



Jane Brodin, J. (2010) Can ICT give children with disabilities equal opportunities in school? *Improving Schools*, 2010, 13 (1), 99–112 DOI: 10.1177/1365480209353483

Abstract

Opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in school on equal terms are often underlined, but reality shows that many children with disabilities are still segregated. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been highlighted as a tool for communication and inclusion for children with disabilities, but it appears from the research that the implementation of technology in children's everyday life (e.g. in school) is difficult.

The positive expectations regarding ICT have thus not been reached. The article discusses a study of whether ICT can promote inclusion of children with motor disabilities and contribute to equal opportunities in school. The focus was on parents' views, with questionnaires being distributed to 16 parents. Interviews were also conducted with the children. The results of the parental questionnaire and an interview with one of the 15-year-old pupils are presented. Two schools where ICT and computers were used as pedagogical tools to promote inclusion were involved. Both schools had and still have the goal of being considered *a school for all children*. One conclusion is that there is a need for both technical and social support in schools if ICT is to function as a bridge for the inclusion of all pupils.

Main findings

Conclusions: In Sweden we talk about a school to prepare children for the future. The concepts used often have more ideological value, rather than serving as guidance in a practical activity. A school that is not at the forefront of its development cannot be seen as a school with a focus on the future. Naturally, it can be claimed that children obtain knowledge that is important for their future, but for typical pupils it is not that simple. Many pupils need ICT both in school and during leisure time to facilitate daily life and for play, and therefore more resources must be expended on these pupils so that they may more easily get the most out of their education. Financial cutbacks increasingly affect schools, inevitably impacting upon the weakest pupils. These cutbacks have had an influence on ICT developments, as have limitations in teacher training.

For children with motor disabilities, ICT could be of great benefit, if based on their own requirements and its potential use as an integrating link in the school. If *a school for all* is to be a reality, support must be given to all pupils who need it. New technology will open the doors for many children. Can ICT give children with disabilities equal opportunities in school? The answer is definitely yes, but resource allocation for the school of the future must be based on the results of current research. For this reason, it is necessary to increase ICT research and make it a greater priority.

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