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Student Participation in Reading Classes in a Swedish Compulsory School for Students Diagnosed with Intellectual Disability

Kattis Edström

Department of Health, Education and Technology, Division of Education and Languages Luleå University of Technology, 971 87 Luleå, Sweden; kattis.edstrom@ltu.se

Abstract: This paper presents a mini-ethnographic case study of student participation in reading classes in a Swedish compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities (CSID). All children have equal rights to good education and there is a need for more research in these schools. The result is interesting for the field of inclusive education since the same students should be welcomed and included in mainstream school classrooms. The Participation Model's (TPM's) criteria for participation (acceptance, accessibility, autonomy, belonging, interaction, and involvement) were used, both as a definition of participation and as an analytical instrument. Six lessons were observed, and a student questionnaire was performed. The school offered a variety of reading classes weekly. The results indicated that most participation criteria were met. Observing and analysing a series of lessons offered a richer picture of student participation than just looking at one activity. The easy access to support from assistants and special education needs teachers also indicated both access to participation criteria and the risk of limiting other participation criteria. This study highlights more dilemmas; for example, when a high degree of the accessibility criterion was met, possibilities of interaction between students could also be limited.

Keywords: dilemma perspective; intellectual disability; The Participation Model; participation criteria; reading class; special education; Swedish special school

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1. Introduction

All children have the right to education and development, and to be listened to [1]. School plays an important role in fulfilling these rights and guiding students into democratic society [2]. In the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 [3], an inclusive society is highlighted, and disability is explicitly mentioned as one of the grounds on which an individual should not be excluded. This makes participation even more important to students with intellectual disabilities (ID). Participation is a fundamental right for all students in Swedish schools [2]. News media remind us almost on a daily basis about how young peoples' lack of access to society leads to exclusion and criminality. Participation is important.

One definition of the multifaceted concept of participation is presented by The Participation Model (TPM) [4,5]. Participation is rarely divided into simply participation or lack thereof, and in this definition, there are six different criteria jointly defining participation. This means that the more these criteria are met, the closer the students are to maximal participation cf. [6]. In this study, student participation was investigated according to the six criteria (*acceptance*, *accessibility*, *autonomy*, *belonging*, *interaction*, and *involvement*) of TPM, which will be described in more detail below. This model is used in research to observe and analyse participation [7,8], but also in school and preschool practice [5]. TPM was developed based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, Children and Youth Version, ICF-CY [9]. In ICF-CY, the definition of participation is 'a

person's "involvement in a life situation" and represents the societal perspective of functioning' [9] (p. xvi). Participation in school is important, no matter what school students attend; it is valuable to ascertain their participation in their specific educational contexts.

In Sweden, there are special types of schools (or classes) for students diagnosed with intellectual disability (ID), hearing and/or visual impairments, and language impairments. During the last thirty years, Sweden has had an increasing number of students in special schools [10]. In this paper, reading classes in a compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities (CSID) (in Swedish "anpassad grundskola"; officially translated into English as "compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities") are investigated. Teachers in Swedish CSIDs consider their own approach to teaching to be more holistic than that of teachers in mainstream schools and hold that SIDs are a better alternative for their students [11]. However, students segregated by different curricula, low expectations, and exclusive settings do not have the same opportunities as students in mainstream schools cf. [12,13]. The present study is concerned with the participation of CSID students in reading classes. The results of this study are valuable not only to other special schools but also to the promotion of inclusive practices. As CSID teachers find that their holistic teaching styles are something that mainstream schoolteachers would benefit from using [11], these results may also contribute to knowledge on inclusive practices.

Special education stems from the tradition of the psycho-medical paradigm [14,15], where special needs are seen as difficulties or deficits and as characteristics of the child. In this view, special education and segregated solutions are seen as rational responses to children's perceived deficits and diagnoses [15]. This psycho-medical paradigm has been criticised, and an alternative paradigm has been suggested, where special needs are instead seen as the results of social processes, where special education should be deconstructed to construct inclusion [16,17]. Also, a third perspective emerged, the dilemma perspective [14]. Proponents of this view highlight the complexity that occurs when theory and practice meet. When trying to reach certain implicit values, for example, equity and participation, contradictions may occur. This raises a need for problem solving and continually ongoing decision making [14]. In the special needs' education context, '[o]nce the curriculum becomes determinate, it inevitably brings with it discriminations and distinctions: some children learn certain things quickly, others slowly; some engage with some learning tasks, others do not; some find their interests and aptitudes favoured, others find them neglected' [14] (p. 166).

In a special educational context, dilemmas are central [14,15]. The dilemma perspective arose as a critique of, or an attempt to nuance, the inclusive education movement. The alleged 'basic dilemma was whether to recognise, or not to recognise, differences, as either option has some negative implications or risks associated with stigma, devaluation, rejection or denial of opportunities' [18] (p. 287). Norwich [18] (p. 288) stated that 'a dilemma refers to a situation when there is a choice between alternatives when neither is favourable', and a classic dilemma is that 'if one identifies groups of children, one risks stigmatising them. However, if one does not identify groups of children, one risks neglecting children who need more support' [15] (p. 235). I find this dilemma easily transferable to the question of placing students in CSID versus in mainstream classes in Sweden, and from this perspective, CSID is one attempt to resolve a dilemma. This transfer of the dilemma perspective to Swedish CSID leads to the following question: Does the Swedish school choose stigmatising before neglecting? In Sweden, as in only a few other countries, students diagnosed with ID have their own curriculum and syllabi and are, in this way, segregated from mainstream education [11]. As in many other European countries, the number of students put into exclusive school settings is increasing [11]. In Sweden, students diagnosed with moderate or mild ID can be integrated in mainstream classes or educated in a special school or special group and students can follow compulsory school curriculum or the curriculum and syllabi of CSID [11,12]. To make this decision could be like solving a dilemma. In this study, all students were placed in CSID, i.e., a special

group, following the CSID's curriculum and syllabi, and only shared buildings with a mainstream school.

Even though the context studied is by definition non-inclusive cf. [19], investigating segregated settings is of importance [11], as students diagnosed with ID also have the right to attend mainstream schools. Thus, it is of interest to understand how students diagnosed with ID who are enrolled in CSIDs are offered opportunities for, and access to, participation successfully. That information may provide ideas to inclusive schools regarding how to teach a variety of students in the classroom.

In this study, TPM is used to define participation. The study aims to investigate and illuminate what criteria of TPM students in a Swedish CSID reach, or obtain access to, during reading classes.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Context and Design

This mini-ethnographic case study [20] was performed in 2020, between the end of August and the end of September. The study context is a CSID classroom, in a Swedish municipality, and included 16 students (13 females) aged 13–16 years, as this was the age group for all students in these school buildings. All students in this class had been diagnosed with moderate to mild ID, and this was the criterion to be enrolled in this CSID. These students came from throughout the entire municipality and did not necessarily live in the local area of the school, like most other students in public mainstream schools. Thus, it could be called a special group that follows the curriculum and syllabi of a CSID. In class, there were two special education needs teachers, henceforth referred to as *teachers*, and four assistant teachers (special needs assistants/paraprofessionals), henceforth referred to as *assistants*. The staff included five females and one male. The assistants are oftentimes the group of staff the students diagnosed with ID meet with most frequently during school days, since they tend to work both in school and at the leisure centre after school [21]. This was also the case in the school included in this study.

A case study may include a variety of methods [22], and in this case, in order to acquire a broad picture of participation in the reading classes, it included classroom observations at six times (out of which four were filmed, see below), as well as one questionnaire. During the observations, which lasted for around 60 min each, I was 'one of the grown-ups' in the classroom but attended as an observer. Thus, this study has an ethnographic approach, and since the investigation also was performed during a rather short period of time, it is seen as a mini-ethnographic case study [20]. Yin [22] (p. 15) defined a case study as investigations into 'a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context', and this provides for the high ecological validity [23] of the study. I was, in the terminology of Gold [24], closer to a complete observer than a complete participant since I tried not to interfere in the classes during field observations. Students were used to more than one teacher and more than one assistant being present during every class, so one more grown-up in the classroom seemed rather natural to them. Some students seemed to be interested in me being a new person in the classroom, and some did not seem to be bothered at all.

The observations in class were all made during the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that there were restrictions on keeping space between people and other limitations on physical interaction. Throughout the entire pandemic, special schools remained in operation, regardless of whether other primary schools in Sweden were closed or not. In the classroom, students sat one by one, which was not very different from ordinary seating in rows facing the front whiteboard, but because of pandemic-related restrictions, their desks were separated from each other. Students' reading lessons were utilised as the arena for investigating students' participation. Language and reading skills are essential competences in order to access and take part in the community.

2.2. Data Collection and Data Processing

During the observations, field notes were taken with the intention of writing down signs of participation criteria offered or accessible to the students. TPM was used to identify the six criteria of participation, and I had a printed version of the model in front of me. After each observation, I went through my field notes and completed missing parts to describe the classes in full sentences. The study included my attendance in class quite often over a short period of time. To be able to revisit and study sequences of uncertainties, classes were also filmed (for exceptions, keep reading). Students were used to being filmed as one of the assistants used to film in class, also prior to the study, so during most of the observation period, they took care of the filming, thus supporting ecological validity [23]. During the reading classes, where one student at a time was in a small room outside the classroom alone with one teacher and with me as an observer, I decided to just take notes. Four different classes were observed, and due to technical problems (due to a technical mistake, one class was filmed without sound, and another class was only partially filmed, so I attended and the assistant filmed similar classes again), two classes—news and literature reading—were observed twice each, but in the results, they are described as one each. Furthermore, in the Results section, the different classes are described and discussed as linked to the TPM criteria (see Tables 1–5).

The research received ethical approval from the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2020-00230). Teachers and students were informed about the entire project, their participation, and their rights, verbally by the researchers in class. Students, parents/caregivers, teachers, and assistants were all provided information in writing as well. After this, students, parents, teachers, and assistants provided written informed consent regarding their participation. At an early stage, a few of the students declared that they did not want to be interviewed, which is why I decided to use a questionnaire. Since they were accustomed to using a quiz game in class, I decided to make the questionnaire in the same format, as it would be more approachable to them. The quiz is built to provide more information on students' *engagement*, as in how they enjoy performing different tasks, but also to provide indications of students' access to *accessibility* and *autonomy*. Their answers provide indications, as described in the results, and may be seen as yielding more qualitative data.

2.3. The Participation Model (TPM)

The term participation is used in various ways and a model called The Participation Model (TPM) can be seen as one way to define it. At Stockholm University, a research group led by Janson [4,5] explored participation and developed a model of six criteria (aspects, in Janson's [4] terminology) to describe participation. Thus, it is logical to say that TPM consists of six necessary criteria, and these are jointly sufficient to define maximal participation. (This terminology was developed by [25].) The six criteria are: *acceptance, accessibility, autonomy, belonging, interaction,* and *involvement* (in the translation of [25]). TPM is useful to investigate participation and the six criteria are all found necessary to reach inclusive education [25]. Sociocultural theory is the point of departure of Janson's [4] model, where participation is understood as occurring during a joint activity, thus, participation always occurs in a context, and Janson suggested three essential cultures: *educational culture, care culture*, and *peer culture*.

Educational culture is the culture that reigns in a classroom context. According to Janson [4], this is a culture with a vertical power structure where teachers and assistants are superior in power, and students are minors, and this also indicates that the responsibility is the teachers' and assistants'. Since the responsibilities are the teachers' or assistants', they are the ones responsible for offering participation, and the students need to be active in order to access participation. In this paper, this view of the expectation of teachers' and assistants' offering is visible.

TPM was first intended mainly for preschool contexts but was later slightly modified and promoted as a tool for teachers in elementary schools in Sweden to support inclusive education in class [5]. In this study, I investigated what criteria of participation students in

one Swedish CSID reach or have access to during reading classes. Below are descriptions of the six criteria and how they were investigated.

Participation Criteria

The six criteria of participation are presented in alphabetical order in this section, starting with *acceptance*. To admit other students as important contributors is to give them *acceptance*; hence, acceptance needs to be received from others. The answers to questionnaire questions about listening to other students' reading (Table A1, questions 11 and 12) indicated tendencies of acceptance in addition to observations.

Accessibility is divided into *physical accessibility*, *accessibility into meaning context*, and *socio-communicative accessibility* [5]. The opportunity to access the school, classroom, and materials falls under the domain of physical accessibility. To understand other students and teachers and to make oneself understood is socio-communicative accessibility. The accessibility of a meaning context is the ability to understand the aims of an activity or task. Both observations and the questionnaire (see Table A1, questions 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 11) were needed here to obtain indications of students' accessibility.

Autonomy deals with students' own opportunities to make decisions, such as what, how, and with whom students are doing something [5]. Independence is a part of this, for example, to be able to manage to do things on your own, but also be able to do things you are not able to manage on your own, supported by an assistant. Observations during class provided indications of this.

The criterion of *belonging* is divided into *formal belonging* and *informal belonging*, where formal belonging is defined as being affiliated with the school and a class [5] and informal belonging is determined by the feeling of being a part of the school or class. In this study, formal belonging was confirmed since students had the right to attend class. Informal belonging is harder to observe, but if other criteria, such as, for example, accessibility and acceptance, are offered, this could indicate higher chances of informal belonging.

Interaction is about companionship and cooperation with other students where everyone is contributing [5], and this was verified through observations in class.

Finally, to reach a high degree of *involvement* is to achieve inner motivation. To be doing something and to enjoy doing it concern the criterion of *involvement* [5], and aside from observations, the questionnaire also made such interrogations (Table A1, questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, and 13) to provide indications of this.

3. Results

In this section, the results from the observations and the questionnaire (Table A1) are presented. The results are divided into four parts: *literature, news, reading training*, and *quiz*, representing the four types of reading classes. Since the context is important, every part is presented as a story from the classroom discussed considering the six criteria of TPM. Even though the results are divided into the different classes there, I do not intend to compare types of classes, but rather to add them together in order to obtain a richer picture of student participation.

All students seemed motivated to develop their reading skills, since all 16 students expressed, in the questionnaire, that being able to read is important. This was further supported as most of them chose 'fun' and 'exciting' as words connected with reading. Aside from *engagement and motivation*, this also indicated *accessibility to the meaning context*.

3.1. Literature

The book *Pojken och Tigern (The Boy and the Tiger*, in English) [26] is a Swedish classic that has been used for reading comprehension exercises in schools, often in the third grade in compulsory school, for decades. It is a story about a boy and his cat, named Tiger, travelling through Sweden.

This literature class started with joint work with this book (*Pojken och Tigern*) and ended with students reading separately from their own 'desk books'. (In Swedish classrooms,

students often have their own elective book to read. Since the books used to be kept in their desks, it is called a 'desk book'.) One of the teachers read a chapter aloud in class. Many of the students watched the teacher reading, and three students were drawing. *Accessibility* was offered through teachers' reading, as they showed pictures from the book. The answers to the questionnaire also supported that the setting supported students' accessibility, since most students chose the description that it was 'easy to understand and follow'.

One of the students laughed quite a lot, and this seemed to be a sign of her *involvement* in the actions. Students also showed *involvement* when they listened to and answered questions from the teacher. Indications of *involvement* could be found in the questionnaire, as it showed that most of the students thought that the book *Pojken och Tigern* was 'exciting' or 'fun'. Two students chose to evaluate it as 'boring' and two as 'sad'.

When the teacher read the chapter, they asked the class the questions that followed (in the book), and a few students had the opportunity to answer. The last question was, 'If you could be an animal, which one would you like to be?' All students stated what animals they would prefer to be. These were signs of *interaction* with teachers and assistants and not directly between students. Then, the teacher discussed spelling and long and short vowels. Students took turns spelling, and the teacher corrected errors and praised the correct spellings.

When they finished the joint work featuring *Pojken och Tigern*, students opened their 'desk books', books they chose themselves from the library, to read. They were all 'satisfied with their choice of desk book', even though two of them addressed the books as 'boring' or 'rather boring'. This is an indication of offered *autonomy*, as students could decide which book to read themselves, and reading a book they actually find enjoyable could also increase *engagement and motivation*. It could also offer a *challenge*, but that could sometimes lead to a too-difficult task, as students must then find a book that looks interesting while being at the perfect level of difficulty.

Some students were supported by assistants or teachers, conversation occurred, and there were sounds of talking and reading in the classroom as well. Thus, during 'silent reading' time, there was never total silence, as always someone was talking, but it was calm, and students seemed to read. As assistants and teachers increased *accessibility* for some in this way, it is possible that it decreased *accessibility* for students who needed silence. Most answered that it was 'working well' to read silently in class. Two students found it 'sometimes worked well/sometimes worked bad', and no one answered that it just 'worked bad'. Even though nine students seemed to think that they needed to have 'total silence' when reading in the classroom, six students said that 'it is ok with a little talking', and one of them chose the answer that 'it must absolutely not be quiet'.

Since *involvement* is a criterion that cannot be clarified by observations only and students' opinions must be acquired, the answers in the questionnaire provided valuable information. Students were mostly positive about the different reading classes and ways of reading and chose positive answers such as 'fun' and 'interesting'. None of the students were negative towards all reading classes, which indicated that they were all offered *engagement and motivation* in at least one of the different classes. Whether all students were *challenged* enough was uncertain and can be questioned since there were students who responded 'boring' and 'easy' for the same activity (see Table 1).

3.2. News

This reading class was about reading news, and when it started, all students had their own copy of the newspaper *8sidor* (this newspaper is published by the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media, MTM (https://www.mtm.se, accessed on 8 August 2023), and it is intended to be easy to read, with bigger letters, omitting difficult words and explaining what, where, and why things happened) (Swedish for *Eight Pages*), thus providing *physical accessibility* to the object (https://8sidor.se/om-8-sidor/, accessed on 8 August 2023). Thus, the paper is designed to increase *accessibility*. The classroom staff also supported *accessibility*. For example, teachers guided the class through the paper by reading all the

headlines while pointing to parts of their copy and explaining certain details to support students in following along. For example, they said, 'let's turn to page five', 'on top [of the page] on your right', 'the large article', or 'the one with several pictures on the right'. Assistants were strategically placed throughout the classroom and close to students in need of extra support, ready to point to specific parts of the text, offer explanations, and so on, which increased both the *accessibility* and *autonomy* to these students. All students seemed used to the procedure and were all aware of the next step: picking their own choice of articles from the different headlines. This well-known structure also supported *accessibility*, as students knew what to do, what the next step was, and what was expected of them (see Table 1)

Table 1. The Participation Model (TPM) criteria in literature class.

Class / Criteria	*Acceptance*	*Accessibility*	*Autonomy*	*Belonging*	*Interaction*	*Involvement*
Literature	Teachers ask questions, and students answer.	Accessibility is created through opportunities to engage in separated/shielded seating, accessibility to the texts through, for example, reading or communication support when needed. The two students who think it is a difficult book have assistants nearby.	Chose book.	Participation on students' own prerequisites, supported by teachers and assistants.	No/few signs of interaction between students.	Satisfaction with book choice.

Within this structure, there were also opportunities for students to make their own choices; hence, they were offered *autonomy*. In a given order, after the teacher asked the students where they began reading the last time to know where to start this time, students were asked to pick the headline they found most interesting, or the headline of the article they preferred to read aloud in class. These procedures seemed to go smoothly, even if a few students needed to change their minds since their preferred article had already been chosen by someone else. The fact that students could decide which article to read and choose 'words of the week' in news reading class were signs of offered *autonomy*.

After all decisions were made by students, they read their chosen articles one by one, starting from the beginning of the newspaper. One exception was a student who went home earlier than the others and was then given the opportunity to read their article ahead of its placement in the paper. Most of the students read by themselves. Some students read part of the text and shared the reading with an assistant. Some students had an assistant who whispered to help them, more or less. These acts by the assistants were also signs of *accessibility*. By the end of the observation period, 10/15 students were finished, and the remaining students read the next day. Even if this procedure was time-consuming, there were no complaints or harsh words heard in the classroom. Students seemed to show *acceptance* of each other's contributions when reading the news, and I never heard any belittling comments from the students in any of the observed classes. Most students were positive towards listening to others, according to the questionnaire. Most of the students also chose positive answers to listening to others reading: it was 'fun' (9), 'exciting' (2), or 'interesting' (2). However, three students answered that it was 'boring'. These positive attitudes supported the indications of offered *acceptance*, and possibly some degree of *interaction*. The teacher gave comments, mostly on the content, but sometimes said 'well read' or 'thank you'. This together with the fact that the teachers offered positive feedback to the students and that they created a positive atmosphere where *acceptance* was expected meant that this criterion was supported. *Interaction* between students was the criterion for which it was the most difficult to find examples. The closest to an example was when they

read the news; they all contributed and read aloud, with or without support, and they also listened to one another. During this activity, they were all supportive of each other, and maybe polite, but this cannot be seen as enabling a high degree of *interaction*.

After each article, the student who had read it aloud explained which word they had chosen to be added to the list of 'words of the week', and this was a sign of offered *autonomy*.

Students seemed to take active part in class; thus, *involvement*, as *engagement and motivation*, could be observed, and the questionnaire showed that 12 students considered it 'fun' or 'rather fun' to read *8sidor*, and four students answered that it was 'boring'. As such, this predominantly positive attitude could indicate *involvement*. Concerning the same paper; one of the students answered that it was 'difficult', and the others that it was 'easy' or that it 'could be both easy and difficult'. This indicates both *accessibility* and *involvement*. Nine students answered that it was 'easy' to listen to other students reading *8sidor*, and six responded that it 'could be both easy and hard'. One answered that it was 'hard'. That it 'could be both easy and hard' could indicate *involvement* as a *challenge*. Students decided which one of the articles to read, and they were more likely to choose a suitable text and thereby access a *challenge* (see Table 2).

Table 2. TPM criteria in news class.

Class / Criteria	*Acceptance*	*Accessibility*	*Autonomy*	*Belonging*	*Interaction*	*Involvement*
News	Listen and take turns. No signs of unfriendliness.	Accessibility is created through chances for separated/shielded seating, and accessibility to the texts through, for example, reading or communication support when needed.	Chose article and word of the week. Assistants' reading support.	Teacher invites informal belonging since all students can take part and do the same thing on their own premises.	Class is organised to foster cooperation where all students contribute, but two-way communication is mostly through teachers and assistants.	Observed engagement. Four students think it is boring and easy (or sometimes easy) to read, and they do not have assistants nearby, which could mean a lack of challenge for (some of) them.

3.3. Reading Training

This class occurred in a group room attached to the classroom. Four students received reading exercises one by one with one of the teachers once a day. They all used an application on a tablet. On this particular day, two of the four students were ill at home; thus, the observation included two of the students who went to the teacher during this lesson. The teacher decided who should start, and when inviting the student to start, the one who was supposed to come next was opposed because they wanted to start. The teacher did not change their mind, and the invited student started. The first student had worked on three levels of the reading programme, and the teacher supported the student with encouragement and praised that they were 'doing really well'. The teacher asked the student for their opinion of how the class went, and they gave thumbs up. This positive attitude indicates opportunities for *involvement*, *accessibility*, and even a sense of *belonging*. In that case, *belonging* was *informal* since *formal belonging* may be seen as challenged since the student was outside the classroom.

When the first student was finished and went back into the classroom, the other student came in. This student tried earlier to increase their *autonomy* by deciding to come first, for which the teacher did not offer consent. The teacher perceived that the student who came in was 'not in shape' and offered them a banana, which the teacher quickly found in the classroom. The banana was welcomed, and afterwards, the teacher told me, 'We were lucky; the banana made miracles!' I would say that the banana increased *accessibility*. This student also seemed to enjoy working with this application and worked efficiently at

many levels. In one part of the lesson, the student started talking about things unrelated to the work. The teacher seemed to approve and offered this *autonomy*, and the student returned to work after a short while.

During reading training activities that occur individually outside the classroom, *informal belonging* might also weaken, as students lose their place in the ordinary classroom for a short while, but as students seemed to be eager to go there, it may even have been the other way around; that it strengthened their sense of *belonging*. This activity also offered tailored reading education strategies for each student and should then offer *involvement* as a *challenge*. Of the two students I saw working with this application, one answered that they did not work with this and the other one responded that it was 'fun' and did not offer clear information about *their involvement* (see Table 3).

Table 3. TPM criteria in reading training class.

Class / Criteria	*Acceptance*	*Accessibility*	*Autonomy*	*Belonging*	*Interaction*	*Involvement*
Reading Training	Uncertain.	One-to-one sessions offer accessibility.	Students could choose levels.	Informal belonging is questioned here since students are alone outside the classroom.	No interaction between students.	Challenges is offered.

3.4. The Quiz

'One expects trouble' was what the teacher said (to me) when they started the computer and the free online version of Kahoot, a program used to construct quizzes. I understood that they were worried about the technology involved, especially that the connection between the internet and students' computers or tablets may be lost during the session. Students seemed to be used to the arrangement and brought out their computers and tablets, preparing to get started. This well-known structure indicates *accessibility*. It was a multiple-choice quiz, where they heard questions like 'How is. . .spelled'? They were offered four alternatives, not only for the spelling questions, but also for news. For example, 'In what country was a refugee camp set on fire' and 'What is the name of the group' for a picture of artists. The three assistants attending this class seemed to be strategically placed throughout the room, one near one student in need of reading support and the other two not as close to any student but ready to support the students around them. This arrangement of the strategic placement of assistants, computers/tablets, and multiple-choice questions also indicates *accessibility*, and to some students increasing *autonomy*.

The fact that students could participate on their own devices increased their *informal belonging* and their *involvement* as well. The spelling questions, with words that were spelled as they sounded, seemed easy for all students, and other words were difficult for them. As it was both easy and challenging, this may also indicate *involvement* as a *challenge*. When the 'expected trouble' came, students were provided coloured pencils to use instead, and they could finish as planned.

When the quiz was completed, the other teacher took over the class and opened a workbook together in class. 'Are we doing this again?' asked one of the students. The teacher answered, 'We are reviewing it'. All students seemed to follow, but the one that the assistant was sitting next to; they only followed the teacher partly and worked with the assistant instead. This indicated that both *accessibility* and *autonomy* were offered to this student, as the student decided not to follow the joint class and instead work on their own while supported by an assistant. How this affected *informal belonging* is uncertain.

Seeing students' engagement in this inspired me to use the quiz game as a questionnaire format, but they did not answer about their views of this class, as it could be a bit confusing. This means that I could not obtain a clear view of their experiences of involvement (see Table 4).

Table 4. TPM criteria in quiz class.

Class / Criteria	*Acceptance*	*Accessibility*	*Autonomy*	*Belonging*	*Interaction*	*Involvement*
Quiz	Uncertain.	Accessibility is created through chances for separated/shielded seating. Accessibility to the texts through, for example, reading or communication support when needed.	Assistants' reading support.	Participation on students' own prerequisites, supported by teachers and assistants.	No interaction between students.	Students all do what they are supposed to do and seem to enjoy it.

4. Discussion

In The Participation Model, the questions 'where' and 'how' are important when investigating participation [4]. In this study, Swedish reading classes were in focus in a CSID classroom for teenage students and their teachers and assistants. Reading ability is essential to gain full access to the society; therefore, reading classes constituted a suitable place to conduct this investigation of student participation. The educational culture was strongest, even if the support from assistants could bring traces of a caring culture in the classroom as well. 'How' students were offered and accessed participation were studied, and the analysis was based on the six criteria of TPM; *acceptance*, *accessibility*, *autonomy*, *belonging*, *interaction*, and *involvement*. When using TPM to analyse participation, dilemmas occurred within the material, and as dilemmas are central in the field of special and inclusive education, this dilemma lens was a useful theoretical perspective. The results are summarised and discussed here, according to each criterion and through the lens of the dilemma perspective (see Table 5).

4.1. Acceptance

Acceptance is a key to accessing interaction [5], and since there were few signs of interaction, it was also difficult to observe the criterion of *acceptance*. There was a friendly atmosphere in which students seemed to accept what others said and asked in class. Whether they were polite or appreciative was uncertain. As observed, there was a high degree of acceptance, for example, at news class, as students took turns, read, and listened to one another, but *acceptance* was never really tested due to the lack of *interaction*. However, creating a friendly atmosphere, where differences are accepted and valued, is an important first step in preparing students for interaction. Since *acceptance* is built on a persons' subjective feelings of being accepted, and even more, other persons' feelings of accepting you [4,5], this criterion is hard to determine without performing interviews. Teachers' feedback to students and that they create this open and friendly atmosphere is essential to offer acceptance.

4.2. Accessibility

The criterion *accessibility* was met by supportive teachers and assistants who ensured *physical accessibility*, allowing students to access objects in the classroom and learn how they organised the physical classroom. *Socio-communicative accessibility* and *accessibility to meaning context* were also met since there was always a teacher or assistant nearby ready to support and explain. The fact that teachers and assistants saw their students every day and that assistants even joined students at after-school activities, such as those at the leisure centre at school, seemed to strengthen their relationships and sensibility for what and when support was needed. There was also a contradiction with this. Teachers and assistants were always nearby and ready to support *accessibility*, which also at times limited *interaction* between students, as has been shown in earlier studies [8,27]. Technical support, such as reading training programmes and quiz games, also seemed to support the idea of students'

accessibility. This can be seen as special educational support, and the same support in an inclusive classroom could support inclusive education.

Table 5. TPM criteria in the four observed variations in Swedish classes.

Class / Criteria	*Acceptance*	*Accessibility*	*Autonomy*	*Belonging*	*Interaction*	*Involvement*
Literature	Teachers ask questions, and students answer.	Accessibility is created through opportunities to engage in separated/shielded seating, accessibility to the texts through, for example, reading or communication support when needed. The two students who think it is a difficult book have assistants nearby.	Chose book.	Participation on students' own prerequisites, supported by teachers and assistants.	No/few signs of interaction between students.	Satisfaction with book choice.
News	Listen and take turns. No signs of unfriendliness.	Accessibility is created through chances for separated/shielded seating, and accessibility to the texts through, for example, reading or communication support when needed.	Chose article and word of the week. Assistants' reading support.	Teacher invites informal belonging since all students can take part and do the same thing on their own premises.	Class is organised to foster cooperation where all students contribute, but two-way communication is mostly through teachers and assistants.	Observed engagement. Four students think it is boring and easy (or sometimes easy) to read, and they do not have assistants nearby, which could mean a lack of challenge for (some of) them.
Reading Training	Uncertain.	One-to-one sessions offer accessibility.	Students could choose levels.	Informal belonging is questioned here since students are alone outside the classroom.	No interaction between students.	Challenges is offered.
Quiz	Uncertain.	Accessibility is created through chances for separated/shielded seating. Accessibility to the texts through, for example, reading or communication support when needed.	Assistants' reading support.	Participation on students' own prerequisites, supported by teachers and assistants.	No interaction between students.	Students all do what they are supposed to do and seem to enjoy it.

4.3. Autonomy

Zhao et al. [28] provided examples of students' feelings of being designated as different if the assistant was only helping them. This may risk students' sense of *acceptance*, *belonging*, and *autonomy*. Students may be supported by assistants and teachers in a way that makes them feel empowered and independent. Students are experts in their own situations and offering them *autonomy* to plan their education is of great importance. It is a difficult but important task to support students' participation in class and not just support their special needs cf. [28]. This criterion is important in order to develop students' independence, and in the long run, it is of importance to support students' development into independent and employable persons.

Being supported by teachers and assistants in receiving, for example, *accessibility* may create the dilemma that it could limit students' feelings of *autonomy* or strengthen them, as students are able to take part and read aloud while being supported by an assistant who offers this *accessibility*. In this way, students can manage more than without support. However, they become more dependent on someone else, and their sense of having their own room for manoeuvres might be limited.

4.4. Belonging

Students, of course, *formally belonged* to the group since they were enrolled in school and had the right, and obligation, to be there. Students' individual work with one teacher in a small room outside the classroom might have decreased *informal belonging*. To know for sure, I would have needed to ask the students about their feelings, but since some students did not feel comfortable being interviewed, I decided on the survey instead; thus, this is missing. Just like Norwich [18] and Nilholm [15] described basic dilemmas, one arose here, since students' *accessibility* and *autonomy* probably rose due to individualised and tailored education techniques. However, at the same time, their *belonging* was jeopardised. *Informal belonging* cannot be confirmed unless we actually ask every student, but *informal belonging* may also be indicated from the sum of the other criteria, as access to the criteria altogether make it more likely that students also feel comfortable in class. Specifically, students had a high degree of *accessibility*, *acceptance*, (*interaction)*, *involvement*, and *autonomy*; as such, they would most likely have a sense of *informal belonging* as well.

4.5. Interaction

Did this rich access to support from assistants and teachers actually limit students' ability (and need) to interact with other students? Matching Östlund's [8] finding, students' access to teachers or assistants entailed limitations in interactions between students. Webster and de Boer [27] found that students' access to assistants limited their interaction, both with other students and with teachers. In Ireland, the role was recently clarified by changing the title from 'special needs assistant' to 'inclusion support assistant' and stressing the importance of assistants' roles in making schools inclusive. They further stated, '. . .the special needs assistant role is an essential element in ensuring that children and young people with disabilities and/or SEN can meaningfully participate in the school environment' [28] (p. 194). This new title is an important reminder of assistants' mission and should be a reminder when the dilemma of assistants offering *accessibility* entails limited *interaction* between students.

Students' *interactions* seemed to be limited to *interactions* with and through teachers and assistants. When they read news and listened to other students' reading, they interacted in one way: reading or listening. During the studied classes, there was no teamwork, which might have occurred in other classes. This criterion was the weakest found while observing these Swedish reading classes. Maybe there were other classes, in other school subjects, where these students were offered more opportunities to interact and cooperate. This study does not go into the peer culture, which could offer more information on students' interaction. The fact that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic did not seem to limit students' social interaction particularly much. Apart from the desks being slightly separated, and the availability of hand sanitiser, there were few signs inside the school that there was an ongoing pandemic.

4.6. Involvement

Participation, defined by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), is 'involvement in a life situation' [9] (p. 10). In The Participation Model, the school situation is highlighted, and *involvement* is about more than what is observable. Students in this study declared interest and enjoyment in reading and a variation in how easy or difficult they found different reading exercises. Since they could also make their own decisions and responsive teachers and assistants were around, this indicates the access to *involvement* via both *engagement and motivation* as well as *challenge*.

Using a questionnaire instead of interviews allowed students' voices to be heard but maybe not as clearly as if interviews had been conducted. When using TPM, it is important to ask students questions about their thoughts and feelings directly, and this part was thereby partly missing. *Belonging*, *involvement*, *autonomy*, and *acceptance* could have been more richly evaluated through interviews. However, using this quiz game as a questionnaire format also yielded good results since students were familiar with the

game. This, along with my being in the classroom, almost like one of the other teachers or assistants, gives the study high ecological validity [23].

5. Conclusions

This CSID classroom offered students the opportunity to meet most criteria of participation, to some degree, during reading classes. To acquire an overall picture of participation, this study used TPM in a school and classroom. As such, it was necessary to take more than one activity into account. Using TPM during not only one class but in a series of classes produced a richer picture of the offered and accessed criteria of participation that would not have been possible by simply observing one activity, and that can also be used as triangulation [23], as well as using the two methods; observation and questionnaire. Variations in reading classes and the types of support offered by teachers and assistants, when needed, are what seemed to be successful in reaching high degrees of participation. The fact that TPM criteria to some extent overlap may also be a way to triangulate, as, for example, informal belonging may be indicated from the sum of other criteria. What should further be investigated is how this education affect students' reading development.

Exercises where students can cooperate and interact to access opportunities for *interaction* are missing pieces. *Interaction* between students was the criterion in the observed reading classes that had the weakest support. Students did not receive many opportunities to interact. They did interactive exercises, such as taking turns reading or answering teacher-asked questions, but they did not interact directly with peers. Were these kinds of exercises not suitable for student interaction or did students find it enough to interact with teachers and assistants?

Relationships between students and their teachers and assistants were important, as students' needs were met, and criteria such as *accessibility* and *autonomy* were offered. This close cooperation between students and teachers/assistants also seemed to limit the possibility of *interaction* between students. This was a dilemma; the high degree of support from assistants and teachers that students received seemed to lead them to miss out on *interactions* with other students. Their *interactions* seemed to go to or through teachers or assistants and not directly between students. Preparing students for a future citizenship, they need both independence and to be able to interact with others, to minimise the risk of stigmatisation. Therefore, school staff should be aware of this importance and provide students with opportunities to interact with one another and challenge them to develop independence by offering opportunities of *autonomy*.

Dilemmas also arose in criteria where support might strengthen students' participation but also limit the same or other criteria. When students received one-to-one reading lessons, they obtained higher degrees of *accessibility*, *autonomy*, and *involvement,* but their sense of *belonging* may have been jeopardised, and *interaction* with and *acceptance* from other students were not offered either, since they were outside the classroom.

If the existence of special schools is a resolution of a dilemma, the question that remains is as follows: Could students (now) in CSID receive education according to their needs in mainstream schools, and would they access the same opportunities for participation? This should be further investigated. In CSID, students are offered participation but they are then excluded from mainstream schools or mainstream classes (since ID is a criterion to be enrolled in CSID, most students are excluded there). This study showed that different criteria of participation also occur within CSID. It is of great importance to continually work to support and strengthen all students' participation in their classrooms, no matter which school they attend.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Questionnaire (translated).

Questions	Possible Answers and Numbers of Answers			
1. Which word do you think is the best match for 'read'? It is . . .	6 . . .fun	1 . . .touch	7 . . .exciting	2 . . .difficult
2. Are you satisfied with your 'desk book'?	16 Yes!	 No!		
3. What do you think of reading your 'desk book'	8 Fun	6 Rather fun	1 Rather boring	1 Boring
4. What do you think about your 'desk book'?	5 Easy to read	1 Difficult to read	10 Perfect	
5. How well do you think reading silently in the classroom works?	14 It works well	0 It works bad	2 Sometimes good/bad	
6. When you are reading silently. . .	9 . . .there must definitely be quiet in the classroom.	6 . . .it is ok with a little talking.	1 . . . there must definitely not be quiet in the classroom.	
7. What do you think about Pojken och Tigern?	9 Exciting	3 Fun	2 Boring	2 Sad
8. What do you think about Pojken och Tigern	10 Easy to understand and follow	4 Sometimes a bit hard to understand	 Difficult book	
9. What do you like about reading *8sidor?*	8 Fun	4 Rather fun	0 Rather boring	4 Boring
10. How do you perceive *8sidor?*	1 Difficult	6 Easy	5 Can be both difficult and eady	4 Perfect
11. What do you think of listening to others reading *8sidor?*	1 Difficult	9 Easy	6 Can be both difficult and eady	
12. Do you like listening to others reading *8sidor?*	2 Exciting	2 Interesting	9 Fun	3 Boring
13. What do you rate *Läskod*?	5 Fun	1 Boring	10 I do not work with Läskod	
14. Do you think it is important to be able to read?	16 Yes!	0 No!	Kahoot All students	

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