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Inclusion as participation: mapping the participation model with four different levels of inclusive education

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ABSTRACT

In Swedish schools, the so-called 'Participation Model' is used to observe and analyse participation, with the intention of supporting an inclusive learning environment. While this model is widely promoted by government agencies, its theoretical alignment to the concept(s) of inclusion is not established. This article therefore compares and maps the six aspects of participation within the Participation Model (i.e. *belonging*, *accessibility, interaction, autonomy, involvement* and *acceptance)* with a hierarchically ordered set of commonly occuring definitions of inclusive education (ranging from the lowest level, *placement*, to the highest, *community*). The Participation Model was found to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the lower levels of inclusion, as well as necessary conditions for the higher levels of inclusion. However, we show that the model suffers from construct underrepresentation and outline a few possible solutions intended to increase the theoretical alignment between the Participation Model and the higher levels of inclusive education. Finally, we suggest directions for further research.

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1. Introduction

The Swedish school system is not as inclusive as it is generally thought to be (Lindqvist and Nilholm 2013), almost 30 years after the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994). Three weaknesses regarding inclusion in the Swedish school system, according to Lindqvist and Nilholm, are that: even if there are some support for inclusive education in Swedish national policy documents (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2019) and the Swedish educational act (Skollag 2010:800),
the expression 'inclusive education' is not mentioned (Göransson, Nilholm, and Karlsson 2011; Lindqvist and Nilholm 2013), there is a separate national agency responsible for students with disabilities, and special schools are established (Lindqvist and Nilholm 2013). Also, Hjörne (2016) pinpoints the discrepancy between policy and practice in Sweden when she states that '[t]he taken for granted educational narrative in Sweden is of a highly inclusive school where only a very low proportion of children are in

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need of special support.' (Hjörne 2016, 550) and at the same time her empirical findings show the opposite.

In Sweden, we are still striving to reach the goal 'a school for all' when, for example, during the last few years giving in-service training for teachers (Government Offices 2019), nationwide, to improve their ability to teach in ways that meet the variety of students in the classroom. The in-service training is provided by The National Agency for Education in cooperation with The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, SPSM, and has first been offered to all teachers in compulsory school and now also opened up for preschool and upper secondary school teachers, for example (Government Offices 2019).

To support inclusive education, a Swedish model called the *Participation Model*, was developed. It was first intended to be used to observe, analyse and improve participation during an activity, for example in the classroom. It is now promoted in the aforementioned national in-service training in order to support inclusive education. Three of Sweden's government agencies; SPSM (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018), The National Agency for Education (Szönyi 2020) and The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2018), all recommend the Participation Model to be used to observe and analyse students' participation within (school or preschool) activities. Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers (2018) describe the model in publications for SPSM, and also in the teachers' national in-service training (Szönyi 2020). They refer to Janson's (2005) manuscript where the Participation Model first was presented. Variations of this model have, in a few dissertations (Melin 2013; Östlund 2012) and reports (Melin 2009; Molin 2018), been used to investigate participation in special schools or special preschools, but never at the group level in mainstream classrooms. Even though the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2018) used the Participation Model in mainstream classrooms to investigate participation for all students, and despite that the model is claimed by government agencies to support inclusive education, no previous work has explored the theoretical interrelations between the Particiaption Model and common definitions of inclusive education. Such theoretical interrelatedness ought to be investigated to exclude 'construct underrepresentation' and to thereby substantiate the construct validity (Messick 1995, 742) of the Participation Model, before testing and applying it in empirical research on inclusive education.

The Participation Model is treated as important in Sweden by Swedish educational authorities. In the article *Participation: to Support an Inclusive Learning Environment* (Szönyi 2020, our translation), written for the in-service training programme, the Participation Model is described and promoted as a model usable for teachers, and if it is a successful model to enrich inclusive education it might be valuable for schools in other countries as well. In other words, the Participation Model is supposed to support inclusive education in schools. However, the question remains as to whether the Participation Model is a valid tool for analysing, and supporting inclusion.

Participation and inclusion do have connections, and the transition to the new era that the Salamanca Statement indicated was by Isaacs, Greene, and Valesky (1995) described as a paradigm shift and the new era was then named 'the full participation paradigm' with 'inclusive participation' as the 'underlying theme' (Isaacs, Greene, and Valesky 1995, 4). Maxwell, Granlund, and Augustine (2018) even suggest that defining inclusion as participation should be a way to operationalise inclusion. This is just what the intentions behind

the Participation Model seem to be (Szönyi 2020), but there lacks a theoretical analysis of the relationship between the Participation Model and concept of inclusion, which is a necessary step on the way to establish the validity of the Participation Model.

There are, however, obstacles for such an analysis, such as confusion and lack of consensus with regard to the meaning of 'inclusion'. For example, the Swedish government stated, in 2019, that 'the striving for inclusion has gone too far' (Swedish Parliament 2019, punkt 52, our translation). This statement indicates a narrow view of inclusion, only focusing on *placement*, totally different from researchers' ideal view, as for example Nilholm's description: ' … inclusion means that all pupils should be participating socially and learn according to their prerequisites. Ideally, this would also involve the creation of communities in schools and classroom' (Nilholm 2021, 5). The difference between these two views make one of many examples that show the difficulties in using the expression 'inclusion' since it is ambiguous (Black-Hawkins 2012; Göransson and Nilholm 2014; Haug 2017; Lindqvist and Nilholm 2013; Magnússon 2019; Nilholm 2021). Already the Salamanca Statement was criticised for opening up to more than one possible interpretation of the meaning of inclusion (Magnússon 2019). The fact that researchers, as well as practitioners, define inclusion in different ways complicates the use of this terminology (Nilholm 2006b). When Göransson and Nilholm (2014) were mapping high impact research in North American and European journal articles, to find the definition of inclusive education, they identified four different ways to interpret the concept, ranging from *placement* (inclusion level A), which was found to be the most common understanding of inclusion, via inclusion as meeting social and academic needs of students with disabilities (inclusion level B) and of all students (inclusion level C), to creating *communities* where differences are valued (inclusion level D). The understanding of inclusion varied both between and within research publications (Göransson and Nilholm 2014).

Similar distinctions between levels of inclusion are recurring in other research, such as in Mitchell's (2008), who describes a changed conceptualisation of inclusive education from earlier focussing on integrating students in need of special support (as in inclusion level A or B), to a nowadays broader view of inclusion, referring to UNESCO's definition, similar to *meet individual needs for all students* (inclusion level C) and statement that there has been 'a shift from a narrow perception based on special education or mainstreaming of children with special educational needs towards a broader understanding of an education system that addresses the needs of all learners.' (UNESCO 2009, 7). Analogously, Loreman (2014) provides a community focussed interpretation of inclusion (as in inclusion level D) and underlines that such a view has been the basis for school research and discussions on inclusive education since the 1990s.

In this article we investigate the relationship between the Participation Model aspects and the four levels of inclusion identified by Göransson and Nilholm (2014), utilising the conceptual framework of necessary and sufficient conditions (cf. Brennan 2017) commonly used in argumentation theory and informal logic. We hereby examine whether the Participation Model suffers from the source of construct invalidity called 'construct underrepresentation', i.e. whether the model is 'too narrow and fails to include important dimensions or facets of the construct' (Messick 1995, 742).

From a historical context for the four levels of inclusion, we proceed with giving an overview of each of them. In this overview, we use previous theory from the community of

inquiry approach to dialogic education (Lipman 2003; Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan 1980), further described below, to support the intelligibility of the community level of inclusion (inclusion level D). Furthermore, since the four levels presented by Göransson and Nilholm (2014) were created based on organising research, some modifications were made in order to better suit the present purpose of investigating a model intended for practical classroom use. Subsequently, we describe the Participation Model, developed to support inclusive education in Swedish schools and preschools (Janson 2005; Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). The Participation Model was intended to be used to observe, analyse and improve participation and has been used for analysing participation in research in special classes and other groups, but the four inclusion levels only concern mainstream classes, so to be able to map the Participation Model aspects to the inclusion levels, this choice was necessary. Belonging in, for instance, a special class is normally enough for formal belonging but not for inclusion at any of the four inclusion levels. In this article, our interest concerns the Participation Model's possibilities to support inclusive education, which requires that participation takes place within a mainstream setting.

We then conduct a mapping between the six Participation Model aspects (i.e. *belonging*, *accessibility*, *interaction*, *autonomy*, *involvement* and *acceptance*) and the four levels of inclusion identified by Göransson and Nilholm (2014). These are thus used as a framework to examine the relationship between the Participation Model and different levels of inclusion. This examination serves several purposes; (1) it contributes to the understanding of each inclusion level A–D through spelling them out in terms of the Participation Model aspects, (2) it provides further insights into how the different definitions of inclusion relate to each other, (3) it sheds light on the relations between the Participation Model aspects and the inclusion levels and (4) it indicates to what extent we can use the Participation Model to analyse and support inclusive education.

This investigation contributes to disambiguating the field of inclusive education, using earlier scholars' contributions within the philosophy of language and informal logic. For instance, Næss (1995), developed an 'empirical semantics', with the actual real-world semantical problems as point of departure for developing an arsenal of intellectual tools to use in ordinary communication. Importantly, he distinguished between *illusory (dis)agreement* and *real (dis)agreement* (Næss 1995), stating that: '[i]f transmitters and receivers, without themselves realizing it, perceive one or more sentences differently, it may happen that they declare that they are in agreement with each other, despite that they do not have the same opinion at all.' (Næss 1995, 67). In such cases '[t]hey are 'verbally' agreeing, they declare themselves to be in agreement without really being so' (Næss 1995, 67). They are then in what Næss calls 'illusory agreement'. If there are many ambiguities within or between policy documents and research communities within the field of inclusive education, the likelihood of such illusory agreements increases, which, among other things, risks hindering successful communication and joint action, and might ultimately thwart efforts to promote inclusive education.

2. Inclusive education

During four days in June 1994, 300 persons, representing 92 governments and 25 international organisations, met in Salamanca for The World Conference on Special Needs

Education, which ended up in the joint Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994).

To celebrate, or to investigate what had been achieved, 25 years after the Salamanca Statement was declared, *International Journal of Inclusive Education* published a special issue on the theme. Ainscow, Slee, and Best (2019) summarise and point out that both the slow progress and other issues are still remaining to be dealt with to really live according to the motto that 'every learner matters and matters equally' (UNESCO 2017). The editorial board of *International Journal of Inclusive Education* stresses the importance of what Salamanca still stands for in stating that '[t]he papers we selected demonstrate that this legacy continues to have a major impact on thinking, policy and practices in the field' (Ainscow, Slee, and Best 2019, 675). At the same time, they highlight the issue that contradictions within the Salamanca make it uncertain what it really implies (Ainscow, Slee, and Best 2019).

On the one hand, one can say that 'inclusive education' came into the arena, not primarily as a new concept, but as a new uniting label, as in a review of articles in the field of inclusion, Nilholm and Göransson (2017, 447) note that in 'several of these articles, inclusion is used synonymously with its forerunners, mainstreaming and integration, and inclusion becomes just a new name for traditional special-needs research.' On the other hand, researchers also saw the new terminology as representing a new view, since 'integration', defined as inclusion level A, was too narrow, lacking important parts of the concept (Farell 2000; Loreman 2014; Nilholm 2006b).

> Most commentators suggest that the emergence of the 'inclusion' concept can be seen as a reaction to the fate of its forerunners, 'integration' and 'mainstreaming'. These concepts came to be used in multiple ways and created confusion, rather than alleviating it. Inclusion made its appearance as a concept with radical implications. The new concept connoted changes with regard to the system rather than to its parts. Schools should be organized with a basis in the fact that children are different. In other words, differences between children should be seen as natural and something the school system should both value and adapt to. (Nilholm 2006b, 436)

But, inclusive education is still defined in many different ways (Haug 2017; Göransson and Nilholm 2014). In a survey of the 30 most cited articles from the US and 30 most cited from Europe concerning inclusive education, Göransson and Nilholm (2014) found different definitions both between and within the articles. Four different definitions were found:

> (A) Placement definition – inclusion as placement of pupils with disabilities/in need of special support in general education classrooms
>
> (B) Specified individualised definition – inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of pupils with disabilities/pupils in need of special support
>
> (C) General individualised definition – inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of all pupils
>
> (D) Community definition – inclusion as creation of communities with specific characteristics (which could vary between proposals)
>
> The categories relate hierarchically to each other in the sense that category D presupposes categories C, B and A, and category C presupposes categories B and A, and so on, … (Göransson and Nilholm 2014, 268)

The definitions can be seen as hierarchical levels since each subsequent definition extends, and therefore also includes, the preceding definition (Table 1).

2.1. Inclusion level A

On the first, and lowest level, inclusive education may thus be understood as only dealing with (A) Placement, which means that simply placing a SEN-student[1] in a mainstream class automatically makes the student included. This is often referred to as *integration* (Nilholm 2006a; Farell 2000). Notably, being placed in a special class does not count as inclusion, even on this level.

2.2. Inclusion level B

The second alternative, *Specified individualised*: (B) Meet individual needs of SEN-students, stipulates higher requirements through adding some social and academic aspects that are needed to meet and support SEN-students. This means that when the student is placed in the class, they also receives needed support to be able to learn and work in class and to interact with other students. On this level of inclusion focus is on the SEN-student. Nilholm and Göransson (2017) state the following:

> The notion of 'meeting the social/ academic needs' in definitions 2 and 3 [here: inclusion levels B and C] is a rather general formulation that can be operationalised in different ways … The formulation implies that the social/academic situation of pupils is beneficial, e.g. that the pupils state that they feel as a part of the group, feel secure in the class, feel that they are learning and participating in the activities of the class and that they reach the knowledge goals. (Nilholm and Göransson 2017, 441)

2.3. Inclusion level C

The third inclusion level, *General individualised*: (C) Meet individual needs of all students, is similar to inclusion level B, with the exception that all students are included,

Table 1. Levels of inclusive education (based on Göransson and Nilholm 2014).

Definition A Placement	Definition B Meet individual needs of SEN-students	Definition C Meet individual needs of all students	Definition D Community
Placement *A (SEN) student is included when placed in class.*	Placement *A (SEN) student is included when placed in class if also*	Placement *Students are included when placed in class,*	Placement *Students are included when placed in class,*
	Social/academic *the social and/or academic needs of SEN-students are met.*	Social and academic *social and academic needs are met for all students, and also*	Social and academic *social and academic needs are met for all students, and also*
		For all *that all students have (the right to) a good school situation.*	For all *that all students have (the right to) a good school situation in a* Community *school where communities are made and differences are valued.*

not only SEN-students. All students are met accordingly some of their social and academic prerequisites in mainstream class, and all students' needs are considered.

> Interpretations of 'meeting academic needs' can vary from more objective definitions in which education is considered inclusive when pupils reach the pre-set goals of the system [...], to more subjective ones in which inclusion is defined as giving pupils the right to develop on his or her own terms [...]. (Göransson and Nilholm 2014, 270)

These different views on 'meeting academic needs' could be compared with the distinction between on the one hand a 'no child left behind' policy, by which we mean the aim that all students reach at least the lowest goals, and on the other a 'school for all' policy, which we here take to include the idea that all students, based on their prerequisites, should get support to develop as far as possible. For example, Swedish law (The Education Act 2018:1098, 3 kap, 2 §) states that all students should receive the support needed in social and academic aspects, both to reach the goals and to 'reach as far as possible'.

2.4. Inclusion level D

The fourth level, (D) Community, which we also refer to as 'the highest level' adds that inclusion also entails the creation of *communities* in schools and that diversity is valued. These communities have specific characteristics, but which these are 'could vary between proposals' (Nilholm and Göransson 2017, 441). Thus, all students in class receive the support they need, both in social and academic respects. Differences are valued and everyone finds a context where one belongs and thrives. Barton (1997) pinpoints what he is striving for, and that is what level D is all about, in: 'Inclusive education is about responding to diversity; it is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members and about celebrating "difference" in dignified ways' (Barton 1997, 233). When Nilholm and Alm (2010) investigated inclusiveness of a classroom they defined inclusion as: 'The extent of (1) differences being viewed as ordinary; (2) all students being part of the social community of the classroom; and (3) all students being part of the learning community of the classroom.' (Nilholm and Alm 2010, 243). Both *community* and *openness towards diversity* are leading concepts in this interpretation which is also in line with their description of inclusion level D.

Hence, we consider the emphasis on 'community' and openness towards diversity at this level distinguishing features between levels D and C. We use Lipman's (2003) broadened interpretation of 'community' (20), with origins in the more narrow concept used in Peirce's theoretical framework, in order to deepen the understanding of inclusion level D. In this sense of the word, a group of persons could be considered to form a community if they are 'similarly dedicated to the use of like procedures in pursuit of identical goals' (Lipman 2003, 20), while these procedures and goals can vary between different communities. There are, for instance, 'thinking communities and unthinking communities, communities that are self-reflective and self-corrective and communities that are not' (Lipman 2003, 94). As an example, Lipman (2003) himself argues for developing a specific form of communities in education, so-called 'communities of inquiry' (81), where the group participates in collaborative inquiry with like procedures such as the use of contestable questions, reasoning, reflection and mutual respect (Lipman 2003; Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan 1980), during their joint effort to reach reasonable

answers (Reznitskaya and Wilkinson 2017) in their 'quest for truth' and 'quest for meaning' in their collaborative inquiry (Lipman 2003, 95). Theoretically, these communities inherent an openness towards certain forms of diversity and facilitate the participants' '[l]earning from the experience of others' (Lipman 2003, 93).

One final note can be made about inclusion level D, that distinguishes it from level C, namely that we leave it open whether the distinguishing features between level C and D concern social and academic needs or not. To be a part of a community which appreciates diversity *could be* considered forms of higher level needs; needs that then must be distinguished from the social and academic needs referred to in Göransson and Nilholm's (2014) description of level C; hence our usage of the terms 'some' or 'part of' needs in our restatement of Göransson and Nilholm's (2014) level C and in the mapping below.

3. The participation model

There seems to be a lack of documentation on how the Participation Model was developed, apart from Janson's (2005) manuscript where the starting point was WHO's classification system. WHO, defines participation as ' … involvement in a life situation' (WHO 2007, 10). The Participation Model is aligned with WHO's definition but contextualised and applied to a school or preschool context (Janson 2005; Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). Janson's (2005) Participation Model is today presented and promoted to be used in order to support inclusive education in school, or preschool, activities (Szönyi 2020). Such an activity is also mostly operating in one of the three areas; *companion culture*, *care culture* (Janson 2005; Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018) *and educational culture* (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). An important aim in using the Participation Model is to give teachers a common professional language when talking about the aspects of participation in school (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018).

In Szönyi's (2020) guide for Swedish teachers, the Participation Model is intended to be used at the group level in class, identifying and supporting inclusive education, in contrast to earlier reviewed work where it has been used for identifying and supporting participation from a disability view, focusing on participation for children or groups of children with disabilities (Janson 2005; Melin 2009; 2013; Molin 2018; Östlund 2012).

The Participation Model contains six aspects that all together supposed to constitute the concept of participation, within different cultures. As Janson (2005) emphasised the need to define participation he pinpointed *where?* and *how?* as the point of departure. *Participation how?* refers to the six aspects and *participation where?* are the different cultures in school, or preschool, where different opportunities of participation are offered. As one person, might act totally different in one context compared to in another, it is important to understand the differences between the arenas where an activity in school may take place. *Participation how?* problematises in what way participation takes place. Janson (2005) suggested six different aspects: *belonging, accessibility, interaction, autonomy, involvement and acceptance*. Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers (2018) authored the publication to SPSM, where the model, containing the three cultures and six aspects, were presented. Our focus is on the aspects, but it is reasanable to assume that we are situated mostly within the *educational culture*. Similar to the Participation Model created by Janson (2005) and developed and published by Szönyi and Söderqvist

Dunkers (2018), Molin (2004) describes types of participation. He presents participation as a dimensional concept and suggests using minimal and maximal participation to describe the extremes. Inspired by this idea, we outline the Participation Model aspects as continuums between absent and full. The terminology used in our description is based on our translation of key terms in the Participation Model into English with guidance by the use of terms in adjacent literature.

The Participation Model describes one way to categorise the complex concept of participation (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). The six aspects are important pieces of the 'participation puzzle'. If there is a deficiency in one out of six 'puzzle pieces', then there is a lack of participation in that specific aspect. To access full participation, students need to be offered all these pieces. Now, we will present more about what distinguishes each aspect, before we start the mapping.

Belonging can be divided into two sub-aspects; *formal* and *informal*. Janson (2005) described formal belonging as formalised in labels of school, class, working groups etc. The most basic type of participation is formal belonging (Molin 2004). To formally belong legitimises student's entry to participate, enrolment in school and class, then they belong to the school (Molin 2004). To formally belong could be counted as a low degree of participation, according to Molin. Also important is students' subjective feeling of being an important part of the group and that is called the informal belonging (The Swedish Schools Inspectorate 2018). This sense of belonging is central, according to Vandenbussche and De Schauwer's (2018) investigation of interpretations of full participation. Unless this sense of belonging is taken into account, belonging is reduced to just a formality. This is also stressed by Kunc (1992) who, pointing to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, claims that belonging is in fact more fundamental than how it is currently being treated in school, where self-esteem and achievement have been given priority. Unless the sense of belonging is taken into account, belonging is reduced to just a formality. To access both formal and informal belonging could thus, be seen as full belonging.

Accessibility[2] is divided into three sub-aspects. First, *physical accessibility* is the availability of the physical environment, access to rooms and objects (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). Absence of physical accessibility could be exemplified by lessons being held on the third floor without a needed elevator, while a situation where the relevant physical areas and their physical contents are easy to reach would characterise a high degree of physical accessibility. Second, *accessibility to socio-communicative interaction* is to understand, to be understood and to be able to communicate with others (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). Absence of socio-communicative accessibility is characterised by unintelligible teacher instructions and many student–student misunderstandings during, for instance, verbal exchange, while consistent and successful teacher–student and student–student understanding during attempted communication would signify a high degree socio-communicative accessibility. The third sub-aspect, *accessibility to meaning context* is to understand, for example, the meaning and purpose of what one is doing or supposed to do and be able to understand according to context (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). Absence of accessibility to meaning context would be characterised by a majority of school tasks that seem pointless to the students. Almost total, absence of accessibility could be to only get access to part of the physical environment, as the school and classroom, compared to full accessibility where the student reaches both rooms and objects as well as the social and academic parts of school.

Interaction is to contribute in an activity with others, e.g. as musicians in a band contribute with important parts to the whole (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). 'Interaction is about both the opportunity to be part of a community and to learn and develop through interaction with others, associated with various teaching activities' (The Swedish Schools Inspectorate 2018, 29, our translation). Acceptance is needed to fully interact (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). Absence of interaction could be characterised by, for instance, no group or collaborative work in class, while a full interaction is signified by plenty of successful occurrences of student–student cooperation and exchange.

Autonomy is to be able to make decisions about one's own situation (Janson 2005), for example; what you are doing, with whom and how you do it (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). The School Inspectorate (2018) describes autonomy in the Participation Model as regarding students' influence on the teaching as well as their impact on their own learning. Accessibility to meaning context is an important prerequisite to achieve autonomy (The Swedish Schools Inspectorate 2018). Absence of autonomy is characterised by authoritarian teacher instruction with no opportunities for student influence on form or content. An example is the initiation–response–evaluation (IRE) pattern in monologic education (Alexander 2017). Full autonomy is when the students have plenty of opportunities to influence form and content and are well-informed about these opportunities.

Involvement[3] is to feel interest and joy in an activity (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). To know for sure that students are involved you need to ask themselves, since it is depending on a subjective feeling. You cannot force someone into involvement, even if students can be more or less forced to take part in an activity. When the students feel that the school tasks are uninteresting and boring, there is a fundamental lack of involvement, while full involvement entails that students enjoy what they are doing and are driven by intrinsic motivation.

Acceptance is about being acknowledged and accepted by others (Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018). This is also called 'intersubjective participation' (Janson 2005), indicating that it is dependent on the other students' opinions of the student. A total lack of acceptance would be characterised by a depreciation of peers and interpersonal student differences, in contrast to full acceptance when students acknowledge each other and see each others' uniquenesses as assets during joint activities.

4. Mapping the participation model aspects into the inclusion level framework

In this section, we will map the six aspects (i.e. *belonging, accessibility*, *interaction*, *autonomy*, *involvement* and *acceptance*) of the Participation Model (Janson 2005; Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018) to the four inclusion levels described by Göransson and Nilholm (2014). We will call these six aspects of the Participation Model 'participation criteria', meaning that each aspect is contributing to higher overall participation and hence that each aspect is a necessary condition for optimal participation. We also use a discrete scale for the aspects, so that a criterion could be said to have to be met to a certain extent in order to reach a certain inclusion level. The mapping of the four inclusion levels to the six aspects of the Participation Model will be performed

through an examination of which and what extent of the six participation criteria must be met in order to reach each respective inclusion level A–D. For each inclusion level, we will first discuss the participation criteria we consider are *necessary conditions* for reaching the inclusion level in question, second rule out the participation criteria we believe are *not necessary conditions* and hence irrelevant for reaching the inclusion level in question, and third suggest which criteria are together *sufficient conditions* for reaching the inclusion level in question. According to the standard theory of necessary and sufficient conditions, both of these can be understood in terms of the truth-functional logical conditional (which in natural English is roughly corresponding to if … then … sentences) (Brennan 2017). Thus, the sentence 'If Anna is a student, then she is a human', states that being a student is a sufficient condition for being a human, while being a human is a necessary condition for being a student (Backman et al. 2012).

We will begin by mapping the participation criteria to inclusion level A and then continue to work our way up the hierarchical inclusion level structure suggested by Göransson and Nilholm (2014), ending with inclusion level D. However, since the only difference between inclusion levels B and C is which students are in focus, we chose not to analyse at inclusion level B. For the Participation Model we decided to restrict the mapping to the six *aspects* (and excluded any consideration of the Participation Model *cultures*, as described in Section 4, below). We suggest absent or full accordance for each aspect. Some aspects do have two or three sub-aspects and then we call them sub-aspect criteria, for example the criterion *belonging* consists of the sub-aspect criteria *formal belonging* and *informal belonging*.

4.1. Inclusion level A: placement

Let us start by looking at the first, the weakest, definition of inclusion, inclusion level A. This definition of inclusive education is all about students' enrolment and placement in a mainstream school class.

4.1.1. Necessary participation model criteria for inclusion level A

In order to be included in the placement sense, the participation sub-aspect criterion of *formal belonging* is necessary. The criterion of *formal belonging* is very closely aligned with placement – it is fulfilled when the student in question is formally a part of a mainstream class. One can not be included in a class at inclusion level A unless one formally belongs to that class. Hence, full *formal belonging* is necessary for being included in the weakest sense of inclusion. A lower level of *physical accessibility* is also necessary, since the students need to be able to get to the classroom, in order to have physical access to the building.

4.1.2. Participation model aspects irrelevant for inclusion level A

Informal belonging is not necessary for inclusion as placement. *Informal belonging*, in the Participation Model, is about one's subjective feeling of belonging, and being a part of the school class. But this is not needed for inclusion level A. Hence, it is not necessary. Accessibility to school and the classroom requires a lower degree of *physical accessibility*, since the student must have physical access to the classroom in order to be placed there. But a higher degree of *physical accessibility*, including parts that go beyond simply having

access to the classroom (such as access to important objects) is still not necessary for inclusion level A, since these are not required for being enroled or placed in a class. The two other sub-aspects of *accessibility (meaning context accessibility* and *socio-communicative accessibility*) are not necessary either at this level. Hence, inclusion level A is only concerned with *formal belonging* and a lower degree of *physical accessibility*, and thus no other conditions from the Participation Model, such as *autonomy*, *involvement*, *interaction* or *acceptance*, are necessary.

4.1.3. Sufficient conditions for inclusion level A

Formal belonging and part of *physical accessibility* (to have access to the school and classroom) are not only necessary conditions for inclusion level A, they are also together sufficient. Anyone who formally belongs to a class, and gets physical access to the classroom, is included in that class in the placement sense. Therefore, these criteria are jointly sufficient.

4.2. Inclusion level B: meet individual needs of SEN-students

Let us now turn to inclusion level B, that of meeting SEN-students' individual needs. At this level, SEN-students are included when (i) they are placed in the classroom and (ii) parts of their social and academic needs are met and supported there. Since inclusion levels B and C are the same except for which students are in focus – SEN-students at level B and all students at inclusion level C – we turn to level C at once.

4.3. Inclusion level C: meet individual needs for all students

Now, all students are taken into account and parts of both their academic and social needs are met. Here, at inclusion level C, inclusion is when all students (i) are placed in the classroom and (ii) have parts of their social and academic needs met and supported there.

4.3.1. Necessary participation model criteria for inclusion level C

Of course, since *formal belonging* and a low degree of *physical accessibility* are necessary for inclusion level A, and since inclusion level A is contained within inclusion levels B and C, *formal belonging* and the pieces of *physical accessibility* that concerns access to the classroom are also necessary for inclusion level C. But over and above that, high degrees of *belonging* and *accessibility* are necessary at this level. At inclusion level C students are supposed to 'feel as a part of the group, feel secure in the class' (Nilholm and Göransson 2017, 441) and then quite a high level of *informal belonging* is needed too. Further, to 'feel that they are learning […] and that they reach the knowledge goals' (Nilholm and Göransson 2017, 441) requires even more than the *physical* part of *accessibility*. *Meaning context accessibility* is about getting access to education in the classroom and academic needs can not be met if the students do not have knowledge about for example what to do; to have one's academic needs met must include quite a high degree of access both to what to do and to understand why doing it. Furthermore, the sub-aspect criterion *socio-communicative accessibility*, that concerns ability to communicate, to understand and to make oneself understood, is required to quite a high degree in

order to give students access to social life in school. Moreover, for teachers to be able to know how to support all students' social and academic needs, the students would need to communicate their preferences to the teachers and the teachers need to take the students' preferences into consideration, a practice that concerns *autonomy*, which thus, is a necessary criterion. In this communication, students need to both explain their views of their situation as well as be able to make proposals and decisions of how to improve the situation. At this level, students are also supposed to be 'participating in the activities of the class' (Nilholm and Göransson 2017, 441) which implies that some degree of *interaction* is necessary.

4.3.2. Participation model aspects irrelevant for inclusion level C

At inclusion level C, *involvement* is not necessary and no high degree of *acceptance* is needed, which entails that students are neither fully interacting at this level.

4.3.3. Sufficient conditions for inclusion level C

At this level, all students are included when they all (i) are placed in the classroom and (ii) have parts of their social and academic needs met and supported there. To reach inclusion level C, the criteria *belonging*, both by placement and the subjective feeling, *accessibility*, including availability to the physical environment, rooms and objects, and access to education and communication in school (to understand both what to do and why), *autonomy*, including being able to make decisions and impact on one's own situation, and parts of *interaction,* concerning cooperation with others, are jointly sufficient, as long as we stick to the understanding of academic needs in terms of 'no child left behind'. But under a 'school for all' understanding of academic needs, under which 'every learner matters and matters equally' (UNESCO 2017), it is not clear that the Participation Model can provide sufficient conditions. One case to consider is that of students who easily reach the goals and need, or would benefit from, more intellectually challenging learning activities (e.g. students often referred to as *gifted children*), who might not get their academic needs met, while all of the conditions of the participation model might be met. Whether or not this could be the case depends, among other things, on how far we stretch the interpretations of *meaning context accessibility* and *involvement*, and what auxiliary hypotheses (such as regarding motivation theory) one provides. In any case, it does not seem beyond a reasonable doubt clear that the Participation Model can provide sufficient conditions for this level of inclusive education. This calls for further attention, as will be done in the discussion below.

4.4. Inclusion level D: community

4.4.1. Necessary participation model criteria for inclusion level D

Since all other levels of inclusion are included in this definition of inclusive education, all criteria that are necessary for A–C are necessary for inclusion level D as well. That is, since high levels of *belonging*, *accessibility*, *autonomy* and parts of *interaction* are necessary already at inclusion level C they are also needed at inclusion level D. Furthermore, at this level all aspects of the Participation Model are necessary. One distinctive feature at this level is that communities are created and to make that happen it is necessary with *involvement*, as to build communities is about gathering around common interests/

goals and procedures. This will not be done without *involvement* or *interaction*. Another distinctive feature at this level is that differences are celebrated, which is closely connected to the *acceptance* aspect. In order for *acceptance* to prevail, the students must be seen by their peers as potential contributors with regard to joint efforts and there must be an openness towards dissimilarities in how and how much different students contribute. To fully *interact*, *acceptance* is necessary, which means that the final obstacle to full *interaction* has been removed at inclusion level D.

4.4.2. Participation model aspects irrelevant for inclusion level D

There are no criteria from the Participation Model that are not necessary for inclusion level D.

4.4.3. Sufficient conditions for inclusion level D

Turning, finally, to the issue of whether or not the Participation Model can provide sufficient criteria for level D inclusion, the remarks made regarding level C are still relevant. But, apart from that, it is interesting to examine whether the Participation Model can provide criteria that sufficiently distinguishes level D from level C, in the sense that it can determine that a certain case would be community level D inclusion, as long as the criteria needed for level C (which, as noted above, the Participation Model currently might not be able to provide) were met. In other words, can the Participation Model provide sufficient conditions to distinguish level D from level C inclusion? The distinguishing features between inclusion levels C and D are that diversity is appreciated and that communities are created in D but not in C, so we must ask whether these added features in D are completely covered by the Participation Model aspects. In order to make more concrete the definition of 'community' in inclusion level D, we used the interpretation discussed by Lipman (2003), in terms of a group of persons with 'like procedures' and 'identical goals'. As previously noted, for *acceptance* to prevail, the students must be seen by their classmates as potential contributors to joint efforts and there must be an openness towards dissimilarities in such contributions. Because the *acceptance* aspect is described in terms of regarding others' differences as assets (Szönyi 2020; Szönyi and Söderqvist Dunkers 2018), we conclude that it is likely that the *acceptance* aspect covers the appreciation of diversity feature of inclusion level D.

4.5. Summary

The Participation Model was shown to cohere fairly well with the (different) levels of inclusion, in the sense that it provides necessary conditions for each level of inclusive education, that it can provide criteria that differentiate level D from level C, and that it can provide sufficient conditions for inclusion level A. The fit is not perfect, though, because the Participation Model cannot provide sufficient conditions for higher levels of inclusive education, if academic needs is understood in a broader sense (as e.g. 'a school for all').

5. Discussion

Prior research has proposed an alignment between inclusion and participation (Maxwell, Granlund, and Augustine 2018; Szönyi 2020), and it has been suggested that inclusive

education can be put into practice through participation (Maxwell, Granlund, and Augustine 2018; Szönyi 2020). In line with this; Schwab, Sharma, and Loreman (2018, 33) identified, in their literature review, 'items relating to presence, participation, acceptance and achievement [...], sense of belonging [...], and a degree of happiness with being educated in the school [...]' as being important to identifying inclusion in the classroom. This indicates that the Participation Model's aspects could be supportive for analysing and developing inclusive education, which is in line with its intended use.

However, our comparison and mapping of the six aspects of the Participation Model with the four definitions of inclusion identified by Göransson and Nilholm (2014) give some support to, but also show limitations of, these ideas. There is a high level of alignment between the Participation Model and inclusive education as shown above, but the Participation Model does not provide sufficient conditions for higher levels of inclusive education and it thus suffers from construct underrepresentation (Messick 1995) in that it fails to include an important dimension of inclusive education. Hence, in its present form, the model cannot be used to establish high levels of inclusion with certainty. However, it can confirm lack of inclusion, since it provides necessary criteria.

The fact that the Participation Model does not provide sufficient conditions for the higher levels of inclusion raises some further issues. There are at least three different ways that this might be dealt with. First, we might, of course 'bite the bullet' and accept the conclusion that participation, as understood through the Participation Model, cannot fully account for inclusion, since it cannot provide sufficient conditions for the higher levels of inclusive education. Second, we might change the definition (or interpretation) of inclusive education, to weaken the condition concerning academic needs, so that the concepts of inclusion and participation fit better together. Third, we might revise the Participation Model, either by adding to some of the existing aspects (such as accessibility or involvement), or by adding new aspects, to account for the parts of the concept of inclusion that the Participation Model cannot currently account for. This third option in many ways seems like the most promising and we suggest that the aspect of *involvement* should be divided into *engagement/motivation*, which is the earlier described involvement and the other part should be *challenge*, cf. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which should secure that students' academic needs would be met. *Challenge* thus indicates that students are offered challenge on their own level, or slightly higher.

It also remains to be studied empirically how the Participation Model actually works in practice with regard to promoting inclusive education. Prior research indicates that several of the parts incorporated in the Participation Model, such as sense of belonging and acceptance, are important for developing inclusive education (Schwab, Sharma, and Loreman 2018). It is reasonable to suggest, that in order to reach community level inclusion, the new sub-aspect, *challenge*, suggested above is needed. After these adjustments it would be of great interest to further investigate the validity, reliability, practical affordances, and effects of using the Participation Model, in cooperation with schools, teachers and students, and maybe thereby even find empirical evidence for classrooms, schools and school systems operating at the highest level of inclusion, which has not been found in prior studies (Göransson and Nilholm 2014). Such studies would also be able to resolve the issue of a lack of practical criteria for inclusive education, as reported by earlier research (Göransson and Nilholm 2014).

To sum up, the Participation Model is shown to provide necessary conditions for each level of inclusive education, and sufficient conditions for inclusion level A. It provides criteria that differentiate the highest levels from each other, but it cannot provide sufficient conditions for higher levels of inclusive education, if academic needs are understood in a broader sense. This means that promoting participation as understood by the Participation Model also furthers inclusion, *ceteris paribus*, but that the Participation Model in its current form cannot fully account for the highest levels of inclusive education.

Notes

1. i.e. a student in special educational needs, which in the Swedish context is any student that at risk not reaching the learning goals or for other reasons in need of extra support..
2. Availability in Östlund's (2012) translation.
3. In Östlund's (2012) translation: engagement. I use involvement in line with Molin's (2004) description, since Janson (2005) refers to Molin.

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