

Looking over the border

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The UN Convention on the rights of persons with a disability

- Countries committed themselves to provide effective individualized support measures in environments ‘that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion’.
- Belgium, Norway and the Netherlands signed this convention.

3 Countries:

- Signing the Convention does not mean that these three countries have made comparable progress, nor have they implemented Inclusive education in a comparable way.
- Actually: Differences between the education of students with special educational needs (SEN) in these countries are quite large.

3 Systems

- Flanders: Two-track system
- Norway: One-track system
- Netherlands: Multi-track system

Percentages:

	% in segregated settings	% students with special needs
Flanders	4.9	6.2
Norway	.3	7.9
Netherlands	2.7	4.3

What does it tell us?

- Differences in % of students with SEN reflect mostly differences in rules, regulations and common practice.
- Differences in % students in special settings mainly show where students are located, but give limited information on the degree of inclusion of these students.

Social Participation

- Interaction
- Acceptance
- Friendships
- Perception of being accepted

Research questions

- Does social participation differ in BE, NL, and NO compared to typical peers?
- Does it differ for subgroups?

Method, sample

	Belgium	Netherlands	Norway
Group	N	N	N
Typically developing students	469	187	461
Students with SEN	43	29	37
Behavior problems	29	20	11
Severe learning problems	0	0	14
Mild learning problems	0	9	5
Communication problems	5	0	4
Sensorial/motor impairments	9	0	3

Method, instruments

- Acceptance and friendships by nomination procedures
- All students were asked to nominate their best friends in class (max. 5).
- Acceptance: Indegrees
- Friendships: Reciprocated choices

Method, analyses

- Ucinett to analyze sociometric data
- MANOVA to compare the means of the three groups
- Restructuring the groups of students with SEN in two: Behaviour problems and other SEN

Results

Students with SEN are less accepted and have fewer friendships compared to peers without SEN.

Significant differences between systems in level of peer acceptance: Norway lowest.

No significant differences between systems in number of friendships.

Discussion

- Most difficulties in social participation in Norwegian one-track and Belgium two-track systems.
- Expectations were that Norway would do better?
- Only students with relatively mild SEN to regular schools in Belgium and the Netherlands, and almost all students with SEN in Norway in regular schools.
- Samples can not be compared!

Looking over the border and seeing nothing!

- Too quick conclusion: The more progress in implementing IE, the lower the score on social participation.
- Disappointing conclusion: A study in only three countries, with similar instruments, with self-organized samples, with self-controlled analyses failed to come with a solid conclusion.