized and implemented in the Norwegian school system compared to the Finnish one (e.g. Takala & al., 2012). On the other hand, despite of the good inclusive aims it seems like the Norwegian system has not succeeded in creating a sufficiently good school for all, at least based on the relatively weak performance the Norwegians have shown in the international comparisons like PISA investigation (e.g. Takala & Hausstätter, 2012). The on-going discussion on the benefit that the Norwegian pupils gain from their education is challenging the inclusive picture of the Norwegian school; promoting inclusive schools and increasing students’ learning can be in contradiction with one another (Fasting, 2013). If justifying the observed increase in special education or ability grouping as being inclusive in the sense that it ensures everyone’s right to beneficial education (Fasting, 2013), one is narrowing down to the same kind of approach to inclusion that is used in the Finnish context, emphasizing the “right to learn”.

Ensuring provision of quality education for all is the central principle in both Finland and Norway, although it has been realised in somewhat different ways (Takala & al., 2012). However, the recent development has been following somewhat same paths of strengthened individualisation. In both countries, individually adapted education (as referred to in Norway) or individually tailored support measures for learning in mainstream settings (as referred to in Finland) have gained a stronger focus during the recent years. Also, both in Finland and in Norway the aim is to promote inclusion in the education system by replacing part of the special education by the adapted education (in Norway) or by using general and intensified support measures – measures that are called something else than the special-needs support (in Finland). As Fasting (2013, p. 264) writes, the inclusive education and the adapted education are related: “…[they] have common denominators, implying respect, sensitivity and responsibility for the diversity of human beings.” It is worth noting, that currently in both of the countries the support measures are dominantly provided by the general class teacher, while traditionally the special needs educators were often responsible for this alone. In addition, as previously shown in both Finland and Norway, special education, that can in general terms be seen as promoting segregation rather than inclusion, has sometimes been justified in the name of more efficient education. The class teachers’ understanding on
inclusion (Fasting, 2013) and their capability of providing instruction that is based on inclusive methods, such as cooperative and participative learning methods (Halinen & Järvinen, 2009), will play an important role on directing the development of inclusive classrooms of both national school systems in the future.

2.7.2 Inclusive education with the IEPs

While, as earlier described, the individualisation is gaining more emphasis in the Finnish and the Norwegian education systems, it has become crucial to find appropriate divergent ways of providing instruction for those students in need for special support. The traditional answer has been providing Individual Educational Plans, IEPs, to the learners with individual special needs. The IEPs are educational plans that are tailored to meet the individual strengths and challenges of each student and in them the educational and pedagogical objectives might differ from those mentioned in the national, municipal or other local curricula and/or the class curriculum.

The curriculum answers, among others, to the question: what is worth knowing? When planning an inclusive school, where pupils with disabilities take part in the general education with their peers, essential focus will quite naturally be directed to the curriculum (Pugach & Warger, 1993). If the schools are to be inclusive for the whole range of special needs and disabilities, the result will be that the curriculum must diverge, and it depends on the quality of the disabilities or special needs that how, and by which means, that must be done (Pugach & Warger, 1993). Among the teachers, this has led to efforts to individualize instruction and to an aim to offer instruction that would be suitable to a wider variety of learners (Pugach & Warger, 1993). In the American context, the purpose of an IEP is to obtain access to and participation in an appropriate educational program in the least restrictive environment (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010; Pugach & Warger, 1993). The legislative obligation in the background very often makes the IEP the actual curriculum for the students with special needs – IEP is the document taking into consideration the individual special needs of the students who have them, and it should be protecting those students from the sameness of the instruction that does not fit their prerequisites for learning (Pugach & Warger, 1993).

The definitions of the IEP are in connection with the ones of curricula. Partly following the same definitions that were used by Lee-Tarver (2006), Sanches-Ferreira, Lopes-dos-Santos,
Alves, Santos and Silveira-Maia (2013, p. 507) define the IEP as something that takes or leads the pupil with special educational needs from the current situation (“what is”) to the planned and defined goal (“what can be”) and using this thinking IEP can be viewed from three different dimensions:

1. IEP as a specific departure point (the child’s present level of performance)
2. IEP as a personal destination (measurable goals)
3. IEP as an individualised route and vehicle (supports and services the child needs).

At its best, an IEP can function positively and promote better learning results in many different levels. Hausstätter (2012, p. 135) lists for example the following potential advantages of the IEPs: An IEP stimulates the communication between teachers and schools, and between teachers, home and the pupil. IEP creates a framework for better classroom work and instructional practices, and provides a tool for the assessment in relation to the objectives of the teaching plan. It provides a tool to direct the school’s resources (e.g. teachers, assistants, materials) towards a common teaching strategy and, in general, develop the schools pedagogical aspects. (Hausstätter, 2012, p. 135).

While continuing the process towards an inclusive school – whether a Finnish or a Norwegian one, it must, however, be kept in mind that inclusion is not supposed to be concentrating on individuals or small groups of pupils to whom the curriculum and exercises are adapted, nor is it supposed to focus on assimilating individual pupils with special educational needs to the already existing school environment, but instead the curricula and school communities themselves should be restructured to reach out and respond to the diversity of the learners as a whole emphasizing the overall school effectiveness (Vislie, 2003). Among others Opertti and Brady (2011) present the ideal of an inclusive curriculum guaranteeing the right for education for all the learners by presenting key concepts in a flexible way and by providing options considering a wider variety of learners rather then standardized approach focusing on the average learner. The suggested leap is huge from the current system where the differences of learners are met by individualized plans that are compensating the deviations from the average pupil, and it is clear that the current structures are not prepared for such a huge change at once, but the changes must be done in small steps. An IEP provides a useful tool to shape the classroom work to a more inclusive direction in the framework of the current system. We will have to wait and see, but perhaps research and discussion on the current IEP processes, which are becoming more and more popular, can
provide a useful basis for the development process of one common inclusive curriculum in the future.

2.8 Previous research findings on class teachers’ perceptions towards the usefulness of the IEPs

Lee-Tarver (2006) has done a survey research on American mainstream education teachers’ views on the utility of IEPs as tools when planning and implementing the educational objectives for pupils with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms. In addition, she investigated how they viewed their roles in the IEP process. The focus of her survey study was very similar to the one that was chosen in the current study. Lee-Tarver’s (2006) findings concerning the southeastern regions of the United States provide interesting aspects to the related issues in the American settings.

In her article, Lee-Tarver (2006) reviews many positive and negative aspects of the IEP work that have been pointed in the previous research. There is a lot of research that has demonstrated the advantages of inclusion of the given pupils, their parents and mainstream education teachers in the IEP process, such as increased self-confidence, camaraderie, teacher support and high academic expectations. Other related studies have pointed many benefits of the inclusion of the children with disabilities to the general classroom settings, such as increased participation to extra curriculum activities, more friends among the peers, better learning results (in academic, linguistic and social skills) and increased participation in the school society. On the other hand, the negative aspects include such issues as: deficits in mainstream class teachers’ special educational skills, limited time resources, difficulty of implementing the IEPs, limited possibilities for providing instruction in smaller groups, increased paperwork, lack of financial compensation for the teachers, lack for funding the special educational interventions and time-consuming changes when implementing new practices. (as reviewed in Lee-Tarver, 2006).

The data gathered by a questionnaire from 123 American mainstream education teachers showed mostly positive perceptions towards the IEP work. The majority of the respondents reported that the time spent in developing the IEPs was justified, and that they viewed the planning and implementing work as a team process. The majority of the participating American mainstream education teachers found the IEPs useful tools when planning and
implementing the educational objectives for their students with special educational needs within their classes. The majority of the participating teachers also reported that they were using the IEPs as tools for organizing and structuring their teaching. (Lee-Tarver, 2006)

Despite of the generally very positive approaches, also negative aspects were indicated. Relatively many of the respondents indicated that they felt they were not involved when choosing the IEP goals for their pupils in the IEP teams. Also, there were teachers that felt that the time used for the IEP work was not worth it and that felt that the placement of the pupil was the only team decision. Lee-Tarver (2006) concluded that it was evident that these teachers did not feel that they were parts of the IEP process. Lee-Tarver (2006, p. 270) stated that: “these are the teachers that must be reached in order for children with special needs to develop their full potential.” Finally, she emphasizes the importance of offering adequate training opportunities, and support and mentoring also within the school for the mainstream class teachers related to the purpose, development and implementation of the IEPs.

2.9 Vygotsky’s learning theoretical aspects and the use of IEPs

Lev S. Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development has become one of the most essential corner stones of the modern understanding of how we learn. This theory provides also an interesting viewpoint to the aspects that should be considered when planning, implementing and evaluating IEPs. According to Vygotsky (1978) learning and development are two separate processes that are in constant interrelation: Firstly the learning should be matched to the child’s actual developmental level, which is determined by the already completed developmental cycles. The level of the potential development, which can be reached with the assistance and support of a teacher or a more capable peer, can vary from child to child even if the actual developmental level, the starting situation, was the same. Vygotsky (1978) calls the area between the actual developmental level and the potential developmental level that the child can reach with the help of assistance from an adult or a more capable peer “the proximal zone of development”. In other words, Vygotsky (1978, p. 90) and his associates understood learning as something that awakens many internal developmental processes taking place in the proximal zone of development, and this can happen only in an environment where the child is in interaction with other people that are able to support these processes. The learning then results to development (Vygotsky 1978). Therefore, translated
to a school environment Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development emphasizes the role of the teacher and the importance of peer support as the ones that are by a supportive interaction enabling learning processes.

To be able to provide meaningful instruction that leads to learning, the teacher planning and providing the instruction must be aware of the levels of actual development and the different potentials of the proximal zones of development that are present in the pupil group. However, in a school classroom the learners seldom (or maybe one could even say never) have similar starting points: the actual developmental levels are various with many ways when looking at the knowledge and skills the individual pupils have for example related to different subjects, concepts, problem solving or social behaviour. In addition to this, based on Vygotsky’s thinking, the learning processes of all the individuals vary also because the proximal zones of development are of different sizes – even if the pupils had the same actual developmental levels and similar prerequisites and capabilities for learning at the starting point, they might reach to different levels of potential developmental as a result of their internal learning processes and the interactive support from other people in their environment. These two aspects are therefore especially essential when focusing on the Individual Educational Plans, IEPs, that are tailored for those pupils whose learning does not fit with the proximal developmental zone that is framed in the national, local and/or class curricula. Some pupils’ actual developmental levels and/or the potential developmental levels that they can reach as the result of the learning processes that are supported by others, might differ so considerably from the frames that the general curriculum sets, that the most beneficial and appropriate solution is to provide an IEP for the pupil. Then the pupil’s actual developmental level is carefully mapped and the pupil’s capabilities, challenges and also available support measures are considered while planning the individually adapted goals for the pupil. The plans are then made to fit the so called proximal zone of development of the given pupil considering the available support measures and assistance that can be directed to support the pupils’ learning.

There are three essential aspects that can be discussed a bit further. Firstly, the IEPs help to map where the proximal zone of development is: that is the area between “what is” and “what can be” if using the metaphors presented in the previous sub-chapter (as in Sanches-Ferreira & al. 2013, p. 507). With this done, the expectations and beneficial learning can be directed to the right level or area. Secondly, with the IEP the required measures and assistance needed to enable and support the individual pupil’s learning can be adjusted considering the specific
challenges in the pupil’s learning, such that it raises the potential developmental level as high as possible. The optimal result would then be that with the carefully directed, individually tailored and efficient support the pupil’s zone of proximal development grows higher, helping the pupil to reach higher goals. Finally, with the frames of the IEP it is also possible to better assess whether or not the child could reach out from her or his usual potential level or not, and therefore, whether development has taken place or not. Continuous assessment is especially important in order to maintain the IEP and the objectives suitable at all times: the child’s potential effort must be awakened with goals that are not too high, but which still challenge the child for learning more and reaching higher.
3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the central concepts of the methodology

The empirical research approaches can be divided in qualitative and quantitative designs both producing data in different forms. The qualitative data can be collected in many different ways (for example using observation, interview or written essay answers) and the data is often in the form of freely expressed words or sentences or even representing some other forms of communication than verbal communication. The social interaction between the researcher and the participant plays an essential role in these types of studies, and the social reality is assumed to be constructed by the participants in it, changing constantly locally and in different points of time. The data collection is often loosely defined beforehand, so that new viewpoints and changes can be added and the design shaped to new directions also while the research process progresses. In qualitative analysis the aim is to get an understanding of given phenomena from an overall, holistic perspective seeking deep understanding and interpretations. When reporting, it is essential to make the readers aware of the researcher’s data construction processes in detail, but beforehand the processes are relatively unstructured. (Befring, 2004; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007)

On the other hand, quantitative (or positivist) approaches are characterized by structured and quite fixed designs that are based on an assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective and relatively constant reality. These features are then measured by collecting numerical data from given samples of individuals representing the focus groups. In other words, the features measured in the social reality are transferred into different variables. The data is then analyzed using statistical tools and the findings are usually based on specific samples. If possible, the findings are then generalized to represent the defined population – the individual participants are not in the center of interest (Gall & al., 2007).

When qualitative and quantitative methods are used as complementing each other in a study, it can be defined as a mixed-method research (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008; Gall & al., 2007). When certain phenomena are studied based on both qualitative and quantitative methods, a single study can give a richer view of the situation (Drew & al., 2008; Gall & al., 2007). Data collection can be done either strictly qualitatively, quantitatively, or combining
the two at either the descriptive phase or the experimental phase of the study or at both phases (Gall & al., 2007). In other words, when doing data collection based on mixed-methods research, some part of the data can be collected in the form of numbers (quantitative data) and another part in the form of narrative descriptions as open essay answers (qualitative data) to gather a combining data set, which aims to answer the research questions more completely (Drew & al., 2008).

Comparative research includes comparing between given groups that can be origin of different cultures, nations or continents (Harkness, Van de Vijver, & Mohler, 2003). Survey research is often used in international and cross-cultural studies (Harkness & al., 2003). Survey research is a (quantitative) type of research where data is collected by asking questions from a sample of participants representing a given focus group or groups (Drew & al., 2008). In surveys the data is usually collected by questionnaires, interviews or combining both of them (Drew & al. 2008).

3.2 Research design

In this research, it was decided to use mainly quantitative design to find answers to the previously presented research questions. In quantitative research it is very crucial that the methodology and even analysis of the future results are planned in detail beforehand (Drew & al., 2008) and that is the case also in this study. Using the quantitative approach the objective is to gather quantities of certain experiences and views from the participants, and rather than on individual participants the focus will be on exploring the data on group level making comparisons between the sample groups. In other words, this study aims to describe and explain the possible trends shown in the experiences and views of the class teachers in the samples, basing these procedures on the numerical data collected from the samples. It was planned from the beginning that the data will be directly collected - or at least by categorizing translated - in the form of numbers, and that the data will later be analyzed using suitable statistical tools. However, some of the research questions will be approached in a more qualitative way and some answers will as well be collected in the form of narrative explanations, freely chosen words or sentences instead of numbers. Later in the data analysis also those written answers will be translated to numerical data points representing different categories. The given qualitative questionnaire items will be discussed in more detail when describing the data collection instrument under the next subtitle. Shortly, the overall approach
to the research questions is mainly quantitative, but to find more reliable answers to some research questions (especially related to the personal views and experiences of the participants) partly mixed methods will be used. This is done to gain more accurate answers than by strictly adhering to one approach only.

A cross-sectional survey will be used for the data collection. Cross-sectional survey is a survey study conducted at a specific point of time to the target group or groups (Gall & al., 2007). Administering an electronic online questionnaire was chosen as the data-gathering instrument. A questionnaire is either a printed or an online form that ask the same questions from each participant who will answer by giving a written or a typed answer to each questionnaire item (Gall & al., 2007). A more detailed description of the questionnaire that will be used in the current study will follow later in this chapter.

### 3.3 Participant selection

In quantitative studies, the objective is to draw conclusions about a defined large group of individuals (a population) by studying a smaller group of individuals (a sample). In order to draw correct inferences of the population based on the sample, the sample must be selected such that it represents the population in best possible ways. The selection of the sample is called ‘sampling’, which can be done in different ways, resulting to different preconditions for the reliability of the generalizations done based on the sample. “Target population” is the group of all the individuals to which the results are aimed to generalize, and the realistic situations (like frame limits set by the resources) usually make the target population shrink to an “accessible population”, the group of individuals who can realistically be included in the sample. Then again, in order to collect a valid sample from the accessible population, and this shall be done by choosing the participants randomly and on the other hand by selecting a large enough sample so that all the essential characteristics that are present in the population, would also be represented in the sample. However, very often it is not possible to use the random sampling but one might use instead a participant selection method that might, for different reasons, be more convenient for the researcher. Then even more caution and prudence shall be exercised when generalizing the results to the population. (Gall & al., 2007).
Although the target population of this study is all the primary school class teachers of Finland and Norway, in the framework of this Master study a considerably smaller accessible population, or participant pool, had to be chosen. Following convenience sampling method, the focus will be directed on the capital metropolitan areas of Finland and Norway. Personal experience of living in these areas, and therefore knowledge of the local schools directed this choice. This way also the already existing contacts within some local schools could be used for advantage when building the contact to the respondents. In addition, focusing on these areas will provide a comparable capital city perspective to this research. Two samples will be collected from the population: one sample including class teachers working in Finnish primary schools in Helsinki metropolitan area, and one including class teachers working in Norwegian primary schools in Oslo metropolitan area. The aim is to do a comparative research to find out whether or not one can find the same kind of trends in the opinions and views gathered related to IEPs within these samples of class teachers representing two different countries – therefore making the research also cross-cultural. With this perspective in the study, it is important that the samples will be large enough to allow generalizations to the population, but also that the samples are representative related to the essential characteristics to allow also the comparisons between the samples.

3.4 Data gathering instrument

A self-planned online questionnaire will be used as the data-gathering instrument. It will be translated both to Finnish and to Norwegian language to make it optimal for the participating sample groups representing two different Nordic cultures (Appendix I: the Finnish version, p. 112; Appendix J: the Norwegian version, p. 117). The language and expressions in the Norwegian and the Finnish versions of the questionnaire will be made as similar as possible. Some concepts and questionnaire items will however be slightly different to make them relevant to each sample (Appendix K: the English translation, p. 122). Differences in translation can be pointed for example in the first section of the questionnaire when asking about the accomplished education within the two national samples. Related to this different multiple choices will be listed, because the most common study programs completed by the class teachers in the given countries are considerably different. These answers will later be categorized and compared (the procedures will be further explained in the following Results chapter). Also the central concept of IEP differs in the educational systems of these two countries, as discussed previously in this Master’s thesis. For the Finnish group the term
“Henkilökohtainen opetuksen järjestämistä koskeva suunnitelma, HOJKS” was used when referring to the IEP. It can be shortly defined as an IEP that is made for pupils who have received a decision on special-needs support in the Finnish three step support system. On the other hand, term “Individuell opplæringsplan, IOP” was used in this reference for the Norwegian group. In the Norwegian context, it can be defined as an IEP document planned for the pupils that are entitled to special education based on an individual decision. However, these concepts are not identical therefore setting some limitations.

The online questionnaire will be constructed using the Nettskjema-tool available for this purpose for the students and staff of the University of Oslo. It is accessible through any web browser and it works on all platforms with all common browsers (University of Oslo, 2014). The questionnaire will be open and submission will not require any passwords. The items of the questionnaire will be categorized under nine sections (A-I). The sections (presented with an example question) were the following:

A. Background information about the respondent
   • What is your gender? (Female/Male)

B. Background information about the elementary school
   • Is the school where you are currently working a typical elementary school representing the ordinary national elementary schools? (Yes/No)
   • Follow-up question: Please explain why your school is not representing the ordinary national elementary schools? (Open question)

C. Background information about the class
   • What year grade is the class you are currently teaching? (open question)

D. Background information about the teacher’s professional experience related to IEPs
   • Have you been involved in IEP planning processes? (Yes/No)

E. Information about the IEPs of the pupils in the current class
   • Do you currently have one or several pupils with an IEP? (Yes/No)

F. Information about the planning processes of the currently followed IEPs
   • Were you involved in some or all of the planning processes of the IEPs that you are currently expected to follow? (Yes/No)

G. Experiences and views on the currently followed IEPs
   • How difficult do you find the use of the current IEP? (not at all difficult 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 very difficult)

H. Information about the evaluation processes of the current IEPs
   • Are the implemented IEPs evaluated regularly in your school? (Yes/No/I don’t know)
I. General views about the use of IEPs

• A pupil with special needs will be provided an IEP. What positive aspects will follow the implementation? (Mention 2-5 aspects.) (open question)

In the questionnaire, there are mostly questions with closed answer options (such as the example question in Section A.), some questions where the participant can measure his or her own views using a Likert scale from 0 to 6 (such as the example question in Section G.), some open follow-up questions to gather a further, free explanation to a previously chosen closed multiple choice answer (such as the example question in Section B.), and also some open questions giving free space and opportunity for the participant to describe personal experiences or views using her or his own words (such as the example question in Section I.). Both the Finnish and Norwegian written answers will then be translated to English and categorized for quantitative analysis.

The follow-up questions are designed so that they will appear only for the participants that will choose a given option on a previous question and therefore no unnecessary questions will be presented for the participants. For example participants who have no students with IEP at the moment (and therefore choose the answer “No” to the example question under Section E.) will skip automatically all the following related questions tailored for the teachers having current students with IEPs. Therefore, all the teachers will not answer to all the questions or even necessarily all the sections in the questionnaire. However, some sections (as for example Section A. and I.) are fully visible and appropriate for all the participants. Except for one voluntary question asking the name of the school (in Section B.) all the questions will be obligatory, which is necessary to be able to structure the relevant follow-up questions based on the previous answers like explained.

3.5 Preparations and pilot study

In the planning and designing phase of the questionnaire (in August–September 2013), a pilot study using both the Finnish and the Norwegian drafts of the questionnaire was conducted. Some Finnish and Norwegian contacts with primary teacher background and/or education were asked to submit the pilot questionnaire online and to give their possible comments related to the translated language, the terminology and the structure of the questionnaire. Very useful comments and experiences were received from in total about ten pilot
participants representing both contexts. The pilot study and testing the questionnaire provided important guidelines when shaping the questionnaire to its final structure.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

According to Cook and Campbell (1979) there are four types of validity: statistical conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity and external validity (cited and explained also in Lund, 2005). These types will now be presented together with some possible validity threats related to the current study:

1) Statistical conclusion validity means that the statistical validity related to the observed relation or a tendency must be significant and strong enough in order to permit for reliable conclusions. If the samples are small, it is more likely that the samples are lacking statistical power to show the differences. It is also important that correct tests (so that the data that fulfills the test assumptions) are chosen and that the statistical evidence is sufficient for making the correct inferences. Related to the statistical conclusion validity it is also important that the questionnaire will be measuring exactly those variables that it is planned to measure. If the items of the questionnaire will be understood in several ways, the results will of course be unreliable, no matter what the results of the statistical analysis are. The statistical conclusion validity can be seen as the one validity that must always be fulfilled, in order to the other types of validity to be reached.

2) Internal validity is related to the process of making inferences between variables – whether or not there can be observed a causal relationship from one variable to another in the form in which they have been measured. This means that despite of the names that are given to the variables, one must consider that does this variable actually represent the variable that it is thought to represent. Related to the current study, this type of validity has also to do with the questionnaire items: it must be carefully considered that what phenomena or trends the variables actually represent, before making the final causal conclusions based on the observed relations, and on the other hand, that is the observed relationship possibly explained by other reasons than by the examined other variable.
3) Construct validity of effects is related to the higher order of research operations. When considering an observed causal relationship, one must ask what are the particular cause and effect constructs involved in this relationship? Then, finally, if all these types of validity are to be filled satisfactorily one can consider 4) the external validity: how generalizable are the observed relationships to other people, settings, cases or times and places? Related to the current study one might consider if the observed trends in views and experiences, and the possibly found differences will be generalizable to the population, for example.

The quality of the instrument used in the study, in this research the questionnaire, is very important because all the conclusions and findings will be based on this instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). For drawing correct inferences and warranted conclusions of the collected data, it is very important that the chosen instrument is valid; appropriate, useful, meaningful and correct to exactly the purpose that it is used for (Drew & al., 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). In this research project, an online questionnaire to collect data from two sample groups situated in two different countries was chosen. This means for data collection is an efficient, less expensive and appropriate means when considering the wide geographical area that was chosen to be in focus.

While planning the questionnaire, after careful consideration only relevant and appropriate questions were chosen in order to answer the research questions. One had to determine what questions were more important and relevant than others and manage to keep the timeframe of the submission within reasonable limits. The aim is that by careful selection of the questions of interest related to the research questions, the meaningfulness of the variables and data as a whole is secured. During the pilot phase, the pilot participants’ comments related to the language structure were considered when formulating the questions as uncomplicated and comprehensive as possible. By the flexible design of the follow-up questions the aim is to secure also the fact that only appropriate questions are presented to each of the participants, by taking the individual previous answers into consideration during the submission process. The ready construct the Nettskjema -tool gives to the online questionnaire is clear and understandable, showing each section of the questionnaire on its own page.

The participants were expected to be currently working as elementary class teachers in either Finnish or Norwegian schools situated in either the metropolitan area of Helsinki or the
metropolitan area of Oslo respectively. This criteria was secured by asking the principals to send the information forward to the primary teachers working in their school, and in addition there were two questions controlling the criteria also in the questionnaires:

- I have read the information letter concerning this research (“Name_of_the_attached_pdf-file”) and I am willing to participate in this research project? Yes/No
- …
- Are you currently working as a full-time class teacher in an elementary school in Oslo or Akershus/Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa/Kauniainen? Yes/No

These procedures aim to secure that the participants submitting the questionnaire will actually represent the defined target population.

The questionnaire will be structured in two different languages to fit to the sample groups’ native languages as well as possible. The translation between the used languages was done as carefully as possible, aiming to express the same meaning in each of the items in both questionnaires. The format and the structure of the questionnaire are alike in the Finnish and the Norwegian questionnaire. When later comparing these two samples that have submitted the questionnaires in different languages, it is crucial that one can assume that the data obtained from these two questionnaires is comparable – in other words, one must be able to assume that the same items in different languages are measuring the same variables.

Reliability means the consistency of the obtained data, for example the consistency of scores or answers provided by a questionnaire (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). In this case, the scores obtained by the questionnaire must therefore be reliable so that the inferences drawn based on them are valid. This means that if, for example, the answer options in one or many of the questionnaire questions are inconsistent to the participant, also the results will be inconsistent providing no useful information for further consideration. Therefore, it is very important to provide all the possible answer options in each question in order to secure as accurate answers as possible – and this shall be done as well as possible when planning the questionnaire. Also, when choosing a survey as a research method, it is very important to obtain as many participants as possible involved in the study, so that the various views and experiences represented in the target population are represented as comprehensively as possible in the samples, thus making the measurement error as low as possible.
3.7 Ethical issues

In this research project, the ethical issues will be seriously considered in all phases. All the procedures that are aimed to follow for ensuring that this research project is ethically satisfactory and safe to all parts will be presented in this subchapter. This research will not cause any harm to the participants, their students, their schools, their municipalities or other subjects. The supervisors of the participants (the primary school principals) and the actual participants (the primary school class teachers) will be informed about the research project by an email. Participation to the study will be clearly described as voluntary, and the respondents will be asked to give their informed consent based to the written information when they will start to submit the online questionnaire. By the information email they will also be informed about their right to withdraw from the project at any phase.

No identifying questions will be asked from the respondents. Gender and age will be asked as a part of the background information because with that information it will be possible to consider how well the samples represent the population in focus. The name of the school will be asked as a voluntary question (in section B.), but in relation to that it will be clearly explained (both in the information letters and the questionnaire page) that the name of the school will only be used to a possible school related summary that will under certain conditions be sent to the school (via the principal), but no other names will appear in any other reports. The name of the school will not be a variable that will be taken into consideration in other analysis in this project. The full protection of the participants’ identity will also ensure the identity of their pupils and their families. Full confidentiality will be promised to the participants and that will be carefully maintained during all the phases.

As the data will be registered on a private computer is important to handle the information with care, and in accordance with the routines for data security commonly used in the University of Oslo, for example using passwords and by other means securing that no other parts can access the data. The original data will be destroyed in the end of this project, in June 2014, and this will be informed to the participants as well.

One important part of the ethical issues of a research is also the honest and open aim to validity (Check & Schutt, 2012). To do this, the study procedures will be reported honestly, openly and in detail. On the other hand, it is also worth of mentioning related to this theme,
that there are no personal advantages (for example financial benefits) based on the possible
results of this study, but the goal is to provide new information for possible further cross-
country studies. A personal goal and also a benefit would rather be to work through this
Master research following the ethical guidelines as well as possible.

### 3.8 Official research permissions

When starting the practical preparations for conducting this study, research permissions from
both Finnish and Norwegian authorities were applied. In June 2013, the Norwegian Social
Science Data Services (NSD) was contacted. An appropriate notification of the planned
study project was sent to their Data Protection Official for Research. They replied in July
with some comments concerning the plan, stated the plan to be satisfactory according to the
Norwegian Personal Data Act, and gave the project a reference number 34898 (Appendix A,
p. 89). This letter functions also as the appropriate official permission for starting the data
collection in Norwegian schools.

Related to the Finnish schools the application process for the research permission is different,
and the practices vary in different cities. In Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa the precondition for
applying the research permission was that some local principals already had given their
preliminary permission for participation. These schools were then listed in the research
permission applications. In Kauniainen, there was no application practice, but the principals
of the local schools could themselves decide if they gave their permission. This was also the
case for the Finnish private schools located in these cities. Official research permissions were
given from the municipal education departments in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. The copies
of these documents can be found in the Appendices (B–D, p. 91–99). The names of the
participating schools are blacked in these appendices to protect the anonymity of the
participants.
4 Results

In this chapter, the results drawn from the collected data will be presented. The numeric data was first organized using Microsoft Excel application and then statistically analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 software. Some of the questionnaire items collected free verbal explanations instead of numeric data, and these answers were either analysed and categorized qualitatively or used for interpreting the numerical data more reliably.

4.1 Descriptive statistics on the samples

During September and October 2014, two separate groups of respondents from the metropolitan areas surrounding Helsinki and Oslo participated in this study. In total only 35 Finnish teachers and 42 Norwegian teachers submitted the questionnaires. However, only 36 submissions of the Norwegian sample were included in the data. This was due to different reasons: One submission was excluded because the respondent indicated not to give her or his consent to the research. In the case of two submissions it was, based on the similarity of the answers and the short time interval between the submissions, obvious that one person had sent the questionnaire twice. In this case, the two submissions were otherwise treated as one but the verbal answers were added together in the analysis. The remaining five submissions were excluded for being completed by teachers who were not currently working as general primary school class teachers, and were therefore not fitting to the set respondent criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of contacted primary school principals</th>
<th>Number of principals that answered giving their permission</th>
<th>Number of submissions by the primary school teachers</th>
<th>Number of submissions included in the final data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki metropolitan area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oslo metropolitan area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. This table is illustrating the extremely low response-rate of this study.

Most of the respondents were female in both samples. This result is probably reflecting the gender distribution within the population, as in both countries there are more female than male class teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of women</td>
<td>26 (74 %)</td>
<td>30 (83 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of men</td>
<td>9 (26 %)</td>
<td>6 (17 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. The gender of the respondents.
The age of the respondents varies between 24-60 in the Finnish sample and between 27-63 in the Norwegian sample. The respondents were divided into five different age categories, and the proportions of teachers in these categories are shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 1.** The Finnish sample (N=35) and the Norwegian sample (N=36) divided in five age categories.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Figure 2.** The Finnish sample (N=35) and the Norwegian sample (N=36) divided in seven categories representing the different levels on years of experience working as a primary class teacher.

Most of the Finnish respondents were middle-aged, representing the age category 51-60 years (mode), but the sample is however represented in all the categories between 20-60 years.

When looking at the years of experience the respondents had been working as primary teachers in the Finnish sample, there is a variation between 1-35 years of experience. After dividing the respondents to categories based on this working experience, it is shown that the Finnish teachers were represented in all but one of the categories. Relatively many (31 %) of the Finnish respondents indicated having 6-10 years of working experience as a primary class teacher (Figure 2.).

The age of the respondents varies more in the Norwegian sample. The teachers in the Norwegian sample were relatively younger than in the Finnish sample, most of them between 41-50 years (mode). When looking at the experience the Norwegian class teachers had, there is a variation between 0-34 years. After dividing the respondents into experience-based categories (Figure 2.), the Norwegian teachers were represented in all the categories.
Although both the Finnish and the Norwegian samples were small, they were representing a wide range of different categories. This is important for the reliability of the samples, because the age and the working experience were highly correlating in the combined data (Pearson’s r=0.802, p>>0.01, N=71), and therefore the samples can be considered as more representative including teachers with varying working experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Frequency in the Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Frequency in the Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary school</td>
<td>2 (5.7 %)</td>
<td>0 (0.0 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Bachelor</td>
<td>2 (5.7 %)</td>
<td>18 (50.0 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Master</td>
<td>28 (80%)</td>
<td>9 (25.0 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>3 (8.6 %)</td>
<td>9 (25.0 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Accomplished education level within the samples.

All the participating Finnish class teachers indicated that their accomplished education fulfils the national requirements for working as a primary class teacher. This is partly in contradiction with their answers related to the following item mapping the level of accomplished education, which were indicating that three (of 35) respondents had not actually fulfilled the required Master studies in Education. The respondents that indicated that they had only completed lower education might be currently working as class teacher substitutes. They were perhaps not aware of the national qualification requirements, which might not be strictly followed related to shorter substitute periods. Three respondents indicating that their completed studies were “something else” and two of them explained this by having studied other studies in addition to the Master degree in Education, and one had completed Master studies in another field. Majority (80 %) of the teachers in the Finnish sample indicated that they have completed a Master level university degree in Education and if the two more from the category “something else” are counted too, the percentage gets even higher: 30/35 meaning 85.7 %. In the Finnish sample, almost all the class teachers (34/35, 97%) were working fulltime, except for one teacher working 80 %, in a primary school located in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

In the Norwegian questionnaire, the multiple answer opportunities related to the education level differed from the Finnish questionnaire, because the ways to acquire class teacher qualification are more varying in Norway (Appendix K, p. 122). However, also the Norwegian answers were later divided to four categories for better comparability with the Finnish answers (Table 5.). Related to this no difference was made on whether the studies were accomplished in a university college (‘høyskole’) or a university (‘universitet’). In the
Norwegian sample, no one indicated that her or his education would not fulfil the national requirements for working as a primary class teacher. As many as 25 % of the Norwegian respondents represent the category “something else” and most of them did not provide further verbal explanations for their choice. These results indicate that the respondents in the Finnish sample had generally achieved higher level of education than the teachers of the Norwegian sample. This reflects the differences in the current national qualification requirements in the focus countries. However, as for a large part of the Norwegian respondents the educational background information remained unspecified, one must be careful when drawing any conclusions based on these results.

4.2 Description of the related schools and the classes

The results related to the participating schools and represented school classes, will be presented protecting the anonymity of the participants. Therefore, some of the following results are intentionally presented only based on combined data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency in the Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Frequency in the Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school is representing a typical national primary school</td>
<td>28 (80 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is not representing a typical national primary school</td>
<td>7 (20 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. This table is indicating how the respondents considered their own school in relation to a typical national primary school.

Most of the respondents in both of the groups indicated that the primary school they worked in was representing a typical national primary school – although in both groups also some of the related schools were defined as atypical. One fifth of the Finnish teachers indicated that they did not consider the school they were working in as a typical national primary school. Corresponding percentage in the Norwegian sample was somewhat lower. The explained reasons for this were among the following in the samples:

- The school is private and it is providing teacher training along the ordinary instruction.
- The school is a private religious school.
- The school is practicing flexible grouping and the pupil groups are not fixed to the year grades.
- The school is very multicultural and less than half of the pupils speak the national language as their mother tongue.
The school is exceptionally large.

Based on these results the samples could be considered reflecting the overall situation of the national primary schools, and therefore representative in this sense.

![Figure 3](image)

Figure 3. The classes taught by the participating class teachers. The Finnish sample (N=35) presented on the left and the Norwegian sample (N=36) on the right. There are six class levels in the Finnish primary schools and seven in the Norwegian.

Few respondents in both groups indicated several class year grades, when asking what class year they were currently teaching. This was probably because some teachers were providing instruction to several classes during the school week. It might also be due to flexible grouping where the pupil’s placement in groups is not depending on their term year. If several class year grades were indicated, a mean number (counted based on all the mentioned class years) was used. This was done for three (of 35) Finnish and four (of 36) Norwegian respondents. In both samples all the primary class years were represented (Figure 3.). Based on this character the samples are varying and therefore more representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>The teacher has been teaching the current class at least for one school year</th>
<th>The teacher has been teaching the current class for less than one school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency in the Finnish sample (N=35)</td>
<td>24 (68.6 %)</td>
<td>11 (31.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency in the Norwegian sample (N=36)</td>
<td>23 (63.9 %)</td>
<td>13 (36.1 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. The table shows the proportion of Finnish and Norwegian respondents that had been teaching their current class for at least one school year.
In both groups, most of the class teachers had been teaching the same class already for at least one school year. One can expect that the teachers having more experience teaching the given class probably knew their pupils better, and were possibly more familiar with their individual needs for support.

The number of the pupils in the classes that were taught by the participating class teachers, varied between 8 and 32 in the Finnish sample, and 10 and 38 in the Norwegian sample. The average class size was 21 pupils based on the Finnish sample and 23 pupils based on the Norwegian sample. The distribution of the number of pupils differs between the samples (Mann Whitney U-test, mean[Fin]=21,29, mean[Nor]=23,39, p=0.037). In the questionnaire, the teachers were asked that according to them, how many of these pupils have special needs, which must be considered in the daily instruction. In the Finnish data the provided numbers varied considerably, the range being 15. Based on the Finnish data considering this item, the average number of pupils with special needs was about 4 while the median was 3. Also the range in the Norwegian data was rather large: 10. The mean based on the Norwegian data was about 4 and the median 3,5. To investigate the proportion of the number of pupils with special needs (according to the teachers) related to the total number of pupils in the class, a proportional rate was counted. The percentages vary between 0-100 % in both samples, but when looking at the mean proportions, the teachers of the Finnish sample indicated that in average 18 % of the students in their classes had special needs while the corresponding mean percentage was 20 % counted based on the Norwegian sample. Based on these results both the Finnish and the Norwegian teachers considered that in average about every fifth pupil in their classes had special needs that must be considered in the daily instruction.

### 4.3 Class teachers’ professional experience on IEPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional experience on IEPs</th>
<th>Frequency in the Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Frequency in the Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Been part of the IEP planning</td>
<td>30 (85,7%)</td>
<td>34 (94,4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been expected to implement an IEP</td>
<td>31 (88,6 %)</td>
<td>35 (97,2 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been evaluating an IEP</td>
<td>30 (85,7 %)</td>
<td>34 (94,4 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. The professional experience that the class teachers have on IEPs

The respondents in both groups had comprehensive professional experience on IEPs. A great majority of the class teachers in both groups had been involved in an IEP planning process, implementing an IEP, and been involved in an evaluation process of an IEP. Comparing the samples, the Norwegian teachers had even more exhaustive experience than their Finnish
colleagues in the sample. The teachers were also asked, if they had received any specific additional training related to planning, implementing or evaluating IEPs. 17/35 (48.6 %) of the teachers in the Finnish and 11/36 (30.6 %) in the Norwegian sample had received such training. According to the related verbal explanations, this training included both internal (provided for example by another teacher within the school) and external training (often provided by the municipal organizers) in both samples. Several of the Finnish teachers (10/17) mentioned that the received training had especially focused on the recently updated IEP related documents, or more generally the newly implemented three step support system (2/17). Some (4/11) of the teachers in the Norwegian sample specified that it was the Educational Psychological Counselling Service (PPT) of their municipality that had provided the additional training on the IEPs.

4.4 Class teachers’ current professional situation related to IEPs

When mapping the current class’ situation related to IEPs, it was shown that majority of the class teachers in both samples had currently at least one student with an IEP in their class. This situation was more frequent among the class teachers of the Norwegian sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency in the Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Frequency in the Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of teachers having at least one pupil with an IEP</td>
<td>26 (74.3 %)</td>
<td>31 (86.1 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of teachers not having pupils with IEPs</td>
<td>9 (25.7 %)</td>
<td>5 (13.9 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. The proportion of class teachers having currently at least one pupil with an IEP in their class.

All the class teachers (from both samples) having at least one pupil with an IEP in their class indicated that they had read through the IEPs that they were currently expected to follow. All these class teachers (26/26, 100 %) of the Finnish sample indicated that the currently followed IEP/s have an effect on their instruction. Majority (28/31, 86.1 %) of the Norwegian respondents indicated this too, but three of them (8.3%) indicated that the IEP does not have an effect on their teaching.

The effects that these IEPs had on the instruction were submitted as free verbal explanations. These answers were translated to English, then analysed and categorized qualitatively. After this the frequency of the mentioned effects related to each category was counted to transfer
this data to a numerical form. The freely constructed answers mapping the effects that the IEPs have on teaching fell in seven categories (a-f) (Figure 4.). These categories (with examples) were:

a. Effects on adult resources
(uses of special needs teacher, resource teacher or an assistant, co-teaching, remedial teaching and one-to-one-lessons or working in smaller groups)
b. Effects on the physical learning environment
(considering the pupil’s placement in the classroom or using learning environment related aid materials such as a screen, a special seat or completely separate rooms)
c. Learning material related effects
(using pictograms, illustrating pictures and other concrete materials, illustrated daily time-tables, using separate or adapted books or other learning materials, exercises and homework)
d. Effects on the objectives related to exams
(concerning the IEP while planning and/or assessing the exams)
e. Effects on the teacher’s language use
(using signs, focusing on how to express instructions, emphasizing concept definitions or clarifications and using more practical examples)
f. Effects related to the instruction, which are described in a more general way (and do not fall to any other specific category).

("I am considering the issues mentioned in the IEP, like special needs and learning difficulties, in my teaching."")
g. Other effects mentioned (which were often mentioned only once or twice)
(more intensive following, cutting down the subject contents, not expecting the same preparedness, letting the pupil work in her or his own rhythm, considering the pupil’s special needs while planning group activities and using variable teaching methods)

Figure 4. The verbal explanations on effects of the current IEP/s on teaching were collected from all the respondents who had currently at least one pupil with an IEP and considered that this IEP had an effect on teaching (N=26 in the Finnish sample and N=28 in the Norwegian sample).
Generally, the listed effects seem to be quite similar in both of the samples. A few interesting differences can, however, be pointed. The class teachers of the Finnish sample referred to the physical learning environment in their answers clearly more frequently. Also, the considerations of the effects that the IEP has related to exams and their assessment was mentioned four times within the Finnish sample, but no mentions related to this category were present in the Norwegian answers. Relatively many teachers decided to answer to this item by general explanations, which did not specify on how the IEPs are in fact affecting the teaching. The “other effects” were often mentioned only once and were therefore placed in a common category. The results indicate that at least intensified use of adult resources and illustrations, pictures, pictograms, separate learning materials and exercises seem to be relatively common attempts to implement the IEP among the class teachers in both the Finnish and the Norwegian sample.

4.5 Experiences on the planning processes of the current IEPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Finnish class teachers having a pupil with an IEP (N=26)</th>
<th>The Norwegian class teachers having a pupil with an IEP (N=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class teachers that have been involved in the planning process of the current IEPs</td>
<td>22 (84,6 %)</td>
<td>25 (80,6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class teachers that have not been involved in the planning process of the current IEPs</td>
<td>4 (15,4 %)</td>
<td>6 (19,4 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. The proportion of the class teachers, which was involved in the planning process of at least one of the currently followed IEPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Finnish class teachers that were involved in the planning of the current IEP (N=22)</th>
<th>The Norwegian class teachers that were involved in the planning of the current IEP (N=25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class teachers that did the planning as a part of a planning group</td>
<td>18 (81,8 %)</td>
<td>18 (72,0 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class teachers that did the planning without being part of a planning group</td>
<td>4 (18,2 %)</td>
<td>7 (28,0 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. The proportion of the class teachers, which was involved in the planning of the current IEP as a part of a planning group.

Most of the class teachers in both samples having one or several pupils with an IEP, were involved in the planning processes of at least one of the IEPs they are currently following (Table 10.). In both samples, the planning was most often done in groups. However, a considerable share of the teachers in both samples did the planning without it (Table 11.).
Based on these results, the IEPs might be planned very independently by the class teacher alone.

The 18 class teachers in each sample reporting that the planning had been organized in groups, were asked to indicate the other members of the group. The multiple answer opportunities of the item were differing in the Finnish and the Norwegian questionnaires, because different possible participating bodies exist in the two national systems (Appendix K, p. 122). Therefore the results related to this item are not totally comparable between the samples. However, if investigating the results of this item in the sample level, one can see a general picture of the bodies that were most often present in the planning groups in each sample context.

In addition to the respondent herself or himself, very often also the special needs teacher of the school and the parents or guardians of the given student are involved in the IEP planning group. Otherwise the groups were more varying. Some of the IEP groups include the principal of the school, previous teachers, other current teachers, school assistants and/or the school nurse. Also some differences can be pointed between the samples. Some of the IEP planning groups represented in the Finnish sample, also had school doctors, school welfare officer or the school psychologist as group members. These members were not at all present in the groups within the Norwegian sample. Such internal professionals might not be often or continuously present in the Norwegian primary schools. A Finnish school welfare officer’s tasks might be quite similar to the ones of a Norwegian social teacher. The possible social
teachers within the IEP groups of the Norwegian sample are shown at the column representing “other current teachers”. Another clear difference is that many Norwegian IEP planning groups had a representative of the Educational Psychological Counselling Service (PPT) included in the IEP planning group – this option was not among the choices in the Finnish questionnaire, as such external body does not exist in the Finnish context.

![Bar chart illustrating how important (on a scale from 0 to 6) the class teachers in the samples viewed their own role in the latest IEP planning process. The median is 6.0 for both the Finnish sample (N=22) and the Norwegian sample (N=25).](image)

Figure 6. Bar chart illustrating how important (on a scale from 0 to 6) the class teachers in the latest IEP planning process. The median is 6.0 for both the Finnish sample (N=22) and the Norwegian sample (N=25).

![Bar chart illustrating how satisfied the class teachers were with their role in the latest IEP planning process. The median is 5.0 for both the Finnish sample (N=22) and the Norwegian sample (N=25).](image)

Figure 7. Bar chart illustrating how satisfied the class teachers were with their role in the latest IEP planning process. The median is 5.0 for both the Finnish sample (N=22) and the Norwegian sample (N=25).

The class teachers representing both focus countries were generally quite satisfied with their own role in the planning process and viewed their own participation to the planning process mostly very important in both samples. In the Norwegian sample, the felt importance and satisfaction of own role during the IEP planning process were correlating (Pearson’s r=0.467, p<0.05, N=25). Such correlation was not found within the Finnish sample.
4.7 Class teachers’ views and experiences on the use of the current IEPs

Most of the class teachers in both groups were satisfied with the resulting IEPs in both of the groups, but the Norwegians seemed to be slightly more satisfied. They also often reported that they viewed the given IEP relatively appropriate.

Table 12. The proportion of the class teachers (having a student with an IEP), that felt that something should be added to the current IEP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Finnish class teachers having a pupil with an IEP (N=26)</th>
<th>The Norwegian class teachers having a pupil with an IEP (N=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something should be added to the IEP</td>
<td>5 (19,2 %)</td>
<td>8 (25,8 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing to add to the IEP</td>
<td>21 (80,8 %)</td>
<td>23 (74,2 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on these previously mentioned results, it was natural that majority of the respondents within both samples did not feel that anything should be added to the current IEPs. However, some respondents in both the Finnish and the Norwegian sample (currently following an IEP in their instruction) wanted to add something to these IEPs (Table 12.). They were asked in an open follow-up question to clarify that what it is that they would like to add to these IEPs. This open question was understood in different ways: Some of the teachers wanted to add some contents to the specific IEP they were following (such as “a new plan considering foreign language instruction” or “more specific objectives”), and some of them wanted to suggest a change or an improvement related to the electronic IEP forms used in the process, or related to other practices generally related to the IEP work.

![Bar chart illustrating how useful the IEP implementation is viewed among the class teachers in the samples. The median is 5 for both the Finnish sample (N=26) and the Norwegian sample (N=31).]

![Bar chart illustrating how difficult the IEP implementation is viewed among the class teachers in the samples. The median is 2,5 for the Finnish sample (N=26) and 3 for the Norwegian sample (N=31).]
The class teachers in both samples viewed the implementation of the current IEPs relatively useful. When mapping the respondents’ views on the difficulty of the current IEP implementation, the answers were more varying and the medians of both samples were placed in the middle of the Likert scale. Implementing the IEPs was viewed time-consuming in both samples, but the Norwegians viewed the process time-consuming slightly more often (Mann-Whitney U test: mean rank[Fin] = 24.21, mean rank[Nor] = 33.02, p = 0.040).

Table 13. Table illustrating how often the related IEPs were evaluated within the represented schools according to the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Frequency</th>
<th>Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEP regularly evaluated</td>
<td>31 (88.6%)</td>
<td>32 (88.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP not regularly evaluated</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. Bar chart illustrating how time-consuming the IEP implementation is viewed among the class teachers in the samples. The median is 4 for the Finnish sample (N=26) and 5 for the Norwegian sample (N=31).

Figure 13. Majority of the respondents indicated that the IEPs are evaluated regularly in their school. This bar chart illustrates how often the regular evaluations were done in the represented schools according to the respondents.

In both the Norwegian and the Finnish schools represented in the samples, it seems to be the most common routine that the IEPs are regularly evaluated (Table 13.). Then the evaluation is most often done twice during the school year (Figure 13.).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports IEPs in the Finnish sample (N=35)</th>
<th>Supports IEPs in the Norwegian sample (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I support the use of IEPs</strong></td>
<td><strong>I support the use of IEPs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 (82.9 %)</td>
<td>33 (91.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I do not support the use of IEPs</strong></td>
<td><strong>I do not support the use of IEPs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (2.9 %)</td>
<td>1 (2.8 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I don’t know</strong></td>
<td><strong>I don’t know</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (14.3 %)</td>
<td>2 (5.6 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Table illustrating the support for the use of IEPs as tools for special educational support among the samples.

Clear majority of the respondents in both groups supported the use of an IEP as a tool for special educational support. Some confusion was also present: as much as 14.3 % of the Finnish sample and 5.6 % of the Norwegian sample did not have a clear opinion on this matter.

All the participating class teachers (despite of their IEP related previous experiences) were asked to consider the positive and negative effects that will follow the implementation of an IEP. They were free to write their answers in open fields. Eight main categories were found while qualitatively analysing and categorizing the mentioned positive consequences of an IEP. The categories (with illustrating answer examples) were:

a. Thorough consideration of the pupil’s needs, challenges or abilities, which will lead to more appropriate objectives and measures related to the instruction.

("The pupil’s and her or his needs for support are considered thoroughly, making it possible to consider right and important support measures for learning and development.")

b. The parents/guardians get involved with the IEP work and receive information of their child’s schooling.

("Co-operation with the parents", “parents become committed to the IEP work”, “discussions with the parents” and "parents get an accurate picture of their child’s capabilities")

c. The pupil’s situation becomes reported and the information is easier to share within the school personnel involved in the pupil’s instruction, and on the other hand between the schools if the pupil changes school, and/or is useful also when searching for new support measures.

("Information is provided also to the subject teachers", “With the reported IEP...the principal becomes aware of the need for additional support in the classroom”, “Easy to inform other teachers who are going to teach the pupil")

d. Consequences related to the continuous following, assessment and evaluation of the pupil’s learning and/or development.

("Provides easily measurable objectives", “Easy to measure the improvement", “helps to see the progress”, “regular evaluation”, “makes it easier to follow what areas have improved")

e. The IEPs help to divide the resources within the school, the teacher gets support from other teachers and more teachers become involved in the provision of the support.
The IEPs provide concrete or practical objectives and/or measures.

(The IEP provides concrete objectives, "practical objectives", "IEP provides concrete measures" and "The IEPs provide concrete or practical objectives and/or measures.")

g. The IEP provides objectives that the pupil is able to achieve, and therefore the pupil more probably gains experiences of mastering or succeeding.

("The pupil achieves a mastering feeling", "...objectives that the pupil is able to achieve", "the pupil experiences mastery, when achieving her or his objectives", "the pupils have better possibilities to master")

h. Other consequences mentioned (often mentioned only once or twice)

("Nothing", "IEP supports the weekly work", "Gives a realistic picture of what can be expected from the pupil", "control")

Figure 14. The mentioned positive consequences that are seen following an IEP implementation divided to eight categories (N=35 for Finnish sample and N=36 for the Norwegian sample).

The resulting categories of the positive consequences following an IEP implementation were emphasized slightly differently in the two samples. The Finnish class teachers mentioned positive aspects related to documenting and information sharing most often. While parental co-operation seemed to gain more emphasis within the Finnish sample, related consequences were relatively rarely mentioned within the Norwegian sample. Assessment was more frequently referred to within the Finnish sample, which is in line with the previous result concerning the effects that the IEPs have on teaching (Figure 4., p. 55). These results indicate that the Finnish class teachers seem to consider the assessment aspect related to the IEP work more often than the Norwegian respondents. Exams and tests are relatively rarely part of the pupil assessment in Norwegian primary schools, and therefore this result might also reflect
the national situation. In the Norwegian answers two aspects can be raised for closer investigation as they were also mentioned considerably more often than within the Finnish sample. Firstly, many of the Norwegian class teachers viewed it positively that the IEP described concrete or practical objectives and measures. In addition to this aspect, it seemed to be very important especially to the Norwegian respondents that the pupils with needs for special support are able to experience mastering and succeeding when the IEP objectives are set to an achievable level. It is possible that the Finnish class teachers offered the same experiences more from the point of view of adjusting the pupil’s assessment to the right level. In other words, the Finnish teachers might be considering the pupil’s special needs in the assessment, and in that way offering the same kind of experiences to the given pupil.

The mentioned negative consequences following an IEP implementation were translated to English, then analysed and categorized correspondingly. The found nine categories (with illustrating answer examples) were:

a. The pupil with an IEP might be addressed to stigma, labelling, prejudices or unequal treatment from the teachers or their peers.

(“The pupil might be stigmatized as difficult or strange because of the needs for special support”, “possibly ending up stigmatized among other pupils”, “...unequal treatment”)

b. Pupils might get a negative self-portrait related to their schooling or they might feel ashamed or view their schooling negatively in other ways.

(“The pupil gets a negative picture of her or his own school-going”, “the pupil might experience being worse than the others”, “the pupil feels isolated and different in a negative way”)

c. The evaluation of the IEP is done following inappropriate time cycles (either too often or too rarely).

(“The IEP must be updated often so that the support is suitably directed”, “IEPs are evaluated too often”, “the situation described in the IEP changes all the time”)

d. The situation is described in a too idealistic way in the IEP and it is not possible to implement the IEP in a real instruction situation (either due to lack of time, personnel or too large pupil groups).

(“Often the result is just a paper, the practices become forgotten”, “practical advantages to the instruction are insignificant, if no additional resources are given”, “the mentioned support measures are not implemented because of the lack of resources”)

e. IEP creates considerably additional work, that is seen time-consuming.

(“It demands a lot of time from the teacher”, “It is hard and laborious to draw up the IEPs”, “the pupils with special needs increase the work load”)

f. There are challenges related to the IEP meetings with the parents.
(“The parents get exhausted in listening to the teacher’s worries and they are not willing to co-operate”, “it is difficult to organize common meetings with the pupil and the parents”, “the teachers are difficult to reach for signing and accepting the IEP”)

g. There are negative aspects related to the IEP forms or documents.

(“It is difficult to understand what should be written and how broadly”, “the documents are not completely meaningful”, “parts of the IEP are a bit complicated and are not used for that”)

h. There are no negative aspects.

(“No negative aspects”, “none”)

i. Other mentions (often mentioned only once or twice)

(“In some cases the previous IEPs are not sent to the new school of the pupil”, “The employer should consider the additional IEP work load by providing smaller class sizes, additional teachers or a financial compensation”, “It is difficult to follow IEP’s objectives and motivate the students when the rest of the class should be working with other contents”)

Figure 15. The mentioned negative consequences that are seen following an IEP implementation divided to nine categories (N=35 for Finnish sample and N=36 for the Norwegian sample).

The class teachers of both samples viewed it negatively that the IEP’s caused so much additional work, which was considered often also very time-consuming. Some respondents felt that the IEPs might end up being too idealistic. The Finnish respondents mentioned labelling or stigma relatively often as a negative consequence of an IEP implementation, while the Norwegian class teachers did not mention this at all. Based on the data, this might either indicate that such social reaction might exist especially in the Finnish context or that the Finnish respondents were for other reasons considering this aspect more often. Another aspect, which was mentioned only by the Finns were challenges that were seen related to the parental meetings.
When looking at the mentioned positive and negative consequences of an IEP implementation, it is shown that some issues can be viewed from totally opposite perspectives among the class teachers. For example the parental meetings were viewed from a positive co-operative aspect, but on the other hand, also negatively emphasizing the challenging or time-consuming aspect. And, although it was often felt positive that the special needs are thoroughly considered and documented, it was nevertheless viewed negatively that this work is so time-consuming and viewed as an “additional” planning work.

### 4.8 Correlations in the combined data material

Generally, the results were quite similar for both of the samples. The data of the two samples was combined while looking for possible correlations of the respondent group as a whole. The previously presented results indicate that this study shows relatively few differences between the Finnish and Norwegian samples. It is therefore interesting to investigate also some common trends that might be present in the experiences and views that these Nordic class teachers have related to IEPs.

A weak positive correlation (Pearson’s r=0.314, p<0.01, N=71) between the years the teacher had been working with the class, and the proportional variable 

\[
\frac{\text{Number of pupils considered having special needs}}{\text{Total number of pupils}}
\]

was found. This is indicating that based on the combined data of the samples, there seems to be a tendency for the class teachers who have more experience with working with the given class, also to consider several of their pupils as having such special needs that must be considered in the teaching. Getting to know the pupil and recognizing the possible special needs is an essential precondition for being able to provide beneficial instruction for each pupil. The teachers that have known their pupils for a longer time, probably also recognize better the special needs that these pupils might have.

Also, a weak correlation between the number of pupils that the teacher considered as having special needs and the class year level (Spearman’s Rho=0.238, p<0.50, N=71) was found. This is indicating that the number of children considered as having special needs that must be taken in consideration in the instruction seems to be slightly increasing while the pupils move on to higher year grades during their primary education. It might be possible that while the teacher or the school community in general learns to know the pupil, and possibly also while the subject contents get more complicated from year to year, the special educational needs that the pupils have become more evident and recognizable.
Teachers that had been involved in the IEP planning processes, had more often gained also other professional experience related to the IEPs. A highly significant positive correlation exists between participating in the planning process of an IEP and being expected to implement an IEP (Pearson’s r=0.832, p<0.01, N=71) and being involved in evaluation process of an IEP (Pearson’s r=0.842, p<0.01, N=71). These results are somewhat natural, but worth mentioning, as they are indicating that planning, implementing and evaluating of an IEP are related processes – just like they are supposed to be in both national contexts. Therefore, these correlations indicate that the class teachers in the samples seem to have a clear understanding and appropriate implementation of these practices.

The results for the teachers that reported the IEPs being regularly evaluated in their schools, correlated positively with the results for the variable indicating if the IEPs have an effect on teaching (Spearman’s Rho: 0.380, p<0.01, N=57). Therefore, at least based on the results on these samples, the regular evaluation of the IEPs is very important. It might guarantee that the contents of the IEP are such that they can have an actual effect on the instruction.

When looking at the views that the class teachers had on their own roles in the IEP planning groups, some interesting correlations are shown. Very naturally, the teachers that viewed their own role relatively important seemed to be also more satisfied with their roles (Spearman’s Rho: 0.410, p<0.01, N=47). Considering one’s role important in the planning process also correlated with the possible effect that the IEP have on teaching (Spearman’s Rho: -0.397, p<0.01, N=47), indicating that the more the teachers seemed to consider their role important, the more frequently they also indicated that the IEP actually has an effect on their teaching. The satisfaction with one’s own role in the planning process correlated positively with viewing the resulting IEP appropriate (Spearman’s Rho: 0.410, p<<0.01, N=57) and as well with how useful the current IEP implementation is viewed (Spearman’s Rho: 0.563, p<<0.01, N=57). Satisfaction with the resulting IEP correlated negatively with how difficult following the IEP is seen (Spearman’s Rho: -0.388, p<0.01, N=57) and positively with how appropriate the IEP is viewed (Spearman’s Rho: 0.624, p<<0.01, N=57). Based on these views, one could conclude IEPs must not only be appropriate for the given pupils, but they must also be planned such that they are easy to follow.
5 Discussion and conclusions

In this Master research, my aim was to find out whether or not the experiences and views that the Finnish and Norwegian primary class teachers’ have on the use of IEPs, differ between the two national contexts. Analysing the educational documents (such as the legislative and curricular guidelines) framing the national basic education and exploring the available previous comparative research indicated that there are some fundamental differences between the Finnish and the Norwegian school systems. However, my understanding is that no previous research on the class teachers’ IEP related experiences and views from a comparative perspective between these national contexts exists.

5.1 Comparison of the represented settings

The samples turned out to be relatively small, which impose limitations on the reliability and validity of the results (further discussion later in the text). Otherwise, the samples could be considered quite representative in many ways. In both samples, both female and male respondents were included, and the percentages (with a considerably smaller share of male participants) could be presumed to reflect the actual gender distribution among this profession in both countries. The age of the respondents, as well as the years of gained working experience as a class teacher, varied in both samples. The samples represented many age and experience categories, and were therefore most probably representing the actual situation of the population. Most of the respondents considered the school they worked in as a typical national primary school. The respondents were providing teaching to varying year classes in both samples. All these results implicate that various background settings were represented in both samples, therefore most probably reflecting the actual situation of the population. Some interesting comparisons could, therefore, be done between the samples.

When mapping the educational background information of the participants, it was shown that most of the Finnish respondents indicated that they have completed a Master’s degree in Education, which is required for the qualification. Two of the Finnish respondents indicated that they had only completed upper secondary school degree. These respondents might have been working as teacher substitutes at the moment. Despite of the indicated lower education level these two respondents nevertheless reported that they were fulfilling the qualification in the previous item. This might be because they were confused or unsure about the actual
national qualification requirement. It is also possible that they accidentally made a false choice when answering in either of these two items, resulting to these contradicting answers.

Every second (50 %) of the participating Norwegian teachers indicated that they had fulfilled a related Bachelor degree. According to Statistics Norway (2013), majority (82,7 %) of the teachers within Norwegian basic education have accomplished Bachelor level studies. The current result is quite well in line with the situation observed in the population. In the current sample, 25 % of the respondents had accomplished a Master level degree. This is considerably larger share than the observed national percentage (5 %) among the primary and secondary teachers (Statistics Norway, 2013). This might be due to the small size of the sample, which might therefore be poorly representative in this sense. It is also possible that the teachers that had accomplished a Master’s degree themselves tended to be more interested in participating in this Master research based on their related personal background. Another possible explanation is that the teachers working in Oslo, one of the main university cities of Norway, might be more educated than the teachers in other cities or smaller towns, where the access to university studies might not be as easy. Nevertheless, 25 % of the Norwegian respondents indicated that their accomplished education was something else than a related Bachelor or Master degree, but did not provide any further explanation for this in the follow-up question. This means that a high percentage of teachers had accomplished education that is something else than the relevant qualifying studies required for working as a class teacher. It raises a question about whether these teachers were actually fulfilling the national qualification requirements or not? However, none of the Norwegian respondents indicated that she or he would not fulfil these requirements. These results give a reason to doubt whether the educational competence of the Norwegian teachers was good enough. If this phenomenon would exist in the population, it would, naturally, be very worrying. The confusion related to the national qualification requirements is interesting. Is it possible that the teachers are not aware of the national qualifications for working as class teachers? It might also result from the teachers’ difficulty to admit that they are in official terms unqualified, if they still would consider themselves as competent teachers. All in all, the accomplished education among the sample groups reflected relatively well the present national situations. The samples were therefore quite representative in this sense.

In both countries, the national basic educational schools can be expected to be quite similar across the country. This is supported by the PISA results indicating relatively small
differences between the national schools (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Kupari & al., 2013; OECD, 2014). However, also opposite studies exist. For example, it has been shown that there are considerable differences in the special educational practices among the Norwegian municipalities (Aarnes, 2008; NDET 2013a, 2014; Skårrevik, 2005). Also, in Finland it has been shown that the new special educational strategy has been implemented in different paces and ways in different cities and municipalities (Thuneberg & al., 2014). In the current study, majority of the participating class teachers considered the schools they worked in as typical national elementary schools. This allows considering the sample somewhat representative also in this sense, as in both national contexts the great majority of the primary schools are municipal, ordinary primary schools (Eurypedia, 2014b; Statistics Finland, 2014b). It was voluntary to indicate the name of the school while submitting the questionnaire. Therefore, this information is not available for all the respondents and it remains unclear how many schools were represented in the samples. It is likely that in these small samples relatively few primary schools were represented, which of course sets limitations for the reliability of the results. The results might lead to false inferences especially related to some questionnaire items that were probably more affected by the school’s practices than the individual respondent’s experiences. An example of this kind of item is for example: “How often are the IEPs evaluated in your school?” (in the Section H. of the questionnaire).

In both samples, most teachers had been teaching the same class for one school year or longer. This might mean that they also knew their pupils better and, as a consequence, were more familiar with their individual educational needs. The teachers were asked to estimate, according to their own opinion, how many of the pupils in their classes have special needs that need to be taken in consideration in the daily instruction. In both samples, the teachers considered that in average every fifth pupil in their classes was having such special needs. In the national level, the percentages of pupils with IEPs are lower than this (NDET 2013a, Statistics Finland, 2013d, 2014b; Statistics Norway, 2013). This indicates that, at least in these samples, it is probable that a considerable share of the pupils with educational special needs is receiving support in the framework of the mainstream instruction (within the general or intensified support level in Finland, or as adapted instruction in Norway) – without an IEP. This is corresponding the presumed real situation in both national contexts, where most of the pupils with special educational needs receive either part-time special education (in the Finnish context) or adapted education (in the Norwegian context) without an IEP (Graham & Jahnikainen, 2011; Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012).
5.2 Answers to the research questions

5.2.1 The Finnish and Norwegian class teachers’ experiences and views on planning, implementation and evaluation of the IEPs

The first research problem was to find out what IEP related experiences these class teachers, working in the primary schools of the capital metropolitan areas of the focus countries, have. In both the Finnish and the Norwegian sample, majority of the participants had taken part in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of an IEP, indicating that the participating teachers had very exhaustive experience on the IEP work. Among the Norwegian sample the gained experience related to these processes seemed to be even more common. Also, most of the Norwegian and the Finnish respondents had currently at least one pupil with an IEP, and they were therefore also expected to implement an IEP in their current working situation.

These results indicate that the gained experience on the IEP work might be very general in the class teachers’ work in both national contexts. However, to be able to make generalisations concerning the whole population, additional research is needed. It is possible that the teachers, who volunteered to submit the current questionnaire, also had more experience on these processes, thereby awakening the interest for the participation. This might have provided a poorly representative picture of the actual situation. Further studies with larger samples are therefore needed.

Experiences and views related to IEP planning processes

When mapping the experience on IEP work, a sub-question about the involvement in the IEP planning processes was also posed. The results show that most of the participating Finnish and Norwegian teachers (having currently at least one pupil with an IEP), had usually also been involved in at least one of the related IEP planning processes. The planning was often organized in groups in both national contexts. The other members of the planning groups and the views the respondents had on their own role in these planning processes were also investigated. In the samples, the planning groups differed related to the participating members. In the Norwegian respondents’ IEP planning groups, the school’s special needs teacher, the involved parents and an external PPT worker were quite usual group members. Respectively, in the Finnish respondents’ IEP planning groups, the school’s special needs teacher and the involved parents, but also the school’s welfare officer or the school’s
psychologist were relatively often involved. In this item, the pupil herself or himself was not among the answer options. This can be seen as a limitation, as it might have been interesting to investigate whether or not the pupils were heard in the planning processes. Many benefits of their involvement have been reported (reviewed in Lee-Tarver, 2006). However, none of the respondents mentioned pupils while asking to explain the possible other members in the planning groups, indicating that they seemed not to be included in the process.

In both samples, the class teachers usually viewed their own role in the planning process positively. They considered their role mostly important and were mostly satisfied with it. In both samples, the teachers seemed to be also generally satisfied with the resulting IEP and they felt that the resulting IEP was appropriate. Most of them did not have anything in mind that should be added to the current IEP.

**Experiences and views on implementing the IEP**

As mentioned, most of the respondents in both samples had currently one or several pupils with an IEP. All the Finnish teachers who indicated so, also reported that this IEP has an effect on their teaching. This was not the case in the Norwegian sample, where 3 out of 31 (8.3%) teachers (that were expected follow an IEP) indicated that this plan did not have an effect on their teaching. This might be due to several reasons, and it does not necessarily mean that these teachers left the given IEP completely unconsidered in their teaching. Instead, it is also possible that these teachers had already, before implementing the IEP, adapted their teaching to the pupil’s needs. Previously in chapter 2 it has been pointed that the Norwegian special educational practices can be criticised for working against the principles of early intervention related to the complicated and time-consuming preparation processes prior to the decision of special education (Hausstätter & Takala, 2011; Takala & Hausstätter, 2012). This might be related to the current result. The IEP planning process might have taken such a long time that the teachers might have been obliged to find and implement suitable ways for supporting the given student already before the IEP implementation. This might explain why the implemented IEP did not bring any additional effect on the teaching. Another possible explanation for this might simply be that these class teachers found the implementation of the IEP so challenging from the their own point of view, or somehow inappropriate from the student’s point of view, that they therefore did not consider this plan in their instruction. Based on the national educational legislation
(Norwegian Education Act 61/1998), it is clear that all the teachers should implement the existing IEP documents so that they are actually considered in the instruction.

Despite the generally positive views and experiences reported related to the planning processes, some negative opinions were raised concerning the class teachers’ views on the implementation of the IEP. Even though many teachers seemed to consider the Individual Educational Plans themselves satisfactory and appropriate, some of the respondents in both samples still viewed the implementation of the IEP little useful, difficult and/or time-consuming. Generally, the IEP implementation was considered quite useful, although nevertheless time-consuming. The opinions on the difficulty of the IEP implementation were varying considerably within both samples, so that the sample averages ended up being quite neutral. The variation shows that the IEP implementation might be experienced not at all difficult or very difficult even within the same sample group. The IEP contents differ related to each individual pupil. It is therefore difficult to conclude if the experienced difficulty is related to the specific IEP and its contents, or if it is rather related for example to the teachers’ experience, educational competence (especially in the Norwegian context) and/or to the teachers’ own capacity or abilities to implement these specific contents.

**Main effects of the IEPs**

The current IEPs’ main effects on instruction were generally quite similar in both respondent groups. Some mentioned IEP effects within the groups were: directing intensified adult resources for supporting the given pupil, adapting the learning materials and using more practical/illustrative materials and considering more carefully what kind of language and clarifications to use in the instruction. The Finnish respondents mentioned also relatively often effects related to adapting the physical learning environment (such using a screen to increase the pupil’s abilities to concentrate). Interestingly, only the Finnish respondents considered the IEP affecting to tests or exams and/or their assessment. This was not mentioned often, but however a clear difference can be pointed between the groups, as it was not at all mentioned among the Norwegian respondents. The Norwegian teachers are not expected to do as much assessment work as their Finnish colleagues, which might offer an explanation to this result. As pointed by Takala and Hausstätter (2012), the Finnish school system can be considered quite competitive, while the Norwegian system has been developing rather to the opposite direction. In the Norwegian primary schools, the pupils’ skills are seldom tested with examinations and they are not at all assessed using grading,
whereas the Finnish pupils have numerically graded tests and exams relatively often –
starting already in the first years of the primary schools. The Finnish teachers might therefore
consider assessment more often also related to the IEPs. This might explain the found
difference, although the current result is based on small samples and is not generalizable to
the population.

Many respondents in both samples provided general level descriptions of the effects that the
given IEPs have on their teaching. This should not be left unnoticed, because there might be
reasons for choosing to do so. Some respondents might have wanted to ensure their students’
anonymity by answering in more general terms. They might also have chosen to do so
because they understood the question in a more general level. Or, perhaps, they did not
bother to make any further explanations when answering. However, one explanation is that
the teachers did not have an organized understanding on the particular, practical effects that
the IEP shall make in their instruction. They might also in that case tend to describe these
effects in general terms. Perhaps, one can doubt if there actually are any real effects in the
classroom, if the teacher describes them very generally and superficially. One might perhaps
expect that if the IEP really had some practical effects on the instruction, some shortly and
concretely described aspects should be relatively easy to provide.

**Evaluation of the IEPs**

As mentioned, most of the class teachers in both samples had also been involved in the
evaluation process of an IEP. The majority of the respondents in both groups indicated that
the IEPs are regularly evaluated in their schools, and that this is usually done twice in a
school year. The legislation obligates for the evaluation whenever there is need for it, but at
least once a year (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; Norwegian Education Act

**5.2.2 The Finnish and Norwegian class teachers’ general views on the use of IEPs**

In the second main research problem, the objective was to investigate whether the Finnish
and Norwegian class teachers generally support the use of IEPs as tools for special
educational support. Majority of the respondents supported the use of IEPs, but the support
was even more common among the Norwegian sample (91.7 %) compared to the Finnish one
(82.9 %). In both samples only one respondent indicated not supporting the use of the IEPs, and 5 out of 35 (14.3 %) of the Finnish participants and 2 out of 36 (5.6 %) of the Norwegian participants answered that they do not know whether they support or not. The hesitation might have been due to lack of experience related to IEPs. That might lead to difficulty in forming an opinion. The hesitation might also reflect uncertainty due to having partly positive and partly negative thoughts on IEPs. Such option opportunity was not among the answer choices. This issue could have been further mapped in the questionnaire, as now the reasons behind the reported hesitation remain unclear.

Another objective was to find out what are the felt positive and negative consequences of the use of an IEP in these two national contexts. The teachers provided their answers freely in open fields, but again many similar issues were mentioned in the context groups. In both samples, it was seen positive that the IEP work obligates the teacher to consider the pupil’s situation in a thorough manner, leading to holistic reflections on the instruction that shall be provided to the pupil with special needs. Especially many of the Finnish teachers found the IEP work or IEP meetings as a way to promote good co-operation with the parents. It was seen positive, especially among the Finnish teachers, that the IEP document is issued, ensuring that this information (in a written, documented form) is more easily shared with the involved teachers either within the school or between the schools if the pupil’s school might change. Another aspect mentioned often especially by the Finns was that the IEPs are helping to consider, which classes within the school need more support. Continuous evaluation of the pupil’s progress was among the mentioned positive issues, and again the assessment aspect was more often raised among the Finns. This might be due to the earlier discussed relatively larger emphasis on the assessment that can be seen characterizing the Finnish basic education compared to the Norwegian one (Takala & Hausstättter, 2012). The Norwegian class teachers raised two issues more often then their Finnish colleagues. Firstly, they valued the concrete and practical objectives that are lined in the IEPs. Secondly, based on the frequency of the mentions they also seemed to consider it more often that the pupils with the IEPs get such objectives that they are able reach, so that they can experience mastering and succeeding related to their learning and schooling. As discussed in the literature review, the Norwegian school system can be considered to emphasize everyone’s “right to participate” (Hausstättter & Takala, 2008, 2011; Takala & Hausstättter, 2012; Takala & al., 2012). Seen in this light, being able to feel mastering and succeeding in school as an equal member of the school community is easy to identify as one of the primary values in the Norwegian context. In the
Finnish context, the same kind of feedback on achieved objectives might be more often attained via adapted assessment and grading.

If considered in Vygotsky’s (1978) learning theoretical framework, emphasizing the importance of achieving the objectives as the starting point can be risky. If the importance of achieving the objectives (a predefined “what can be”) is seen more important than the effort that must be made to gain better achievement while supporting the learning in the pupil’s proximal zone of development (the processes happening in the area between “what is” and “what can be” –if using the previously discussed metaphors of Sanches-Ferreira & al., 2013), there is a risk of setting the objectives too low. Using Vygotskian terminology, it might be possible that the potential developmental level is set too low, in order to ensure that the pupil gets the hoped mastering feeling as a result of the learning processes supported by the teacher, assistant or other people present in the pupil’s learning environment. Even higher potential level (“what can be”) might, however, be reached if the level set for satisfactory learning result was not strictly predefined and already beforehand so much emphasized. A more ideal situation would be to support the pupil’s learning process as much and in as appropriate ways as possible, and during this process to let the pupil reach on as high level as possible without strictly predefining the level which is considered satisfactory. Objective planning emphasizing the importance of mastering feeling might result to the objectives being too low, and rather than motivating for better learning, they might function as obstacles for allowing the learning to proceed even further. One might ask if it is more important that the child works with something until she or he masters the predefined objective, or that the child works with something until she or he is able to show the actual potential level that she or he is able to reach with the help of the appropriate support measures (the real “what can be”)? And which resulting level is more worth celebrating? To put it bluntly, is it more important that the education ensures efficient learning or that it offers experiences of mastering?

Some ways for defining IEPs were previously discussed in this Master thesis. Sanches-Ferreira & al. (2013) presented three important perspectives to the IEPs: IEP as a specific departure point considering the current level of performance, IEP as the personal goal or destination, and IEP as the route or a vehicle to reach these goals – meaning the needed support and services. All these aspects were considered among the respondents when asking about the positive effects of an IEP. If discussing the answers of this item generally, it was
seen positive that the pupil’s situation is thoroughly considered, the goals are appropriate and suitable and that the needed support is carefully planned and appropriate. To reach the best possible benefit and level of learning, it is important to consider all these aspects equally, without giving too much emphasis on any of them solely.

Also the negative aspects following the implementation of an IEP were mapped. In both groups, some teachers did not have any negative consequences to mention. This shows that some respondents viewed the use of IEPs only positively. However, several negative aspects were described as well. The Finnish respondents raised two aspects that were not at all mentioned among the Norwegian sample: Firstly, they considered that sometimes there is a risk that the pupil with an IEP might be stigmatized and therefore unequally treated by their peers or the teachers. Secondly, the Finnish teachers mentioned several times challenges related to the parental meetings, such as lack of co-operation with the parents or difficulty to find suitable schedules for the meetings. It was interesting that related aspects were not at all named among the Norwegian class teachers. This might be just a coincidence (due to small samples), but it might also mean that those issues were not seen currently existing or just not as negative in the Norwegian context. Perhaps the Norwegian system is more used to having pupils with special needs and otherwise heterogeneous backgrounds in the mainstream classrooms, and such worries of stigma are no more as relevant. The Norwegian school system seems to segregate these pupils less than the Finnish system (NDET, 2013a; Statistics Finland, 2013d, 2014b; Statistics Norway, 2013). In addition, the schools of Oslo area gather in average more students with immigration or foreign language background than the ones in Helsinki area (Eurypedia, 2014b; Pihl, 2002; Statistics Finland, 2013a, 2013c, 2014a; Statistics Norway, 2014). One might therefore expect that this has lead to more accepting atmosphere simply because the school communities are more used to having a wider variety of different pupils. The challenges related to parental meetings were somewhat contradicting mentions among the Finns, as these meetings were meanwhile often mentioned also in positive light related to the previous item. This shows that same issues can be viewed very differently also within the sample. The following negative issues were raised in both groups: the possibility that having an IEP results to a negative self-portrait of own learning/schooling, the evaluation cycles being either too long or too short, and the related IEP forms being inappropriate and difficult to use. The class teachers in the Norwegian sample saw the IEPs being too idealistic more often than the Finnish ones. Related to this, it was mentioned that the IEP might just end up being words on a paper without any real implications to the actual
situation. The most often mentioned negative aspect in both samples was that the IEP work is very laborious and/or time-consuming. The Finns mentioned this aspect more often, which is actually a bit surprising. As mentioned, the Finnish class teachers are generally more educated than the Norwegian class teachers (FNBE, 2013, 2014b; Eurypedia, 2014a, 2014b; Statistics Norway, 2013). In Finland, also the intensified support is reported, while there are no such obligations for reporting the adapted support measures in Norway (Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE, 2004; Norwegian Education Act 61/1998). The Finnish legislation together with the core curriculum frames in more details that who is entitled to the special-needs support compared to the Norwegian guidelines (Basic Education Act 628/1998; FNBE 2004; Norwegian Education Act 61/1998). Therefore the Finnish teachers could be expected to have generally more competence, and also more comprehensive guidelines and documentation on the support history at hand while starting the IEP development. Therefore, one might have rather expected that the Finnish class teachers would not have experienced this work as time-consuming as their Norwegian colleagues. However, the Finnish education system has implemented a new strategy for special education only a few years ago (FNBE, 2014a), and the newly introduced practices might be more time-consuming in the beginning. This might at least partly explain this result. Even though the Finnish respondents mentioned often the lack of time resources related to this item, a comparative result of a previous item showed that Norwegian respondents viewed the IEP implementation in average slightly more time-consuming than the Finns.

Summarily, majority of the Finnish and Norwegian primary school class teachers in the samples seemed to have exhaustive professional experience on the IEP work. They viewed the use of the IEPs as a tool for special educational support mostly positively. The current results were generally well in line with the results of Lee-Tarver’s (2006) related survey results concerning the American mainstream class teachers’ IEP views, which were discussed previously in Chapter 2. Both in Lee-Tarver’s (2006) and in the current survey, also negative aspects were indicated among the respondents, and not everyone saw the IEPs in positive light.

5.3 Considerations on the validity and reliability

Unfortunately, despite of the large number of contacted schools, the sample sizes that were reached in this study were considerably low. This might have been due to different issues,
such as teachers’ busy schedules not easily allowing using fifteen minutes for research purposes or possibly an unclear information letter, which might have not outlined the target population clear enough, or simply was not interesting enough. Due to the small samples, the results of this quantitative study cannot be generalized to the accessible population (the external validity is poor). Despite of this, it is still possible to compare the samples. Respecting the statistical conclusion validity, only a few statistically significant correlations were found from the combined data, but these results were rather irrelevant in the light of the current research problems. Usually, the comparisons were done focusing on the mean values of each item, therefore also ensuring the internal validity as no specific assumptions of relationships between certain variables were expected in order to make the comparisons this way. In addition to the sample comparisons, considerations on the usability of the questionnaire and suitability of the sampling methods for another related study can be done based on the study.

5.4 Conclusions
As discussed in chapter 2, despite many geographical, societal and cultural similarities, the national basic education systems, and also the special educational procedures seem to differ in several aspects between Finland and Norway. Also the practices related to the IEP work seem to differ in some aspects, as differences can be pointed for example in the demanded documentation related to the common support measures used in the mainstream education. In addition to this, the related legislative frames and the steps preceding the decision of special educational support seem to be clearly different between the focus countries. Also, the IEPs in these contexts have somewhat different contents and are therefore not directly comparable concepts between these educational cultures. Despite of all these differences, it seems like at least based on the data gathered with the used questionnaire items, the current samples did not show large differences that could be seen as reflecting the differing contexts. Rather than that, based on the results gathered from these samples, it seems like it is possible that the IEP related experiences and views of the class teachers in these two countries might also be very similar. However, as discussed, the current small samples do not allow generalizations to the population, and further studies are required to find more reliable answers to the presented research questions on the country level.
Both the Finnish and the Norwegian basic educational systems emphasize equal opportunity for all the pupils. This study can be considered to reflect this principle. In both samples, the teachers’ experiences and views were generally very similar, with relatively little variation. In short, most of the teachers had exhaustive professional experience on IEP work and the use of IEPs was viewed mainly positively. This homogeneity related to the experiences and views among the class teachers can be considered as a sort of equality from the pupils’ point of view. One might expect that if a considerable part of the teachers had experienced or viewed the IEP work very differently, they might also have done the IEP related tasks very differently, or possibly even left them consciously undone if they viewed this work very negatively. It is the pupils’ benefit to have teachers that experience their tasks important and view that the result of their work is useful, satisfactory and appropriate. The results reflect equity also in the sense that even when the respondents represented different schools, they had relatively very similar experiences, which might be because the ordinary schoolwork can be considered to offer quite similar experiences to the teachers, despite of the institution.

Due to the small sample sizes, further research shall be done in order to collect data that allows generalizations to the population. More municipalities and schools from both countries should be involved in further studies, and also the teachers that do not necessarily have so much IEP-related experience, or perhaps such positive views on the use of IEPs shall be reached. This might be done using better formulations in the invitation letter and simply reaching larger samples with a wider timeframe for the research. Some items must be reconsidered in order to ensure that all the respondents understand them the same way.

In addition to offering a good starting point for developing a better and more comprehensive related survey, this research has raised also some new aspects that might serve as interesting additional research problems. What are the actual effects that the IEPs have on teaching in these national contexts? The teachers’ viewpoints were mapped in the current study, but for example comparative case studies in these contexts might reveal some additional aspects. On the other hand, do the nationally used assessment measures set different kinds of expectations or objectives to the IEP work in these two contexts? The IEP work is an increasingly relevant part of the class teachers’ work in the Nordic context making these questions extremely important while aiming to develop the school systems further, hopefully also in an inclusive direction.
References


Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NDET). (2013a). *The Education mirror 2013: Facts and analysis of kindergarten, primary and secondary education in*


Education GPS. Retrieved from: http://gpseducation.oecd.org


Appendix A

The NSD letter, functioning as the research permission related to the Norwegian schools (2 pages).

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Lage Jonsberg
Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1140 Blindern
0318 OSLO

Vnr dato: 18.07.2013
Vnr ref: 05898 / 3 / 081
Døds dato: Døds ref.

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 29.06.2013. Meldingen gis det prosjektet:

34898
Elementary class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for their students with special needs in Finland and in Norway

Behandlingsansvarlig
Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste ledar

Daglig ansvarlig
Lage Jonsberg
Anna-Maria Vuohelainen

Personvernmubdet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepålagt i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen utføres i overensstemmelse med personopplysningsloven.

Personvernmubdets vurdering fortsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningens gjitt i meldeskjemata, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseberedskapen. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan sette i gang.


Personvernmubdet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Videre Namnvedt Kvalheim

Marte Bjorkeland, CFO 55 58 33 48
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Anna-Maria Vuohelainen, Vids gate 10 A, 0452 OSLO
The participant’s consent will be obtained by answering the e-questionnaire, based on written information about the project and the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Official finds the letter of information satisfactory according to the Personal Data Act.

If a data processor is used in the project, the Data Protection Official for Research presupposes that a data processing agreement is made between the data processor and Universitetet i Oslo for the processing of personal data, cf. Personal Data Act § 15. For advice on what the data processor agreement should contain, please see: http://www.datatilsynet.no/English/Publications/Data-processor-agreements/

The information will be registered on a private computer. The Data Protection Official for Research presupposes that the use of a private computer is in accordance with the routines for data security for the Universitet of Oslo.

When the project is completed, by the end of June 2014, the data material will be made anonymous by deleting directly and indirectly identifying variables. In order for the data to be fully anonymised, logs, e-mails and all directly identifying data, such as names/referance numbers must be deleted, and indirectly identifying data in the remaining material must be deleted or changed.
### Appendix B

The research permission related to the schools of Helsinki, Finland (4 pages). (The names of the schools and the principals are blacked to protect the respondents’ identity.)

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<td>Anna-Maria Kristina Vuohelainen</td>
<td>Vidar's gate 10 A, 0452 Oslo, Norway</td>
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**Helsingin kaupunki OPETUSVIRAOSO**

**TUTKIMUSLUHIAHAKEMUS**

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Käytämään ilmi tietoja, joista voisit tunnistaa yksilöitä vastantapaa. Koulujen nimi ja nimi toimitaan totuusmateriaaleja, mutta sen tehtävän on kerätä tietoa rehtoreille toimitettavista koulukohdista tiliviesteineä varten ja vastaajat valitsevat itse haluavat käyttävän nimen vastauksessaan mainita.

Käytä alaistä aineiston huolissaan analysoituani pyrin vastaamaan seuraaviin tutkimuspyynnöksiin:

1. Mita kokemukset suomalaisilla ja norjalaisilla alakoulujen luokanopetajilla on HOJKSeista? Lisäkysymyksiä: Mita määrin luokanopetajat osallistuvat KOJSien suunnittelukunta? Entä määrästä vaikutusta HOJKSeilla on opetukseen?

2. Minkälainen näkemys suomalaisilla ja norjalaisilla luokanopetajilla on HOJKSein käyttämisestä erityisperustamon vuoksi välineenä ja yksilöivissä luokassa? Lisäkysymyksiä: Kannattavatko suomalaiset ja norjalaiset luokanopetajat HOJKSein käyttöä erityisperustamon vuoksi välineenä ja yksilöivissä luokassa? Mita positiivisia ja negatiivisia puolia HOJKSein käyttöön ottamisesta heidän näkemyksensä mukaan seuraa?


Tutkimustapa / -menetelmän
- Kysely X
- Haastattelu
- Asiakirja- / tilastoanalyysi
- Koasetaima

Havainnointi □ miten havainnoidaan
Muu, mikä □

Käsitelääntöä tutkimukessa henkilötietoja □ kyllä □ ei X

Tutkimuksen ohjelmaksiksi opetusmateriaalina

Tavoitteen halukkailla alakoulujen luokanopetajilla osallistumaan tutkimukseen alla listatuista alakouluista. Näiden koulujen johtajat/rehtorit ovat antaneet tutkimukseen osallistumiseen alustavan suostumuksemansa.
Onko tutkimusyhteistyöstä neuvoteltu elukäteen kohteyksikköjen kanssa
kyllä X päivämäärä ja henkilön nimi, kenen kanssa on neuvoteltu

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marras/joulukuu 2013 (viimeistään
31.12.2013)

Tutkimuksen arvokulut valmistumisajaksi
30.6.2014

SITOUMUKSET JA
ALLEKIRJOITUKSET

Sitoon aihen että käydä saamani tietoja tutkittavan tai hänen lahestensä vaihdeksi tai
haaventamiseksi kaikka sellaisten muiden etujen lukuun muistaeto, joiden suojatko on säädetty
salassapito/velvollisuus enkä luovuta saamani henkilötietoja sivuhankille.

Tutkijana olen tietoinen lainsäädännön, erityisesti henkilötietolain henkilötietojen käsittelyyle
asetetunista vastavimksista sekä vastuuaste tietojen lainmukaisesta käsittelystä.

Tietosuojavaltuutetun tehtävänä on neuvos, ohjaa ja valvoa henkilötietojen käsittelyä.

Tietosuojavaltuutetun toimisto on antanut muun muassa ohjeet "Tietosuoja ja tieteilijän
oiden henkilötietolain kannalta ja Henkilötietojen käsittely suostumuksen perusteella"

Luovutan valmiista tutkimusraportista yhden kappaileen korvuksetta opetusviraston tieto-
ja annoin lainpalvelut -ylsköön, osoitte: PL 3000, 00098 Helsingin kaupunki

Paikka ja päivämäärä
Oulussa 30.9.2013

Tutkijan alakirjoitus

Anna-Maria Vuolijokinen

Paikka ja päivämäärä
Muiden salassa pidettäviä tietoja käsittelevien
henkilöiden allekirjoitukset

PUOLTO

Puollan hakemusta ☑
En puollan hakemusta ☐

Paikka ja päivämäärä
Helsinki 30.9.2013
### Allekirjoitus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salasana</th>
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<tr>
<td>Virka-asema</td>
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### PÄÄTÖS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paikka ja päätös päätelmä</th>
<th>Helsinki 30.9.2013 s. 3284</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paattajan allekirjoitus</td>
<td>Ojasma Järvi</td>
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<td>Salasana</td>
<td>Rauno Jarvi</td>
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<td>Virka-asema</td>
<td>opetustoimen johtaja</td>
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</table>

Päätös antaa mahdollisuuden tutkimusaineiston keräämiselle ajalta:

Päätös on annettu saada tietoa Helsinkiin kaupungin asiakirja- ja rekisterialkmaistosta.

Tämä päätös ei edellytä Helsingin opetusviraston osallistumaa tutkimuksen kustannuksiin.

### LIITTEET

| Liite 1. Kopio opinnotetyön ohjaamisesta tehdyistä sopimuksista |
| Liite 2. Vahvistuskirje, joka sasutuun ilmoitettavissa projektista norjalaiselle tutkimuseettiselle komitealle (Norwegian Societal Science Data Services, NSD) — Kyseinen dokumentti vahvistaa tutkimusohjelman norjalaisen alkoulajen osalta, kunhan vain koulujen johtajat/tehtöön myös antavat suostumuksensa |
| Liite 3. Selvitys siihen miten tutkimuksen kohteena olevan henkilön otetaan yhteyttä |
| Liite 4. Tutkimusauunnitelma, jonka liitteinä myös kyselyryhmään kysymykset ja informaatiokirjeet |

Jakelu: ac. hlö, laatupäällikö
The research permission related to the schools of Espoo, Finland (3 pages). (The names of the schools are blacked to protect the respondents’ identity.)

### Appendix C

The research permission related to the schools of Espoo, Finland (3 pages). (The names of the schools are blacked to protect the respondents’ identity.)
6  
Arvoi, miten tutkimus hyödyntää kaupungin palvelujen kehittämistä:
Tutkimuksessani saadut tulokset hyödyttävät Espoon kaupungin Sivistystoimessa
suunniteltuja ja kehitysvälineitä. Hän on tervehtinut näkemystä siitä, miten
Espoon ja muiden Suomen pääkaupunkiseudun kaupunkeihin luokanote
kokevat HOKSien käytön erityisen tuen yhteydessä ja 2.) näkevät HOKSien
käytön erityisen tuen työvälineenä alakoulussa. Toisaalta tutkimus tarjoaa
mielentuomisen ikkunan norjalaisen inklusiosta painottavaan tapaan. Espoon
linjaus erityistä tukea tarvitsevien oppilaiden siirtämisestä erityisopettajien
opetuksen on hyvin erilainen toimintamalli norjalaiseen lähtökohtaisesti kaikki
oppilaita integroivaa mallia, joten vertailu on tässä mielessä erityisen kiinnostava.

7  
TUTKIMUksen
TEKJOIDEN
SITOUMUS JA
ALLEKIRJOITUKSET

Siltaudun siihen, että en käytä samannesti tietoa asiakkaan, hänen lahteistensit tai
Espoon kaupungin vahingoiksi entä luovuta saamani henkilötietoja ulkopuolisille,
vaan pidän ne salassassa. Tutkimustulokset esitän niin, ettei niistä voida tunnistaa
yksittäistä henkilöä tai perhettä. Noudatan henkilötietotaitoja ja muualla
ainsaadannosta mainittuja säännöksiä henkilötietojen käsittelystä ja
salassapidosta:

Paikka ja aika
Oslossa 30.9.2013

Allekirjoitukset ja nimenselvennykset

Anna-Maria Vuohelainen

FM, biilge opettaja (HY-2008), erityispedagogikai maisteriopiskelija (2012->)

8  
PÄÄTÖS

☐ Tutkimuslupa myönnetään
☐ Tutkimuslupa myönnetään ehdollisena:

Myönnetyyn tutkimusluvan numero: 39/2013
☐ Tutkimuslupa ei myönnetä seuraaviin perustein:

Pyytään lähetettämään tutkimuksen valmistuttua sähköpostitse samaan
osoitteeseen kuin tämä tutkimuslupahakemus
☐ Tävistelmä
☐ Kokotutkimusraportti

Espooossa 11/10 2013
Päätäjän allekirjoitus
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juha Nurmi</th>
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<td>Juha Nurmi</td>
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<td>Virka-asema</td>
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<td>kehittämispäällikkö</td>
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Tutkimusluvan myöntäminen ei velvoita tutkimuksen kohteelta osallistumaan tutkimukseen. Tutkijan on neuvoteltava aina erikseen tutkimuskohteena olevien organisaatioiden kanssa tutkimukseen osallistumisesta ja kohteen nimen mainitsemisesta tutkimusraportissa. Tutkimuksen teko ei saa häiritä tutkimuskohteen toimintaa.

9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIITTEET</th>
<th>Merkitse alle rastilla</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Tutkimussuunnitelma</td>
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<td>Tutkimusrekisterile erot</td>
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<td>Muu, mikä?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

The research permission related to the schools of Vantaa, Finland (2 pages). (The names of the schools are blacked to protect the respondents’ identity.)
Oikaisuvaatimus on tehtävä 14 päivän kuluessa päättöksen tiedoksisaannista. Kunnan jäsenen katsotaan saaneen päätöksestä tiedon, kun pöytäkirja on asetettu julkiseksi nähtäväksi. Asianosaisen katsotaan saaneen päätöksestä tiedon, jollei muuta näytetä, 7 päivän kuluttua kirjeen lähettämisestä, saantitodistuksen osoittamana aikana tai erilliseen tiedoksiantotodistukseen merkittyä aikana.

Oikaisuvaatimuksesta on käytävän ilmi vaatimus perusteineen ja se on oikaisuvaatimuksen tekijän allekirjoitettava.

Sähköistä asiakirjaa ei tarvitse täydentää allekirjoituksella, jos asiakirjassa on tiedot lähettäjästä eikä asiakirjan alkuperäisyttä tai eheyttä ole syytä epäillä.

Sähköinen viesti katsotaan saapuneeksikäviranomaiselle silloin, kun se on viranomaisen käytettävissä vastaanottolaitteessa tai tietojärjestelmässä siten, että viestiä voidaan käsitellä.

Oikaisuvaatimus on toimitettava oikaisuvaatimusviranomaiselle ennen oikaisuvaatimusajanhäiriöiden päättymistä.

Oikaisuvaatimus toimitetaan aina omalla vastuulla.  
Tämä päätöspöytäkirja on yleisesti nähtävänä  
Alkaa: 1.11.12013

Paikka: Vantaan kaupunki, Kirjaamo, Asematie 7, 01300 Vantaan (Tikkurila)

Tiedoksianto asianosaiselle:

1. Lähetetty tiedoksi kirjeellä (kuntalaki 95 §)
   Asianosainen: Vuohelainen Anna-Maria
   Annettu postin kuljetettavaksi 28.10.13
   Annettu tiedoksi sähköisenä viestinä
   Tiedoksiantaja:

2. Luovutettu asianosaiselle
   Paikka ja alka: Vantaan
   Asianosainen:
   Vastaanottajan allekirjoitus ____________________________
   Tiedoksiantajan allekirjoitus ____________________________

Päätöspöytäkirjan oikeaksi todistaminen
Allekirjoitetun ja edeltäkään ilmoitettuna aikana nähtävänä olleen päätöspöytäkirjan oikeaksi todistaa: Päiväys Vantaan 15.10.2013

Allekirjoitus

Nimen selvennys Tuula Kivioja
Tehtävänimike hallintosihteeri
Appendix E

The Finnish information letter to the principals followed by the English translation:

Osallistumiskutsu tutkimusprojektiin
“Luokanopettajien kokemukset ja näkemykset heidän erityisistä tukea tarvitsevien oppilaittensa henkilökohtaista opetuksen järjestämistä koskevista suunnitelmista (HOJKSeista) Suomessa ja Norjassa”

Taufatiedot ja tavoite
Nimeni on Anna-Maria Vuohelainen ja olen maisterioopiskelija Oslon yliopiston erityispedagogiikan laitoksesta. Teen gradututkimustani suomalaisten ja norjalaisten alakoulujen luokanopettajien kokemuksista ja näkemyksistä henkilökohtaista opetuksen järjestämistä koskevista suunnitelmista (HOJKSeista), jotka on räätälöity heidän erityisistä tukea tarvitseville oppilailleen. Opinnäytetystä minulla on tänään vanhempi luennoija Lage Jonsborg.

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen

Mikäli annat alustavan suostumuksesi koulussanne työskentelevien luokanopettajien osallistumiselle tähän tutkimusprojektiin, ole ystävällinen ja vastaa minulle mahdollisimman pikaisesti tähän sähköpostiviestistä. Tutkimusluvan saatuani otan teihin uudelleen yhteyttä toivoen, että lähetätte edelleen koulunne luokanopettajille informaatiokirjeen, jossa on myös linkki internetistä löytyvään kyselyyn.

Mitä sähköisellä kyselylomakkeella kerättylle tiedolle tapahtuu?
Motivoidakseni kouluja ottamaan osaa tutkimusprojektiin, tarjoudu koulun oppilaitteiston luennoitsijalle, että vähintään viisi (5) kouluopettajan osallistuminen tukee yksityiskohtaisia ja yhteisövahvuutta heijastavia tapauksia. Olen nähnyt, että koulussanne on olemassa sähköistetut kyselylomakkeet, joita saatavissa on heijastavia tapauksia. Tämän olen ymmärtänyt, että koulun oppilaitteisto on ollut erityisen avoin ja ystävällinen.

Opettajien nimitietoja ei kerätä ja heidän henkilöllisyystukseen suojataan tutkimuksen kaikissa vaiheissa. Koulun nimi kysytään sähköisessä kyselylomakkeessa ainoastaan koulukorttien rehtorin käyttöelämän vuoksi ja yhteisön vapaaehtoisesti. Koulun luokanopettajien nimiä on mahdollista tunnistaa, jos koulussanne on ollut erityisen avoin ja ystävällinen.

Tämä tutkimusprojekti päättyy 30.6.2014, jolloin kaikki alkuperäinen tutkimuksen puitteissa kerätty tieto tuhotaan.
Request to participate in a research project

“Elementary class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for their students with special needs in Finland and in Norway”

Background and target
My name is Anna-Maria Vuohelainen and I am a Master Student in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo. I am doing a Master thesis research on experiences and views that the elementary class teachers have on the use of Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) tailored for their students with individual special needs in Finland and in Norway. The supervisor of this student study project is Senior Lecturer Lage Jonsborg.

Participation in the research
I am currently looking for voluntary elementary teachers from Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa to take part in my study by answering an e-questionnaire in the Internet. Answering the e-questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

If you are willing to give your preliminary permission for the participation for the class teachers working in your school, please reply to this e-mail as soon as possible. After your permission I can add your school’s name to the Research permission application that will be sent to the Education Department of Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa. When I receive the research permission, I will contact you again hoping that you could send forward an information letter, containing the link to the online questionnaire, to the class teachers working in your school.
What will happen to the information collected by the e-questionnaire?
To motivate you to participate in this study project, I am offering to send you back a short summary of the results concerning your school during this school year, if five (5) or several class teachers from your school answer to the e-questionnaire within one month, and voluntarily indicate the name of your school when answering the questionnaire. In the possible summary you might get useful information about the experiences and views that the class teachers of your school have about the planning, implementation, use and evaluation of the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).

The identity of the participating class teachers will be protected in all phases of the study. The name of the school is asked in the e-questionnaire only for sending the school-specific summary to the principal of the school as explained before and the names of the schools will not be otherwise used in any reports. Therefore full protection of the identity concerning the teachers and the pupils of your school is secured in all phases and none of the participants will be recognized from the publications.

This study project will end 30.6.2014 and all the original data collected during this project will then be destroyed.

Voluntary participation
Participation in this research project is voluntary. The participating teachers give their consent for the participation by submitting the e-questionnaire and they have the right to withdraw from the research in any phase.

This study project is, according to the Norwegian practices, reported to the Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and the project number is 34898. After your permission, the research permission will be applied also from the Education Department of Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa.

If you have any questions related to this research, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to provide further information. You can also contact the supervisor of this master thesis.

Thank you very much for your help.

With kind regards,

Anna-Maria Vuohelainen
Master student in Special Needs Education
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo
Email: annamarv@student.uv.uio.no
Mobile: +47-45196324

Lage Jonsborg
Supervisor of this Master Thesis study project
Senior lecturer
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo
Email: lage.jonsborg@isp.uio.no
Telephone: +47-22858147
Appendix F

The Finnish information letter to the class teachers followed by the English translation:

Osallistumiskutsu tutkimusprojektiin
“Luokanopettajien kokemukset ja näkemykset heidän erityistä tukea tarvitsevien oppilaittensa henkilökohtaista opetuksen järjestämistä koskevista suunnitelmista (HOJKS:ista) Suomessa ja Norjassa”

Taustatiedot ja tavoite
Nimeni on Anna-Maria Vuohelainen ja olen maisteriopiskelija Oslon yliopiston erityispedagogiikan laitoksella. Teen gradututkimusta suomalaisten ja norjalaisten alakoulujen luokanopettajien kokemuksista ja näkemyksistä henkilökohtaisen opetuksen järjestämistä koskevista suunnitelmista (HOJKS), jotka on rääتلöity heidän erityistä tukea tarvitsevillä oppilailleen. Opinnäytetyööni ohja vanhempi luennoija Lage Jonsborg.

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen

Sähköinen tutkimuslomake löytyy seuraavasta internet-osoitteesta:
https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/hojks.html

Mitä sähköisellä kyselylomakkeella kerättyä tiedolle tapahtuu?
Kaikki tämän tutkimuksen puitteissa kerätty tieto on luottamuksellista.

Motivoidakseni kouluja ottamaan osaa tutkimusprojektiini tarjoudun tämän lukuvuoden aikana lähettämään koulullinen rehtorinne väliaikaisella luvussaan oppilaitosten luokanopettajien kokemuksista ja näkemyksistä henkilökohtaisen opetuksen järjestämistä koskevasta suunnitelmasta (HOJKSien) laatimisesta, käytäntöönpanosta, käytöstä ja arvioinnista.

Osallistujien luokanopettajien nimittäjöitä ei kerätä ja heidän henkilöllisyytensä suojataan tutkimuksen kaikissa vaiheissa. Koulun nimi kysytään sähköisessä kyselylomakkeessa ainostaan koulukohtaisen rehtorin säilyttämässä luokanopettajien kokemuksista ja näkemyksistä henkilökohtaisen opetuksen järjestämistä koskevista suunnitelmista (HOJKSien) laatimisesta, käytäntöönpanosta, käytöstä ja arvioinnista.

Tämä tutkimusprojekti päättyy 30.6.2014, jolloin kaikki alkuperäinen tutkimukseen kerätty tieto tuhotaan.

Osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista
Tähän tutkimusprojektiin osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Annat oman suostumuksesi tutkimukseen osallistumiseen vastaamalla sähköiseen kyselylomakkeeseen ja Sinulla on koska hyvänsä oikeus vetäytyä tutkimuksesta.

Tämä Oslon yliopistossa toteutettava opinnäyteprojekti on maan tavan mukaisesti raportoitunut norjalaiselle tutkimustietojen suojaamisesta vastaavalle taholle (The Data Protection Official for
Request to participate in a research project

“Elementary class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for their students with special needs in Finland and in Norway”

Background and target
My name is Anna-Maria Vuohelainen and I am a Master Student in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo. I am doing a Master thesis research on experiences and views that the elementary class teachers have on the use of Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) tailored for their students with individual special needs in Finland and in Norway. The supervisor of this student study project is Senior Lecturer Lage Jonsborg.

Participation in the research
I am currently looking for elementary teachers from Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa to take part in my study by submitting an e-questionnaire in the Internet. In order to participate, it is not necessary to have a pupil with an IEP in your current classroom. The principal of your school has given you the permission to take part in this study project. Answering the e-questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

You can find the e-questionnaire from the following link: https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/hojks.html

What will happen to the information collected about you?
All the data collected in this study will be confidential.

To motivate the schools to participate in my study project, I have offered to send your principal a short summary of the results conducted from your school during this school year if five (5) or several teachers from your school answer to the e-questionnaire before within one month, and voluntarily indicate the name of the school while answering. However, in the summary your school might get useful information about the experiences and views that the class teachers of your school have about the planning, implementation, use and evaluation of the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).

The names of the participating class teachers will not be collected and their identity will be protected in all phases of the study. The name of the school is asked in the e-questionnaire only for sending the school-specific summary to the principal of the school as explained before and the names of the schools will not be otherwise used in any reports. Therefore full protection of the identity concerning
the teachers and the pupils of your school is secured in all phases and none of the participants will be recognized from the publications.

This project will end 30.6.2014 and all the original data will then be destroyed.

**Voluntary participation**

Participation in this research project is voluntary. You give your consent for the participation by answering the e-questionnaire and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

This study project is, according to the Norwegian practices, reported to the Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and the project number is 34898. In addition, the Education Department of Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa has given the research permission for the data collection in the local municipal elementary schools.

If you have any questions related to this research, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to provide further information. You can also contact the supervisor of this master thesis.

Thank you very much for your help.

With kind regards,

Anna-Maria Vuohelainen  
Master student in Special Needs Education  
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo  
Email: annamarv@student.uv.uio.no  
Mobile: +47-45196324

Lage Jonsborg  
Supervisor of this Master Thesis study project  
Senior lecturer  
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo  
Email: lage.jonsborg@isp.uio.no  
Telephone: +47-22858147
Appendix G

The Norwegian information letter to the principals followed by the English translation:

Forespørsel om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt i forbindelse med en masteroppgave
"Barneskolelærerens erfaringer og meninger om individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP) lagt til sine elever med særskilte behov i Finland og i Norge"

Bakgrunn og mål
Jeg heter Anna-Maria Vuohelainen og jeg er en masterstudent i spesialpedagogikk ved Universitetet i Oslo. Jeg holder nå på med den avsluttende masteroppgaven. Temaet for oppgaven er bruk av individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP), og jeg skal undersøke hvilke erfaringer og meninger barneskoleklasselærere fra to nordiske skolesystemer – i Finland og i Norge - har om individuelle opplæringsplaner av sine elever med særskilte behov. Veilederen i dette forskningsprosjektet er førstelektor Lage Jonsborg ved Institutt for spesialpedagogikk.

Deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet
Jeg leter etter frivillige klasselærere fra barneskoler i Oslo og Akershus for å delta i forskningen min. Deltagelse i prosjektet innebærer at man fyller ut et spørreskjema på internett. Det vil ta ca. 15 minutter å besvare spørreskjemaet.

Jeg ber nå ditt lov og hjelp for å ta kontakt til de klasselærere som jobber i barneskolen deres. Hvis du er villig å oppmuntre klasselærere fra deres skole til å delta i prosjektet, vennligst bruk den vedlagte 'Lærerens informasjonsskriv' (som inneholder også linken til det elektroniske spørreskjemaet) og send det videre til alle klasselærere som jobber i barneskolen deres. Med dette gjort blir disse lærere automatisk informert om at de har fått samtykke ditt for deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet. Jeg ber deg også å sende meg en tilbakemelding på epost dersom du sender/ikke sender informasjonsskrivet videre til klasselærere i deres skole – det hjelper meg å kontrollere m.a. tidsperioden spørreskjemaet må være åpent.

Du kan bli kjent med spørreskjemaet her (https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/iop.html) og du finner 'Lærerens informasjonsskriv' som filvedlegg.

Hva skal skje til opplysningene som blir samlet med spørreskjemaet?
For å motivere dere til å ta del i prosjektet, jeg vil tilby å sende dere tilbake et kort sammendrag om resultatene fått fra skolen deres i løpet av dette skoleåret, om fem (5) eller flere klasselærere fra deres skole fyller ut spørreskjemaet i løpet av en måned og bestemmer seg frivillig å skrive navnet på skolen mens de besvarer spørreskjemaet. I dette muligens sammendrag kan dere få interessant informasjon om erfaringer og meninger som lærere fra deres skole har om planlegging, gjennomføring, bruk og evaluering av individuelle opplæringsplaner.

Identiteten til de delaktige lærere skal beskyttes i løpet av hele prosjektperioden og ingen personopplysninger til lærere blir samlet. Navnet til skolen blir spurt på spørreskjemaet bare for å lage et skolespesifikk sammendrag til rektoren til skolen som forklart ovenfor og navnene til skolene blir ikke ellers brukt i noen rapporter. Derfor full beskyttelse av identiteten om lærerne og elevene på skolen din er sikret i alle faser, og ingen av deltakerne vil bli gjenkjent fra publikasjonene.


Frivillig deltagelse
Det er helt frivillig å delta i prosjektet. De delaktige lærere gir sin samtykke for deltagelse når de besvarer spørreskjemaet og de har mulighet til å trekke seg når som helst underveis.
Request to participate in a research project

“Elementary class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for their students with special needs in Finland and in Norway”

Background and target
My name is Anna-Maria Vuohelainen and I am a Master Student in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo. I am currently doing the final Master thesis research. The theme of the thesis is the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), and I will investigate what experiences and views the elementary class teachers from two Nordic school systems – in Finland and in Norway – have on Individual Educational plans of their students with special needs. The supervisor of this student study project is Senior Lecturer Lage Jonsborg.

Participation in the research project
I am looking for elementary teachers from Oslo and Akershus to take part in my research. The participation includes submitting a questionnaire in the Internet. Answering the e-questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

I am now asking for your permission to contact the class teachers working in your elementary school. If you are willing to encourage the class teachers of your school to take part in the project, please use the included ‘Teachers’ information letter’ and send it forward to all the class teachers working in your elementary school. By doing this, these teachers will be automatically informed that they have your permission to participate in the research project. In addition, I ask you kindly to send me a reply by email whether you send or do not send the information letter forward for the class teachers of your elementary school – this helps me to control among others the time period the questionnaire must be open.

You can get to know the e-questionnaire here (https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/iop.html) and you will find the ‘Teachers’ information letter’ as a file attachment.
What will happen to the information collected about you?

To motivate the schools to participate in my study project, I offer to send you a short summary of the results conducted from your school during this school year, if five (5) or several class teachers from your school submit the e-questionnaire within one month, and voluntarily decide to indicate the name of the school while answering. In the possible summary you can get interesting information about the experiences and views that the teachers of your school have about the planning, implementation, use and evaluation of the Individual Educational Plans.

The identity of the participating class teachers will be protected during the whole project period and no personal information will be collected from the teachers. The name of the school is asked in the questionnaire only for sending the school-specific summary to the principal of the school, as explained before, and the names of the schools will not be otherwise used in any reports. Therefore, full protection of the identity of the teachers and the pupils of your school is secured in all phases and none of the participants will be recognized from the publications.

This project will end 30.6.2014 and all the original data will then be made anonym.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this research project is totally voluntary. The participating teachers give their consent for the participation while answering the e-questionnaire and they have the possibility to withdraw from the research at any time.

This study project is reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and it was given the project number 34898.

If you have questions related to this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor Lage Jonsborg, using the contact information included under.

Thank you very much for your help.

With kind regards,

Anna-Maria Vuohelainen
Master student in Special Needs Education
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo
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Mobile: +47-45196324

Lage Jonsborg
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Senior lecturer
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo
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The Norwegian information letter to the class teachers followed by the English translation:

**Forespørsel om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt i forbindelse med en masteroppgave**

"Barneskolelærerens erfaringer og meninger om individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP) lagt til sine elever med særskilte behov i Finland og i Norge"

**Bakgrunn og mål**

Jeg heter Anna-Maria Vuohelainen og jeg er en masterstudent i spesialpedagogikk ved Universitetet i Oslo. Jeg holder nå på med den avsluttende masteroppgaven. Temaet for oppgaven er bruk av individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er), og jeg skal undersøke hvilke erfaringer og meninger barneskoleklasselærere fra to nordiske skolesystemer – i Finland og i Norge - har om individuelle opplæringsplaner av sine elever med særskilte behov. Veilederen i dette forskningsprosjektet er førstelektor Lage Jonsborg ved Institutt for spesialpedagogikk.

**Deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet**

Jeg leter etter klasselærere fra barneskoler i Oslo og Akershus for å delta i forskningen min. Du trenger ikke å ha elever med IOP i den nåværende klassen din for å delta i prosjektet.

Rektoren til skolen din har gitt samtykket sitt for deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet når han har bestemt å sende dette brevet videre til deg.

Deltagelse i prosjektet innebærer at man fyller ut et spørreskjema på internett. Det vil ta ca. 15 minutter å besvare spørreskjemaet.

Du kan finne spørreskjemaet fra denne linken: [https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/iop.html](https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/iop.html)

**Hva skal skje til opplysningene som du gir på spørreskjemaet?**

Alle de innsamlede opplysningene i dette forskningsprosjektet vil være konfidensielle. For å motivere skoler til å ta del i prosjektet, jeg vil tilby å sende tilbake et kort sammendrag til skolen via rektoren om resultatene fått fra skolen deres i løpet av dette skoleåret, om fem (5) eller flere klasselærere fra deres skole fyller ut spørreskjemaet i løpet av en måned og bestemmer seg frivillig å skrive navnet på skolen mens dere besvarer spørreskjemaet. Det er et frivillig valg om du vil oppgi navnet på skolen eller ikke. I dette muligens sammendrag kan dere få interessant informasjon om erfaringer og meninger som lærere fra deres skole har om planlegging, gjennomføring, bruk og evaluering av individuelle opplæringsplaner.

Din identitet skal beskyttes i løpet av hele prosjekterioden og ingen personopplysninger blir samlet fra de delaktige lærerne. Navnet til skolen blir spurt på spørreskjemaet bare for å lage et skolespesifikk sammendrag til rektoren til skolen som forklart ovenfor og navnene til skolene blir ikke ellers brukt i noen rapporter. Derfor full beskyttelse av identiteten om lærerne og elevene på skolen din er sikret i alle faser, og ingen av deltakerne vil bli gjenkjent fra publikasjonene.


**Frivillig deltagelse**

Det er helt frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Du gir din samtykke for deltagelse når du besvarer spørreskjemaet og du har mulighet til å trekke deg når som helst underveis.

Studien er meldt til Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS (NSD) og den har fått prosjektnummeret: 34989.
Har du spørsmål i forbindelse med denne henvendelsen, kan du gjerne ta kontakt med meg eller veilederen min Lage Jonsborg på kontaktsøpplyseringer under.

Tusen takk for hjelpen.

Med vennlig hilsen,
Anna-Maria Vuohelainen
Master Student i spesialpedagogikk
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet, Institutt for spesialpedagogikk, Universitetet i Oslo E-post: annamary@student.uv.uio.no
Mobiltelefon: +47-45196324

Lage Jonsborg
Veilederen i dette forskningsprosjektet
Førstelektor
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet, Institutt for spesialpedagogikk, Universitetet i Oslo E-post: lage.jonsborg@isp.uio.no
Telefon: +47-22858147

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Request to participate in a research project
“Elementary class teachers’ experiences and views on the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for their students with special needs in Finland and in Norway”

Background and target
My name is Anna-Maria Vuohelainen and I am a Master Student in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo. I am currently doing the final Master thesis research. The theme of the thesis is the use of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), and I will investigate what experiences and views the elementary class teachers from two Nordic school systems – in Finland and in Norway – have on Individual Educational plans of their students with special needs. The supervisor of this student study project is Senior Lecturer Lage Jonsborg.

Participation in the research project
I am looking for elementary teachers from Oslo and Akershus to take part in my research. You don’t have to have pupils with IEP in your current class in order to participate in the project.

The principal of your school has given the permission for the participation in this research project, when he/she has decided to send this letter forward to you.

The participation includes submitting a questionnaire in the Internet. Answering the e-questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

You will find the questionnaire from this link: https://nettskjema.uio.no/answer/iop.html

What will happen to the information collected about you?
All the collected data for this research project will be confidential.

To motivate the schools to participate in my study project, I offer to send you, via your principal, a short summary of the results conducted from your school during this school year, if five (5) or several class teachers from your school submit the questionnaire within one month, and voluntarily decide to indicate the name of the school while answering. It is a voluntary choice whether you write the name of the school or not while submitting the questionnaire. In the possible summary you can get
interesting information about the experiences and views that the teachers of your school have about
the planning, implementation, use and evaluation of the Individual Educational Plans.

Your identity will be protected during the whole project period and no personal information will be
collected from the teachers. The name of the school is asked in the questionnaire only for sending the
school-specific summary to the principal of the school, as explained before, and the names of the
schools will not be otherwise used in any reports. Therefore, full protection of the identity of the
teachers and the pupils of your school is secured in all phases and none of the participants will be
recognized from the publications.

This project will end 30.6.2014 and all the original data will then be made anonym.

Voluntary participation
Participation in this research project is totally voluntary. You will give your consent for the
participation while answering the questionnaire and you have the possibility to withdraw from the
research at any time.

This study project is reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and it was given
the project number 34898.

If you have questions related to this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor Lage
Jonsborg, using the contact information included under.

Thank you very much for your help.

With kind regards,

Anna-Maria Vuohelainen
Master student in Special Needs Education
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo
Email: annamary@student.uv.uio.no
Mobile: +47-45196324

Lage Jonsborg
Supervisor of this Master Thesis study project
Senior lecturer
Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo
Email: lage.jonsborg@isp.uio.no
Telephone: +47-22858147
Appendix I

The contents of the Finnish online questionnaire (4 pages) (English translation in Appendix 11. p. 122):

Luokanopettajien kokemukset ja näkemykset heidän erityistä tukea tarvitsevien oppilaittensa HOJKSeista Suomessa ja Norjassa

Lupa tutkimukseen osallistumisesta *
Olen lukenut tätä tutkimusta koskevan informaatiosähköpostin (‘HOJKStutkimus_Opettajien alustuskirje’) ja olen halukas osallistumaan tähän tutkimusprojektiin.

• Kyllä
• Ei

A. Kysymyksiä henkilökohtaisista taustatiedoista, koulutuksesta ja ammatillisesta kokemuksesta

Sukupuoli *
• Nainen
• Mies

Ikä *

Työskenteletkö parhaillaan kokopäivätoimisesti luokanopettajana pääkaupunkiseudulla sijaitsevassa alakoulussa? *
• Kyllä
• En

Mikäli työskentelet osa-aikaisesti, ole hyvä ja merkitse tähän kuinka monta prosenttia nykyinen työtehtäväsi kattaa *

Kuinka monta täyttä lukuvuotta olet työskennellyt alakoulun luokanopettajana? *
Mikäli olet toiminut osa-aikaisena luokanopettajana, ole hyvä ja merkitse, kuinka monta lukuvuotta olisit työskennellyt täysiaikaisesti.

Täyttääkö koulutuksesi kansallisien alakoulun luokanopettajille asetetun kelpoisuusvaatimuksen? *
• Kyllä
• Ei

Valitse korkein valmiiksi suorittamasi tutkintotaso: *
• Ylioppilastutkinto
• Alempi korkeakoulututkinto kasvatustieteissä
• Ylempi korkeakoulututkinto kasvatustieteissä
• Jokin muu

Jos korkein valmiiksi suorittamasi tutkintotaso on 'Jokin muu', ole hyvä ja selvitä, mikä? *
B. Kysymyksiä alakoulusta, jossa parhaillaan työskentelet
Koulun nimi: 
Tähän kysymykseen vastaaminen on vapaaehtoista ja voit halutessasi jatkaa kyselyyn vastaamatta tähän kohtaan vastaamatta. Mikäli mainitset koulun nimen, kyselyssä antamiasi tietoja voidaan käyttää oppilaitoskohtaiseen tutkimusyhteenvetoon, joka toimitetaan koulullenne rehtorinne välityksellä, mikäli vähintään viisi (5) koulunne luokanopettajaa mainitsee kyselyyn vastaamatta koulunne nimen.

Edustako alakoulu, jossa parhaillaan työskentelet, tyyppillistä suomalainista alakoulua? * 
• Kyllä 
• Ei 

Ole hyvä ja selvitä, miksi alakoulunne ei ole tyyppillinen suomalainen alakoulu? *

C. Kysymyksiä luokastasi
Mitä vuosiluokkaa parhaillaan opetat? * 
Vuosiluokka:

Kuinka monta oppilasta luokallasi/oppilasryhmällä ainakin yhden täyden lukuvuoden? * 
Oppilaiden lukumäärä:

Merkitse, kuinka monta täyttä lukuvuotta olet työskennellyt luokanopettajana kyseiselle luokalle/oppilasryhmälle? * 
Täysien lukuvuosien määrä:

Merkitse, kuinka monta täyttä kuukautta olet toiminut luokanopettajana kyseiselle luokalle/oppilasryhmälle? * 
Täysien opetuskuukausien lukumäärä:

D. Kysymyksiä ammatillisista kokemuksistasi HOJKSeihin liittyen
Ole hyvä ja vastaa tämän sivun kysymyksiin koskien ajanjaksoa, jona olet työskennellyt alakoulun luokanopettajana.

Oletko ollut osallisena HOJKSien suunnitteluprosesseissa? 
• Kyllä 
• En 

Oletko ollut velvoitettu seuraamaan HOJKSia opetuksessasi? 
• Kyllä 
• En 

Oletko ollut mukana arvioimassa HOJKSia? 
• Kyllä 
• En
Oletko saanut erityistä koulutusta liittyen HOJKSien laatimiseen, käyttöön tai arviointiin?

- Kyllä
- En

Mitä HOJKSeihin liittyvä koulutusta olet saanut? *

E. Kysymyksiä nykyisen luokkasi/opetusryhmäsi oppilaiden HOJKSeista

Onko sinulla tällä hetkellä yksi tai useampi oppilas, jolla on henkilökohdainen opetuksen järjestämistä koskeva suunnitelma (HOJKS)? *

- Kyllä
- Ei

Mikäli sinulla on oppilas, jolla on HOJKS, oletko lukenut sen? *

- Kyllä
- En

Mikäli olet lukenut kyseessä olevan HOJKS:n, onko sillä vaikutusta opetukseesi? *

- Kyllä
- Ei

Mikäli olet lukenut kyseessä olevan HOJKS:n, kuvale, mitä vaikutusta suunnitelmalla on opetukseesi? *

F. Kysymyksiä nykyisen luokkasi/opetusryhmäsi oppilaiden HOJKSien suunnitteluprosesseista

Olitko osallisena jossakin tai kaikissa niiden HOJKSien suunnitteluprosesseissa, joita sinun parhaillaan oletetaan seuraavan? *

- Kyllä
- En

Mikäli olit osallisena parhaillaan noudattamiesi HOJKSien suunnitteluprosesseissa, toimitko osana suunnitteluryhmä? *

Mikäli olet osallistunut useampaan suunnitteluprosessiin, ole hyvä ja vastaa viimeisimmän pohjalta

- Kyllä
- En

Ole hyvä ja valitse muut tahot, jotka olivat mukana suunnitteluryhmässä. *

- Kouluun rehtori
- Edellinen luokanopettaja/Edelliset luokanopettajat
- Muut edelliset opettajat (esim. aineenopettajat)
- Muu nykyinen opettaja/Muu nykyiset opettajat (esim. aineenopettajat)
- Kouluun erityisopettaja
- Oppilaan vanhemmat tai huoltajat
- Kouluavustaja/Kouluvastajat
- Kouluun terveydenhoitaja
- Kouluun terveydenhoitaja
- Kouluun terveydenhoitaja
- Koululääkäri
- Kouluvaattorit
- Koulupsykologi
- Kouluvastajat
- Koulun terveydenhoitaja
- Koululääkäri
- Koulupsykologi
- Kouluvastajat
- Lastensuojelun edustaja
- Muut ammattilaiset koulun sisäpuolelta
- Muut ammattilaiset koulun ulkopuolelta
Mikäli mukana oli muita ammattilaisia koulun sisä- tai ulkopuolelta, ole hyvä ja selvitä, kuka tai ketä?

Käyttäessäsi asteikkoa nollasta (0=ei lainkaan tärkeä) kuuteen (6=erittäin tärkeä), kuinka tärkeänä pidät omaa rooliiasi kyseisen HOJKSin suunnitteluprosessissa? *

(ei lainkaan tärkeä) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin tärkeä) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Käyttäessäsi asteikkoa nollasta (0=ei lainkaan tyytyväinen) kuuteen (6=erittäin tyytyväinen), kuinka tyytyväinen olet omaan rooliisi kyseisen HOJKSin suunnitteluprosessissa? *

(en lainkaan tyytyväinen) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin tyytyväinen) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Käyttäessäsi asteikkoa nollasta (0=ei lainkaan tyytyväinen) kuuteen (6=erittäin tyytyväinen), kuinka tyytyväinen olet HOJKSiin, joka on syntynyt suunnitteluprosessin tuloksesta? *

Ole hyvä ja vastaa kysymykseen, vaikka et olisi ollut osallisena suunnitteluprosessissa.

(en lainkaan tyytyväinen) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin tyytyväinen) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Onko mielessäsi jotakin sellaista, mitä pitäisit mielestäsi lisätä tällä hetkellä seuraamaasi HOJKSiin? *

• Kyllä
• Ei

Mitä tällä hetkellä seuraamaasi HOJKSiin tulisi mielestäsi lisätä? *

G. Kysymyksiä kokemuksistasi ja näkemyksistä nykyisen luokkasi/opetusryhmäsi oppilaitten HOJKSeista

Alla on kysymyksiä, jotka mitatavat sitä, minkälaisena koet sen HOJKSin tai niiden HOJKSien käytön, joita sinun on määrä opetuksessasi seurata. Ole hyvä ja vastaa alla oleviin kysymyksiin käyttäen asteikkoa nollasta (0=ei vaikutusta) kuuteen (6=suuri vaikutus) arvolla, joka kuvaa parhaiten kokemuksiasi.

Kuinka vaikeaa kyseisten HOJKSien seuraaminen mielestäsi on? *

(ei lainkaan vaikeaa) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin vaikeaa) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Kuinka hyödyllistä kyseisten HOJKSien seuraaminen mielestäsi on? *

(ei lainkaan hyödyllistä) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin hyödyllistä) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Kuinka aikaavievää kyseisten HOJKSien seuraaminen mielestäsi on? *

(ei lainkaan aikaavievää) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin aikaavievää) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Kuinka sopiva kyseinen HOJKS/sopivia kyseiset HOJKSit mielestäsi on/ovat? *

(ei lainkaan sopiva) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (erittäin sopiva) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

H. Kysymyksiä nykyisen luokkasi/opetusryhmäsi oppilaiden HOJKSien arviointiprosesseista

Arvioidaan kouluissasi käyttöönotettuja HOJKSeja säännöllisesti? *

• Kyllä
• Ei

• En osaa sanoa
Kuinka usein HOJKSeja arvioidaan koulussasi?
• Harvemmin kuin kerran lukuvuodessa
• Kerran lukuvuodessa
• Kahdesti lukuvuodessa
• Useammin kuin kahdesti lukuvuodessa

I. Yleiset näkemyksesi HOJKSien käytöstä
Kannatatko HOJKSien käyttöä erityispedagogisen tuen välineenä? *
• Kyllä
• En
• En osaa sanoa

Oppilaalle, jolla on erityistarpeita, laaditaan HOJKS. Mitä positiivisia puolia siitä seuraa? (Mainitse 2-5 aspektia.) *

Oppilaalle, jolla on erityistarpeita, laaditaan HOJKS. Mitä negatiivisia puolia siitä seuraa? (Mainitse 2-5 aspektia.) *
Appendix J

The contents of the Norwegian online questionnaire (4 pages) (English translation in Appendix 11. p. 122):

Barneskolelærerens erfaringer og meninger om individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOPer) i Finland og i Norge

Samtykke for deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet *
Jeg har lest eposten med informasjon om forskningsprosjektet ('Lærerens informasjonsskriv'), og jeg er villig å delta i prosjektet.
• Ja
• Nei

A. Spørsmål om personlig bakgrunn, utdannelse og lærer erfaring

Kjønn *
• Kvinne
• Mann

Alder *

Jobber du for tiden som en heltid klasselærer på barneskole i Oslo/Akershus? *
• Ja
• Nei

Hvis du jobber deltid, vennligst skriv hvor mange prosent du jobber for tiden? *

Hvor mange skoleår har du jobbet som en lærer på norske barneskoler? *

Hvis du har jobbet deltid, vennligst skriv hvor lang denne erfaringen skulle være som fulltid.

Oppfyller utdanningen din de nasjonale kvalifikasjonskrav for å jobbe som en klasselærer på en norsk barneskole? *
• Ja
• Nei

Vennligst velg det høyeste nivået for fullførte studier: *
• Videregående skole
• Relevant Bachelor v/høyskole
• Relevant Bachelor v/universitet
• Relevant Master v/høyskole
• Relevant Master v/universitet
• Bachelor i annet felt + PPU
• Annet

Om det høyeste nivået for fullførte studier er 'Annet’, vennligst beskriv, hva det er? *
B. Spørsmål om barneskolen hvor du jobber
Navnet på skolen:
Det er frivillig å oppgi navnet på skolen eller ikke. Hvis du navngir skolen her, blir opplysningene som du gir mens du besvarer spørreskjemaet brukt til å lage et sammendrag om resultatene fått fra skolen deres. Sannomdraget blir sent til skolen via rektoren om fem (5) eller flere klasselærere fra deres skole fyller ut spørreskjemaet og velger å skrive navnet på skolen her mens de gjør dette.

Er skolen der du jobber på denne tiden en typisk barneskole som representerer den nasjonale ordinære barneskolen? *
- Ja
- Nei

Vennligst beskriv, hvorfor skolen der du jobber representerer ikke den nasjonale ordinære barneskolen? *

C. Spørsmål om klassen din
På hvilken trinn er klassen som du underviser for tiden? *
Trinn:

Hvor mange elever har du i klassen som du underviser nå? *
Antall elever:

Har du jobbet som kasselerærer for denne klassen i minst et skoleår? *
- Ja
- Nei

Vennligst noter, hvor mange skoleår har du jobbet som kasselerærer for denne klassen? *
Antall hele skoleår:

Hvis du har jobbet mindre enn et skoleår, vennligst noter antall av hele måneder som du har jobbet som kasselerer for denne klassen. *
Antall hele måneder:

Hvor mange av dine elevene mener du har spesielle behov som må tas hensyn til i den daglige undervisningen? *
Antall elever med spesielle behov:

D. Spørsmål om din profesjonell erfaring i individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP)
Vennligst besvar spørsmål på denne siden knyttet til tidsperioden som du har jobbet som kasselerer på barneskole.

Har du vært involvert i en planleggingsprosess av en individuell opplæringsplan (IOP)? *
- Ja
- Nei

Har du blitt forventet å følge en individuell opplæringsplan (IOP) i undervisningen din? *
- Ja
- Nei

Har du vært involvert i en evalueringsprosess om en individuell opplæringsplan (IOP)? *
- Ja
- Nei
Har du fått spesiell opplæring knyttet til planlegging, bruk eller evaluering av individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er)? *
  • Ja
  • Nei

Vennligst beskriv, hvilken slags opplæring knyttet til IOP-er du har fått? *

E. Spørsmål om dine erfaringer i individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er) i din nåværende klasse
Følger du for tiden en individuell opplæringsplan (IOP) for i minst en elev med spesielle behov i klassen din? *
  • Ja
  • Nei

Har du lest gjennom vedkommendes individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er)? *
  • Ja
  • Nei

Om du har lest den/de gjennom, har den vedkommende individuelle opplæringsplanen (IOP-en) innvirkning på undervisningen din? *
  • Ja
  • Nei

Om du har lest den/de gjennom, vennligst beskriv, hvordan innvirker IOP-en på undervisningen din? *

F. Spørsmål om dine erfaringer og meninger knyttet til planleggingsprosesser av IOP-er i din nåværende klasse
Var du involvert i planleggingsprosessen om denne/de IOP som du er forventet til å følge i din nåværende klasse? *
  • Ja
  • Nei

Om du var involvert i planleggingsprosessen om denne IOP/de IOP-er som du er forventet til å følge i din nåværende klasse, var du en del av en planleggingsgruppe? *
(Om du har deltatt i flere planleggingsprosesser, vennligst besvar her knyttet til den nyeste.)
  • Ja
  • Nei

Vennligst kryss av de andre medlemmene i planleggingsgruppen: *
  • Rektoren til skolen
  • Tidligere klasseslærer/e eller føreskolslærer/e
  • Annen/Andre tidligere lærer/e (f.ex. faglærer/e)
  • Annen/Andre nåværende lærer/e
  • Spesialpedagog fra skolen
  • Foreldre/forsørgere av den vedkommende eleven
  • Skoleassistent/er
  • Skolehelsesøster
  • Lege
  • Representant fra PPT
  • Representant fra barnevern
  • Andre representanter fra skolen
  • Andre representanter utenfor skolen
Om det var andre representanter i planleggingsgruppen fra eller utenfor skolen, vennligst beskriv, hvem de var?

Ved bruk av en skala fra null (0=ikke viktig i det hele tatt) til seks (6=svært viktig), hvor viktig vurderer du din egen rolle i planleggingsprosessen av denne IOP-en som du er forventet til å følge i din nåværende klasse? *
(ikke viktig i det hele tatt) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (svært viktig)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Ved bruk av en skala fra null (0=svært misfornøyd) til seks (6=svært fornøyd), hvor fornøyd er du med din egen rolle i planleggingsprosessen av den vedkommende IOP-en? *
(svært misfornøyd) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (svært fornøyd)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Ved bruk av en skala fra null (0=svært misfornøyd) til seks (6=svært fornøyd), hvor fornøyd er du med IOP-en som ble resultatet av den vedkommende planleggingsprosessen? *
Vennligst svar på spørsmålet også om du ikke tok selv del i planleggingsprosessen.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Opplever du at det mangler noe eller at noe burde være lagt til denne IOP-en? *
• Ja
• Nei

Vennligst beskriv, hva syns du at skulle være lagt til i denne/de IOP? *

G. Spørsmål om dine erfaringer og meninger knyttet til innføring og bruk av IOP-er i din nåværende klasse
På denne siden er det spørsmål, som måler det hvordan du opplever bruk av de individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er) som du er forventet til å følge i din nåværende klasse. Ved bruk av en skala fra null (0=ingen effekt) til seks (6=stor effekt) hvilken valg beskriver erfaringen din best?

Hvor vanskelig finner du bruk av de individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er) som du er forventet til å følge i din nåværende klasse? *
(ikke vanskelig) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (svært vanskelig)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Hvor nyttig finner du bruk av de vedkommende individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er)? *
(ikke nyttig) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (svært nyttig)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Hvor tidkrevende finner du bruk av de vedkommende individuelle opplæringsplaner (IOP-er)? *
(ikke tidkrevende) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (svært tidkrevende)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Hvor egnet er de IOPer du er forventet å bruke, i forhold til hensikten? *
(ikke egnet) 0-1-2-3-4-5-6 (svært egnet)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

H. Spørsmål om dine erfaringer og meninger knyttet til evalueringssprosesser av IOP-er i din nåværende klasse
Evaluere de innførte IOP-er regelmessig i skolen din? *
• Ja
• Nei
• Jeg vet ikke
Hvor ofte blir de innførte IOP-er evaluert i skolen din? *
  • Sjeldenere enn en gang i skoleåret
  • En gang i skoleåret
  • To ganger i skoleåret
  • Oftere enn to ganger i skoleåret

I. Generelle meninger om bruk av en individuell opplæringsplan (IOP)
Støtter du bruk av IOP-er som et verktøy i forbindelse med spesialpedagogisk støtte? *
  • Ja
  • Nei
  • Jeg vet ikke

En individuell opplæringsplan (IOP) blir utarbeidet til en elev med særskilte behov. Hvilke positive synspunkter har du om dette? (Nevn 2-5 synspunkter.) *

En individuell opplæringsplan (IOP) blir utarbeidet til en elev med særskilte behov. Hvilke negative synspunkter har du om dette? (Nevn 2-5 synspunkter.) *
Appendix K

The English translation of the questionnaire (the items with differing answer options related to Finnish/Norwegian originals are underlined):

**The class teachers’ experiences and views on the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) of their pupils with special needs in Finland and in Norway**

The informed consent for the participation in the research project *
I have read the information letter concerning this research (‘Name_of_the_attached_pdf-file’) and I am willing to participate in this research project.
- Yes
- No

**A. Questions about personal, educational and professional background**

Gender *
- Female
- Male

Age *

Are you currently working as a full-time class teacher in an elementary school in Oslo or Akershus/Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa/Kauniainen? *
- Yes
- No

If you are working part-time, please indicate how many percentages you are currently working *

How many full school years have you been working as a class teacher in elementary school? *

If you have been working part-time, please indicate how long this experience would have been as full-time.

Does your education fulfil the national qualification requirements for working as an elementary school class teacher? *
- Yes
- No

Choose the level of completed studies: *

**The answer options in the Finnish questionnaire:**
- Upper secondary school diploma (Matriculation Examination)
- Lower tertiary level diploma in Education
- Higher tertiary level diploma in Education
- Something else

**The answer options in the Norwegian questionnaire:**
- Upper secondary school
- Related Bachelor degree from a University College
- Related Bachelor degree from a University
- Related Master degree from a University College
- Related Master degree from a University
If the chosen level of completed studies is ‘something else’, please indicate what it is? *

B. Questions about the elementary school where you are currently working

Name of the school:
It is voluntary to answer this question and you can continue submitting the questionnaire without indicating the name of your school. If you write the name of the school, the information you submit to the questionnaire can be used while drawing up a school-specific summary of the answers, which will be sent to your school’s principal if at least five (5) class teachers of your school decide to mention the name of your school.

Is the school where you are currently working a typical elementary school representing the ordinary national elementary school? *

- Yes
- No

Please explain, why your school is not a typical national elementary school? *

C. Questions about your class

What year grade is the class you are currently teaching? *
Year:

How many pupils do you have in the class that you are currently teaching?*
Number of pupils:

Have you been working as a class teacher for this class/pupil group for at least one full school year? *
- Yes
- No

How many full school years have you been working as a class teacher for this class/pupil group? *
Number of full school years:

How many full months have you been working as a class teacher for this class/pupil group?
Number of full months:

How many of these pupils do you consider having special needs that must be taken in consideration in the everyday teaching? *
Number of pupils with special needs:

D. Questions about your professional experience related to IEPs

Please answer the questions on this page related to the time period that you have been working as an elementary class teacher.

Have you been involved in IEP planning processes?
- Yes
- No

Have you been expected to follow an IEP in your teaching?
- Yes
- No

Have you been involved in an IEP evaluation processes?
• Yes
• No

Have you received specific training related to planning, using or evaluating an IEP?
• Yes
• No

Please explain, what kind of training related to IEPs have you received? *

E. Questions about the IEPs of the pupils in the current class/pupil group

Do you currently have one or several pupils with an IEP?
• Yes
• No

If you have a pupil with an IEP, have you read it? *
• Yes
• No

If you have read the IEP, does it have an effect in your teaching? *
• Yes
• No

If you have read the IEP, please explain what effects does the IEP have on your teaching? *

F. Questions about the IEP planning processes of the currently followed IEPs

Were you involved in some or all of the planning processes of the IEPs that you are currently expected to follow? *
• Yes
• No

If you were involved in the planning process/es of the currently followed IEP/IEPs, were you part of a group? *

If you have been participating in several planning processes, please answer based on the most recent one.
• Yes
• No

Please indicate who were the other members of the planning group*

The answer options in the Finnish questionnaire:
- Principal of the school
- Previous class teacher/s
- Other previous teacher/s (such as subject teachers)
- Other current teacher/s (such as subject teachers)
- The school’s Special Needs Educator
- Parents/Guardians of the pupil
- School assistants
- School nurse
- School doctor

The answer options in the Norwegian questionnaire:
- Principal of the school
- Previous class teacher/s or kindergarten teachers
- Other previous teacher/s (such as subject teachers)
- Other current teacher/s (such as subject teachers)
- The school’s Special Needs Educator
- Parents/Guardians of the pupil
- School assistant
- School nurse
If other professional were involved in the planning group, please explain who they were?

Using a scale from 0 (not at all important) to 6 (very important), how important would you consider your own role in the planning process of the currently followed IEPs? *
(not at all important) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very important)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Using a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 6 (very satisfied), how satisfied were you with your own role in the planning process of the currently followed IEPs? *
(not at all satisfied) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very satisfied)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Using a scale from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 6 (very satisfied), how satisfied were you with the IEP that was the result of this planning process?
Please answer this question also if you did not participate to the planning process.
(not at all satisfied) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very satisfied)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Is there something that you think should be added to the currently followed IEP?

- Yes
- No

Please explain, what is it that you think should be added to the current IEP? *

G. Questions about your experiences and views on the currently followed IEPs
On this page the questions measure how you experience the use of the IEP, that you are currently expected to follow. Please answer the items using a scale from zero (0=no effect) to six (6=strong effect) and choosing the value that best describes your experiences.

How difficult do you find the use of the current IEP? *
(not at all difficult) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very difficult)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

How useful do you find the use of the current IEP? *
(not at all useful) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very useful)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

How time-consuming do you find the use of the current IEP? *
(not at all time-consuming) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very time-consuming)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

How appropriate do you find the current IEP? *
(not at all appropriate) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (very appropriate)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6
H. Questions about the evaluation of the current IEPs
Are the implemented IEPs evaluated regularly in your school? *
• Yes
• No
• I don’t know

How often are the IEPs evaluated in your school?
• More rarely than once a school year
• Once a school year
• Twice a school year
• More often than twice a school year

I. General views about the use of IEPs
Do you support the use of IEPs as a tool for special educational support? *
• Yes
• No
• I don’t know

A pupil with special needs will be provided an IEP. What positive aspects will follow the implementation? (Mention 2-5 aspects). *

A pupil with special needs will be provided an IEP. What negative aspects will follow the implementation? (Mention 2-5 aspects). *