

Ambivalences in the role of support agents in Icelandic schools – critical reflections and international perspectives¹

In this chapter, the role of support agents² in Icelandic schools is discussed and – with a view to the international research and the international discourse on assistance and inclusive education – potential ambivalences related to this role, are elaborated.

1 Inclusive education and the role of paraprofessionals

Inclusive education can be seen as a reform process that focuses on questions of inclusion and exclusion in educational organisations and asks how heterogeneity is dealt within and by educational organisations, how educational justice can be achieved and which powerful processes of separation and exclusion take place (Sturm, 2016; Ainscow, 2021). Processes of inclusion and exclusion are situated on a continuum of recognising and responding to difference, as well as the essentialist codification and dramatisation of difference. Pfahl (2009) speaks in this context of a paradoxical connection between special support and separation.

A transformative demand is made on schools to create more participation – legally founded in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the agenda to transform schools and education towards inclusion, there is an international trend towards responding to the assumed (primarily disability-related) heterogeneity of learners with a plurality of (para)professional roles within school staff – ergo with the establishment of a school-internal personnel support system. Although countries and cultures differ greatly in their social, cultural and political practices, paraprofessional support roles have received particular attention from a transnational perspective, especially due to its increase in numbers, e.g. in Germany (Henn et al., 2014), Finland (Takala, 2007) or the UK (Butt & Lowe, 2012). A critical analysis of this role, with a lens pointed towards the Icelandic school system, will be the focus of this article. The specific view of this role as an object of analysis for inclusive school and classroom development lends itself to the different lines of discourse related to pedagogy with a focus on multi-professional cooperation (Mulholland & O’Connor, 2016), to special education with a focus on subsidiarity and flexibilisation of special education measures (Weisser, 2017) as well as with a view to discourses around self-determined living, autonomy and personal assistance (Feuser, 2009). Thus, it can be described as a hybrid and precarious role in school and education, to which different, sometimes contradictory expectations are attached.

In the international professional and research discourse, this very complexity is empirically traced and highlighted – combined with some further ambivalences that come to light as a result. It can be stated that paraprofessionals are ‘in-betweens’, as there are extremely different

¹ Originalbeitrag der deutschen Übersetzung „Ambivalenzen in der Rolle von Unterstützungspersonen in isländischen Schulen – kritische Überlegungen und internationale Perspektiven“ aus dem Sammelband „Inklusive Bildung in Island – Grundlagen, Praktiken und Reflexionen“, open access und print 2024 bei Beltz Juventa erschienen unter der Lizenz CC BY-SA.

Original contribution of the German translation of this article from the anthology “Inclusive education in Iceland – basics, practices and reflections”, open access and print 2024 published by Beltz Juventa under the licence CC BY-SA.

² We use the term ‘support agent’ (isl. stuðningsfulltrúi) for paraprofessionals assisting and supporting children in classes and everyday school life in Icelandic schools. In addition, we refer to ‘paraprofessionals’ in an international context and try to include country-specific designations, such as Teacher Assistants (Canada) or Teaching Assistants (UK), in appropriate places.

expectations placed on this role. Therefore, it becomes evident that paraprofessionals play a critical role in the implementation of an inclusive reform agenda.

Against this background, this article focuses on Iceland, a country that has distinguished itself in recent years by developing support structures and legal frameworks towards inclusion – closely linked to democratic school development. This is how Iceland is often mentioned in international discourse when it comes to the successful implementation of inclusion in schools and classrooms. In this article, the role of support agents (isl. stuðningsfulltrúi) in Iceland is discussed and – with a view to the international research and study situation – potential ambivalences and areas of tension related to this role, are elaborated.

2 Empirical perspectives on school assistance in an international context

In the following, individual empirical highlights from the international discourse on paraprofessionals in schools are subsumed and central research results are presented along exemplary studies. Without being able to systematically map the state of research here (Sharma & Salend, 2016; Lübeck & Demmer, 2017), a few points of focus will be highlighted:

On the one hand, it can be stated – among others through the research review by Sharma & Salend (2016) – that paraprofessional support roles are seen in the international context as a possibility to act fair to the heterogeneity of learners in schools and in inclusive teaching. Against this background, they are increasingly employed in schools in many countries. Along the nomenclature, certain emphases emerge in the formal expectation of the support role. For example, they are called Special Needs Assistants (Ireland), Teacher Assistants (Canada), Teaching Assistants (UK), or School Assistants (Germany). They are used to support the teaching process, the teacher or the person-related disability-specific assistance. Although paraprofessionals do not have the professional qualifications of trained teachers and therefore are not supposed to be/are not allowed to take full responsibility for teaching-learning processes, they often play a significant role in learning, teaching and daily life of some learners. This development, combined with the increase in numbers, can be considered critical, as it has been empirically shown that the presence of paraprofessionals does not necessarily imply adequate and effective support measures for learners' learning and educational processes (Butt, 2016; Giangreco, 2010; Rutherford, 2012; Webster et al., 2010) – not to mention the fact that learners with assigned assistance have limited access to professionally trained teachers. For example, a study by Blatchford, Webster & Russell (2012) found that learners, who receive extensive support from teaching assistants, appear to make significantly less progress in learning than learners who receive most of their support from teachers. The same researchers suggest that this negative effect is a result of how teaching assistants are prepared and guided in their activities. This indicates that it seems to be important how teaching assistants are implemented in schools, how they are supported and how they are prepared for their work so that they can support learners and/or teachers adequately.

Furthermore, the results of a study by Egilsson & Traustadóttir (2009) reveal that it is necessary to consider the competences of support agents in relation to the needs of learners and to ensure that they are guided by professionals. In addition, it is important to consider the factors that have influenced the increase in number of support agents, namely teachers' attitudes, skills, roles and working conditions in planning and designing lessons in heterogeneous classrooms (Egilson & Traustadóttir, 2009).

In this context, empirical research highlights that paraprofessionals are routinely expected to perform tasks for which they are not qualified or trained, such as lesson planning and didactic activities within lessons, including task-based differentiation (Giangreco et al., 2013; Webster & Blatchford, 2013; Köpfer & Tan, 2023). A study exploring the work of teaching assistants in

the UK indicated that the positive effects on learner achievement were more related to the organization of teaching assistants' work and the preparation they received than to their individual characteristics and those of the learners (Blatchford et al., 2012). In the same study, the results suggest that the decisions made by school administrators and teachers about the work of school assistants may best explain why the support has a negative impact on learner achievement. Moreover, the findings suggest that the constant presence of teaching assistants impairs learners' differentiation and reduces their opportunities to communicate with the teacher and with their peers (Webster & Blatchford, 2013). Thus, the practice of teaching assistants as one-to-one support (with pull-out) not only leads to reduced learning gains for learners but also to reduced interaction between learners and teachers (Giangreco et al., 1997) and potential stigmatisation (Sharma & Salend, 2016).

Considering the learners' perspective, which is rarely addressed in empirical studies in this context, empirically shows that learners with assigned school assistance in Germany have room for manoeuvre (agency) in relation to school assistance actions (Köpfer & Böing, 2017; Ehrenberg, 2021) and that school assistants are proactively functionalised by learners regarding social and learning-related support.

When teachers and teaching assistants engage in collaborative school and classroom work, a positive impact on the working conditions of both can be identified (Radford et al., 2015). This means that they plan together and distribute roles among themselves according to the scope of the lesson and based on the different pedagogical goals of the same as well as the individual learner. For example, in the findings of Radford's (2015) study, it is noted that the teacher could encourage the child to approach the teacher or classmates to prevent learners from relying too much on the teaching assistant, as it is important to encourage their independence and participation. For this to be feasible, it is important that the teacher and the school assistant have space to prepare lessons together and are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. This is also confirmed by ethnographic research results from the German-speaking context – to the extent that school assistants take on a mediating role between different groups of actors in the classroom and during the break (Blasse, 2017). But there is a lack of clarity about the positioning and responsibility of paraprofessionals within a multi-professional team of an inclusive school (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009), which is mostly answered in practice with a retreat to their own autonomous action and responsibility for a specific child (Fritzsche & Köpfer, 2021).

Overall, it can be stated from an empirical point of view and with a view to the international professional discourse that a fundamental ambivalence of participation and social stigmatisation (Blatchford et al., 2009; Butt & Lowe, 2012; Sharma & Salend, 2016; Schmidt, 2016; Lübeck & Demmer, 2017) is inherent in paraprofessional support roles.

3 Support Agents in Icelandic Schools – Context and Practice

The role of paraprofessional assistance in schools is called “stuðningsfulltrúi” in Icelandic. This term can be translated into German as “Unterstützungsbeauftragter” but can also be understood as “support agent”, which is used below to refer to this role. The number of support agents in the Icelandic school system more than quadrupled between 1999 and 2019 (from 209 to 885). In the same period, the number of all learners in the education system increased by only 7% and the number of teachers by 37% (Statistics Iceland, ed, a, b). It can be stated that this increase in the number of support agents has coincided with a trend to implement the inclusion reform agenda with more special education support and assistance rather than focusing on school and classroom development measures (Radford et al., 2015).

The role of support agents is not mentioned in the Icelandic ‘Act on Comprehensive Education’ (lög um grunnskóla 91/2008) or in the regulations on support for learners with Special Needs (Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir í grunnskóla 585/2012). When searching for information about support agents on the websites of individual (comprehensive) schools, it appears that the job descriptions for support agents are mostly based on a common definition. This common job description states that they should assist teachers in supporting one or more learners who need special help. The tasks mentioned are varied, e.g. working according to a support and development plan, working under the supervision of teachers, helping learners to achieve set goals, providing social support and assisting with activities of daily living (such as dressing, eating and personal hygiene). In addition, they are supposed to perform other unspecified tasks assigned to them by their supervisors when the learners are not in school. Some schools state that the role of the support agents is to help learners to be independent both in learning and in social situations, so that their need for support is gradually reduced.

A few schools specify the required competences for support agents. These focus on aspects such as good social skills, good Icelandic language skills and positive attitude. However, competences such as being independent in their work, having creative thinking or liking children are not mentioned.

So far, not many studies have been conducted on the work of support agents in Icelandic schools. The results of one study showed that support agents were dissatisfied with their job description. They felt that their tasks were too varied, as they were seen as ‘multi-purpose workers’, so to speak, and that their salary did not correspond to the range of responsibilities they have in their work (Gunnþórsdóttir & Möller, 2017). Several master’s thesis research projects have also investigated the practice of school assistants: Their findings show that the role is multifaceted and that there are different views within schools on how to organise and use the work of support agents (Línadóttir, 2018) – for example, that (1) teachers consider it important to have school assistants in classes, especially when the group of learners is challenging (Kjartansdóttir, 2016) and that (2) many tasks that support agents are expected to perform are not necessarily within their remit (Veigarsson-Olsen, 2018).

In an action research project focusing on the development of inclusive practice in a comprehensive school, the role of support agents played a significant role (Óskarsdóttir, 2017; Óskarsdóttir & Guðjónsdóttir, 2021). The research project was divided into three different phases: Exploration phase, Implementation phase and Reflection phase. At the beginning of the exploratory phase, it became clear in the interviews with the teachers that while many of them felt that support agents were important, others (mainly teachers at the lower secondary school level) felt that they could be an additional burden on teachers and that this role was not helpful. At this phase, there were examples from practice where support agents had sole responsibility for learners with individualised education plans – for their education and social participation. The support agents stated in the interviews that no time or space was created for them to meet with teachers and receive information on how they should work. One support agent with many years of experience stated that when she did not know what the teachers expected of her, she would often just go into the classroom and take out the learner who was least on task or most disruptive and work with him in the library. Another problem mentioned by the support agents was that they felt that their presence caused “learned helplessness” (Dweck, 1975) among learners. An example of this was that learners were dependent on support and waited to be assisted, i.e. did not move from one room to the next without the support agent standing next to them. From interviews with the learners, it was apparent that they perceived the support agents to be a barrier to interaction. A fifth-grade learner stated that when she works with a boy in her class who has a particular support agent, she usually talks with the support agent and not the boy himself.

In the implementation phase of the action research project, the focus was on changing this way of working with the support agents – and one of the measures was to set up time during the week for the support agent to meet with the class teachers and/or special needs teachers. These meetings were to give the support agents opportunity to discuss their work, exchange information about the learners and get advice from the teachers. This way of working proved to be successful in empowering the support agents, giving them a voice and at the same time clarifying their roles and responsibilities. Another measure was to ensure that support agents were assigned to work with teachers at specific grade levels (e.g. only with third or fourth grade teachers) rather than with individual learners and not across multiple grade levels. Sometimes, certainly, they were asked to work individually with a learner, but this was always under the supervision and organisation of the teacher or special needs educator.

4 Areas of tension of support agents in Icelandic schools in the mirror of international perspectives

Overall, the programmatic contextual conditions as well as the first empirical insights show that support agents in Icelandic schools represent a role that needs to be further developed and structured and that this very act of assistance involves several ambivalences. Although further, more in-depth empirical research is necessary, some tensions related to the role of support agents in the Icelandic school system can be outlined below due to preliminary exploratory insights. They are connected to the international professional and research discourse on school assistance in the context of inclusive education – introduced in the previous chapters.

4.1 Qualifications of support agents in relation to job expectations

Clearly, one area of tension in the paraprofessional status of support agents is the relatively low level of qualification or the (non-) training provided. While the exact practice of qualification differs considerably internationally (Takala, 2007), the overall picture is that the tasks and requirements of paraprofessional support roles are not commensurate with their qualifications but exceed them (Egilson & Traustadóttir, 2009). This can be seen, for example, in the fact that school assistants are often asked to provide task-related internal differentiation and adaptation (e.g. with regard to the level of requirements or abstraction), which requires a high degree of pedagogical know-how and has so far been (too) little addressed even in teacher education. In addition, paraprofessionals are confronted with diffuse job descriptions, which oscillate between person-related assistance and teaching support for the teacher, as shown by different country perspectives (Fritzsche & Köpfer, 2021).

4.2 Dealing with expertise and knowledge

Another related ambivalence can be seen in the lack of integration and the lack of time for cooperation within the school – especially regarding agreements, information exchange and knowledge transfer with the (class) teacher. This is important insofar – as already mentioned – as the expectations on the part of the teachers regarding the support agent's work differ greatly. In addition, the support agent creates a role that acquires experience (and thus also diagnostic expertise) through the person-related activity but tends to have a short-term and transient attitude. Thus, the sustainable transfer of learner-, class- and school-related knowledge is questioned.

4.3 Systemic outsider role and relative autonomy

Paraprofessional support roles find themselves – as it has become clear from the previous descriptions – in a systemically conditioned outsider role (e.g. low qualification, low integration into the school, little cooperation time). They run the risk of not being perceived as part of the school or the school team. At the same time, they are in a powerful position in a kind of ‘double-bind’ relationship with the child. The child is dependent on the support of the paraprofessional in order to be part of the school or class. On the other hand, the paraprofessional is also dependent on the child’s need for support in order to be able to continue her*his work at the school. Within this narrow structure of conditions and dependencies, an autonomous – and thus at the same time separating – arrangement of the paraprofessional’s work is practised as study results from different countries, e.g. UK, Germany, Canada (Fritzsche & Köpfer 2021) indicate.

4.4 Relationships and interaction

As in all pedagogical situations, the relationship between support agent and learner with support needs is characterised by an ambivalence of closeness and distance. Due to the formal constellation of the direct assignment of the support agent to the learner, the challenge of relating this relationship arises here in particular. It is apparent – both in Icelandic schools and in international discourse – that the paraprofessional support role is primarily designed as a close caregiver for the child. The literature sometimes refers to a “second mother” (Ehrenberg, 2021) or “mom’s army” (Ainscow, 2009) or to a “buddy” relationship (Köpfer & Böing, 2017). On the one hand, this expresses a close and familiar assistance situation but at the same time – and this is criticised in the research literature as well as in the exploratory explorations by Óskarsdóttir (cf. chapter 3) in Icelandic schools –, it potentially creates distance between child and teacher as well as child and peers. In addition to the impaired (authentic) communication situations, it is also questioned to what extent the narrow and unidirectional support situation prevents the emancipation striving, problem-solving behaviour and self-determination and thereby potentially creates “learned helplessness” (Dweck, 1975).

5 Conclusion

With a view to the discussed areas of tension that can be identified in the range of activities of school assistants in Icelandic schools, it becomes apparent that the introduction of paraprofessional roles makes the ambivalences of pedagogical action related to questions of inclusion and exclusion visible like a burning glass. Thus, the question can justifiably be asked: Do paraprofessional support roles represent an inclusion-related measure to ensure the participation of all learners – or does this very role create a segregating practice within schools or school systems designated as inclusive?

Allan – referring to Slee (2001) – emphasizes the dubious reflex that in inclusion-related school reforms, educational equity is often attempted to be established merely by providing additional resources to children with attributed support needs (put into a short formula: “Equity [E] is achieved when you add Additional Resources [AR] to the Disabled Learner [D], thus $E = AR + D$ ”). Furthermore, in the professional and research literature, the connection between a selection-oriented school system and norm-oriented paraprofessionals is often emphasised and paraprofessional support role is critically viewed as reinforcing rather than compensating for an “integration of inclusion into segregation” (Feuser, 2016). The underlying assumption is that especially performance-based vertically stratified education systems with a high rate of exclusion could transform or overhaul the role of paraprofessionals in a separative way, since mechanisms of placement and disability-related support are incisively inscribed in these school

systems. However, the example of Iceland – as well as the analysis of teacher assistants in Canadian schools (Köpfer, 2013) – shows that even countries with comprehensive school systems have ambivalences in the design of paraprofessional support roles regarding potential risks of segregation.

An empirically based international (cultural) comparison, which takes into account the framework conditions and practices of corresponding school systems in a contrastive manner, has yet to be conducted. Currently, however, a study is under way that aims to contrast and compare the status in Iceland, Great Britain, Germany and Georgia on the basis of a secondary analysis of interview data with paraprofessionals (Köpfer & Óskarsdóttir, 2023). Such an empirical comparative study is necessary because, on the one hand, the formal roles and expectations of assistance roles seem to differ greatly in the respective countries and, on the other hand, because apparently similar autonomy-practicing paraprofessional practices become apparent against the background of different framework conditions (Fritzsche & Köpfer, 2021). Lessons learnt from such comparison have the potential of clarifying measures needed for the continued development of creating equitable and inclusive schools and classrooms – where all learners are active and valued participants receiving quality education.

References

- Ainscow, Mel (2009). Das Entwickeln von inklusiven Bildungssystemen: Was sind die Druckmittel für einen Wandel? In Ulrich Heimlich & Isabelle Behr (Hrsg.), *Inklusion in der frühen Kindheit: internationale Perspektiven* (pp. 67–84). Berlin Münster: Lit.
- Ainscow, Mel (2021). Inclusion and equity in education: Responding to a global challenge. In Andreas Köpfer, Justin J.W. Powell & Raphael Zahnd (Eds.), *International Handbook of Inclusive Education* (pp. 75–88). Opladen Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Blasse, Nina (2017). Vielfältige Positionen von Schulbegleitung im Unterricht. In Marian Laubner, Bettina Lindmeier & Anika Lübeck (Eds.), *Schulbegleitung in der inklusiven Schule* (pp. 107–117). Weinheim Basel: Beltz.
- Blatchford, Peter, Bassett, Paul, Brown, Penelope, Martin, Claire, Russel, Anthony, & Webster, Rob (2009). *The impact of support staff in schools. Results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project*. London: DCSF.
- Blatchford, Peter, Russel, Anthony, & Webster, Rob (2012). *Reassessing the impact of teaching assistants*. Abingdon Oxon: Routledge.
- Blatchford, Peter, Webster, Rob, & Russell, Antony (2012). *Challenging the Role and Deployment of Teaching Assistants in Mainstream Schools: The Impact on Schools. Final report on the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project*. London: Institute of Education, <http://www.schoolsupportstaff.net/edtareport.pdf>.
- Butt, Rosemary (2016). Teacher assistant support and deployment in mainstream schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(9), 995–1007, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1145260>.
- Butt, Rosemary, & Lowe, Kaye (2012). Teaching assistants and class teachers. Differing perceptions, role confusion and the benefits of skills-based training. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(2), 207–219.
- Chambers, Dianne (2015). The changing nature of the roles of support staff. In Dianne Chambers (Ed.), *Working with teaching assistants and other support staff for inclusive education* (pp. 3–25). London: Emerald Publishing.
- Dweck, Carol S. (1975). The role of expectations and attributions in the alleviation of learned helplessness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 31(4), 674.

- Egilson, Snæfríður, & Traustadóttir, Rannveig (2009). Assistance to learners with physical disabilities in regular schools: Providing inclusion or creating dependency. *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 24, 21–36.
- Ehrenberg, Katrin, & Lindmeier, Bettina (2020). Differenzpraktiken und Otheringprozesse in inklusiven Unterrichtssettings mit Schulassistenten [Practices of difference and othering in inclusive classrooms with school assistants]. In Halyna Leontiy & Miklas Schulz (Eds.), *Ethnographie und Diversität*. [Ethnography and diversity] (pp. 139–158). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Feuser, Georg (2009). Integration und Inklusion als Möglichkeitsräume. *Gemeinsam leben*, 17(3), 156–166.
- Fritzsche, Bettina, & Köpfer, Andreas (2021). (Para-)professionalism in dealing with structures of uncertainty – a cultural comparative study of teaching assistants in inclusion-oriented classrooms. *Disability & Society*, 37(1), 1–21.
- Giangreco, Michael F. (2010). One-to-one paraprofessionals for learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms: Is conventional wisdom wrong? *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 48(1), 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-48.1.1>.
- Giangreco, Michael F. (2013). Teacher assistant supports in inclusive schools: research, practices and alternatives. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 37(2), 93–106, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jse.2013.1>.
- Gunnþórsdóttir Hermína, & Möller, Kristín Þ. (2017). Frímínútur í tveimur grunnskólum: Fyrirkomulag og sjónarmið starfsfólks sem sinnir gæslu nemenda. *Netla*, 1–18, <http://netla.hi.is/greinar/2017/ryn/13.pdf>.
- Kjartansdóttir, Þórunn (2016). „Ég myndi ekki vilja vera án góðra stuðningsfulltrúa, það er alveg á hreinu.“ *Þáttur stuðningsfulltrúa í menntastefnunni skóli án aðgreiningar*. [“I would not want to be without a good support assistant, that is for sure.” The role of support assistants in the education policy of inclusion.] Unpublished master’s thesis. Reykjavík: University of Iceland.
- Köpfer, Andreas (2013). *Inclusion in Canada: Analyse inklusiver Unterrichtsprozesse, Unterstützungsstrukturen und Rollen am Beispiel kanadischer Schulen in den Provinzen New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island und Québec*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Köpfer, Andreas, & Böing, Ursula (2020). Learners’ Perspectives on Paraprofessional Support in German Inclusive Schools: Results from an Exploratory Interview Study with Learners in Northrhine Westfalia. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 16(2), 70–92.
- Köpfer, Andreas, & Oskarsdóttir, Edda (2023). Reconstructing Paraprofessional Practices in Inclusive Schools – a European Comparison. In: *European Journal of Inclusive Education* (in prep.).
- Köpfer, Andreas, & Tan, Run (2023). Between support and stigmatization – international comparative perspectives on paraprofessional practices in inclusive schools. In: Elizabeth J. Done & Helen Knowler (Eds.), *International Perspectives on Exclusionary Pressures in Education*. London: MacMillan (in print).
- Línadóttir, Elísa Ósk (2018). *Störf stuðningsfulltrúa í íslenskum grunnskólum*. [The work of support assistants in Icelandic comprehensive schools.] Unpublished master’s thesis. Akureyri: University of Akureyri.
- Lübeck, Anika, & Demmer, Christine (2017). Unüberblickbares überblicken – Ausgewählte Forschungsergebnisse zu Schulbegleitung [A clear overview – selected research results for school support]. In Miklas Laubner, Bettina Lindemeier & Anika Lübeck (Eds.), *Schulbegleitung in der inklusiven Schule* [Overseeing the not even remotely comprehensible: Selected research results on teaching assistants in inclusive schools] (pp. 11–27). Weinheim Basel: Beltz.
- Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008*. [Act on Education no. 91/2008].

- Mulholland, Monika, & O'Connor, Una (2016). Collaborative classroom practice for inclusion: Perspectives of classroom teachers and learning support/resource teachers. *International journal of inclusive education*, 20(10), 1070–1083.
- Óskarsdóttir, Edda (2017). *Constructing support as inclusive practice: a self-study*. Unpublished EdD thesis. Reykjavík: University of Iceland.
- Óskarsdóttir, Edda, & Guðjónsdóttir, Hafðís (2021). Að þróa starf og hlutverk stuðningsfulltrúa í skóla fyrir alla. *Glæður*, 1(31), 28–37.
- Pfahl, Lisa D. (2011). *Techniken der Behinderung*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Pluquailec, Jill (2018). Affective economies, autism, and ‘challenging behaviour’: socio-spatial emotions in disabled children’s education. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 29(2), 9–14.
- Radford, Julie, Bosanquet, Paula, Webster, Rob, & Blatchford, Peter (2015). Scaffolding learning for independence: Clarifying teacher and teaching assistant roles for children with special educational needs. *Learning and Instruction*, 36, 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2014.10.005>.
- Reglugerð um nemendur með sérþarfir í grunnskóla nr. 585/2012* [Regulation on learners with special needs in comprehensive school no. 585/2012].
- Rutherford, Gill (2012). In, out or somewhere in between? Disabled learners’ and teacher aides’ experiences of school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 16(8): 757–774, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2010.509818>.
- Sharma, Uma, & Salend, Spencer J. (2016). Teaching Assistants in Inclusive Classrooms: A Systematic Analysis of the International Research. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(8), 118–134.
- Schmidt, Lisa D. H. (2016). *Schulische Assistenz – Der Forschungsstand in Deutschland mit Blick auf die internationale Ebene*. [Educational assistance – The state of research in Germany overlooking the international level]. *Zeitschrift für Inklusion-Online* 4. <https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/372/312>.
- Statistics Iceland (ed) a. *Fjöldi nemenda í grunnskólum 1999–2019*. http://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Samfelag/Samfelag_skolamal_2_grunnskolastig_0_gsNemendur/SKO02101.px/?rxid=5ef2fb1d-c193-4b67-adea-6da0704487c8.
- Statistics Iceland (ed) b. 1999–2019. *Starfsfólk í grunnskólum eftir hlutverkum*. http://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Samfelag/Samfelag_skolamal_2_grunnskolastig_1_gsStarfsfolk/SKO02307.px/?rxid=5ef2fb1d-c193-4b67-adea-6da0704487c8.
- Sturm, Tanja (2012). Praxeologische unterrichtsforschung und ihr beitrag zu inklusivem unterricht. [Praxeological classroom research and its contribution to inclusive education]. *Zeitschrift für Inklusion-Online* 1, <http://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion/article/view/151/143>.
- Takala, Marjatta (2007). The work of classroom assistants in special and mainstream education in Finland. *British Journal of Special Education*, 34(1), 50–57.
- Veigarsson-Olsen, Martin (2018). *Stuðningsfulltrúar: Starfslýsingar og störf í grunnskólum*. [Support assistants: Job descriptions and work in comprehensive schools.] Unpublished master’s thesis. Akureyri: University of Akureyri.
- Webster, Rob, Blatchford, Peter, Bassett, Paul, Brown, Penelope, Martin, Clare, & Russell, Antony (2010). Double standards and first principles: Framing teaching assistant support for pupils with special educational needs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 25(4), 319–336, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2010.513533>.
- Webster, Rob, & Blatchford, Peter (2013). The educational experiences of pupils with a statement for special educational needs in mainstream primary schools: Results from a systematic observation study. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(4), 463–479.

Weisser, Jan (2017). *Konfliktfelder schulischer Inklusion/Exklusion im 20. Jahrhundert*. [Fields of conflict regarding inclusion/exclusion in schools in the 20th century]. Weinheim Basel: Beltz.