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Challenges in Inclusion, Learning Goals in Didactics and Education

ABSTRACT

During the last 5-10 years teaching with centralized learning goals in didactics and education together with inclusion of children with special needs have been focus areas both nationally and internationally.

Educators, directors of education etc. find inspiration in works by John Hattie and James Nottingham and visit schools in Ontario. Many Danish municipalities require teaching in schools with detailed goals and effective learning. We have asked critical questions to the research in this area and developed critical analysis and possible didactic thinking of professional teachers.

In our project 2015 – 2017 we have researched in these topics. The background is that in Denmark the Inclusion Act was passed in 2012 and a new school act in 2014. Several pupils with special needs have been included in the school and the teachers have met a great challenge by teaching all pupils in the class in an including way.

The basic in our project is that some educators believe or have the hypothesis that clear, detailed, and specified goals combined with classroom management is a main thing for better learning and for including all students.

In our project we have asked: Which advantages and disadvantages do effective learning goals have of inclusion? How can practice be developed within these frames?

We have both observed how students in complicated learning situations participate in education without learning goals and how the same students participate when the teacher has planned the

education with learning goals. We have found both advantages and disadvantages. The consequences differ related to the specific teacher, students, culture of school, and municipalities. In interviews the teachers express their concerns about inclusion, planning with and without learning goals and how the didactical thinking maintains or changes when it's required that they teach with detailed goals and effective learning.

We have seen a didactical concept with a very narrow understanding. We know from investigations that teaching with goals is very important for students' learning, but it is difficult to observe essential effects when learning goals in didactics are used systematically. The question is still: Does the great focus on effective learning goals influence students' learning and teachers' possibilities of making plans for their teaching and carrying out their plans? Is it a question of thinking in an instrumental way? Can teachers still be independent, reflect their didactic approach and estimate what is convenient in their own class? In our interviews the teachers express that they are aware of the issues but they deal with it in different ways.

In the project we have used intervention research supplied with other approaches. We have observed teaching in schools and discussed the observations with teachers to understand their goals and arguments for planning. Our aim has been not only to observe, but also to intervene and discuss their planning.