How are the strategies teachers use to facilitate participation of children in need of special supports in three ‘inclusive schools’ in Finland

-From teachers’ perspective

Minzhi Wang
ABSTRACT

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From teachers’ perspective

Inclusion enable children with special needs pursue their education or activities with their peers who are not disabled. Participation of children can be promoted by inclusion. Teachers are key for developing inclusive schools and improve the participation of children with special needs. The aim of this study is to describe strategies teachers use to facilitate participation of children in need of special supports in three ‘inclusive schools’ in Finland. To study this issue, interviews were conducted with eight participants from these three schools. The ICF-CY model was used to analyze the interview data. Results show that teachers’ strategies of promoting children’s participation in these Finnish ‘inclusive’ schools are diverse, teachers use strategies that focus on children’s environmental factors as well as factors that relate to children themselves. Most of teachers believe strategies that make changes on children environmental factors can help children participate in classroom tasks and activities. Some factors to influence difference of the strategies in different schools were found, different school situations and seems to be a decisive role on teachers’ strategies of improving the participation of the children. This study gives a promising view of the actions that teachers take to promote participation of children in need of special support.

Keywords: Teachers’ strategies, participation, inclusion, inclusive schools, children in need of special support, Finland

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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

The concept inclusion has been implemented in schools for long, and ‘inclusion’ is viewed as a facilitator to increase the participation of children in need of special support in school environment (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006). Inclusion is an educational option where children with special support needs pursue all or part of their education or activities with their peers who are not disabled, and it can promote and support the participation of children within an environment (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006).

Finland, is a country which is rated as one of the best school system in the world and the educational results of Finnish pupils are successful according to PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). In 2003, Finland ranked first in reading, in 2006, Finnish student ranked first in science and second in reading and mathematics. Finnish children succeed at all in PISA tests, one of the secret of this education success is continuous support by special education teachers (PISA, 2006; Arinen & Karjalainen, 2007). The term inclusive special education has been previously used to describe the special education system in Finland (Takala et al., 2009). In Finnish schools, around 22% of children receive part-time special education, this special education system has been considered to be one of the possible reasons for children to achieve high academic achievement in Finland in international surveys (Takala et al., 2009).

Teachers, who work as promoters in children’s everyday school life, can provide actions that help children participate in school life. Therefore, in school environment, the importance of strategies that teachers use to include children with special needs have been emphasized and teachers are considered as an essential factor promoting participation of children with special needs (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008). In Finnish schools, all teachers should be well educated, from 1980 all class teachers have had to obtain at least a master’s degree. The programs of study for special education teachers are nearly homogeneous in all Finnish universities, which concentrate on training reading, writing, language and mathematical and behavioral difficulties (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008). Reflection from research shows that strategies used by teachers of children with special needs are not different to the strategies used by classroom teachers (Lindqvist & Nilholm, 2013) However, in many cases, classroom teachers are not
capable of teaching children who are identified as having special needs (Cameron, 2017). According to Hausstätter and Takala (2008), in Finnish mainstream schools, there is a lack of special education teachers, and teachers usually find their work exhausting. In order to improve the practical work in schools, the reinforced idea of specialist knowledge and appropriate pedagogical approaches for teaching diverse group of learner are crucial for teacher education (Kiuppis & Hausstätter, 2015). Moreover, strategies to support the participation of children with special needs to school are essential. Therefore, this thesis will focuses on teachers’ strategies that help children in need of special support in three chosen Finnish ‘inclusive schools’ by conducting a qualitative analysis.

1.2. Research aim and questions
The aim of this study is to describe strategies teachers use to facilitate participation of children in need of special supports in three ‘inclusive schools’ in Finland.

Research questions:

- What strategies do Finnish teachers in these three schools use to facilitate the participation of children in need of special support in the classroom, playground, school public areas settings?

- What makes it easier for children in need of special support to participate in these inclusive settings from the teachers’ perspective?

2. Background

2.1 Inclusion
Inclusion and exclusion, commonly refers to the inclusion or exclusion of a group of students who are distinguished by their categorization as having 'special needs' (Booth, Ainscow, & Dyson, 1997). Before the concept inclusion, the expressions ‘integration’ or ‘mainstreaming’ were used to support the right of education for all children, regardless their diversity and their characteristics. These concepts concentrates more on adapting the curriculum to fit one student’s needs, as well as trying to integrate students who have special needs into a non-changeable school system (Reindal, 2016). The concept inclusion is much more than integration, and it does not only mean to set up a child into an inclusive environment, such as
mainstream classroom - a classroom with both with children with disabilities and general developed children. Inclusion, on the other hand, is concerned with all children and young people in schools, not only those who have impairments or those who are categorized as ‘children in need of special support’ (Ainscow, 2005).

There are many interpretations about inclusive education, in which, the movement ‘education for all’ was created in 1990s, in order to let children, especially disabled children become active participants in their life situations. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) elaborates the principle of inclusion by stating: “Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning; every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs; education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs; and those with special educational needs must access regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.” (p. viii-ix) (UNESCO, 1994).

Despite that inclusive education can raise academic achievement of children with special education needs in schools (EASNIE, 2016) there are some debates about full acceptance of the inclusive philosophy. For instance, some researchers believe that inclusive environment may not be helpful for children with hearing impairments, because they have to be educated separately so that their right of accessing sign language as well as the deaf culture can be guaranteed (Ainscow, 2005).

Ainscow (2005) also mentions that ‘inclusion’ in school related to social economy, culture and policies. Implementing inclusive education policies in practice is challenging, and some children with special needs do not feel included in the schools, and some of them are still having difficulties in participating in schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Egilson & Traustadottir 2009; Falkmer et al., 2012).

### 2.2 Inclusion in Finnish education system

In Finland, where inclusion is part of the official educational policy, the goal is to make schools suitable for all pupils and in practice, inclusion means teaching in a diverse classroom with pupils who have various individual needs (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma & Earle, 2009). In
order to make children function well, actions need to be carried out to promote inclusion, and possible actions is to adapt the instruction and the curriculum (Idol, 2006).

To meet the challenge of inclusive education in Finland, a three tiered system is defined. The first tier refers to actions made by regular classroom teachers as well as schools in terms of differentiation to meet the diversity of children. The second tier consists of supports from class teachers, co-teachers with special educator. In practice, this is highly compatible with the definition of ‘part-time special education’. The third tier is made up of the special education services from full-time general education, and it is equivalent with ‘full time special education’. Every student in this special support tier must have a personalized education plan (Hausstätter & Takala, 2008; Kiuppi & Hausstätter, 2015).

2.3 Inclusion in this study

The concept of inclusion is controversial and it raises many debates, it is recognized as a new word for integration or mainstreaming. Question was raised about whether inclusion focuses on fully integrating children with special needs into the mainstream classroom or more towards helping all children participate in the classroom (Ainscow, 2005).

According to Takala and colleagues (2012), finnish system mainly focuses on different kinds of learning problems, methodological solutions, individual development and evaluations. The provision of special education, including segregated provision, is seen as part of inclusive education in Finland. In this study, inclusion is described as a concept that much more than integration, and it is concerned with all children and young people in schools, not only those who have impairments or those who are categorized as ‘children in need of special support’ (Ainscow, 2005). To be accordance with the concept inclusion, the educational programs and strategies used by teachers should take into account the wide diversity of all children’s characteristics and needs (UNESCO, 1994).

2.4 Children in need of special support

Many definitions exist for ‘children in need of special support’ and there is often an overlap with other categories such as ‘children with disabilities’. Some authors base the definition for children in need of special support on disability categories; Lahdenperä (1999) reported for example that it is based on biological categories (e.g. speaking or visual disabilities) or
medical categories (e.g. diabetes or asthma). However, the definition of children in need of special support should not only be limited to biological or medical defects, but should also include children who encounter uncertain environmental factors or stressful situations. Sandberg and colleagues (2010) stated that children in need of special support should be best understood by relating to their everyday life context rather than only seeing the consequences of a specific impairment. Possible examples are children who live under family conflicts, poverty, abuse or violence. These factors can be seen as risk factors.

In Finnish schools, a very large percentage of the learners (about 30%) receive special education or additional support, while without using disability labelling or diagnoses, unless there is an impairment or the learning problems are major (Halinen & Järvinen, 2008). In this study, children in need of special support are mainly children who have dyslexia (reading and writing problems) and ADHD from the chosen Finnish schools, but the schools also include serval children with slight or mild intellectual disability. Therefore, children in need of special support in this study contains children with dyslexia, ADHD, intellectual disability and learning difficulties.

2.5 Participation

Chawla (2001), provides a definition of child participation: ‘participation is a process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions’ (p. 42). Participants have to show respect to each other by trying to achieve the common goal which gives children a sense of being useful in the community (Chawla, 2001). Meanwhile, the place and part where children participate in are illustrated in UNICEF (2003) with different levels, from the family to greater society. It shows that participation can be found through everyday life, within family, school, community and society.

Participation can be focused on the right to be in the same activities as other children in school as well as level of engagement when being in a school activity (Granlund et al., 2012). Participation can be divided into three dimensions: 1. to experience, it refers to have positive experiences of active interaction within the environment, 2. to act, which means to be active both physically and mentally in a life situation and, 3. context; the availability to activities and interaction with the environment. In summary, these three dimensions are “being a part of
The concept of participation used in this study is based on these three dimensions, in which the second dimension and the third dimension are mainly focused in this study. An ability to act in a situation or context contains children’s individual participation and social participation. Children’s individual participation, includes concentrate in the classroom, follow the classroom instruction or work with class assignments. Social participation refers to joining in classroom activities, cooperating in group work with peers. Availability to activities, is regarding to if children have the context to participate or not (Florian, 2013).

2.5.1 Participation and inclusion

Nowadays, the concept of inclusion is highlighted as a facilitator for children in general to participate in school activities. According to a general acceptance, participation is crucial for children in order to feel included (Falkmer et al., 2015).

The terms participation and inclusion are intimately correlated. Florian (2013) pointed out that participation recognizes the interdependence of inclusion and achievement, it concerns all aspects of classroom life and all members of a class, not only those learners identified as having special needs and disabilities. In general, the concepts of inclusion and participation together provide an opportunity to explore ways in which children in need of special support experience their interactions and diverse possibilities in a school environment (Asbjørnslett, Engelsrud, & Helseth, 2015).

For children with special education need, studying in a mainstream school environment does not lead to participation in school automatically, children may still experience social exclusion if they are only physically integrated (Falkmer, Granlund, Nilholm, & Falkmer, 2012). And for special needs children who do not attend to mainstream schools, they may still participate in activities or engage in schools while they are socially excluded from their peers (Florian, 2013). Interacting with peers and performing social activities is crucial to the participation of children in need of special support at school, as well as to the creation of an ‘inclusive society’. Some researchers have found that being socially excluded from activities with peers is a barrier to achieving social participation in the school environment (Asbjørnslett, Engelsrud, & Helseth, 2015). Florian (2013) mentioned that unless children are
joining the class as a member while attaining individually and collectively, it is inappropriate to describe them as being ‘included’ in a class (Florian, 2013).

### 2.6 Teachers in inclusive environments and strategies teachers use

According to Cameron (2017), it is surprising to notice that there are only a few studies addressing teachers’ role and attitudes toward the concept ‘full inclusion’ in Scandinavian countries. Compared with teachers who lack confidence, effective inclusive teachers tend to have positive beliefs about their ability to teach students in need of special support and are more willing to accept responsibility to include these students in school environments. In the classrooms, teachers often use strategies which match the purposes of learning outcomes, and they respond on the basis of their knowledge of individuals within their classrooms. However, when having a child who is identified as having a disability, or a special educational need, a frequent finding is that teachers often feel unprepared to adapt their instruction for students with special needs. Some of the teachers even resist the placement of children in need of special support in their classrooms due to the fact that teacher education has not been emphasized sufficiently on preparing teachers to work in inclusive settings (Cameron, 2017; Florian, 2013).

Strategies is viewed in close connection as teachers’ choices which can have a great influence on the students’ outcomes and opportunities to participate both academically and socially (Molbaek, 2017). In inclusive school settings, all teachers must be able to identify children in need of special support and ensure that the teaching strategies and techniques that they use are based on practical guidelines (Hornby, 2014). Kurawa (2010) pointed out that pedagogical approaches (i.e. give instruction, establish social interactions with students) that teachers use can effectively include children in mainstream classrooms. In Mitchell’s book, strategies used by teachers can be characterized as 27 types, for example, cooperative group teaching, social skills training, direct instruction, classroom climate, review and practice are identified (Mitchell, 2014). Lindqvist and Nilholm (2013) mentioned that when creating inclusion in school settings, teachers and leaders should use strategies to organize activities in accordance with inclusion. Kiuppis and Hausstätter (2015) pointed out inclusive school is an institution that should change and adapt to the needs of all students based on the general goals of inclusion. In this sense, it is teachers who should adapt teaching skills, use different strategies to children who are in need of special support.
3. Theoretical framework- ICF-CY and participation

ICF-CY is The World Health Organization’s International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (WHO, 2001).

The ICF-CY provides a classification system to rate functioning and disability of children and youth. It is also a framework of relationships among the six core domains, which are: health condition; body structures and functions; environmental factors; personal factors; activity; and participation (Imms, et. al, 2017).

![ICF Model Diagram]

Figure 1. The ICF model of human functioning, disability and health: core components and their relations (WHO, 2001).

Participation in ICF-CY is described as ‘involvement in a life situation’. At an individual level, participation can be seen as an outcome – one that is important for both learning and development as well as health and well-being. Looking at the structure of participation, it has two essential components: attendance, defined as ‘being there’ and measured as frequency of attending, and involvement, defined as ‘the experience of participation- taking part, being included or engaged in an area of life, being accepted or having access to needed resources’ while attending (Coster & Khetani, 2008; Imms, et. al, 2017).

Environmental Factors include physical, social and attitudinal factors. Schools’ environment, teachers, peer-relations are all the environmental factors which influence the participation of children with special needs, in which teacher is the main promoter in children’s everyday school life. Teachers can help children build peer-relations as well as create atmosphere that
stimulate children’s participation (Egairns, Ewhipp & Ejackson, 2015). Several researches also show that teachers can have impact on students’ self-esteem, which is a part of student’s personal factor (Carroll, 2007). Body functions include physiological and mental function of the body. For example, voice, skin, sensory function, etc. Body structures refers to anatomical parts of the body, such as, structure of the eyes, structure of respiratory system, etc. Personal factors are information about a person such as age, culture, sex. But in the ICF-CY framework, the component personal factors are not clearly defined (Imms, et. al, 2017). By using categories from the components, the ICF-CY can provide a support for holistic descriptions of children’s functioning in everyday life situations (Adolfsson, Malmqvist, Pless & Granlund, 2011). However, in ICF-CY the relationship between elements are not described thoroughly.

4. Method

4.1 Study design

The research techniques are thought to capture the subjective experiences of teachers who help special needs children participate in inclusive school environment and, in particular, the strategies teachers use to promote children’s participation. The study is designed as qualitative research, with the intention to emphasize exploring individual experiences, describing phenomenon (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). To study this question, qualitative researchers may use a qualitative approach to inquiry the teachers’ actions of helping children with special needs in school environments. The study is designed as both deductive approach and inductive, to analysis the interviews, the ICF-CY framework was used, which means all the data from the interviews are reviewed for content and coded for correspondence to or exemplification of the identified categories (Polit & Beck, 2012). However, in order to establish patterns or themes of the strategies used by the teachers, an inductive approach to to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations by researchers (Bryman & Burgess,1994).

As all the teachers who participated in this study have experienced a phenomenon of helping children in need of special support participate in inclusive schools. In this sense, the design of the study is inspired by phenomenological research (Creswell, 2000). Thus, the researcher
collected data from the teachers who have experienced the phenomenon, and developed a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 2000). The results of the data analysis include the voices of teachers, and an interpretation of the strategies used by teachers, and it extends the literature or signals a call of how should improve the participation of children with special needs in Finnish inclusive school environment (Creswell, 2000).

4.2 Study setting and participants

The study is conducted based on two primary schools and one upper secondary school in Finland, in which one primary school and the upper secondary school located in the middle part of Finland and the other primary school is located in the south part of Finland. The chosen schools are all schools that integrate children with special needs in the classroom, for instance, children with mild dyslexia, for example reading problems and writing problems and children mild ADHD. The overview of the chosen schools is presented in Table 1.

Why these three schools are included in this research? The main reason is the accessibility. The researcher only knows the contact information of these three Finnish schools’ principals, so only these three schools can be included in this study. However, in order to make a description and evaluation of inclusion situations in these three schools and to see if these three schools are working to help children in need of special support include in their schools. Before recruiting the participants, all the principles were invited to a short interviews so that they could introduce schools’ situation of inclusion. The situation of the inclusion reported by principals contains children’s arrangement and teachers’ equipment, and also assistant’s numbers. As a result, all the schools have certain children with special needs. Reported by principals, teachers are working to help them include in school environments. The situation of inclusion in each school is Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘inclusive school’</th>
<th>Number of teachers in total and Number of special teacher</th>
<th>Number of children in total and Numbers of children in need of special support</th>
<th>Situation of ‘inclusion’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Primary School A  | 15 and 1                        | 197 and 8                       | 1. Children with disability can choose to go to this school but currently there is no child with severe disability in the school. Children with different needs are in different classes.  
2. One special teacher and the main teachers are in charge of these children.  
3. All the teachers are holding a master degree and they are aware of the special needs of the children.  
4. Every class is equipped with one assistant. |
| Primary School B  | 34 and 3                        | 504 and 29                      | 1. Children with disability are integrated in the school but most of them are in an independent building. Only few children with special needs (mild dyslexia and ADHD) are arranged in mainstream classes.  
2. One special teacher and main teachers are in charge of children in need of special support in mainstream.  
3. All the teachers are holding a master degree and they are aware of the special needs in different occasions.  
4. Two classes are equipped with one assistant. |
| Upper Secondary School | 30 and 2                     | 321 and 10                     | 1. There are some children with disabilities in the school and they are all studying in mainstream classrooms.  
2. Two special teachers and the main teachers are in charge of these children.  
3. All the teachers are holding at least a master degree and they are aware of the special needs in different occasions.  
4. Every class is equipped with one assistant. |

Table 1 Overview of the study setting
Compared to school A and C, not all the children in need of special support are assigned in mainstream class in primary school B and, according to principals, the schools’ assistants are described as inadequate, so the school is demanding of teaching assistants. Nevertheless, these three schools all integrate children with special needs in the schools settings and the special teachers are equipped in each school in order to help children with disabilities or special needs. According to all the principals, teaching resources of these schools are sufficient and all the teachers are aware of special needs that some children have. Due to the different definitions of inclusion and uncertainty about the actual situation in each school, inverted commas are used to describe these ‘inclusive schools’.

Participants of this study - teachers, are chosen from these three schools. Due to ethical issues, the researcher did not contact teachers personally when recruiting participants. Hence, the selection criteria for teachers was formulated by the researcher and then sent to the school principles so that principals could choose the teachers which suits best according to the criteria. Three of the teachers who have experience of helping children with special needs were selected in each school, so the participants of the study are nine in total.

The criteria for teacher selection is:

- Teachers who have experiences of working with children in need of special support for 1 year.
- Teachers who put effort into making the school environments inclusive.

All teachers showed willingness to participate in this study. Teachers were from different grade and they all had different working experience and background. Table 2 provides an overview of participants as well as the conducted interviews including teachers’ teaching grade, special need of the child/children, focus setting, and length of the interviews. An overview of the children in need of special support from these three schools are shown in Appendix C.
4.3 Instrument

The research instrument for this study is individual one-on-one interviews with teachers who have experiences of helping children in need of special supports to participate in ‘inclusive schools’. Individual one-on-one interview allow interviewers to have a face to face meetings with the researcher so that informants’ perspectives in relation with their lives, experiences or situations, according to their own words can be gained through questions (Creswell, 2002). During the interview, one semi-structured interview guide for teachers is used to find out what strategies do teachers use to increase the participation of children with special needs. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Special need of the child/children</th>
<th>Focus setting</th>
<th>Length of the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First grade</td>
<td>Mild dyslexia/Reading problem and writing problem</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>32 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>First grade and Second grade</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>26 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fourth grade</td>
<td>Learning difficulties/Math problem</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>29 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(principal) Mix</td>
<td>Mild dyslexia/Language problem</td>
<td>Classroom and public areas</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Third grade</td>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>Playground and public areas</td>
<td>46 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fifth grade</td>
<td>Mild intellectual disability</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper secondary school C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senior one</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>28 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior one</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior three</td>
<td>Speech problem</td>
<td>Classroom and public areas</td>
<td>21 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Overview of participants and conducted interviews

4.3 Instrument

The research instrument for this study is individual one-on-one interviews with teachers who have experiences of helping children in need of special supports to participate in ‘inclusive schools’. Individual one-on-one interview allow interviewers to have a face to face meetings with the researcher so that informants’ perspectives in relation with their lives, experiences or situations, according to their own words can be gained through questions (Creswell, 2002). During the interview, one semi-structured interview guide for teachers is used to find out what strategies do teachers use to increase the participation of children with special needs. The
flexibility of semi-structured interviews generally allows the research to have deeper exploration perspectives of the participants and a richer data set. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

**4.3.1 Interview guide**
The interview guide (Appendix A) is therefore designed with an aim to facilitate descriptions and possible follow-up questions to go deeper into each main question. The interview questions for teachers include the teachers’ perspective on how to help children with special needs participate in ‘inclusive school’. Follow up questions like ‘Can you explain what you mean?’ and ‘Can you tell me more about that?’ are frequently used during the interviews. Sample questions to find what strategies do the teachers use to facilitate participation of children with special supports are provided below:

- Can you give some examples of how did you support children in need of special supports participate in inclusive settings (for example: classroom/playground games/public areas/school activities)?

- What makes it easier for the child with ADHD/Autism/Intellectual disability to be engaged in inclusive settings?

- How do you use other factors to improve children’s participation, for example peers relations?

**4.3.2 Trustworthiness of the Interview guide**
The interview guide is created by researcher. The interview guide contains six background questions and four main interview questions, which revolves around teacher’s experience on helping children with special needs participating in schools. The interview guide was used once when exploring teachers’ strategies of helping children with special needs participate in play activities. As a result, the interview guide was tested out once and adjustments was made according to experienced difficulties in order to make sure interview questions can capture teachers’ experience and used strategies. Consequently, all interview questions were therefore designed with an aim to facilitate descriptions on teacher aspects that were relevant to the respondent’s perspective.

**4.4 Data collection and procedure**
Data collection process was conducted in one month period. In order to gain teachers’ assent, a letter (Appendix B) was sent to principals or head teachers before the interviews. The head teachers and principals helped to recruit respondents. After that principals sent letters to school teachers and helped to seek teachers who showed interest to this study as well as who fulfills the criteria. The contact information of the teachers who were willing to participate were offered through principals so that the researcher could contact teachers and arrange time and place for interviewing. In total, 3 teachers from each school were included in the study, all participants were positive and open toward the research. Before the interviews, rapport was built through teachers and interviewers through warm-up conversations, the conversation includes the basic information about the teachers, schools, class, teaching experience as well as the teachers’ attitude towards ‘inclusion’. The conversation helped to establish the foundation of interviews and participants could be more opened to the following questions. During the interviews, participants could end the interview, take a pause or pass on a question at any time. After the interviews, the participants and researcher had conversations and summarized the interviews. Some of the teachers also gave feedbacks on feelings of participating in the interviews.

All interviews took place during school hours and the data collection procedure took 7 afternoons, which is the convenient time for participants. Since these three schools are located in different cities, the researcher spent 2 days in one primary school and 2 days in the upper secondary school for interviews after arranging interview time. Locations of the interviews were selected by teachers in schools, which includes teachers’ office, classroom and school library where participants prefer. Each interview was recorded digitally with the permission of the participants. In total, 9 interviews were conducted, totaling approximately 5- recorded hours.

The participant (Teacher B3) described herself as ‘not professional in english’, and during the interview she can not make sure what she said in english is what she meant. So, in order to guarantee the quality of interviews, this interview has been excluded from data analysis mainly due to the language barrier of the participant.

4.5 Data analysis
The data analysis is designed as a mixed approach, both deductive approach and inductive, to analysis the interviews, the ICF-CY framework was used, which means all the data from the interviews are reviewed for content and coded for correspondence to or exemplification of the identified categories (Polit & Beck, 2012). Each teacher constituted the unit of analysis and data analysis consisted of two main steps. The first main step aimed at getting a general description of each teacher from each school. The first step consisted of analyzing each interview and finding out teachers’ supportive actions that facilitate children’s participation and then relate these actions into ICF-CY. The analysis is based on what the text says, and then finding the visible, obvious components—meaning units. Meaning units were then defined. A meaning unit is the constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning, it has been referred to as a keyword and phrase, a unit of analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). These meaning units consisted both of direct citations from the text and descriptions which are keeping close to the transcribed text. After that, codes are given, codes contain the key information of the meaning of the unit. Then, these meaning units were analyzed in relation to the proposed framework by assembling the meaning units from each respondent into each related domain of ICF-CY, which are: health condition; body structures and functions; environmental factors; personal factors; activity; and participation (Imms, et. al, 2017). This step was to analysis the data with theoretical framework. Interviews from each school were analyzed independently and then summarized into tables in relation to ICF-CY (Appendix D). Table 3 gives an example of analysis interviews relation to ICF-CY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Meaning unite</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Relation to ICF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher A2:</strong> Last year, we introduced some chairs from a company, and the chairs are not the normal one, they are specially designed for children who have concentration problems.</td>
<td>teachers introduce chairs for children with ADHD</td>
<td>Provide special designed product</td>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Example of data analysis

After this step, teachers’ actions related to the ICF-CY in each school was identified. The teachers’ actions are analyzed by using an inductive approach, which can allow unexpected
themes to emerge, and the interpretation is descriptive, empathic and critical (Smith et al., 2009). The next main step was to sort these codes into sub-categories based on differences and similarities. After grouping sub-categories, the categories were emerged (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The names of the categories were emerged based on researchers' analysis and defined by the researcher. Finally, the latent content of the categories are formulated into a theme (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Table 4 illustrates an example of procedure of emerging sub-categories, categories and theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Equipment support</th>
<th>Content support</th>
<th>Teacher parent cooperation</th>
<th>Instruction support</th>
<th>Interaction support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Material support strategy</td>
<td>Material support strategy</td>
<td>School-wide strategy</td>
<td>Material support strategy</td>
<td>Social support strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Environmental-oriented strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Example of data analysis

4.6 Ethical consideration

When conducting research, seeking access, acquiring informed consent, protecting the privacy or confidentiality of the participants should be done by researcher (Bryman, 2012). The informed consent principle arises from the self-determination, right of subjects to freedom and to refuse to participate (Abed, 2015). When conducting research, the assent of
participants is an ethical consideration need to be taken into account, which means participants should be given full information about details of the research and the interviews, and should be given opportunities to make a decision as to whether to participate in the interview or not (Stineman & Musick, 2001). The consent of teachers was gained through principals before starting the interviews. Interview environments such as location and time of the interviews were arranged according to participants’ preference. Before each interview, brief conversation which is initiated by researcher were conducted in order to build rapport with participants (Stineman & Musick, 2001). During the interviews, the consent of participants was seen as an ongoing process, which means the participants can pause the interview or ask researcher questions during the interviews (Abed, 2015). Moreover, among all the participants, there are two teachers who already known the researcher for one year. One of the advantages of using familiar persons as informants is the participants would be more likely to open up when performing the interviews since established rapport has already been built between researcher and participants. However, there are some disadvantages of using familiar persons as informants. For example, the consent of participants might be neglected by the researcher, and the pre-understanding on the informants might influence the analysis, which causes research bias (Stineman & Musick, 2001).

Confidentiality was taken into consideration when conduct the research, which means the privacy of the school, teachers and children are protected. The background information of the chosen schools, teachers and children are not written in the study. Moreover, since the study includes vulnerable children in inclusive schools, the children’s name and gender, were not gained through the teachers while conducting interviews.

Interviews may benefit the participating subjects (Kvale, 1996). Three teachers reported that they think the interview was useful because it can help them review and re-evaluate if the strategies they used were useful or not. This was illustrated at the end of one of the interviews:

Teacher A2: I think it is a very interesting topic, usually teachers prefer to think that helping children in need of special support as special teachers’ responsibilities. The questions you asked make me remind of what did I do to help them and what should I do something to help them in the future.
5. Findings

According to the interviews, it is reported that the three teachers in school C use holistic strategies to help children in need of special support, the strategies described by the teachers not only focus on children themselves but also take children’s environmental factors into consideration. The strategies used by the teachers from school A and B show a different picture. Based on what the teachers said, strategies that used by the three teachers from school A can be categorized as environmental-oriented strategies (strategies work on children’s environments, such as peers, parents and school), while the teachers in school B use strategies which are children-oriented (strategies that focus on children’s behavior or mental development directly). Therefore, strategies that improve the participation of children in need of special support used by these Finnish teachers from these schools can be characterized as: holistic strategies (Teacher C1, C2, C3), environmental-oriented strategies (Teacher A1, A2, A3), and children-oriented strategies (Teacher B1, B2, ). Above strategies are presented in the following part and examples of how teachers described their strategies are explained below. Meanwhile, 5 teachers (Teacher A1, A2, A3, C2, C3) identified that environmental-oriented strategies can facilitate children’s participation effectively while the other 3 (Teacher B1, B2, C1) teachers believed children oriented strategies can help children participate in schools easily.

5.1 Strategies facilitate the participation of children in need of special support

Table 5 illustrates the strategies in three different schools, and how the strategies related to each other. The explanation of each strategy is shown below:
Table 5: Strategies facilitate the participation of children in need of special support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holistic strategies (C1, C2, C3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental-oriented strategies (A1, A2, A3)</th>
<th>Children-oriented strategies (B1, B2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Sub-categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support strategy</td>
<td>- Interactional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material support strategy</td>
<td>- Instruction support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-wide strategy</td>
<td>- Content support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Equipment support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teacher cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- School- parent cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Holistic strategies (Teacher C1, C2, C3)**

Teachers from school C said that they are using holistic strategies to improve the participation of children in need of special support. The holistic strategies include: behavioral support strategy, social support strategy, cognitive support strategy, material support strategy, school-wide strategy. These strategies focus on children’s learning achievements, social interactions, emotional well-beings, availability towards equipments, curriculum and instructions, and school supports.

**Behavioral support strategy**

Behavioral support strategy refers to teachers use strategies to support children’s behavior, such as concentration, reading and writing.

**Ability support.** Teachers make support towards children’s ability of writing, reading and concentrating. Since teacher C2, C3 focus on children with ADHD and their participation in classroom, they described their strategies as ‘focusing on a specific behavior I wish to improve and reinforcing it’. For example, teacher C2 stated that:
I think it is important that I know his ability of listening need to be improved, cause the child he could not concentrate in the class, and sometimes he disturbs others when he could not focus any longer... So, when I find out he is listening and concentrating in the class, I just pay attention to his behavior and then ask him to continuously pay attention to the class and tell him it is very impressive that he can listen to what I said.

Similarly, teacher C1 also used strategy that focus on children’s ability of applying knowledge and learning, according to teacher C1, he asked the children to practice speech more in order to let them make progress.

Teacher C1: To help children with speech problems overcome the difficulties (when giving speech), I asked them to practice (doing speech) in front of everyone for example, 2 day in a row if I notice that they have made progresses.

Apart from that, teacher C2 and C3 also think children’s behaviors in classrooms are related to the children’s body function. For example, how long does the child sleep everyday.

Social support strategy

Social support strategy is regard as teachers use strategy to support children’s social relations. Interactional support. Strategies that are related to children’s social participation focus on children’s social interactions with peers and teachers in classroom environments. Teacher C1, C2, C3 all stressed strategies that support social interactions of children in need of special support. For instance, teacher C3 gave an example of how to help children with ADHD participate socially.

Teacher C3: Because Children with ADHD can become easily distracted in large groups, in the class, I like to form small group settings for the child when possible, I asked the group members to help each other.

Teacher C3 suggested that when offering social support to children with ADHD, it is important to think about group size. According to teachers in school C, peer interaction refers to participating in group activities, pair assignments while interaction with teachers refers to ask questions, answer the questions, ask teacher for help.

Teacher C2: I think in my class, it is necessary to build interactions with the child, and question him or help him are the thing I can do in class, and I think it is a good way of knowing if he can follow the class well.

Cognitive support strategy

Cognitive support strategy refers to teachers’ strategy to change children’s negative thinking.
**Emotional support.** Emotional support refers to praising, encouraging and stimulating. Teacher C1 reported that when he encourages or praises the children, they are more engaged in the classroom and class activities. Teacher C1 also described that children are motivated to participate in class activities when their attitudes were changed.

> Teacher C1: I always believe in my students, even if some have speech problems, what I usually do is to let him realize that doing speech is not an embarrassing thing. I like to praise them when I find out they have achieved some progress.

**Material support strategy**

Material support consists of instructional support, content support and equipment support.

**Instruction support.** Instruction support refers to class’s rules, adaptive curriculum and tasks, and teacher’s modeling. Teacher C2 and C3 reported that when they provided clear and concise classroom rules, children with ADHD could follow the class easily and they could concentrate on class. When they provided clear and concise instructions for academic assignments, children were more engaged in classroom tasks, Teacher C3 also mentioned that breaking complex instructions into small parts is useful for children with ADHD.

**Content support.** Content support refers to offering support towards children’s participation settings, such as learning settings and activity settings. For example, teacher C1 said that he usually create settings to stimulate the children so that they can participate in class activities.

> Teacher C1: I know that for them (children who have special needs in doing speech) doing speech is not an easy thing, so I do much as I can to create opportunity for them to practice. One day, we are having class, I just made a decision that everyone needs to present what they know about our country’s economy statues, so the children who have speech problem got the chance to practice.

**Equipment support.** Equipments in the classroom, school are widely used to support children with special needs in school C. Teachers reported that to help children with ADHD concentrate in their assignments or exams, headphones were recommended.

> Teacher C3: The child likes to use headphones, and I let him use when he needs it, so that he don’t get distracted by the noise around. Yeah, he likes it when having headphones cause he feels more calm when having headphones, like he is in his own world.

This example shows that the teacher provide headphones to help the child feel calm so that he can focus on his assignments.
School-wide strategy

Teacher cooperation. Teacher cooperation and co-teaching were described by teachers in school C, according to teachers, the teachers usually ask the social teacher for help if they do not know how to help the children with special needs. Teachers in school C have collaborative spirits when making plan for children in need of special support.

Teacher C2: *We have teacher meeting once a week. In the meeting, we usually discuss the curriculum and the problems we are facing right now, and when having a child with special needs in the class, teachers usually gathered together and discussing and making a plan to the child, and the conference also includes special teachers.*

Special teachers were also included in the teacher cooperation. According to Teacher C2, when making plans for children with special needs, special teachers’ advices, such as, how to help children improve their academic achievements, are taken into account.

Teacher–parent cooperation. The frequency of cooperating with parents in school C is very high. Teacher C1 said that he cooperates with parents at least twice a month, and when cooperating with parents, he usually reports children’s achievements in school and discusses with parents and listen to their opinions.

Environmental-oriented strategies (Teacher A1, A2, A3)

According to teachers A1, A2, A3, strategies used by teachers in school A are characterized by environmental-oriented strategies. By analyzing the interviews, it can be concluded that teachers in school A mainly use strategies which focus on the environmental of the children. Environmental-orient strategies include: social support strategy, material support strategy, school-wide strategy. These strategies focus on children’s social interactions with teachers and students, availability of equipments, curriculum and instructions, support from teachers and school.

Social support strategy

Social support strategy is regard as teachers use strategy to support children’s social relations. Interactional support. Strategies that are related to children’s social participation focus on children’s social interactions with peers and teachers in classroom environments. In school A, strategies related to children’s social participation focus on children’s social interactions with
peers in classroom environments. Both teacher A1 and A2 emphasize that they use strategies which facilitate children’s peer interaction and cooperation.

Teacher A1: *Well i think group work can also help them participate in assignments but it is also depends. For example. we have a lot of pair works. if I gather the children who can not read with children who can do a lot of reading, and one is helping the other one. I think it is cooperation.*

From the example, it can be seen that teacher A1 likes to use pair tutoring to let them participate in class. However, teacher A2 reported the child with ADHD becomes active participant when participating in large group activities.

Teacher A2: *Yeah i put the child into a group with children who are more calm, first I thought it would be a good idea but then I realized that It is also important for him to get social interactions with other children, and I found out that when he is working in a group in large size, he can discuss more with his peers.*

**Material support strategy**

*Instruction support.* All teachers in school A emphasize the importance of instruction support. According to teachers A2 and A3, they usually make adjustments on classroom tasks for children in need of special support. Teacher A3 gave an example of how to make adjustment on classroom tasks for children with reading difficulties.

Teacher A3: *For children who have reading difficulties I sometimes give them less assignments to do in the class. If I see that this part is not that important for them I will say yes you can skip this one. So that, they can be more focus on the important assignment.*

For children who have ADHD, Teacher A2 reported: *children who have concentration problem can not focus on the same thing for a long time, so i will give them different tasks, like they can do 15 minutes this and 15 minutes on other tasks.*

*Content support.* Content support in school A is used when having class activities. For example, teacher A2 use letter cards to decorate the classroom so that children with writing problems can memorize the letters randomly in the classroom, and the teacher also put some short texts on the wall, so that children can read and look, which may enhance their ability of reading and understanding.
Equipment support. According to teachers, school A values the use of equipment in the classroom settings and the whole setting. Teacher A2 reported that the teachers can apply for better equipments for children in general or children with special needs every semester.

Teacher A2: Last year, we introduced some chairs from a company, and the chairs are not the normal one, they are specially designed for children who have concentration problems. There are at least four chairs in each classroom nowadays, and not only for children who have concentration problem, other children can also choose to use them or not.

Apart from that, teacher A1 also mentioned that the blackboard and projector also play vital roles of helping children with writing problems. Teacher A1 summarized that when teaching letters, the projector can magnify the letters, so that children can write correctly.

School-wide strategy

Teacher cooperation. According to what teachers said, teacher cooperation was a strategy that help children with special needs. Teacher-teacher cooperation, teacher-special educator cooperation, teacher-assistant cooperation and teacher cooperation outside school were mentioned by teachers in school A.

Teacher A3: There is an assistant in the class, and sometimes she helps me take care of these children if I am too busy with the other children. And, we talk a lot about how to make the class better, how to let everyone participate in class. She also reported the problem of the child to me sometimes, so I am able to aware the child’s need.

This example shows that teacher-assistant cooperation in the classroom is used by teacher A3. Other than teacher-assistant cooperation, the teachers also pointed out that it is very often that they communicate with teachers from other schools.

Teacher A1: Every semester we get the chance to visit other primary schools in this region and we usually have communication with other teachers and talk about what they manage their classroom and how do they do with children with special needs.

School-parent cooperation.

The three teachers in school A all emphasize the significance to have parents involved in their work. The teachers report that they usually communicate with all the parents once a month, and daily communication such as messages are usually sent via website. Teachers say that they communicate with parents of children in need of special support twice a month or more.
often. When making the individual plan, they also take parents’ opinions into consideration. Teacher A2 said cooperation with parents is not only about asking their opinions but also about discussing with parents, for example, discuss with parents what has been working well or not.

**Children-oriented strategy (Teacher B1, B2)**

Based on what teachers said during the interviews, strategies that teachers use focus on children’s behavioral and cognitive development in school B. While, teacher B1 also stressed that the strategy to promote social interactions of children was also used in playground activities.

*Behavioral support strategy*

Behavioral support strategy refers to teachers use strategies to support children’s behavior, such as concentration, reading and writing.

*Ability support.* Teachers make support towards children’s ability of writing, reading and concentrating. Strategy that support children’s behavior is regarding to support their abilities of learning and applying knowledge. Teacher B2 reported that when she helps children with language problem, the most frequent strategies she usually takes is to enhance their language skills, such as provoke the child to use the new words from class more, correct grammar mistakes, and find the right word for the child when she cannot express the word. Teacher C5 also stress that support towards children’s behavior is the most direct way to help them engage in class or activities.

*Cognitive support strategy*

Cognitive support strategy refers to teachers’ strategy to change children’s negative thinking.

*Emotional support.* Emotional support refers to praising, encouraging and stimulating. Both teachers value cognitive support strategy as an important strategy for children’s participation. They mentioned that when offering cognitive support, they usually prize the child, encourage the child and help them build confidence.

Teacher B2: *When the child is playing football, I will pay more attention to him and if he did something good, I will applause and let him realize that he is good at doing this,*
so the confidence will be built and he will be more active when having activities at the playground.

This example shows that teacher B2 build confidence for children with intellectual disability by praising.

Similarly, teacher B1 also mentioned that it is very important to help children who have language problems to establish their confidence.

Teacher B1: *When the child cannot understand what teacher said, it is very easy to cause some misunderstanding of the child, and the child might feel embarrassed. So I usually tell her ‘it is okay’ all the time. And when she makes some progress when speaking, I praise her and told her ‘it is very good’, so that she would be more willing to talk in the school.*

### 5.2 Effective strategies identified by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental oriented strategies</th>
<th>Social support strategy</th>
<th>Material support strategy</th>
<th>School-wide strategy</th>
<th>Children oriented strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A1 A2 A3 C2 C3</td>
<td></td>
<td>B4 B5 C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material support strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>A1 A2 A3 C2 C3</td>
<td></td>
<td>B4 B5 C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-wide strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>A1 A2 A3 C2 C3</td>
<td></td>
<td>B4 B5 C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral support strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B4 B5 C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive support strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B4 B5 C1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Effective strategies identified by teachers

Table 6 indicates the most effective strategies identified by teachers in these three schools.

**Material support strategy**

According to interviews, material support strategy was identified as the most effective strategies among eight teachers from these three schools. Teacher A2, A3, C2 all identified that instruction support can help children participate in classroom assignments while teacher A2, C3 believed that content support is the most effective strategy for children with ADHD.

Teacher A2: *I think the child can be more engaged in the classroom when I guide him reading and told what he needs to do in the classroom.*

Teacher A3: *Well, in the class the child can read and understand the text when I guide her and let her read word by word.*
Meanwhile, teacher C2 said: *He can focus on the assignment if the assignment is short enough for him and if I set a goal for him, like tell him today you need to do this, and after you need to do this...I think it is the easiest way for him to calm down and do something.*

In summary, teacher A2, A3, C2 all reported that children’s participation can be improved by instructions they offered.

Meanwhile, teacher A1 believed that participation of the child is highly correlated to the content and the environment. Teacher C3 believed that the child concentrates more if the teacher set the child away from distractions and next to children who are the positive role models.

**Teacher A1:** *When he could not understand the reading text, I will ask the other children to perform the text or story in front of the class, and I think it is the easiest way for him to understand the story while the others are enjoying watching the performance.*

**Cognitive support strategy**

Cognitive support strategy is viewed as the most effective strategy to improve children’s participation by teacher B1, B2 and C1. Both teacher B1 and C1 considered that encouragement and praise can motivate children and help children build self-esteem as well as confidence.

**Teacher C1:** *I will say the encouragement that I gave to the children, are the most useful motivation when they are doing speech. And if they can overcome the fear they have and they have the willingness to practice, doing speech is not a problem for them at all.*

Teacher B4 also think that for children who have language problem, the most essential strategy is to help them eliminate their negative thinking and let the children realize that misunderstanding in daily life is not an embarrassing thing.

Meanwhile, teacher B2 also identified emotional support can eliminate the mental barriers of children with mild intellectual disabilities and make them more active when participating in playground activities.

**Teacher B2:** *To help the child build confidence, like I said before, I praise them and show attention to them so that they can feel that they are valued. The reason why the child do not have confidence in school is mainly due to his disability. So the most important strategy or the first step for me to do is to do something that make him thinking positively rather than thinking negatively.*
School-wide strategy

Teacher A1 viewed teacher-parent cooperation as the most important strategy for children with have reading and writing problems.

Teacher A1: At the first grade, the children usually finish school at 13.00, so there is a lot of time for the child to stay at home, and that is why I like to cooperate with the parent. The parent will help him and assist him when he is practicing writing at home, and I usually find some progress the other day at class and I think after a while, he can keeping up with the whole class.

It is shown that teacher A1 cooperate with the parent and ask parent to supervise their child when the child is wiring letters, so that the child can keep up with the whole class.

6. Discussion

6.1 Reflections on findings related to other research

The result of this study shows that strategies to facilitate children’s participation used by the Finnish teachers from these schools can be divided into two dimensions, one focuses on children’s school environment and the other one focuses on children directly. In these three different schools, the strategies they use show different patterns when working towards inclusion. School C emphasizes strategies related to children’s environments as well as Individual factors among the children, and the strategies are summarized as holistic strategies. Strategies used by school A and B emphasize children’s environments and personal factors respectively, the strategies they used are summarized as environmental-oriented strategies and children-oriented strategies. Moreover, a majority of the teachers in these threes schools believed that children can participate in schools easier when teachers offer supports towards their environment.

The notion about participation is understood to be central in inclusive practice, teachers are the most important factor who support all students’ learning processes and increase their participation. The reason why the teachers strategies are so diversity can be attribute to different school ideologies, culture, priority and school policies (Göransson, Malmqvist & Nilholm, 2013). When looking at the inclusion in each schools, there has been wide-spread acceptance of the idea that schools make differences when it comes to working towards inclusion in practical work (Malmqvist, 2016). Results show that these three schools have
different strategies when working towards inclusion and it is recognized that inclusion may not be the priority for all schools.

Based on the interviews and results, it indicates that school C has a holistic inclusive ideology, positive school culture and has put much effort towards inclusion. The strategies used by the teachers in School C can facilitate children’s participation by improving children’s learning environments, schools environments and facilitate children’s personal behaviors and thinking while accepting children’s diversity (Göransson, Malmqvist & Nilholm, 2013; Mitchell, 2014). Rouse (2010) and Slee (2010) mentioned different issues that teachers should pay attention to, such as co-work between professionals, parents and peers; critical thinking towards the curriculum and pedagogy. Consistently, the result shows that school A emphasizes strategies that make changes towards schools, teachers and curriculum. Looking at the whole school, it also shows that the concept of “inclusion” is not only related to a school setting. It is a concept that can be influenced by all parts surrounding a child’s environments, such as, the family, the school, the community, the culture, the policies, etc. In this way, it is correspondent with ‘environmental factors in the ICF-CY model (Bornman & Rose, 2010, WHO, 2001). School B stresses the strategies towards children’s personal attitudes as well as children’s behaviors. Related it to ICF-CY model, it shows that the strategies which change children’s personal factors and children’s ability of fulfilling activities can result in changes of participation eventually (WHO, 2001).

When looking at the situation of inclusion in relation to what strategies do the teachers use in school B, it shows that the strategies used in school B are not comprehensive enough as in the other two schools. Teachers in school B only emphasize the strategies that improve children’s personal abilities and emotional well-beings. However, in order to let children in need of special support feel fully included in schools, it is required that teachers who can help children build their social interactions with peers by peer tutoring (Mitchell, 2014; Kurawa, 2010). The concept of inclusion goes beyond children merely being placed in a classroom, but rather participating in the activities, so it raises the possibility that “students who are physically integrated may still be socially excluded”, (Falkmer, Granlund, Nilholm, & Falkmer, 2012, p. 191;). In this case, children in School B may still be socially excluded from their peers when participating in classroom activities or group work even if teachers use strategies to twist the negative thinkings or to improve their behaviors.
School B only include few special needs children in mainstream school and most of the children with special needs are studying in a separate building. For children with special needs, participating in another building is not considered as inclusion (Asbjørnslett, Engelsrud, & Helseth, 2015). The inclusion situation of the school may establish obstacles for teachers to conduct their strategies since children with social needs do not attend to mainstream classrooms with their peers without social needs. For special needs children who do not attend to mainstream schools, they may still participate in activities or engage in schools while they are socially excluded from their peers (Florian, 2013). In this way, even if teachers in schools B use strategies to promote the participation rate of the special needs children in school B, the participation rate of them is relatively lower because children with social needs can interact with peers in the mainstream building.

As stated before, in this study the concept of inclusion is much more than integration, and it does not only mean to assign a child into an inclusive environment, such as mainstream classroom. Rather, in school environment, inclusive education means to create an education system which is designed and implemented to take into account the wide diversity of all children’s needs (UNESCO, 1994). It is worth noticing that the strategies teachers used in these three schools mainly concentrate on the children with special needs rather than make a changeable school system for all children. Teachers described their strategies as tools to improve the participation of one specific child with special need rather than make all children participate in school. For example, teacher A3 described the strategy she use to help the child with math problems as: ‘make her own goals, give assignment individually, to provide her with extra classes with the help of special teachers’. This implicated that ‘inclusion’ in these Finnish schools mainly focuses on fully integrating children with special needs into the mainstream classroom rather than concerns about all children and young people in schools, not only those who have impairments or those who are categorized as ‘children in need of special support’ (Ainscow, 2005).

The result also shows that environmental-oriented strategy is viewed as the most effective supportive strategy that can help special needs children to participate in activities easily by most of the teachers in three schools, while three teacher believed offering cognitive support is the most effective strategies. Findings from this study shows that teachers in these three school prefer to emphasize the importance of changing towards children’s environments
rather than children themselves when helping them participate in schools. This indicates that teachers and leaders should use strategies to organize activities or do adaptations on classes and schools in accordance with inclusion, rather than make changes on children who are in need of special support. Finding shows that teachers view environmental factor as the most essential factor to promote participation and inclusion, and it is consistent with the emphasis on ‘Environmental factors’ in the ICF-CY framework. In the ICF-CY framework, environmental factors which can influence children’s participation are stressed, for example, lack of natural environment, products and technology, support and relationships can limit children’s participation (WHO, 2001). Accordingly, Imms (2017) also summarized that children in need of special support should be included in inclusive or mainstream schools with required environmental support provided by ordinary teachers.

6.2 Quality of the study and limitation of the study

Looking at the quality of this qualitative research, the credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity of the research need to be discussed (Torgé, 2017).

To increase the credibility of the research, all teacher showed high level of engagement. Some of the teachers posted some questions such as ‘what do you think…’ during the interviews, which shows a high level of interactions between participants and the researcher. Three of the teachers were fully prepared before the interviews, they made notes which were related to the topic and they intended to provide sound information which were useful for this study. This procedure demonstrate the engagement of participants, as it is can show the truth of the data or the participant views as well as the interpretation of them so that the credibility of the study can be increased (Cope, 2014; Polit & Beck, 2012). Moreover, the researcher tried to provide adequate time in collecting data as well as to obtain an understanding of the participant by building trust and rapport with participants to foster rich, detailed responses (Cope, 2014). In this study, the detailed description and quotes were used when showing results, the quotes increase the accuracy of interpretations, as well as provide a process to achieve data saturation and breadth of understanding of the phenomenon, which address the credibility, confirmability and vividness of this study (Cope, 2014).
However, there are some limitations in this study need to be addressed. Firstly, one of the interviews, was not used in the study, which means there are finally two teachers from school B included in this study. During the interviews, two of the participants from school B provided vivid and sound information of their actions that help children participate in schools and working towards inclusion. However, the lack of one participant from school B may cause deviation of the study results, which influence the dependability of the study. In result, the researcher are aware of the consequence of missing one participant when analyzing and presenting the findings.

Secondly, the limited method influence the credibility and authenticity of the study. This study was intended to describe Finnish teachers’ strategies of improve participation of children in need of special support in these three schools, however, interview was the only tool to collect data. Teachers described their strategies during the interviews but the real situation in classroom is unpredictable without for example, classroom observation. Only bu using multiple methods can study gain an articulate, comprehensive view of the phenomenon (Casey & Murphy, 2009).

6.3 Further research

This thesis has provided a foundation for future research. The study focuses children in need of special support in general ages and limited types of special needs. Further researches could explore teachers’ strategies of helping children in need of special support while specify the ages of children and types of children’s special needs and find out the strategies teachers’ use to help children in certain age or special needs’ type.

Moreover, this study described strategies used by teachers to improve the participation of children in need of special support for teachers’ perspectives rather from children’s point of view. So, the other suggestions is further researches could take children’s point of views into consideration, so that strategies which improve the participation of children use by teachers can be fully understand from children’s perspectives if researchers involve children in the research (Punch, 2002).

Little is known about how teachers’ strategies enable or hinder the inclusion of children in need of special support. In order to maximize potential outcomes, it is crucial to understand how these strategies can advance inclusion. Therefore, future studies could reveal the
outcomes of children after using these strategies in inclusive schools, for example, if the children feel included or not after receiving teachers’ help.

7. Conclusion

Inclusion can be viewed as a facilitator to increase the participation of children in need of special support in school environment, and how teacher help children in need of special support participate in schools along with the concept of inclusion is worth investigating. The researcher has conducted an exploratory study of describing teaching strategies of improve the participation of children with special needs in the three ‘inclusive’ schools in Finland. The objective of this study is to explore strategies that teachers use to facilitate participation of children in need of special supports in three ‘inclusive’ schools in Finland.

Generally, findings in this study indicate that the teacher’s strategies of promoting children’s participation in three Finnish ‘inclusive’ schools are diverse, these strategies can be divided into holistic strategies, environmental-oriented strategies and children-oriented strategies, while most of the teachers from these schools suggested that environmental-oriented strategies can effectively improve the concentration, social interactions of children in need of special support.

Some factors to influence difference of the strategies in different schools were found, different school situations and seems to be a decisive role on teachers’ strategies of improving the participation of the children. When the teachers offer holistic strategies or environmental strategies, the children might participate individually as well as socially in school environments. For special needs children who do not attend to mainstream schools, they may still participate in activities or engage in school. Nevertheless, they might only be physically integrated or participate individually in schools while socially excluded from their peers. Even if the teachers perceive their strategies as tools of include children in need of special support in schools, however, these strategies might actually help children with special needs integrate in schools. Despite there are some limitations remaining in this study, this thesis has still provided a foundation for future research. In sum, it is evident that developing strategies to facilitate the participation of children with special needs in inclusive schools is challenging for teachers and schools.
8. Reference


PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment (2006) *Results* [online at http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_32252351_32235907_1_1_1_1_1_00.html]


Appendix A: Interview guide

Background questions:

• Which grade do/did you teach?
• How many children are/were there in your class in total?
• How many children in need of special support are/were there in your class?
• Which kind of special support does the child need?
• How many years are you working with children in need of special support?
• What is your attitude towards the concept ‘inclusion’?

Interview questions:

• What difficulties do children in need of special support usually face when participating in inclusive settings (for example: classroom/playground games/public areas/school activities)?
  Do they have difficulties in concentration? doing classroom assignment? in group cooperation?
• How did you support children in need of special supports participate in inclusive settings?
• Have you ever make an adjustment when teaching? And how did you do that?
• What makes it easier for children in need of special support to be engaged in inclusive settings?
• How did you use other factors to improve children’s participation, for example peers relations and family cooperations?
Appendix B: Information about the research- Informed consent

Researcher:

Minzhi Wang (Email: wami1612@student.ju.se)

Originally come from China, studying in Jönköping University, Sweden. A student who is studying in master program: Intervention in childhood.

Study:

The aim of this study is to describe strategies teachers used to facilitate participation of children in need of special supports in ‘inclusive schools’ in Finland.

The children in need of special in my study can be defined as children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia (Reading and writing problem), Mild intellectual disability or other participation problems (i.e children with communication problems, children shows aggressive behaviors) which is not based on diagnoses.

Interview:

• Interview will be followed by a interview guide, which includes 6 background questions + 4 main questions based on the strategies the participant use to help children with special education in the school environment.

• The interview shall be recorded on an audio device.

• The interview will only be used by this study.

• The interview takes about 30-40 minutes.

• The interview will be conducted in English.

• Participation is free and only for one time.

• During the interview, participant can pause the interview or ask researcher questions at anytime.

• Before and after the interview, participant can ask questions about researcher and the study, this part will not be recorded.

• After the interview, the researcher will transcribe every word in the interview into text.

Participants:

• Participation in this study is voluntarily.

• Participant need to have experience of working with children with special needs (it is okay if you don not work with special needs children right now)

• The participant will be anonymous; the name shall not be used. Simultaneously, the name of school and child in need of special support will be protected.
• The consent of participant is seen as an on-going process, which means participant can stop the interviews at any time and there will be no further consequences.

• Participation can be at school or an alternative location chosen by the participant or you can choose to perform the interview through Skype.

• Participant can also choose the time to interview.

• Results of this research will be published.

• If you have any questions, please don not hesitate sending me an email! Thank you so much for your participation!
### Appendix C: Overview of the children in need of special support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Examples of participation difficulties</th>
<th>Time that the teacher had worked with the child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>- Can not understand the texts in books</td>
<td>Almost 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Struggling with wiring letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>- Having trouble concentrating different things, such as listen to teachers and peers</td>
<td>1.5 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>- Having difficulties of learning numbers</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Doing assignments slowly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>- Misunderstanding teachers’ requests</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Can not follow the class in some occasions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>- Having difficulties in understanding activity rules</td>
<td>Almost 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Do not have confident in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>- Can not keep up with school</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Have few friends in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary school C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>- Disturbing other children</td>
<td>1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Can not focus on class or assignments for a long time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>- Disturbing other children</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Away from the desk few times when having a class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boy and girl</td>
<td>- Feel nervous when doing speech</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Can not finish tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D: Summary of teachers’ strategies in relation to ICF

#### Activity and participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning and applying knowledge</th>
<th>General tasks and demands</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Interpersonal interactions and relationships (teachers, peers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 B2</td>
<td>B1 B2</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 C2 C3</td>
<td>C2 C3</td>
<td>C1 C2 C3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Environmental factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products and technology</th>
<th>Natural environment and human-made changes to environment</th>
<th>Support and relationships (teacher- teacher, teachers-family)</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 A2 A3</td>
<td>A1 A2</td>
<td>A1 A2 A3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 C3</td>
<td>C2 C3</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Body function and body structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental function</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1 B2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>