

## **Situated inclusion: A Framework for localised Inclusive Education in the Faroe Islands**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents and explores the concept of situated inclusion as a framework for understanding inclusion as a dynamic process that requires local transfer, translation and transformation. By analysing inclusive school environments in the Faroe Islands, the study highlights the necessity of situating inclusion within the local societal, cultural, and geographical settings. The research employs a Situational Analysis approach, incorporating documents, observations and interviews with various stakeholders, including administrators, leaders, advisers, teachers, pupils, parents and others to gather insights into their experiences and perspectives on inclusion. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the development of inclusive policy and practices within the local situation. The findings reveal that inclusion is not merely a universal standard but a situated practice that must be tailored to local situations. The study develops the concept of situated inclusion which consists of and identifies four key components of involvement that play a crucial role in the development of inclusive schools: 1) Political and administrative involvement; 2) Societal and community involvement; 3) Negotiating involvement on principles and values and 4) Argumentation involvement making rationales visible. Emphasis is placed on the importance of engaging all four components to foster sustainable and meaningful inclusive practices. The article concludes that situated inclusion is a valuable tool for guiding policymakers and practitioners in tailoring their efforts to meet local needs and resources. It calls for further research into how situated inclusion can be applied in other communities and internationally to ensure that global ideals of inclusion translate into sustainable and meaningful local practices. The interaction between global and local perspectives is essential for developing inclusion as a dynamic and enduring process that promotes possibilities for participation for all pupils.

**Keywords:** situated inclusion, inclusive education, the Faroe Islands, educational policy.

### **Points of Interest**

- Local focus on inclusion: This study introduces situated inclusion, emphasising that inclusion is not a one-size-fits-all concept but must be adapted to local cultural, societal, and geographical contexts.
- Dynamic and collaborative process: The research identifies inclusion as an ongoing process requiring collaboration among communities, schools, policymakers, and leaders to negotiate shared values and address local needs.

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- Comprehensive methodology: By incorporating interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study gathers diverse perspectives from stakeholders, including teachers, pupils, and parents, offering a well-rounded view of inclusive policy and practices.
- Practical framework: Four essential components—community, negotiations, argumentation, and leadership—are highlighted as key to fostering meaningful and sustainable inclusion in schools.
- Global and local insights: The findings stress that global ideals of inclusion must be transferred, translated and transformed into locally relevant practices, offering guidance for policymakers and practitioners worldwide.

## Introduction

This article introduces the concept of *situated inclusion* as a holistic and ecological approach to developing inclusive school environments. It contends that this approach can offer a deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities when inclusive education develops locally.

Drawing on an extensive study of the Faroese public school system, including document analysis, observations, and interviews with 97 stakeholders (Poulsen, 2023) the concept captures the interplay of cultural, political, and social factors in fostering inclusion. Through Situational Analysis (Clarke et al., 2018) the “entire situation” is examined emphasising the dynamic interactions between political, structural, cultural, and practice-related factors in shaping inclusion. The concept of situated inclusion comprises four essential involvement components: political and administrative involvement, societal and community involvement, negotiation involvement and argumentative involvement. These four components form the foundational building blocks for developing inclusive school environments.

Globally, inclusion often struggles to translate into local practices, with cultural environments frequently overlooked (Chong, 2019; de Bruin, 2022; Dickson, 2019, 2022; Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011; Pijl, 2016). Using Cowen’s (2006, 2009) framework of transfer, translation, and transformation, this study explores how global policies are adapted locally. Transfer refers to the movement of ideas, translation to their adaptation, and transformation to deeper contextual changes influenced by local conditions. Building on Cowen’s framework, Christensen and Ydesen (2015) interpret these concepts through the lenses of impact, space, and movement, highlighting the methodological challenges of capturing the complexities of how ideas evolve from the global to the local. Such reductionist approaches fail to account for the iterative and multi-faceted nature of these processes, obscuring the subtle shifts and interactions that occur along the way.

## The Faroe Islands: Tradition, Modernity, and Inclusive Practices

The Faroe Islands, a constituent part of the Danish Kingdom with partial sovereignty (West, 2020), represent a distinctive and complex society. With a population of approximately 55,000 inhabitants dispersed across 18 islands, the Faroese community combines the characteristics of both insularity and smallness. Traditionally rooted in a way of life closely tied to the environment and strong communal bonds, the Faroe Islands are currently undergoing a transition from a primarily traditional society to one influenced by modernity, and even elements of late modernity (Gaini, 2015; Skorini et al., 2022). The Faroese experience is defined by what Baldacchino and Veenendaal (2018) term the “social ecology of smallness,” where close social networks, shared histories, and mutual interdependence play central roles in community life. This transition introduces a dynamic and sometimes contradictory tension between deeply rooted traditions and emerging modern practices. On the one hand, traditional values of community solidarity and mutual care provide a strong foundation for inclusive practices. On the other hand, the growing emphasis on individuality and diversity challenges these traditional frameworks, requiring a redefinition of what inclusion means in a modern and increasingly heterogeneous society.

The international understanding of inclusion has often developed in modern or postmodern environments, challenging traditional assumptions about schools and teaching (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014; Haug, 2017; Nilholm, 2021). Graham & Jahnukainen (2011, p. 279) points out:

While some might say that we have witnessed the ‘globalisation of inclusion, questions remain as to what has spread. In simple terms, the inclusive education movement is geared towards a reconceptualisation of schooling and the removal of exclusionary barriers through deep change to school cultures, structures, practices and logic.

In the Faroe Islands, the close social relations, shaped by the unique characteristics of communities in very small societies, mean that the principles of inclusion cannot simply be transferred directly but must also be translated and transformed by the local conditions (Cowen, 2006; 2009; Ydesen & Andersen, 2015). Ainscow (2020) emphasises the importance of involving the entire community in the development of inclusive schools. This community-oriented approach is central in the Faroe Islands, where local actors such as politicians, administrators, leaders, advisors, parents, teachers, and others must play a crucial role in developing inclusive practices.

The Faroese situation, combined with tradition, modernity, and the social dynamics of small communities, creates a unique platform for exploring how inclusion can be developed through a situational approach. This approach explains how local actors can collaborate to create inclusive learning environments where all pupils are ensured participation and learning (Farrell, 2004). By recognising the complex relationships and processes necessary to adapt inclusion to local conditions, an ecological approach (Ainscow, 2020; Mitchell, 2018) can help shape a situated understanding of inclusion tailored to the local situation.

Thus, this article explores the concept of situated inclusion, rooted in the Faroese educational environment, as a lens to engage with the broader international discourse on inclusive education.

### **Current Perspectives: Situating the Research**

Inclusive education has become a global ideal, championed by key international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (1994), the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) and the OECD’s Inclusive Goals (OECD, 2023). These frameworks define inclusion as a cornerstone of equitable and high-quality education systems worldwide.

However, translating this ideal into sustainable local applications remains challenging (e.g. Slee, 2013a; Slee, 2013b). Inclusion is shaped by the unique social, cultural, and structural dynamics of each environment, making the process of adapting global ideals to local realities complex (Haug, 2017; Cowen, 2006, 2009). Additionally, research shows that inclusive policies have not substantially reduced exclusion rates in some countries, and categorisation and segregation, particularly for pupils identified as having special needs, have persisted or increased (Chong, 2019; de Bruin, 2022; Dickson, 2019, 2022; Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011; Pijl, 2016). This underscores the necessity of locally grounded research that examines how inclusion can be fostered in specific cultural and societal environments.

Over the past two decades, inclusive education has influenced global educational policies, yet the translation of these policies into practice varies considerably across local contexts. Scholars such as Lakkala et al. (2014) stress the importance of building inclusive cultures through collaboration among educators, multi-professional staff, and parents. However, global and local competitive educational agendas, as seen in e.g. New South Wales and Denmark, often overshadow inclusion and equity (Chong, 2019; Engsig & Johnstone, 2015). This tension between global ideals and local priorities underscores the need for a theoretical and methodological framework that situates inclusion within specific cultural, social, and political environments.

## Introducing Situated Inclusion

This article contributes to international discussions on inclusion by introducing situated inclusion, a concept that encapsulates how local actors navigate the tension between global inclusion ideals and specific cultural and educational realities. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from sociology, political science, and education, this research advocates for an ecological and situational approach to inclusive school development.

While the study is grounded in the Faroese situation, it offers insights that are conceptually and methodologically relevant to other settings by highlighting inclusion as a situated process rather than a universally transferable model. The Faroe Islands serve as a micro-case that illuminates broader processes of transferring, translating, and transforming global inclusion ideals into tangible local practices.

## Structure of the Article

The article unfolds in four key sections:

1. *Theoretical and Methodological Framework* – Establishing the theoretical foundation for the concept of situated inclusion within ecological and situational approaches.
2. *The Analytical Journey (1) and (2)* – Presenting the Faroese educational environment, highlighting its unique challenges and opportunities in fostering inclusion.
3. *Reimagining Inclusion Through a Situated Approach* – Identifying and discussing key components of situated inclusion based on empirical findings.
4. *Situated Inclusion as an Analytical Lens* – Demonstrating how the concept provides a framework for understanding inclusion as a process that evolves through local adaptation of global ideals.

By positioning the Faroe Islands as a micro-case, this article bridges local and global perspectives on inclusion.

## Theoretical and methodological framework

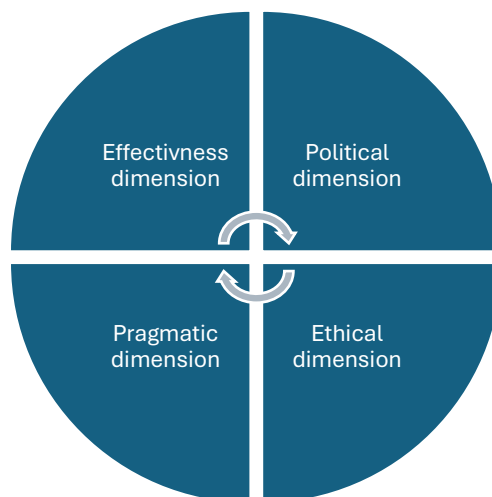
As mentioned in the introduction, this article is based on a larger research project on the development of inclusion within Faroese school environments, focusing on the interaction between school policy and practice (Poulsen, 2023), with Situational Analysis (Clarke et al., 2018) employed as the theoretical and methodological framework. The project's understanding of inclusion aligns with Dyson's (1999) four dimensions of inclusion, which address effectiveness, policy, ethics, and pragmatism (see Figure 1). This aligns with calls for ecological and interdisciplinary approaches in inclusion research (Ainscow et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2014; Kalenda, 2016; Messiou, 2017; Slee, 2013b).

The large-scale research project (Poulsen, 2023) focused on four key areas: the motivations behind the development of inclusion, strategies and organisational initiatives, the experiences and activities of practicing actors, and the perspectives of those who lead, manage, advise, and support inclusive practices.

The Faroe Islands, with its unique societal and cultural foundation, served as the analytical unit. The empirical material comprises 67 semi-structured interviews with 97 informants, including pupils, teachers, school leaders, parents, school advisers, school administrators, labour union representatives, and policymakers, alongside policy documents, historical materials, and other relevant political and discursive texts. Together, these data constitute the empirical platform for the study (see Figure 2 on

page 6). This platform enables analysis of opportunities and barriers to inclusive school development and underpins the concept of situated inclusion.

Figure 1: *The four dimensions of inclusion (Dysons, 1999, in: Poulsen, 2023)*



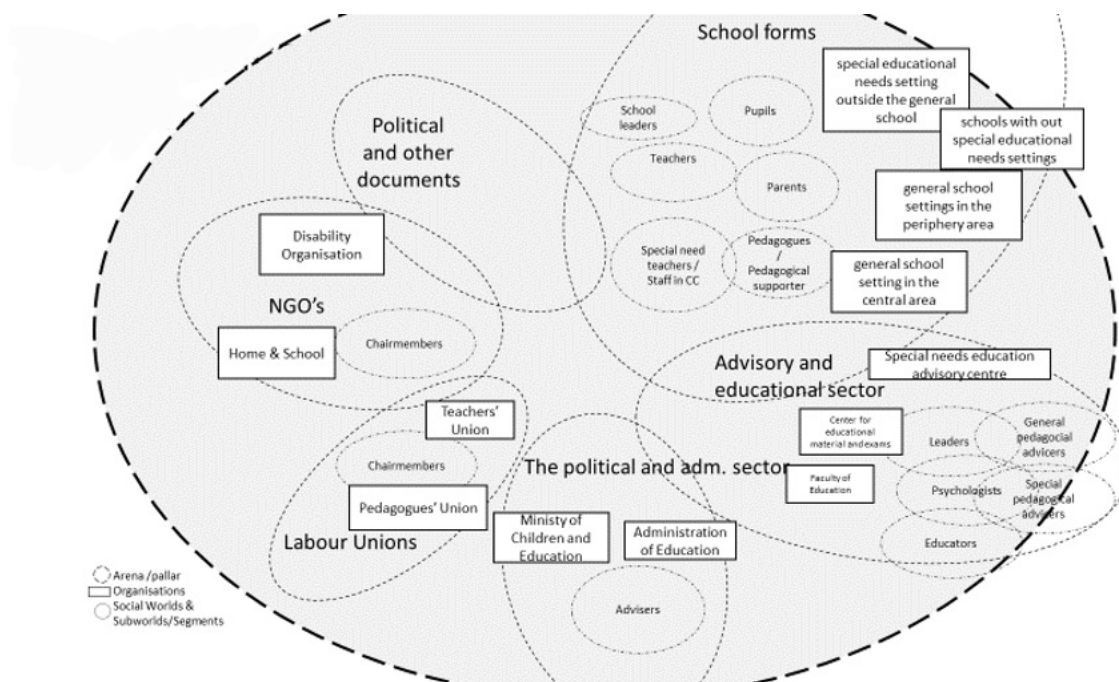
The empirical material was analysed collectively to capture the relationships and dynamics between actors across various social worlds, arenas, and positions, rather than focusing on fixed structures such as micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. Drawing on analytical tools such as situational maps, social worlds/arenas maps, and positional maps, the analysis foregrounds processes, negotiations, and interactions through which inclusion is constructed and contested. This approach is theoretically rooted in critical symbolic interactionism, pragmatism, constructivism, and post-structuralism (Clarke et al., 2018; Strauss, 1978).and enables in-depth analysis of relationships and interactions among actors and actants. The small population size of the Faroe Islands made it possible to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the research process—from pupils and teachers to administrators, advisors, and policymakers—thereby enabling a comprehensive examination of inclusion across interconnected social worlds and arenas. By applying SA's mapping techniques, the study reveals the complex dynamics shaping inclusion practices and potential development pathways.

### **The empirical platform**

Using a Situational Analysis (SA) approach, the "situation" itself (Clarke et al., 2022, p. 18), served as the central unit of analysis. Unlike predefined categories, the situation was framed by the interplay of elements identified through empirical data and relevant research literature. This approach captured diverse perspectives and experiences, highlighting the interrelations within the social worlds and arenas of the Faroese situation, illustrated in fig. 2.



Figure 2. *The empirical platform (Poulsen, 2023).*



The empirical material comprises 67 semi-structured interviews with 97 informants. The informants represented key stakeholder groups within and around the Faroese public school system, including:

- Pupils (n = 26) from both general and segregated school settings, primarily aged 10–16 years, covering upper primary and lower secondary education
- Teachers (n = 20) from general and special education
- School leaders (n = 15)
- Parents (n = 12)
- School advisers (n = 11)
- School administrators and policymakers (n = 7)
- Labour union representatives (n = 6)

Most interviews were conducted individually, while a smaller number involved paired or group interviews, particularly with pupils and teaching staff, depending on context and ethical considerations. All interviews were semi-structured, allowing for comparability across interviews while providing space for participants to articulate experiences and perspectives they considered significant.

The interviews addressed themes such as understandings of inclusion and exclusion; cultural traditions within the Faroese school system; relationships between policy and practice; perceived needs for change; roles and responsibilities; relationships between general and special education; professional collaboration; and perceived opportunities and barriers to inclusive school development.

Interviews with pupils focused on their everyday school experiences, including participation, learning, well-being, relationships with peers and teachers, and their perceptions of inclusion and exclusion in school life. To facilitate pupils' engagement and gain insight into their social worlds as users of the school system, interview questions were supported by visual prompts inspired by Farrell's (2004) conceptualisation of inclusive schooling.

In addition to interviews, the empirical platform included policy documents, legislative texts, historical materials, and other political and discursive sources relevant to the development of inclusive education

in the Faroe Islands. Together, these materials formed an elastic and evolving empirical platform. In this elastic and ongoing situation, actors and stakeholders move fluidly between social worlds and arenas, engaging in interactions through knowledge exchange, meaning making, and coherence. These dynamics provide pitfalls and developmental opportunities for advancing inclusion, explored further in the analysis.

### **Mapping as analysis-strategy**

The collected material was processed in four mapping phases, leveraging the analytical tools provided by SA with a focus on:

1. Transcription and Condensation of Meaning – initial coding and thematisation using NVivo software.
2. Situational and Relational Mapping – secondary coding and thematisation, identifying and organising 67 themes into 8 key clusters.
3. Mapping Social Worlds and Arenas – creation of 14 situational descriptions guided by the themes and clusters.
4. Positional Mapping – developing 10 integrated positional maps intervening with social arenas, worlds, and context-specific descriptions.

### **The Analytical Journey (1): Mapping the Landscape of Inclusion**

From the data, 67 themes emerged, grouped into eight clusters that collectively illuminate the Faroese experience of inclusion. These clusters, supported by empirical examples, highlight critical aspects of the situation.

The first cluster, (1) The “Invisible Vision,” recurred throughout the data across nearly all perspectives. As one teacher remarked:

...I feel it's missing, that someone dares to step forward and say what we want [...] I rarely hear the word [inclusion] anywhere... We don't discuss it at school—ever (Teacher (1), general school setting).

This lack of an articulated and shared vision was also evident among school leadership and administrative actors. One school leader noted:

We are expected to work inclusively, but there is no clear direction. Everyone interprets inclusion differently, and that creates uncertainty (School leader (1), general school setting).

This "Invisible Vision" reflects a recurring absence of explicit goals regarding inclusion, indicating a weak translation process between policy ambitions and everyday school practice.

The first cluster connects directly to the next cluster, (2) "Knowledge," as the implicit and unspoken vision underscores a need to translate, explore and expand knowledge about inclusion. This concern was expressed particularly by actors in advisory and administrative positions:

We lack knowledge [...] It's a huge issue that we don't have research [...] this lack makes it difficult to transform visions (Advisor (1) in the political and administrative sector).

Parents similarly pointed to uncertainty about what inclusion entails:

Sometimes I don't know what the school means by inclusion. It sounds good, but I'm unsure what it means for my child in practice (Parent (1), general school setting).

The third cluster (3) "Dilemmas" was inspired by frequent references to dilemmas between special and general education, while the fourth cluster (4) "Reforms" encompassed suggestions for handling these dilemmas. A teacher highlighted how traditional structures persist:

The old school system still lives on in special educational offerings. Pupils' learning and developmental goals are still measured against standard benchmarks (Teacher (2), in a general school setting).

From an administrative perspective, these dilemmas were framed as structural rather than individual:

We keep moving pupils instead of changing the system. That's the real dilemma (Administrator (1)).

The fifth cluster (5) "Lonely Planets" emerged solely from the empirical material, addressing themes of isolation felt by school leadership, teachers, and pupils alike. This sense of fragmentation pointed towards the sixth cluster (6) "Cohesion" within the school system. For instance, a teacher in a special education setting noted:

When a pupil joins this special education provision, a wall is put up between this school and the rest of the school system (Teacher (3) in a segregated school setting).

A pupil echoed this sense of separation:

It feels like I am not really part of the school anymore. I am just somewhere else (Pupil (1), segregated school setting).

The seventh cluster (7) "Attitudes" was not part of the original situational maps but emerged as related themes surfaced in the empirical material. These included notions of "village children," experiences of loneliness, "bullying, as well as theory-driven concepts as participation, presence, and opportunities for learning (e.g. Farrell, 2004). These themes were subsequently connected to eighth cluster (8) "Children's Rights."

Both clusters were consistently discussed by pupils as decisive for whether they felt included or excluded. Pupils frequently observe attitudes and power relations as central factors shaping their school experiences. One pupil stated:

My suffering was enough for me. In the end, I couldn't make it to school ... I wish there was more focus on well-being at school (Pupil (2), segregated school setting).

Another pupil conveyed a similar concern:

I'm learning too little in the special class, and I'd like to do and learn other things like other pupils at my age. I'm given first-grade books. It's annoying and makes me feel dumb. I don't think I'm wanted in the general class ... they often forget about me (Pupil (3), segregated school setting).

The mapping process, encompassing 67 themes across eight clusters, provided a comprehensive understanding of the empirical material and laid the groundwork for the abductive analysis (Clarke et al., 2018, pp. 28-29). This analysis informed the subsequent development of the concept of situated inclusion.

## **The Analytical Journey (2): From Mapping to Meaning**

The analytical journey employs a rhizomatic approach (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), building on the complexity of the empirical and analytical mappings while introducing structure within the analytical landscape. This method highlights the intricate interplay of relationships and processes, moving beyond rigid hierarchical distinctions to explore the fluid connections between macro- and microelements.



Below, six analytical phases are presented, bridging empirical mapping and the conceptualisation of situated inclusion.

## **Political Engagement and the Challenge of Policy Adaptation in Inclusive Education**

The first analysis section titled “Political Engagement” reveals that, although the transfer process has begun by committing to developing inclusive schools e.g. by ratifying the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009 (Føroya Løgting, 2009), the translation process has been absent, e.g. shown as little political debate or engagement with inclusive principles. The development of inclusion is mainly interpreted through the Public School Act (1997), which, while not explicitly mentioning inclusive schooling, promotes the idea of a school for all. Notably, the drive for an inclusive public school primarily stems from the field of special needs education. The absence of political leadership for translating and transforming an inclusive school policy might be attributed to the unique features of a very small political and administrative entity, where policy and practice often converge, and a tendency for the field of practice to define its politics (Poulsen, 2023).

## **Signs of Transfer and Translation**

The analysis section titled “Signs of Transfer and Translation” highlights an increased awareness of children’s rights and well-being, reflected in local school initiatives that seek to interpret and adapt inclusive principles in context. These local efforts suggest emerging processes of translation and, potentially, transformation. While the political vision of inclusion remains largely implicit, the analysis demonstrates a growing recognition of the need to develop more inclusive schools.

## **Culture and Practice: Inclusion in the Faroese Social and Cultural Landscape**

The analysis of the “Culture and Practice” section explores how inclusion is shaped by the unique socio-cultural situation of the Faroe Islands. Findings indicate that individuals often navigate inclusion independently within a school policy environment that remains largely silent on the matter. This reflects broader societal shifts, as the traditionally homogenous Faroese culture transitions toward greater diversity and modernity (Skorini et al., 2022). The development of inclusive education is embedded in broader societal value debates, including children’s rights and participation, which are rarely addressed explicitly within educational discourse (Gaini, 2009; 2013, 2015).

The Faroese school system stands at a pivotal juncture, reflecting the societal shifts toward modernity and diversity. Inclusion processes, therefore, challenge traditional approaches to schooling, creating friction between entrenched values and the need for transformative practices. This “value battle” emerges clearly in the empirical data, as actors within the school system grapple with differing opinions and the absence of a clear, inclusive policy direction. Advancing inclusion therefore requires both a shift in values and increased professionalisation within the school system.

## **Pupils’ Perspectives: The Need for Professional Awareness**

The analysis of pupils’ perspectives further illuminates how the lack of professional awareness, direction, and knowledge of inclusive schools affects the pupils’ experiences of school life. Pupils describe situations in which they are left subject to professionals’ arbitrary interpretations of what inclusion means in practice. As one pupil explained:

Sometimes it depends on which teacher you have. One thinks you can be part of the class, another thinks you should be somewhere else (Pupil (4), general school setting).

This variability highlights how professional attitudes and decisions shape inclusion and exclusion processes. The analysis indicates that professionals' attitudes, often rooted in kinship and relationships, influence inclusion and exclusion processes. While this interconnectedness can support inclusive practices, pupils also pointed to its potential drawbacks:

Everyone knows everyone, and that can be good, but it also means that people already have an opinion about you (Pupil (5), general school setting).

Several pupils expressed a sense of limited influence over their own schooling, emphasising the need for a more active pupil role in shaping teaching and learning practices:

We are rarely asked what helps us learn or what we need. Decisions are already made before ... (Pupil (6), general school setting).

Insights into pupils' perspectives thus deepen the understanding of what is required to achieve inclusion and demonstrate how pupils can make a crucial contribution to the development of inclusive schools. Pupils frequently pointed to the need to revise the content, structure, and strategies of schooling to better account for diversity:

School is made for some kinds of pupils, but not for everyone. If you don't fit, you have to adjust, not the school (Pupil (7), segregated school setting).

These perspectives underscore the necessity of examining how the relationship between special needs education and general education is conceptualised. Analysing from the pupils' viewpoint, the Faroese school system predominantly adopts a narrow, compensatory approach to inclusion, where difficulties are located within the individual rather than the educational environment:

They keep trying to fix me instead of changing how school works (Pupil (8), segregated school setting).

At the same time, some pupils noticed emerging efforts to rethink inclusive practices through collaboration and shared responsibility:

It helps when teachers talk to each other and try to find solutions together instead of sending you away (Pupil (9), general school setting).

These accounts point to the importance of developing interrelated sub-practices and collaborative patterns that can support the translation and adaptation of inclusive principles to local needs, highlighting the potential for transformation within the system as educators seek to translate and adapt inclusive practices to local needs.

## **Reimagining Inclusion Through a Situated Approach**

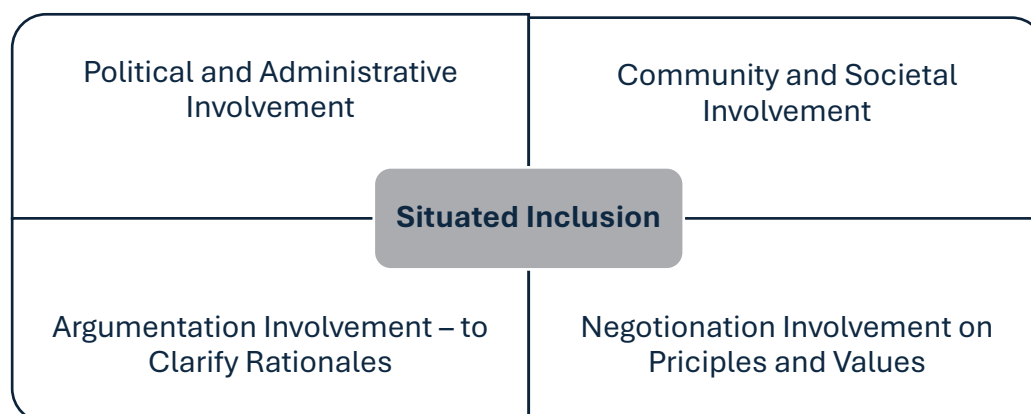
Based on the above analysis of Faroese development of inclusive school environments, and inspired by previous researchers in the field of inclusion, such as Ainscow's (2020) "whole system approach," Dyson's (1999) four discourses on inclusion, Farrell's (2004) four criteria for translating inclusion principles into practice, as well as more ecological approaches to developing inclusive education (Anderson et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2018), the development of a comprehensive situational approach has emerged.

Situated inclusion refers to a dynamic, circumstantial approach to inclusion, where the development of inclusive practices is integrated into the setting and culture in which it is applied. This concept

acknowledges that inclusion cannot be understood as a universal solution or a uniform practice; rather, it requires a situated understanding and adaptation that considers cultural and societal aspects and local norms, relationships, and available resources.

I define situated inclusion as a model in which the development of inclusion requires involvement from four distinct local fronts, illustrated in Figure 3 (Poulsen, 2023).

Figure 3. *Model of the concept Situated Inclusion and the concept's four components (Poulsen, 2023)*



### Political and Administrative Involvement

School policy and administrative engagement play a central role in developing inclusive schools (Ainscow, 2020; Dyson, 1999). However, analyses reveal a significant lack of political and administrative commitment to enact inclusion principles in the Faroe Islands, and this has consequences. The Faroese political and administrative sectors are characterised by a pragmatic and conservative approach, where school development is often left to practitioners without the necessary strategic direction (Poulsen, 2023). This makes it challenging to translate and transform inclusion into practice, particularly as decisions are frequently based on experience and opinions rather than research-based knowledge. At the same time top-down control and overly clear governance (implementation) are also not the solution. Without translated guidance, traditions take over, and with too much control, local grounding is lost.

In the political landscape, inclusion is often viewed through a traditional understanding of schools, as reflected in the Public Schools Act of 1997, which supports a "school for all." However, this legislation does not fully address the challenges and opportunities inherent in modern inclusive practices. The transition from a traditional school model to an inclusive one is thus difficult, especially given the lack of political discourse and will to drive this development forward (Dyson, 1999).

The small size of the Faroese society and the limited number of political and administrative professionals heighten the need for knowledge-sharing and networking to promote the vision of inclusion. In small communities like the Faroe Islands, where specialised knowledge is often scarce, broad collaboration is essential. This underscores the necessity for politicians and school leaders to work closely together and use locally grounded, research-based arguments to translate and transform and thus advance inclusive schooling.

A key challenge for the Faroese school system is the lack of local research to underpin the tailored and effective development of inclusive practices. Without this local research base, the school system may lack the knowledge needed to develop transformative and sustainable inclusive strategies.

Despite these challenges, the very small size of the Faroese society can also be an advantage. As one informant notes, change can happen quickly in small communities, creating opportunities to develop inclusion strategically and pragmatically. By adopting a "bottom-up" approach and adapting school

policies to the local Faroese context, networks and collaborative structures can be strengthened, enhancing schools' capacity to create inclusive environments (Dyson, 1999). As one informant explained:

We are still waiting for direction from the authorities. So, it's more a matter of arguing from the ground up to get some guidance (Advisor (2) in a school advisory organisation).

This statement highlights the importance of translated dialogue and engagement from school leadership and the political system to transform inclusion work in practice. Leadership commitment and negotiation over the school's direction are critical for translating inclusion from a political vision into practice.

### **Societal and Community Involvement**

Societal and community involvement is essential for the development of inclusive education, but empirical evidence highlights both pitfalls and opportunities. While Faroese society is moving towards modernity and individualism, traditional social relations remain strong, largely due to the small size of the community. This social dynamic can create challenges, for instance, for migrants who need linguistic and cultural frameworks to feel included into the existing environment and, by extension, into the school community, reinforced by the lack of political involvement.

Another important dimension of community involvement is the strong "we-culture" that inherited by traditions characterises Faroese society, which became clear in empirical material concerning inclusion (Poulsen, 2023, p. 119). While this culture fosters a sense of belonging, inclusion requires a broader understanding of the boundaries of the community and a conscious effort to accommodate diversity. If this aspect is overlooked, it could hinder progress towards a more inclusive school system.

The Faroese chain dance exemplifies cohesion and cultural continuity, mandated in schools under national legislation (Fólkaskúlalógin, 1997). As part of school events, it reinforces cultural traditions but can also integrate inclusive principles, aligning with the national curriculum's core competencies: tolerance, communication, exploration, and creativity (Námsætlanir fyri fólkaskúlan, 2011).

However, empirical evidence points to collaboration challenges across different social spheres e.g. starting with children and building on the traditional communities of Faroese society (Gaini, 2021). A key area for development could be the modernisation of these traditional communities, fostering inclusion through an ecological and situated perspective.

To promote inclusion in the school system, it is crucial to involve diverse stakeholders – parents, professionals, and minority groups – and to strengthen collaboration across societal arenas (Ainscow, 2020). Such cooperation could be a decisive factor in creating a more inclusive school environment where all actors contribute to children's learning and well-being.

### **Negotiation Involvement**

There is a noticeable lack of political support and leadership in the Faroe Islands, and in its absence, the traditional "we-culture" tends to dominate, even as society progresses. The transition to negotiation involves navigating the tension between tradition and change and understanding how political and administrative leadership can facilitate the development of inclusive practices. Negotiation becomes crucial for balancing these forces, providing an opportunity to challenge the status quo, embodied by the "we-culture," and to create space where marginalized perspectives can be included in the development process. Political leadership must actively engage in this process to ensure that the shift towards inclusion happens not only conceptually, but in practice.

A critical element of this negotiation is acknowledging the tradition of silos in the Faroese system while recognizing that recent developments have allowed for meetings between groups who previously did not interact. The challenge lies in the need to foster mutual commitment among these groups, a dynamic

that requires careful attention and highlights the necessity of political leadership in this process – or, more specifically, that leadership must understand and navigate these emerging dynamics.

To develop a more inclusive education system, ongoing dialogue and negotiation are essential tools. Inclusion goes beyond implementing practical changes; it demands a continuous critical examination of the cultural norms that shape the educational system and pedagogy. In a small society like the Faroes, where debates often remain implicit or unspoken (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018), the development of inclusive schools requires open discussions about the school's purpose and its ability to accommodate all students according to inclusive principles (Brantlinger, 1997; Farrell, 2004; Haug, 2020; Magnússon, 2019).

Historically, the division between special and mainstream education has created a form of stigmatisation, where children with special needs have been excluded from the community (Norwich, 2014). This division between general education and special needs education has also roots in the division between who are in the we-culture and the ones who differ and thus are outside the we-culture. To advance inclusion, it is necessary to negotiate how the education system can be restructured to break down this division and include all pupils in a shared community, while silence can legitimise exclusion, making it crucial to speak openly about inclusion as an ideological commitment (Nusbaum, 2013). The negotiation process is not merely a theoretical exercise but a practical necessity. As Brantlinger (1997) argues, socially beneficial theories are developed through communication and daily interactions, where different stakeholders – parents, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers – must engage in negotiation about the values and practices of schools. In the Faroese situation, however, some actors perceive inclusion as a topic that is not widely discussed. For instance, one informant remarked: *The word 'inclusion' doesn't exist* (Teacher (8) in a general school setting), reflecting a lack of public dialogue on the issue.

Despite Faroese society's strong traditions of community and collaboration, challenges persist. However, the tight-knit nature of the Faroese community offers a unique advantage—changes can be initiated and implemented rapidly when approached with clear focus and intent. Faroese history shows that independence and self-determination have not only strengthened the community but also reinforced its cultural cohesion (Nielsen, 1998; Petersen, 1994).

Progress in the translation of inclusive principles into practice has already begun. A working group established by the Ministry of Children and Education underscores the importance of adapting the objectives and values of the public school system to reflect modern societal conditions (Knudsen et al., 2023). This active negotiation marks a critical step towards embedding inclusion as a transformative force within Faroese education.

### Argumentative Involvement

Incorporating arguments is a crucial step in developing inclusive schools, emphasizing the importance of constructing effective and ethically sound justifications for advancing inclusion (Dyson, 1999). These arguments must go beyond social or moral reasoning to demonstrate how inclusive schools enhance learning and well-being for all pupils. Ainscow (2020) highlights that evidence of effectiveness is essential and that pupils' own experiences can play a central role in this process (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018).

Pupils' perspectives provide unique insights into the benefits of inclusion. Research shows that they view inclusive schools as critical for improving the quality of school life, arguing that inclusion promotes social well-being and enhances learning opportunities for all (Poulsen, 2023; Tangen, 2009). Their voices are not only compelling arguments for inclusion but also serve as a key component of the collaborative process. Involving pupils in discussions about inclusion creates opportunities to anchor these arguments in lived experiences, fostering greater buy-in from stakeholders.

Despite the strength of these arguments, there is a notable reluctance within advisory, administrative, and political sectors to actively promote and prioritize inclusive education. This lack of cross-sectoral



engagement slows the translation of inclusion from vision to practice. Too often, inclusion remains siloed within special needs education, limiting its transformative potential.

A meaningful discussion on inclusion must go beyond imposing top-down directives. Instead, engaging diverse stakeholders, including pupils, in the negotiation process can ensure that inclusion reflects local realities and builds on shared understanding. Involving children as active contributors not only strengthens the arguments for inclusion but also aligns with evidence that local involvement leads to more sustainable and context-sensitive outcomes (Haug, 2017).

Thus, developing inclusive education requires more than political will. It calls for strategic collaboration among politicians, school leaders, and community stakeholders. Flexibility, dialogue, and mutual engagement are essential to transform the principles of inclusion into effective, practical outcomes that benefit all pupils.

### **Situated Inclusion as an Analytical Lens**

The four components of involvement—political and administrative involvement, community and societal involvement, negotiation involvement, and argumentation involvement—discussed in the previous section, collectively frame the concept of Situated Inclusion. This concept offers a new analytical lens for understanding inclusion as a dynamic process that is shaped by local transfer, translation and transformation. Instead of treating inclusion as a universal model that can be uniformly applied across contexts, this perspective emphasizes the need to adapt global ideals to local realities.

According to Dyson (1999) and Ainscow (2020), inclusion must be understood as an ongoing process of translating global ideals into local practice, which simultaneously demands deep systemic reforms (The Salamanca Statement, 1994). However, for these reforms to yield lasting outcomes, they must be shaped and adjusted in alignment with the specific local situation. The Faroe Islands provide a compelling case where inclusion can be understood as a situated process requiring a careful balance between universal standards and local culture, resources, needs, and opportunities.

The analysis of the development of inclusion in the Faroe Islands has generated new insights into how situated inclusion can inform future approaches to inclusion. While absolute knowledge often seeks a fixed model for universal implementation, situated inclusion is rooted in situated knowledge (Brantlinger, 1997; Haraway, 1988). This involves recognising that inclusion processes must necessarily be tailored to the unique circumstances in which they unfold. In the Faroese context, this has resulted in a holistic understanding of inclusion, where the processes of transfer, translation, and transformation of global ideals are essential components of local development.

A key part of this development is the four components of involvement—political and administrative involvement, community and societal involvement, negotiation involvement, and argumentative involvement—discussed earlier in this article. These components play a pivotal role in the development of inclusive schools by supporting broad engagement from various stakeholders within the local community. Such broad participation is crucial for creating ways that integrate global ideals of inclusion while addressing the specific dynamics of the local situation.

With the concept of situated inclusion, the aim is to highlight the importance of a holistic approach to inclusion that extends beyond the school and incorporates a wider spectrum of societal, cultural, geographical, and political factors. This approach requires the engagement of the four components of involvement that constitute situated inclusion.

This understanding of inclusion as a situated process has both methodological and conceptual implications for future research. Recognising that inclusion cannot be implemented through a universal model necessitates research that focuses on local studies of how inclusion can be developed and adapted. This opens possibilities for future development projects and policy strategies to be grounded in the unique conditions of specific communities, offering valuable insights into how inclusion can be adjusted and advanced in alignment with local realities.



Situated inclusion not only holds the potential to deepen understanding of inclusive practices in small communities like the Faroe Islands but also inspires further research and practice in other international environments. The development of inclusion is a process of transfer, translation, and transformation that requires the integration of local realities to ensure that global ideals are translated into sustainable and meaningful practices. It is within this dynamic interplay between the global and the local that inclusion can be developed and adapted, making situated inclusion a valuable approach for future research and practice in inclusion.

## Conclusion

This article has explored how the concept of situated inclusion can offer a new understanding of inclusion as a dynamic process requiring local adaptation and interpretation. Through an analysis of inclusive school environments in the Faroe Islands, it has become evident that inclusion is not merely a universal standard but a situated process and practice that must be tailored to the specific social, cultural, and geographical contexts in which it unfolds. This perspective challenges traditional views of inclusion as a universal concept and highlights the necessity of considering local nuances and needs to develop sustainable inclusion in practice.

By integrating the four components of involvement – political and administrative involvement, community and societal involvement, negotiation involvement and argumentative involvement – the article has demonstrated how these elements play a crucial role in developing inclusive schools. This holistic approach emphasises that inclusion is a collective effort, requiring engagement from all actors in the local community to create sustainable inclusive practices. Schools, parents, pupils, local educational authorities, and other stakeholders must collaborate to foster inclusive environments where all pupils can thrive, learn, and actively participate in learning communities.

The article further underlines the importance of considering local conditions when developing political strategies and initiatives. Situated inclusion can serve as a guiding framework for policymakers and practitioners to direct their efforts in ways that respond to local opportunities, needs, and resources. This necessitates ongoing dialogue among various stakeholders and a flexible approach to transforming inclusion principles into practice.

In conclusion, the article points to the need for further research focused on how situated inclusion can be applied in other communities and international contexts. Such research would not only enhance the theoretical understanding of inclusion but also contribute to the development of concrete, locally tailored approaches that ensure global ideals of inclusion are translated into sustainable and meaningful practice. It is in this interaction between the global and the local that inclusion can be realised as a dynamic and enduring process that promotes participation and opportunities for all pupils. Through targeted efforts, we can work towards creating inclusive learning environments that respect and embrace the unique circumstances of each situation.

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