

# INSPIRE

## Innovations in Special Educational Needs Support in Regular Education



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# CONTENT

## Part 1: Concepts and policies

- |      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 1.1  | Defining 'special needs'.<br>John Wilson<br><i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i>  | 6  |
| 1.1. | Special needs in the twenty-first century.<br>Where we've been and where we're going,<br>Alan Dyson<br><i>British Journal of Special Education</i>              | 11 |
| 1.3. | Factors in inclusion: a framework<br>Sip Jan Pijl & Cor Meijer<br><i>Inclusive Education. A global agenda.</i>  | 19 |
| 1.2. | The reform of special education or the transformation of<br>mainstream schools?<br>Alan Dyson and Alan Millward<br><i>Inclusive Education. A global agenda.</i> | 23 |

## Part 2. Implementation: Trends and Innovative Practices. At school-and classroom level

- |      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 2.1. | Inclusion : Implementation and approaches<br>Cor J. W. Meijer, Sip Jan Pijl and Seamus Hegarty<br><i>Inclusive Education. A global agenda.</i>  | 32 |
| 2.2. | Principles of good practice in educational integration.<br>August Dens, Liliane Decock, Cliff Warwick<br><i>European guide of good practices in educational integration:<br/>Towards equal opportunities for disabled people. (EU-Commission)</i> | 40 |
| 2.3. | Planning for support in the mainstream.<br>Gary Thomas<br><i>Planning for Special Needs. A whole school approach<br/>(Gary Thomas &amp; Anthony Feiler)</i>   | 48 |
| 2.4. | Special educational support in Estonia.<br><i>Eurydice - Eurybase Estonia 2007-2008</i>   | 56 |

**Part 3 : Support for teachers**

- |      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 4.1. | Effective Classroom Practices for Inclusive Education<br>Chapter 3: Synthesis of findings.<br><i>European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education</i> | 65 |
| 4.2. | Educational consultation. Discussing pupils in a professional way.<br>Wim Meijer  | 72 |
| 4.3. | Peer Learning Groups for Teachers: A Norwegian Innovation.<br>Elaine Munthe and Unni Vere Midthassel  | 78 |
| 4.4. | Ten Questions on Inclusive Education<br><a href="http://www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education">http://www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education</a>                 | 86 |

**The < INSPIRE > TEAM 2009**

Cees Grol	Senior Lecturer in Ecological Pedagogy, Utrecht University of Higher Professional Education, Hogeschool Utrecht, The Netherlands
Gust Dens	Educational Consultant – Former co-ordinator International Projects for CLB-Centres (Pupil Support and Consultation) in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Leuven, Belgium.
Bill Goddard	Director of Postgraduate and Doctoral Professional Development Programmes, School of Education and Training, University of Greenwich, London, UK.
Robert Davies	Senior Lecturer in Education and Childhood Studies, School of Education and Training, University of Greenwich, London, UK.
Ene Mägi	Prof. Em. Ph.D. / Special Education, Former Head of Department of Special and Social Pedagogy, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Tallinn University.
Kai Kukk	Senior Expert at the Estonian Ministry of Education. Representing Estonia in the European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education.
Ene Varik	Lecturer - Department of Special- and Social Pedagogy, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Tallinn University.

## Defining 'special needs'

JOHN WILSON

### ABSTRACT

Policy, research and practice in special needs education are inevitably determined by our conceptions of 'special needs' and our understanding of that phrase. There is a distinction between (1) the meaning of the phrase (the linguistic equivalent of 'special' and 'needs') and (2) the criteria of application (what is to count as a special need). Both (1) and (2) are here explored, and it is shown that both depend ultimately on value judgements about what is important or desirable in human life and not just on empirical fact. Those concerned with the theory and practice of special needs have to face the task of clarifying, and defending, the value judgements on which their work relies.

There is a vast volume of literature under the heading of 'special needs' in English, or equivalent expressions in other languages, and a great deal of policy-making, research and practice that goes on under that heading but may not be represented in the literature. But it is striking that very little attention has been paid to defining the expression 'special needs' or equivalent expressions. I shall argue that this task needs to be taken more seriously and has great practical importance: it is not only a matter of 'defining one's terms' just for the sake of academic precision or tidiness.

Part of the trouble is that the task of definition is commonly scamped or avoided in favour of other tasks. Thus, (1) some writers collect or *report* on definitions, along the lines of 'A and B (1993) define special needs as "the requirements of an individual to fulfil his true potential"; 'For C and D (1998) a special need is one which falls outside the normal curriculum'; and so forth. Whatever the value of such reportage, it does not in itself define anything or even attempt to do so. Then, (2) other writers may specify, or (if they are in positions of authority) ordain, what is to *count* as a special need within some particular society or educational system, as a judge may specify what is to count as reasonable force in English law when making a citizen's arrest (one may legitimately restrain the wrongdoer but not knock him down and jump on him, or whatever). That too is not to define 'special needs' or 'reasonable force', but just to say what will be cases of special needs or reasonable force within some given set of rules or criteria. And (3), other writers again offer particular philosophical or ideological *conceptions* of equality or justice; but that too is not to define anything: I may have a particular conception of what special needs are and how they should be handled, or of what a just society should look like, without being concerned to define the terms 'special needs' or 'justice'.

Another part of the trouble is that 'special needs' is already used, at least by those in the special needs industry, as a kind of semi-technical or specialized term which creates the impression that we already know what we are talking about. But in fact it is nowhere clearly defined, in the way that full-blown technical terms are defined (like the terms 'work' or 'mass' in physics or 'point' in Euclidean geometry). It is as if we believed that, because it already stands as the title of a particular industry or set of practices, its meaning must already be clear. But actually its semi-technical use obscures rather than clarifies its meaning.

The way in which such terms are deployed in different cultures and languages throughout the world would repay study; but the position in the UK is not atypical, and may at least serve as an illustration. There is (to the best of my knowledge) no serious attempt in the literature of

analytic philosophy which attempts the task, and it is a remarkable fact that the official literature on special needs (e.g. DES, 1978, 1994; DfEE, 1997) makes no attempt to define 'special needs': that is, to tell us what the expression 'special needs' means. Rather it is concerned to lay down or specify what is to count as a special need, to identify certain things as special needs, and to say something about how they should be assessed and catered for in practice.

The difference is important; normally we define words or expressions, not things (the word 'table', not actual tables), and we do this in order to get clear about their meaning. That seems to be necessary before we go on to talk about the things themselves:

otherwise we shall not know what we are talking about (we need to know what 'table' means before we can talk about tables). Perhaps those responsible for the literature thought that it was already entirely clear what 'special needs' means. I shall try to show here: (1) that this is not so, and (2) that the meaning we give to it makes a considerable difference to policy, research and practice.

1. 'Special' is ambiguous as between (a) 'peculiar', 'specific' and 'not general', and (b) 'of special importance'. Thus, (a) I may have a special talent for playing poker or solving crossword puzzles, a talent shared by few other people or perhaps just peculiar to myself; and if I have an unusual complexion or head of hair, I may need a special kind of cosmetic or haircut. Whether these talents or needs are thought to be (b) of special importance (value, weight, significance) is another matter: that will turn on the importance we attach to poker or crossword puzzles, or to what my face or hair look like. Conversely, there are things which we may think to be (b) specially important to all human beings — for instance, health or love or enough food and drink; and these are not 'special' in the sense (a) of being peculiar or specific to a small class of people and not to others.

The relevance of this distinction to practice is obvious. Assuming (in advance) that we know what 'needs' means, we may then be able to identify a particular class of people who (a) have special or peculiar or distinctive needs. But that in itself goes no way to show that the needs are (b) of special importance, or that we should expend time and money and other resources in catering for them. We justify meeting a need on the ground that the need is important, not on the ground that it is peculiar or unusual. Generally speaking, the literature seems to interpret 'special needs' in sense (a) rather than in sense (b); but that leaves entirely open the question of whether any, or some, or all, of these needs should actually be met.

2. We commonly suppose that if somebody needs something, then he ought to have it. But that is a mistake. To say that I need X is to say only that X is necessary or useful to me if I am to achieve some end or be in some state, and that the lack of X prevents this. Often such ends or states are desirable: I need to be able to read in order to appreciate literature, and I need vitamins in order to be healthy. But often they are not. It is undeniable that burglars and safe-breakers need certain tools, that confidence tricksters need to be able to lie convincingly, that assassins need sharp knives, that the Nazis needed efficient weapons to conquer Europe. We might put this by saying that the concept marked by 'need' is relative to some particular end-state, without any implication that the end-state is desirable or undesirable. There is no doubt that I need four aces in order to beat four kings and thus win a hand at poker; but whether I ought to win the hand, or whether I ought to be playing poker at all, is another matter. So whether a need ought to be met depends not only on whether it is important (as in (1), above), but also on whether the end-state is desirable. That too has obvious implications for practice: we have to justify the end-state as desirable before we can justify meeting the need.

3. But even that is not enough, for not all desirable end-states entail needs. It may be desirable that I should be able to take frequent holidays abroad or own two cars or live in a large house, but that is not sufficient to establish that I need these things. Similarly, I need food and drink,

but I do not need five-star meals or vintage wines. We endorse something as a need only if we see the end-state for which it is necessary; not just as desirable — something which it would be nice for the person to have or enjoy — but as something without which his life would be seriously defective. That is admittedly an obscure idea; but it seems that we conceive of some things as necessities for a normal or adequate or satisfactory human life, and of other things as extras or bonuses. Thus we see health as a necessity, so that I need food and drink and vitamins and some form of exercise; but I do not need five-star meals or bulging muscles or the ability to run as fast as Olympic athletes. In the same way, I need some form of transport to get to work, but not a Rolls-Royce. Different people may count different things as necessities, as against extras or bonuses: they may, for instance, argue about whether I really need a car or whether public transport is good enough; but that does not invalidate the distinction itself.

4. In the case of some needs, for instance, those that relate to health, the distinction is not too hard to apply: we know pretty well what counts as good health, and how to distinguish what is necessary for good health from what is unnecessary. But in the case of educational needs, it is much more difficult. That is because we have no clear idea about what kinds or contents of learning are really *necessary* for this or that person, as opposed to being just desirable extras. Thus we have the intuitive idea that, at least in our society, it is necessary that people should be literate and numerate, but not necessary that they should appreciate Shakespeare or understand the binomial theorem, so that the former will count as needs and the latter as extras. But the rationale for these intuitive judgements is very far from clear.

5. In this particular instance, we might defend our judgement on strictly pragmatic grounds. We should say perhaps that, given our society as it is (and it cannot be easily or quickly changed), the life of an illiterate or non-numerate person would be severely defective: he might be unemployable, unable to communicate adequately, incapable of sharing important activities or enterprises with his fellows, and so forth. Pragmatic arguments of this kind carry much weight: just as, in a society whose members depend for their survival on the ability to catch fish or trap animals, learning to do these things is obviously a necessity and in no sense an extra. But a very great deal of what pupils are supposed to learn is not defensible by that kind of argument. If we ask whether pupils actually need to learn (for instance) history or music or physics, or a foreign language or English literature, the answer will not be obvious. And the fact that these learning contents figure in an established curriculum is no answer at all: perhaps they ought not to.

6. The point may be made more dramatically. I may think that it is in some way ‘enriching’ or instructive or useful if a person learns about religion or politics, or music and literature, without thinking that his life will go seriously astray if he is ignorant of these things. On the other hand, I may think that his soul will not be saved if he is ignorant of Christian (Islamic, Buddhist, etc.) doctrines; or that if he is not adequately versed in politics, he may find himself living under a Fascist tyranny; or that without an appreciation of music, literature and other art forms, he will be no more than a moral and emotional imbecile. I then think of these things as necessities: he needs to learn them for reasons which are just as decisive as the pragmatic or utilitarian reasons in (5), above.

7. It is thus impossible to identify something as a ‘special need’ in education without reference to some picture or set of criteria in virtue of which certain learning-contents are seen as not only desirable and important, but also in some sense necessary. The value or weight we give to learning X or Y or Z determines what we shall count as a ‘special need’, just as it determines what we shall count as a ‘learning difficulty’, or a ‘disability’ or a ‘talent’ or a ‘gift’. In that sense, whether someone has a special need is not a matter of empirical fact: it calls rather for a judgement of value. That does not, of course, imply that such judgements

have to be ‘arbitrary’ or ‘subjective’ or anything of that kind: we can make good (reasonable, sensible, well-founded) judgements of value just as we can make good judgements of fact. But it does imply — and we can see this once we realize what the phrase ‘special needs’ means — that the idea of determining special needs by empirical observation and research alone is incoherent.

8. That has important consequences not just for the identification of special needs, but for the whole management, organization and (in a broad sense) politics of the industry that has grown up under that title. If we were dealing with an area which did not involve value-judgements — for instance, children’s health, or the understanding of elementary mathematics — we should have an agreed basis for research and practice:

We do not have to *decide* what to count as ‘healthy’ or ‘understanding elementary mathematics’, because the answer is already given to us by the meaning of those expressions, as it is not given by the meaning of ‘special needs’. Hence we may expect to have, as in fact we do have, (a) experts in these fields (doctors and paediatricians, mathematicians and teachers of mathematics), and (b) national and international organizations, like the World Health Organization, all of which would share a common conception of the goals or ends to be achieved (because they share a common conception of ‘health’ and ‘understanding elementary mathematics’), and would be able to pool their empirical knowledge on the basis of this conception.

Different countries might meet with different obstacles in attaining those goals or ends, but the goals or ends would be the same for all: what counts as ‘being healthy’ or ‘understanding elementary mathematics’ is the same for children in Iraq or India or Indonesia. But none of this holds for special needs.

9. Thus there is a serious question (a) about who is best placed to decide what children to count as having ‘special needs’, given that this involves a judgement of value. Shall we give particular weight to the people who know the children intimately, to the parents and teachers who have daily contact with them? Or are we content to leave the decision to government or some central authority, on the grounds that such an authority is best placed to identify the needs of society in general, and hence to identify what kinds of learning-contents are particularly important? What kind of knowledge is most relevant to making good value judgements in this field? Or again, are some people (apart from their knowledge) better at making such judgements than others, because they are wiser, or more perceptive and insightful, or more well-versed in ethical theory? Where are such people to be found, how can they be identified?

10. There is also a serious question (b) about how far we should strive for, or expect, any kind of national or international consensus at all. For (i) on any account special needs will vary depending on local conditions: some at least of the special needs of children in the Amazonian jungle will be different from those of children in Siberia, and different again from those of children in New York. And (ii) different societies will have different pictures of what is necessary for human flourishing; and we can hardly ask that these should be abandoned and put into some kind of melting-pot in the interests of obtaining a consensus, any more than we can ask religious believers to abandon their particular creeds and give their allegiance to some world-wide syncretic religion. In this situation we can, of course, communicate and cooperate and learn a lot from each other; but we also need diversity and experiment, which an international or even a national organization may stifle (particularly if it holds significant purse-strings).

11. I cannot pronounce on these questions here, but the meaning or definition of ‘special needs’ requires us to reflect on them. One thing is perhaps worth saying: that without such

reflection, we may easily come to take it for granted that what counts as a special need is indeed a matter of fact — even perhaps that it is settled by what governments or other authorities tell us is to count. But such authorities have their own axes to grind, usually (and not without reason) of a fairly pragmatic or utilitarian kind. Certainly, in most modern societies, items like literacy and numeracy and employability have weight. But it may also be necessary (perhaps even more necessary) for an adequate life that a child should learn to behave justly, or to form rewarding personal relationships, or find meaning in his life, or invest in various worthwhile activities for their own sake. There is a very wide variety of candidates; and that some are more impalpable and less easily researchable than others is not a reason for thinking them less important. I hope, at least, to have shown that the meaning of ‘special needs’ leaves these questions open.

12. What practical force or application does all this have for those actually engaged in the special needs industry? Many such people are, of course, bound to work within the particular parameters laid down by authority: that is, as I have explained earlier, what the authorities dictate as counting as a special need (not *defining* ‘a special need’). That may apply to researchers as well as to practising teachers. But it would be servile for either researchers or practitioners to accept these parameters uncritically. We should expect an independent-minded teacher at least to reflect on whether his pupils can rightly be said to have special needs which fall outside the official parameters, and perhaps even to do something about meeting those needs: as surely a parent would think about the special needs of his children, and try to meet them, without being bullied or constricted by any specific criteria delivered *de haut en bas*.

13. But more than this: for such reflection requires some kind of organized or institutionalized back-up. To put this rather ferociously, it is a crucial *part of* research and academic enquiry into special needs not only that the expression should be properly defined, but that the merits and delivery of various criteria should be explored. Very few journals, books, conferences or programmes of learning actually do this, and to that extent they remain self-sealed, confined within a particular conception of special needs which constitutes an uncritically accepted orthodoxy and, in effect, dictates the agenda of both research and practice. Thus suppose we thought (not implausibly) that, alongside their needs to be literate and numerate, and so forth, children also needed to be able to make friends, or find meaning in their lives, or come to delight in various forms of life for their own sake; and that some children stood particularly in need of these things, so that their needs would be ‘special’ not only in the sense of being important, but also in the sense of being distinctive. Then, at least, we would expect such items to be discussed in the literature, both in terms of their nature (what does friendship consist of, what is it to find meaning in one’s life?) and in terms of how these items could be delivered in practice (what can schools actually do to generate them?).

14. Such discussion is conspicuous by its absence; and it is, of course, much easier to confine ourselves to particular needs or ‘disabilities’ that may be more easily pinned down; for instance, to ‘learning difficulties’ like dyslexia, rather than to things which are also ‘learning difficulties’ in the normal sense of the phrase, such as laziness or rebelliousness or sheer boredom. (Our conception of ‘learning difficulties’ is constricted in much the same way as our conception of ‘special needs’, and for much the same reasons.) There are many important questions about how these more impalpable needs can best be described, how they can be researched and how they can best be met. At present, such questions are rarely even raised, let alone answered. What I have tried to show is that this is because our conception of special needs is too parochial, and that this in turn is at least partly because we have not faced up to what the phrase ‘special needs’ actually means.

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# Special needs in the twenty-first century: where we've been and where we're going

*Alan Dyson*

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Alan Dyson, who last year gave the Gulliford lecture on which this article is based, takes a critical look at the relationship between 'inclusion' and 'social inclusion'. He bases his analysis on a review of the history of special needs education and on some of the thinking which emerges from his work on a current research project, *Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools*. This project is funded by ESRC (L 1392 51005) as part of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme and has been undertaken in collaboration with colleagues at Newcastle, Christchurch University College Canterbury and the University of Manchester. The later parts of this article refer to this project, although the views expressed are Alan Dyson's rather than those of the research team as a whole.

## The need for a historical perspective

It is appropriate, in a lecture which honours the work of Professor Ron Gulliford, that we give some thought to what the past of special needs education means for us now. By 'us', I refer particularly to the practitioners and policy-makers who form the audience for this lecture — though let me state at the outset that the issues and debates I wish to address involve far more than the professional community.

The task of taking a long, hard look at our field seems to me particularly urgent. Special needs education so patently *has* a past and that past — like the present — is highly fluid and even turbulent. The very term 'special needs education' is one that only emerged at around the time when Gulliford himself argued for it in the 1970s (Gulliford, 1971). It gradually made the older term 'special education' and the structures and practices associated with it — seem outmoded and inappropriate, just as it itself is now being overtaken by the term 'inclusive education' and the new sorts of practices that this term denotes. This, however, is just one example. Remedial education, compensatory education, special classes, special treatment, the whole school approach, integration, differentiation — these and many more have had their brief heyday in our field and have, in due course, disappeared into history.

Given this unstable past, one would imagine that some sort of historical perspective would be an integral part of our field. In reality, however, we are not very good at remembering our past, much less at connecting it with our present. At one level, there is simply a dearth of historical studies. More important, our thinking about the past is dominated by perspectives which disconnect us from it far more than they connect. These perspectives, I believe, take either unduly optimistic or unduly pessimistic stances towards history and offer us inadequate means of understanding how change takes place in the field or what the direction of change might be.

## The optimistic and pessimistic views of the past

The *optimistic* view of history is premised on a notion of uninterrupted progress. According to this view, practice and policy in special needs education improve over time. The past, therefore, is a time when things were done less well than they are now, or, indeed, a time when entirely the wrong things were done. Writing a few years before the publication of the Wamock Report (DES, 1978), Brennan (1974), for instance, described the 'progress' that had been made since the 1930s in terms of, 'considerable change in social conditions, development and improvement in the educational system itself; radical changes in our

concepts of intellectual development and the nature of intelligence, new knowledge and growing experience about the teaching and learning of backward children'. p.5)

More recently, last year's Gulliford lecturer, Mel Ainscow, characterised the development of special education as a 'historical road', stretching from the first, uncoordinated attempts of nineteenth-century special educators to make provision for marginalised students, through the development of state provision, the expansion of provision in mainstream schools and the integration movement, to the 'current emphasis on inclusive education' (Ainscow, 2000, p.76).

Those who hold these views conceptualise progress in a variety of ways: scientific progress in the understanding of children's difficulties, technical progress in developing effective educational responses to those difficulties, moral progress in terms of changes in prevailing attitudes to difficulty and political progress in terms of the will to implement change. However, whatever the precise nature of progress might be, the view of the future is rosy — either some form of progress will continue or *nirvana* has already been reached. At the same time, the view of the past is that history has very little to offer us beyond, perhaps, the inspiration that can be drawn from its struggles. Put simply, we know more, can do more and have more humane attitudes than our counterparts in former times.

An alternative view of history is somewhat more *pessimistic* in tone. It stems from powerful critical traditions in the sociology and politics of special education which have uncovered the ways in which vested interests in the education system and beyond have conspired to subvert any 'progress' towards more liberal practices and forms of provision. The *locus classicus* of this view is Sally Tomlinson's demonstration of how the benevolent cloak of special education has repeatedly been used to damage the interests of those children whom it claimed to serve and to further the interests of those professional groups and others who stood to benefit from maintaining the *status quo* (Tomlinson, 1982; 1985; 1995). In such a view, history — up to and including the present — takes the form of a Manichaeian 'struggle for inclusive education' (Vlachou, 1997) between liberal/radical forces for change and conservative forces representing the current inequitable system. The pessimism arises from a perception of the overwhelming strength of the latter which means that change is always illusory (Jeffs, 1988) and that battles won in the past have to be re-fought in different form today. Once again, however, the past itself has little to offer beyond a sorry tale of thwarted initiatives and shattered ideals.

### **An alternative view of the past**

It seems to me that a different view of the past is possible — a view that not only enables us to connect more fruitfully with our history, but that enables us to make better sense of the present and better projections into the future. In recent years, a number of commentators on special education have begun to explore the potential of the concept of 'dilemmas' as a means of understanding the field. Brahm Norwich (1994), for instance, has identified, 'a dilemma in education over how difference is taken into account — whether to recognise differences as relevant to individual needs by offering different provision, but that doing so could reinforce unjustified inequalities and is associated with devaluation; or, whether to offer a common and valued provision for all but with the risk of not providing what is relevant to individual needs'.

Similarly, the American scholar, Alfredo Artiles (1998), has observed that, 'the ways in which we treat difference are problematic. For example, we deal with difference by treating certain groups of students differently (e.g. educational programs for limited English proficient

students) or the same (e.g. recent university admissions criteria for ethnic minority groups). Interestingly, both approaches to dealing with difference achieve exactly the same thing: they affirm difference. Thus, it appears that to acknowledge difference in any way creates a dilemma that poses seemingly insurmountable choices between similar or preferential treatment, between neutrality or accommodation, or between integration or separation...'; a contradiction within the education systems in the UK and the USA (and, we might guess, elsewhere in the liberal democracies) between an intention to treat all learners as essentially the same and an equal and opposite intention to treat them as different. All learners are the same in their essential human characteristics, in the rights and entitlements which are ascribed to them and in their participation within some more-or-less loosely defined process of education. At a practical level, therefore, we seek to educate them within common schools, through a common curriculum and by means of broadly common pedagogical strategies. All learners are different, however, insofar as they are individuals with distinctive learning styles, needs and interests. We seek to respond to these differences by placing them in different teaching groups, offering them variations on the common curriculum, developing individual teaching programmes and so on.

Working within this contradiction creates a series of dilemmas for education professionals and policy-makers. Put simply, the more their educational responses emphasise what learners have in common, the more they tend to overlook what separates them; and the more they emphasise what separates and distinguishes each individual learner, the more they tend to overlook what learners have in common. It is, of course, special education that has tended to face these dilemmas in their most acute form. It has, as Ainscow (2000) points out, served the: 'historical purpose of addressing the needs of those learners who remain marginalised by existing educational arrangements'. (p.76)

Dealing, as it does, with those students who are most obviously 'different' from the majority, it is the part of the education system which more than any other has had to reconcile the dual imperatives of commonality and difference. It is this recognition which affords us a new perspective (p.293) on the history of special education. That history need be seen neither as a story of uninterrupted progress, nor as one of a doomed struggle against overwhelming odds. Instead, it can be seen as the product of the contradictory tendencies within the education system's responses to diversity and of the resolutions of the 'dilemma of difference' to which those tendencies give rise. The American scholar, Barry Franklin (1994), for instance, has produced a fascinating account of responses in the USA to children with learning difficulties in these terms:

'From the first, the efforts of American school managers to provide for students with learning difficulties have pulled them in contradictory directions. Not certain as to whether they wanted to provide for the individual needs of these children or to assure the uninterrupted progress of the regular classroom, these educators embraced a recalibrated common school ideal that resolved the dilemma through curriculum differentiation.

The result has been the creation of an array of special programs to remove these children from regular classrooms.'

It is not difficult to see how a similar account might be constructed of special education in this country (see, for instance, Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997; Dyson & Millward, 2000). On the one hand, the English system (and, to a greater or lesser extent, those in other parts of the UK) has, particularly from the 1960s onwards, moved towards a greater emphasis on what learners have in common. This has entailed, in particular, the development of a common 'comprehensive' school, the formulation of a common entitlement curriculum and

various explorations of ‘mixed-ability’ grouping. On the other hand, these education systems have been confronted at every step of the way by the substantive differences between learners — differences which led to successive ‘recalibrations’ of the common ideal — a comprehensive system which retains selective and private schools, a common curriculum with increasingly separate pathways through it, a refusal to abandon ‘ability’ grouping, and so on.

The interplay of these contradictions is particularly evident in provision for students identified as ‘having special educational needs’. The contortions of the special education system that I listed at the start of this article can then be seen as attempts to resolve the dilemmas created by the twin realities of difference and commonality — some, like special schooling, favouring the former and others, like the whole school approach, the latter. Like school managers in the US, we have espoused an ideal of common schooling, but we have ‘recalibrated’ it through notions of remedial provision, differentiation, integration and the rest so that what was ‘common’ could also accommodate what was ‘different’.

### **Making sense of the present**

I regard this view of history as more fruitful than the others that are on offer because it reconnects us with our past. The past is not simply a failed precursor of the present; neither is the present simply a recycling of the failure of the past. Instead, the past is a time in which our counterparts — and ourselves in our earlier incarnations — have faced and responded to precisely the same dilemmas and contradictions which we face now. There are, therefore, things which we can learn from the past.

Every resolution that has been attempted opens up to us a range of possible actions and enables us to see the consequences of those actions. We can take from the past those things which we find positive and avoid repeating what we see as its mistakes.

At the same time, the past can also show us the inherent instability of any resolution of the ‘dilemma of difference’. Such resolutions are always attempting to hold contradictory tendencies together. Wherever they pitch themselves between those tendencies, they are always subject to centrifugal forces from both poles. They will always fall foul both of the substantive differences that they ignore and of the aspects of commonality that they fail fully to acknowledge.

There are any number of examples of this process in our own times. The ‘whole school approach’, for instance, which dominated thinking about mainstream provision (p.153) for a decade or so in the 1980s (Dessent, 1987), was fraught with tensions right from the start (Bines, 1986). Its emphasis on commonality — on educating students ‘with special needs’ in ordinary classrooms — always paid too little attention to the problematic characteristics of those students both for mainstream class and subject teachers and for the reconstructed remedial teachers who continued to withdraw them, support them and otherwise make special provision for them. On the other hand, however, those very concessions to difference compromised — we might say, ‘recalibrated’ — the avowed aim of making such students the responsibility of the ‘whole school’ (Dyson, 1990a; 1990b; 1991).

Not surprisingly, this apparently definitive resolution has disappeared or, more accurately, fragmented into occasional attempts to move ‘beyond the whole school approach’ (Clark et al 1995, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1994) and the more widespread and difference-oriented resolutions proposed by the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994).

Looking back at the demise of resolutions such as this ought not to make us feel complacent. Rather, it should help us see the transformations of special education which characterise our own time as similar attempts to resolve the ‘dilemma of difference’ — attempts which draw

on the past, which may in some respects supersede the past, but which will themselves in due course fragment and lose their hegemony. If we take the current focus on inclusion (as exemplified, for instance, in the recently distributed Index for Inclusion (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw, 2000) as a case in point, it is evident that this is at one and the same time both something that is new and something that is subject to precisely the same tensions as all past resolutions. Inclusion clearly builds on and extends the technologies of responding to difference that have been developed in the last half — and, particularly, the last quarter — of the twentieth century. It has learned from those technologies how to maintain students facing considerable difficulties in ordinary classrooms, how to develop flexible teaching styles and materials, how to deploy resources in support of those students, and how to organise and manage schools so that teachers can support each other. To these technologies, moreover, it has added a distinctive value position, one that is concerned with the rights of marginalised students, with building a particular sort of ‘inclusive’ society and with conceptualising ‘difference’ as an issue in the schooling of all students. In this sense, therefore, ‘inclusion’ is indeed giving rise to genuinely new forms of practice (Ainscow, 1999) and marks a real ‘advance’ in (some would say, beyond) special needs education.

However, inclusion, like the whole school approach two decades ago, is already fraught with tension. The ‘inclusion backlash’, which has been under way in the USA for some time (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995) and which is now beginning to gather pace in this country (Garner & Gains, 2000; Hornby, 1999; Wilson, 1999, 2000), points to some of the contradictions within this project. In particular, the powerful emphasis within inclusion on access to common placements and participation in common learning experiences generates enormous practical and theoretical tensions when set against the realities of limited teacher skills, exclusionary pressures in schools and, above all, substantive differences between learners. The more the inclusion ‘movement’ pushes towards an emphasis on what learners have in common, the greater these tensions become. Not surprisingly, these tensions in many cases lead to a ‘recalibration’ of the inclusive ideal.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that there are already calls for ‘responsible inclusion’ (Garner & Gains, 2000) — by which is meant something less like inclusion and more like ‘old-fashioned’ integration.

### **Coming to terms with the future**

It is my contention that the inherent instability of the present means that it is incumbent on us to look carefully at what the future might hold. Even as the ‘new’ resolution of ‘inclusion’ struggles to establish its hegemony, we should, I believe, try to understand how it will ultimately fragment and what possibilities might open up for alternative resolutions. Moreover, despite the apparent conservatism of the ‘inclusion backlash’, there are indications that those possibilities might consist of more than a return to the *status quo ante*. One such possibility is the emergence of the *social* inclusion agenda.

In the 1997 SEN Green Paper (DfEE, 1997), DfEE used the term ‘inclusion’, it seemed, to refer to an extension of the process of integration that had been under way for well over two decades. Since then, however, the Government and, in particular, David Blunkett have tended to elide inclusion in this sense with the notion of ‘*social* inclusion’ (Blunkett, 1999a; 1999b; 2000). This latter term seems to mean something that is allied to, but not quite synonymous with the former. Blunkett’s 1999(a) CBI speech, for instance, describes a ‘drive for inclusion’ in the following terms:

‘Our Green Paper on special educational needs has resulted in almost £60m being made available to support SEN pupils and improve access to buildings; LEAs now have targets to

reduce truancy and exclusions by a third, and the New Deal for 18 — 24 year olds is ensuring that all those who have left school without the necessary skills are in work or training with charitable or voluntary organisations or employers, and have advice tailored to their needs.’

What is significant here is the way that the notion of inclusion slips from a classic concern with access for ‘SEN pupils’ to a new discourse which is to do with truancy, (disciplinary) exclusion, and progression to work and training. What a more extended reading of Blunkett’s speeches reveals, in fact, is that *social* inclusion is concerned with far more than where children with special educational needs receive their education. Rather, social inclusion — a key concept in the ‘third way’ ideology (Giddens, 1998) — is about building a cohesive society, by ensuring that no social groups become alienated from the mainstream. This in turn means equipping potentially marginalised groups with the capacity to become active citizens and, crucially, with the skills they will need to survive in an increasingly competitive and skills-hungry job market. The social inclusion agenda, therefore, is linked to the wider standards agenda through which the Government ultimately seeks to create a highly skilled workforce capable of maintaining a high-tech economy. As Blunkett (1999b) puts it elsewhere:

‘Finding a way of giving people a stake will be critical. The Thatcher era attempted to do this through shareholding but succeeded in excluding those with few material resources. Our approach must be more inclusive and it must be two-way. We need to recognise that for most people — particularly those who are disadvantaged materially — personal initiative, skills and the ability to capitalise on labour market opportunities are now the keys to success and to having a tangible stake in society. Skills and human capital are the new forms of wealth and security in which people can share.’

Not surprisingly, this new agenda has generated a wide range of initiatives which embrace, but also go well beyond issues in special needs education. Some of these — Sure Start (DfEE, 1999c), say, or the Connexions Service (DfEE, 2000) are neutral, or even supportive, of the inclusion agenda *per se*. Others, however— Excellence in Cities (DfEE, 1999a), with its ‘learning support units’, Education Action Zones (DfEE, 1999b), with their overwhelming emphasis on targets for raised attainment, or the study support programme, with its overtones of remedial education — seem, at best, little concerned with the placement of children with special educational needs and may, at worst, be positively inimical to some of the principles of participation embodied in, say, the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth et al, 2000). In crude terms, whilst the *inclusion* agenda focuses on presence and participation, *social* inclusion focuses much more on educational outcomes and, particularly, on the re-engagement of marginalised groups with learning, whether or not that engagement takes place in the context of the ‘common’ classroom, school and curriculum.

We can already see examples of schools which are *socially* inclusive in the Government’s sense, but whose commitment to inclusion *per se* is ambiguous, to say the least. Elsewhere (Dyson & Millward, 2000), Alan Millward and I have described schools serving areas of social disadvantage which have sought to drive up ‘standards’ amongst their lowest attainers and to engage their most disaffected students in education not through a commitment to participation in shared learning experiences with their peers, but through alternative curriculum and provision — perhaps outside school — an unrelenting focus on ‘basic skills’, a policy of (virtually) zero tolerance towards disruptive behaviour and so on. Similarly, our current collaborative research with schools on how they can develop their responses to the inclusion agenda is finding that their concerns are not primarily about the presence and participation of students ‘with special educational needs’; they are about issues in social

inclusion, changing cultural attitudes to schooling in areas of social disadvantage, for instance, or finding ways of reducing truancy, or improving the writing skills of boys.

What this social inclusion agenda, both at Government and at school level, offers us, is an emerging alternative resolution of what we earlier called the ‘dilemma of difference’. This resolution pays attention to other aspects of difference than those which concern inclusion *per se*. Its focus is on marginalisation, alienation and exclusion from employment — not on special needs or on disability as such. It offers a different view of what it means to be ‘included’ — a view which is about acquiring essential skills, surviving in a competitive labour market and active engagement with a stakeholder democracy rather than about participating as an equally valued member of a common social institution. And it proposes different means of realising its ideals — not individual programming and cultural change within institutions, but intensive training and support, frequently targeted on areas and groups rather than on individuals, in order to ensure that everyone has at least some minimum level of skills and resources to enable them to survive in a competitive environment. Given the capacity which Government has to exert pressure on the education system, it seems probable that it is this version of inclusion that will come to dominate the future — at least in the medium term. Whether inclusion as it is understood within the special needs field will be subsumed within this wider agenda, or will simply disappear in the face of it, is something which remains to be seen.

### **Where do we take our stand?**

The turbulent view of history that I have proposed raises a crucial question. If ‘resolutions’ come and go in rapid succession; if, even more, resolutions are characterised from the start by fault lines, tensions and unacknowledged realities — then how do policy-makers and practitioners ever decide upon sensible and ethical courses of action? Put more bluntly, if everything that we do is inherently flawed and fated to disappear, why do anything at all?

The answer, I believe, has to lie in the historical perspective itself. By understanding the inherently unstable nature of the responses to the commonality-difference dilemma, we have a means of interrogating the resolutions of the past in terms both of the possibilities they opened up and the contradictions and tensions that they embodied. Moreover, it is not simply the past which can be interrogated in this way; it is also the present and the future. Given that force with which new resolutions tend to be advocated by interest groups or imposed by policy-makers, it is incumbent on all of us to subject them to the most rigorous critical scrutiny. We need to look behind the benefits that are claimed and the imperatives that are advanced in order to see what I have called the ‘fault lines’ in resolutions that are proposed as though they are faultless.

This need by no means be a purely negative process. Proposed resolutions may have something genuinely new and positive to offer which we should seize willingly. This is true of inclusion and, I believe, is also true of social inclusion: the latter opens up possibilities for addressing educational disadvantage that have been overlooked by special needs education — and by the inclusion agenda — for far too long (Dyson, 1997).

However, if we retain our critical stance, it is already possible to see the fault lines in social inclusion as in inclusion — a distinctly narrow and instrumental view of education, a serious underestimation of the structural factors implicated in ‘exclusion’ and the real danger of creating a ‘ghetto’ of students with more complex difficulties who have no real part to play in the sort of society it envisages, to name but three.

The point of any interrogation is neither to accept uncritically nor to reject out of hand, but to put ourselves in a position to manage the complexities and contradictions with which we are faced in a more informed way. In order to do so, however, we have to have solid ground on which to take our stand — solid ground that can only take the form, I suggest, of some carefully thought-through sets of values, principles and perspectives that we are prepared to articulate and defend. Only in this way can we detect the silences and unspoken assumptions of what is proposed. Only in this way, too, can we engage in rational debate both amongst ourselves and with the wider group of stakeholders outside the professional community.

I fully realise that this is a difficult message to give to an audience of practitioners and policy-makers who cannot avoid the necessity to act — and frequently to act quickly and decisively in complex situations, with minimal opportunities for reflection and debate. There is an inevitable desire for unequivocal guidance on what to do next — a desire that has cheerfully been fostered by successive governments in their pursuit of ever-higher levels of control over the education system. However, in a field such as ours, which is shot through with ethical and political questions, it seems doubly important to resist this desire. If looking at our past enables us to do that, then it will indeed be a worthwhile exercise.

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# Factors in inclusion: a framework

*Sip Jan Pijl & Cor Meijer*

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*In: Inclusive Education. A global agenda.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the past decades an impressive number of publications on inclusion have been written, not always with 'inclusion' as the central concept, but also using concepts like 'mainstreaming' or 'integration'. These publications address a wide variety of subjects: the philosophy behind inclusion, the necessary requirements for inclusion, the effects on inclusion for pupils, parents, schools and teachers, etc. In most of these publications one or more factors considered relevant for realizing an inclusive school are put forward, for instance: a much more differentiated curriculum, teacher support teams, legislation and regulations supporting inclusion. Studies show that minor adaptations in the regular curriculum can easily lead to would-be inclusion, that a teacher support team and intensive staff development make teachers more self-confident and willing to accept a special needs pupil, and that new legislation affects the referral behaviour of schools.

It is obvious that an almost endless list of essential steps to take, of necessary conditions to fulfil and of desired ways of working can be compiled from these publications. Each of these dos and don'ts can be rewritten in terms of the factors relevant for making education inclusive. For most of these factors it seems plausible that they contribute to realizing an inclusive school, but as yet we lack convincing evidence about their relevance. Studies show that certain innovations or changes do have an effect, but the link with inclusive education is often indirect and partial. At the same time it is clear that none of these are in themselves enough to realize inclusion. Inclusive education depends on the implementation of a set of related factors, with the proviso that several sets consisting of slightly differing factors may do the job. This certainly holds for different countries, but also within one country there are probably many roads leading to Rome.

A search for one or two key factors that make up inclusion can therefore be regarded as unrealistic. In this book we aim for the election of those factors that form an integral part of most sets. Alternatively, we seek to answer the question: what are the minimum conditions for realizing inclusive education?

The contributors to this book were invited to write a chapter about the factors they considered to be relevant. In order to explain what was meant by the term "factor" and to provide some structure for the authors, a framework was developed in which three groups of factors were described: it is assumed that inclusive education depends on what teachers do in classrooms, on the way in which schools organize in education and on a number of factors outside schools.

### **Teacher factors**

The way in which teachers realize inclusion in the classroom largely depends on their attitude towards pupils with special needs and on the resources available to them. In quite a number of studies the attitude of teachers towards educating pupils with special needs has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive (Hcgarty 1994). If regular teachers do not accept the education of these pupils as an integral part of their job,

they will try to make someone else (often the special teacher) responsible for these pupils and will organize covert segregation in the school (e.g., the special class).

The different types of resources available to teachers can be deduced from the micro-economics of teaching (Brown and Saks 1980; Gerber and Semmel 1985). In these theories the term 'resources' does not only refer to teaching methods and materials, but also to time available for instruction and to the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experience. All these resources can be used for education.

Teaching pupils with special needs in the regular classroom no doubt deviates from the 'regular' programme. Teachers are confronted with the question of how to instruct these pupils. Special needs pupils may require more instruction time or other learning methods and professional knowledge. In which case, teachers will feel the need to expand their resources: more time, materials and knowledge. The problem is that teachers may have limited access to additional resources. These are relatively scarce and fixed (Gerber and Semmel 1985). Of course this does not hold true for all resources. Learning materials are relatively easy to borrow and photocopy, but it is more expensive to purchase new methods or create room to work in smaller groups. Increasing available time or enhancing teachers' professional knowledge is also often very expensive. Less expensive ways of creating more time (e.g., education assistants) and enhancing professional knowledge in schools (e.g., consultation teams) are of limited availability. The outcome of these considerations is that, given finite resources, teachers need to rearrange available resources across the pupils in the classroom. Teachers, for instance, can encourage above-average pupils to work more independently, to work with computers and to help each other, so that more teaching time is left for special needs pupils.

To realize the inclusion of these pupils in regular education, teachers will try to enhance the amount of resources and differentiate between pupils with respect to the amount and type of resources available to them. The idea is that a successful inclusion of special needs pupils not only depends on appropriate organization, legislation and regulations, but also on the availability of resources in the regular classroom and on the way teachers differentiate the resources between pupils.

In summary, teachers' attitudes, available instruction time, the knowledge and skills of teachers and the teaching methods and materials on hand seem to be important prerequisites for special needs teaching in regular settings.

### **School factors**

Next to the attitudes of teachers and the availability and quality of resources in the classroom there are factors at the school level and at the district or national level that may influence the factors at the teacher level. These factors can operate as prerequisites for changing attitudes and for putting resources into education.

The basic question concerning the organization necessary for educating special needs pupils in regular schools is how the special services are to be provided. In a review of studies on integration, Hegarty et al. (1981) give an overview of the organizational structure of integration:

- (a) regular class, no support;
- (b) regular class, m-class support for teacher and/or pupils;
- (c) regular class, pull-out support;
- (d) regular class as basis, part-time special class;
- (e) special class as basis, part-time regular class;
- (f) full-time special class;
- (g) part-time special school, part-time regular school;
- (h) full-time special school.

The above-mentioned variants give the possible forms in which integration can be organized. A characteristic of variant (b) is that support can be provided for the regular teacher and special needs pupil in the regular classroom. In all other forms special needs pupils are given assistance in a special setting. Extra support can be very different: for example, a special teacher for pupils with reading difficulties, a computer for pupils having problems with arithmetic, extra support for the class teacher with pupils with behaviour problems.

Each point on this continuum can be elaborated in various ways «and each has its own advantages and disadvantages for different [groups of special needs pupils. It is obvious that the level of integration varies with each variant. With variants (a), (b) and (c), social, curricular or psychological integration (as defined by Kobi (1983) seems achievable, while with variants (e), (f) and (g), lower levels of integration (physical, administrative) will be realized (Kobi 1983). Because the organizational structure can determine the resources teachers can use in teaching children with special needs, it is clearly an important issue in further policy decisions on inclusion. It largely sets the conditions for teaching special needs pupils. The special school system has already been mentioned while [describing the organizational structure. The role of special schools [and special teachers can be elaborated on further. The experience, [knowledge and facilities of the special school system can be made available to regular schools in various ways. Other means of support, such as special needs teams, libraries with information on teaching methods and materials as well as therapists, should also provide assistance to regular schools.

In studies describing the organization of educational systems in [other countries (see, for instance, Meijer et al. 1994), concepts such 'decentralization', 'flexibility' and 'authorization to decide' seem to be linked to successfully integrating special needs pupils into regular schools. These concepts stand for increasing the power to take decisions concerning special help within schools.

A final aspect of organization is co-operation between (regular) schools.. Currently the formation of clusters of schools is seen in the Netherlands under the so-called 'Weer samen naar school' policy and similar developments occur in the United Kingdom (Dyson and Gains 1993; Lunt et al. 1994; Meijer 1995). It is clear that the creative strengths, knowledge and expertise, as well as the facilities, of a group of schools exceed those of a single school. The ability of co-operating" schools to find ways of taking care of special needs may be essential for integrating special needs pupils into regular settings. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine that organizing such co-operation requires 'valuable time and may lead to bureaucracy.

In summary, the Issues involved in organizing inclusive education at the school level are: (1) a structure for providing special services in schools; (2) the role of special education; (3) other support systems; (4) decentralization; and (5) co-operation between schools.

### **External factors**

A number of factors outside schools and outside education affect daily school practice. Legislation, regulations, and funding provide the framework within which schools can operate. As a rule, laws and (financial) regulations do not run counter to public opinion and often government legislation follows developments in society (Elmore y 1989). Thus, prevailing public opinion on the position of special education and the pupils attending it determine - via laws and (financial) regulations - the way in which special needs teaching in regular education has been realized.

Even if society is in favour of integration, it does not necessarily imply that teachers hold similar views. After all they have to realize integration in everyday school practice under

certain conditions. They may well have to consider whether having special needs pupils in regular classrooms is in the interest of these pupils themselves and perhaps whether it is disadvantageous to other pupils in the class (Schumm and Vaughn 1991; Whinnery et al. 1991).

In summary, it seems worthwhile to take into account public opinion and the attendant legislation, regulations and funding as determining factors for providing special needs provision in regular education. A special point of interest here is whether the views of teachers run parallel to those in society.

### **THE MAIN QUESTIONS**

The factors mentioned above are potentially relevant to special needs teaching in regular schools. At the classroom level we distinguished the available instruction time, the knowledge and skills of teachers, the teaching methods and the materials on hand as important prerequisites for special needs teaching in regular settings. The issues involved in organizing inclusive education at the school level are: (1) a structure for providing special services in schools; (2) the role of special education; (3) other support systems; (4) decentralization; and (5) co-operation between schools. With respect to factors outside schools it is worthwhile to take into account public opinion and the attendant legislation, regulations and funding as determining factors for providing special needs provision in regular education.

The contributors to this book have been invited to address these issues. A central question is whether the issues mentioned above are relevant to the inclusion of special needs pupils in regular education. And if they are, what should be done? Specifically, what would be the advice to policy-makers, teacher educators, school support services, schools, etc., in countries trying to realize or to improve inclusive education? What seem to be sensible first steps, taking into account limited means?

It is obvious that not all contributors address all the possible factors mentioned above. Depending on personal interests, knowledge and current developments in different countries, each contributor has chosen to go into a limited number of issues regarded as most relevant in making schools inclusive and - in a number of cases - to insert new factors. There is no presumption of being exhaustive, but the essays which follow contain an overview of current thinking on the factors that promote or inhibit inclusive education.

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Sip Jan Pijl, Cor J.W. Meijer & Seamus Hegarty (Eds)

# The reform of special education or the transformation of mainstream schools?

*Alan Dyson and Alan Millward*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the question of how national governments can promote the integration of children with special needs into mainstream (regular) schools. It argues that although it is tempting to see integration as a reform of special education, its success actually depends upon the transformation of mainstream schools in ways which make them more able to respond to the diversity of student characteristics. This transformation itself depends upon a paradigm shift at a "number of levels within education - not least in the way school managers and class teachers conceptualize their approach to student diversity. Paradigm shifts of this sort cannot simply be legislated into being, and therefore governments have to find sophisticated means of managing change.

## UNDERSTANDING INTEGRATION

Integration is a deceptive and slippery concept. On the face of it, nothing could be simpler than the idea that children should be placed in mainstream (regular) schools rather than in special schools. It is, at least superficially, a process which can be managed through national legislation and supported through the deployment of central resources. In other words, it is an ideal arena for centralized reform. We wish to suggest, however, that integration, properly understood, is far from simple; that the relationship between the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools and the process of central legislation and reform is complex and tenuous; and that sophisticated forms of change-management are necessary if integration that is meaningful is to result.

We shall begin by defining our own understanding of integration: Integration is not about the relocation of pupils from special to mainstream schools, nor is it about finding ways of replicating special forms of provision within the mainstream. Rather, it is about reforming mainstream schools in ways which make them more responsive to the individual differences of the children within them. And the successful achievement of this reform depends on paradigmatic shifts, not simply at the level of policy and structure, but also at the level of the constructions of special needs undertaken by particular teachers in particular schools.

This understanding starts from a distinction made by Lise Vislie (1995) between two fundamentally different ways in which Western countries have approached the issue of integration over the past two decades. On the one hand, Vislie argues, there are countries which have seen integration essentially as a reform, of their special education system. The aim of reform has been to find ways of extending special education programmes and services into mainstream (regular) schools. This approach, Vislie suggests, is characteristic of countries such as Germany, England and Belgium. On the other hand, there are countries which have understood the movement towards integration as a reform of mainstream education; that is, they have sought ways of making mainstream schools more responsive to the particular characteristics of children with special educational needs. Such countries would include Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the United States,

Vislie argues that outcomes from the former group of countries have been somewhat disappointing; a great deal of activity and apparent change has not in fact substantially increased the proportion of children placed in genuinely integrated settings. It is the latter

group of countries - those which have focused on the reform of mainstream schools - that have been the more successful in promoting forms of integration that are more than merely nominal. We wish to support and elaborate Vislie's argument in order to understand why it should be that reform of mainstream schools proves to be the more effective approach to integration, and to understand more fully what that reform might look like. In so doing, we will draw upon a series of investigations we have undertaken into innovations in special needs provision in mainstream schools in the United Kingdom.

## COMPETING PARADIGMS

The key concepts in the field of special education - 'disability', 'handicap', 'special educational needs', 'learning difficulty', and so on - are by no means unproblematic. It is becoming increasingly obvious that, far from being self-evident descriptions of children's 'objective' characteristics, they are constructions which emerge in particular times and places, and which may be seen to serve certain social interests (Barton and Oliver 1992; Fulcher 1989a; Oliver 1990; Slee 1993a; Tomlinson 1982). These constructions in turn are founded upon paradigmatic ways of viewing the differences between people in general and children in particular,

Two such paradigms have been identified as being in competition within the field of special education. The first is the 'psycho-medical' paradigm or the 'individu gaze'. (Fulcher 1989a). This paradigm understands special needs (or disability, or whatever term is in use) as intelligible entirely or largely in terms of the characteristics of the 'disabled' individual. It is these characteristics which are seen to account for the inability of certain children to flourish within the provision made in mainstream education. It follows that the appropriate educational response to these characteristics is either to change them through some form of remedial intervention, or to make alternative provision for the child in the form of an adapted (often reduced) curriculum, delivered in the context of special forms of support and teaching, and very possibly within a 'special' setting. It is this paradigm, of course, which informs the whole apparatus of special education as it has developed in contemporary Western education systems.

Alongside this psycho-medical paradigm has grown up - particularly in recent years - an alternative way of understanding special needs. This paradigm - the 'interactive' or 'organizational' paradigm - acknowledges differences between individual children as both real and significant. However, it does not view these "differences alone as adequately accounting for the failure of children within mainstream schools. Rather, it is the failure of those schools to respond with sufficient insight and flexibility to children's characteristics that results in educational failure. Since this "paradigm sets particularly high store by the values of social integration, non-segregation and participation in a common curriculum seen as an entitlement for all children, it follows that the appropriate response to educational failure is to interrogate and reform the characteristics of schools rather than the characteristics of children.

These paradigms are not 'merely theoretical'. On the contrary, each has its distinctive implications for practice at three levels, if not more: school organization, teacher expertise, and underpinning values. To take each of these in turn:

- **School organization.** The psycho-medical paradigm, on the one hand, requires forms of school organization in which remedial and adapted-curriculum-type activities can take place. That is, it requires settings that are more or less segregated, ranging from separate special schools at one end of the continuum to apparently 'integrated' classrooms at the other end, in which, none the less, pupils are effectively placed on separate tracks and offered alternative curricula. The interactive paradigm, on the other hand, requires restructured mainstream schools in which separate forms of provision give way to a more flexible and responsive approach in regular classrooms.

- **Teacher expertise.** The psycho-medical paradigm calls for special educators with a clearly-defined expertise which is different from that offered by mainstream educators. This expertise will allow them to address directly and effectively those aspects of their pupils' learning which make them 'special'. The interactive paradigm tackles the same issue by calling not for specialist expertise, but for an extended and enhanced form of 'general' teaching expertise, placing emphasis on the need for regular teachers to develop their skills to the point where they can routinely respond to a wide range of individual differences (Ainscow 1994).
- **Underpinning values** Working from assumptions about the deficits and disabilities which children with special needs 'suffer\*', the psycho-medical paradigm places particularly high value on actions which, where possible, cure or ameliorate those deficits and, at least, protect and care for their vulnerable victims. The special school, therefore, is seen as a caring environment; the adapted curriculum is seen as a means of protecting children from unmanageable demands; and the remedial group is seen as a curative intervention which takes precedence over whatever is going on in the mainstream classroom. The interactive paradigm, on the other hand, allocates the highest value to notions of participation, access and equality. It sees special forms of provision as forms of institutionalized discrimination and 'remediation' as a subtle and pernicious means of exclusion. For this paradigm, participation in the social world of the regular classroom is more important than (and not incompatible with) protection, and access to a common curriculum is an entitlement that takes precedence over illusory forms of remediation and cure (Ballard 1995).

It is not difficult to see the connection between the paradigms we have thus characterized and the two national approaches to integration identified by Lise Vislie. The attempt to integrate by reforming and extending special education into mainstream schools would appear to be based on the psycho-medical paradigm with its assumptions about the necessity of special provision, even in a mainstream setting. The view of integration as essentially about the reform of mainstream schools is equally clearly informed by the interactive paradigm, with its assumptions about enhanced and flexible mainstream classrooms as the starting-point for meaningful responses to individual differences.

This, it seems to us, offers two explanations for Vislie's finding that special-education-focused integration is relatively ineffective. First, as Vislie herself points out, a move towards integration which is premised on the psycho-medical paradigm is self-contradictory, for it is precisely that paradigm which made segregation seem legitimate and rational in the first place. The attempt to persuade mainstream schools to accept responsibility for educating children with special needs whilst at the same time reaffirming the specialness and difference of those children, and emphasizing the specialist expertise necessary for their effective education, is doomed to failure. At best, it will lead mainstream schools to replicate specialist forms of provision and to demand increasing levels of resources to support this provision. At worst, it will lead schools to outright rejection of problematic children.

Second, the psycho-medical paradigm, by focusing on the special-ness of children and the special provision to be made for them, offers no rationale or mechanism for intervention in the workings of regular schools and classrooms. And yet, as advocates of the interactive paradigm point out, it is those very workings which play a significant part in determining which children succeed and remain 'ordinary', and which children fail and become 'special'. Once again, there are best and worst case outcomes from this position. At best, the education system commits itself to resource-intensive and ultimately inefficient forms of support for individual children in mainstream schools, when some reform of those schools might be less costly and more effective (the case of 'in-class support teaching' in the United Kingdom is an example of this. At worst, children with special needs are 'integrated' into an environment which has failure built in. We would argue strongly, therefore, that integration, if it is to be both manageable and effective, is about much more than the relocation of children from

special to mainstream provision. Indeed, it is about much more than the replication of special provision in mainstream settings. Rather, it is about a paradigm shift which has implications for the way schools are organized, the way teachers teach, and for the values which underpin the whole education system. In particular, this paradigm shift requires a refocusing, away from the specialness of children and the special forms of provision they are seen to 'need', and towards the nature of mainstream schools and regular teachers and their ability to respond to a wide range of individual differences amongst their pupils.

Such a shift would be a major undertaking if it were restricted to policy-makers at national level. However, we know that special needs is something which is not constructed simply at the level of policy and the structuring of national systems. On the contrary, policy and systemic structuring simply set the context for the construction of special needs at the level of individual teachers and individual schools. We know that educational reforms which fail to engage with such constructions are doomed to failure. And, finally, we are beginning to see how these local constructions emerge from peculiarly local factors, as well as from the broader national context.

This knowledge, we believe, puts us in a position to redefine the project of 'integration' in a way which would have been difficult, if not impossible when countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom began to move down this road two decades and more ago. That project is a complex and daunting one which cannot be accomplished simply through a process of centralized reform. None the less, there are specific steps that can be taken, and it is to these that we now wish to turn.

## **REFORMING MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

### **Special responses in mainstream schools**

There is a sense in which the separation of special and mainstream education systems in any country can be seen as self-perpetuating.

In so far as a special school sector exists, mainstream schools are likely to be offered 'perverse incentives' to narrow the range of students for which they cater and to avoid developing effective forms of special educational provision. The ready availability of special school placements effectively invites teachers and schools to subscribe to the psycho-medical paradigm, attributing those difficulties to within-child factors rather than to shortcomings in teaching and school organization.

If this situation is to be changed, there are, we believe, certain features which mainstream schools have to be helped to develop. Meaningful integration requires mainstream schools to develop their own 'special response systems'; that is, to have means of responding to the particular learning characteristics of students with special needs. In doing so, they have to achieve a difficult and delicate balance between treating all students as though they are identical on the one hand, and replicating special education systems within mainstream schools on the other.

Our recent work in British schools illustrates this point. We identified what appeared to be quite contradictory developments in primary (elementary) and secondary schools. Primary schools tend to be small, to have little or no in-house special needs provision, and to depend heavily on the special services provided by the local education authority (LEA). In such schools, we detected a clear move towards the articulation of a school-level response to special needs, the development of a range of explicit teaching and support strategies, and the establishment of systems and procedures for assessing children's needs and taking co-ordinated action in respect of those needs.

Secondary schools, on the other hand, tend to be large enough to have their own in-house specialists, who have traditionally operated as internal providers of special education services. Here we detected a move away from such separate systems, an emphasis on responding to

students' needs within regular classrooms and by means of the class teacher's expertise, and an attempt to blur the boundaries between special needs issues and wider issues of teaching and learning.

Our interpretation of these apparently contradictory developments is that, in order to respond to special needs without setting up forms 'of internal segregation, mainstream schools need sets of strategies and systems that are explicit and targeted on the one hand, but that are embedded within normal processes of teaching and hence within regular classrooms on the other hand. Such systems depend heavily on the skills and resources of regular classroom teachers. It is essential, therefore, both that these skills are enhanced through programmes of training and that the special responses that are established draw upon the skills and resources that class teachers already have. 'Special teaching' thus becomes an extension of existing 'mainstream teaching' techniques - an enhanced use of group work, individualized materials, teacher exposition, problem-solving activities, and all the other strategies that teachers draw upon in their daily work. The mystique of the expertise of the special educator, which is reinforced by the existence of an extensive special school sector, is one that has to be dispelled if the integration process is to be meaningful.

However, it was evident in the schools we studied that class teachers were not left to work in isolation. The individual teacher and individual classroom were set in a context which provided them and their students with a flexible range of support. In broad terms, this support came in four forms:

- **Policies** Co-ordinated whole-school approaches to issues such as assessment, behaviour management, the use of information technology, parental involvement and so on.
- **People** Access to additional human resources such as special educators, parents and other adults working in the classroom, and external specialists (such as educational psychologists).
- **Places** Alternative places where learning could take place, such as resource centres, libraries, drop-in centres and facilities provided by other schools.
- **Programmes** Teaching programmes over and above those that class teachers could provide, such as one-to-one tuition, reading blitzes, curriculum extension and enrichment courses, special courses, and so on.

The existence of these key factors - appropriate and enhanced classroom teaching strategies, and flexible systems of support at the school level - appeared to have two effects. First, schools could respond to a range of special needs from within their own resources, without recourse to the special education system. Second, they could respond to those needs largely within the context of their normal teaching procedures and hence within the common curriculum. These two effects amount to what we have called 'meaningful integration' as opposed to the replication of special education in mainstream schools.

### **Inclusive perspectives on teaching and learning**

We found in our investigation that these responses to special needs both rested upon and contributed to particular perspectives on teaching and learning. A response to special needs by way of enhanced mainstream teaching was tending towards the redundancy of the psycho-medical model of special need. Rather than focusing on an ever more precise diagnosis of 'students' problems, or the formulation of ever more sophisticated remedial treatments, schools were seeking ways to enhance 'mainstream' teaching strategies to the point where they enabled students with special needs to learn within the common curriculum. To this extent, the task of 'special education' was becoming identical with the task of 'mainstream education'; both were seen as being about enabling individuals with distinctive characteristics to learn effectively.

This apparently abstract point has some very practical implications. In many schools - particularly secondary schools - special educators and special needs resources were increasingly being deployed in support of the learning of the full range of students. The focus for development was less on doing something 'special'<sup>1</sup> for a minority of students than on enhancing the quality of provision for all, in the expectation that this would ipso facto constitute a response to special needs. Most schools we studied, for instance, had access to some level of in-class support teaching. Traditionally, this support has focused on one or two students with special needs in each class, who have been provided with extra help. However, many schools were using this support with the class as a whole, regardless of their level of 'special need', arguing that a higher level of adult attention was good for all students. A few schools had taken this argument even further, dismantling their special needs systems entirely and replacing them with systems (often led by a co-ordinator) for managing teaching and learning for all. Again, the argument was that responding to 'special\*' needs was simply a subset of responding to all needs.

These systems and structures in turn implied a particular view of the curriculum and of how learning should take place within the curriculum. As many within the inclusive education' movement in the United States have pointed out, a traditional view of the curriculum as hierarchically organized knowledge and a traditional view of learning as the cumulative mastery of that knowledge are inherently inimical to the inclusion of those who cannot master the curriculum as quickly or completely as their peers. Inclusion - what we are calling meaningful integration - demands a more constructivist view, in which learners are seen as collaboratively building their own understandings rather than following predetermined paths of rote learning. Certainly, we identified a number of schools in which such views were beginning to emerge, and in which the reconceptualization of the curriculum was becoming an essential constituent of meaningful integration. This has implications for the control of the curriculum at the national level, and is an issue to which we shall return in considering the policy context.

### **The school as problem-solving organization**

There is a growing body of evidence and argument which suggests that the way schools are organized is not determined by the needs of their students, but rather that the needs of students emerge from the organization of the school. In particular, the isolation of teachers in their classrooms, the sub-division of teaching expertise amongst subject or age-group specialists and the existence of separate special education systems internal and external to the school make it very difficult for teachers to respond effectively to the complex problems posed by students with special needs. A different sort of school, it is argued, based around problem-solving teamwork, is necessary for meaningful integration to take place.

In many of the schools we studied, there was evidence that collaborative problem-solving strategies were beginning to emerge. Teachers in these schools tended to support each other, sharing their expertise in order to develop special responses. This phenomenon was not simply a matter of the schools having a 'collaborative culture'. Rather, there were specific structures and systems which facilitated co-operative working. These included:

- in-class support teaching in which special educators and class teachers worked closely together on practical classroom problems;
- forms of professional consultancy in which special educators and class teachers were able to discuss particular problems and issues;
- problem-solving groups in which teachers pooled their expertise to assist one another in managing difficult situations;
- participatory decision-making structures which allowed teachers to plan together and to become involved in policy decisions.

Beyond this, some schools were developing means whereby the incidental learning which occurs as teachers collaborate together in problem-solving activities could be formalized. In particular, the focus on the quality of provision in mainstream classrooms as the key to special responses places a premium on schools being able to assess that quality and differentiate between effective and less effective practice. In some schools, therefore, special educators and/or teaching' and learning co-ordinators were being asked to establish formal systems of quality assurance, monitoring and review. Typically, these systems made use of classroom observation, reviews of teaching materials and schemes of work, and feedback from students. These data were then used as the basis of a debate amongst the teachers concerned which in turn resulted in some commitment to action and development.

## **THE POLICY CONTEXT**

### **Central-local relations: innovation through policy or practice?**

In the previous section we have attempted to characterize the features of mainstream schools which were making them more able to promote 'meaningful integration'<sup>1</sup>. We offer this characterization, as a model which may be of use in determining the direction of school development in education systems which are engaged in integration initiatives. However, we are under no illusions either about the impact on schools of the local and national policy contexts within which they are located, or about the complexities of formulating such policy in a way which fosters the sorts of developments we are advocating. Accordingly, it is the policy context upon which we now wish to focus our attention.

All policy-makers face 'a dilemma in their attempts to manage a process of educational reform in respect of special needs provision. On the one hand, issues such as the nature and extent of the special school sector, the placement of students with special needs, and therefore the move towards integration are matters of central concern, determined, as Vislie (1995) points out, by central legislation. On the other hand, all education systems, however centralized, have to cope with the enormous diversity of individual schools and the scope there is for misunderstanding subversion, resistance and non-compliance with central initiatives. This problem is, we would suggest, compounded in the field of special needs by the degree to which the values, beliefs and presuppositions of teachers and administrators - the 'paradigms' upon which they operate - are deeply implicated in both policy and practice. It is, therefore, essential to understand the relationship between government policy on the one hand and school practice on the other and, in particular, to understand what sort of policy is most likely to promote meaningful integration.

Our first observation would be that the inability of central policy-makers to determine in fine detail practice at school level is not necessarily a disadvantage. The British schools which we have described are operating in a policy context which has given them, in some important respects, significantly increased levels of autonomy in recent years. Certainly, until very recently, there was no attempt at central government level to prescribe to schools what their approach to special needs should be, and some of the schools we studied were fiercely defensive of their ability to steer a course independently of the control and persuasion of local government. As a result, the approaches they developed were in many respects, in advance of any guidance; that was available at either local or national level. The role of teaching and learning co-ordinator, for instance, is not one that has been proposed in such guidance, but rather has emerged as a result of individual schools' own creative responses to their particular situations.

Schools were not operating in a policy vacuum, however, and we would wish in particular to highlight two areas where policy appears to have significant impact. The first is in the way school-level innovations are responded to by policy-makers. We have found evidence in the British context that there is an important role for local government in particular to play in

supporting school developments. The initiatives which emerge from schools are in need of encouragement, support and guidance in the first instance, but also subsequently of evaluation and dissemination - at least if they are to be more than temporary blooms. We found, for instance, that some of the earliest and most enduring integration initiatives in the United Kingdom were not determined by central government at all, and were only lightly managed by local government. Essentially, they were school initiatives, which were supported and nurtured by their LEAs, but which only subsequently became part of LEA policy and, indeed, never entirely became part of national policy. The notion of 'mapping backwards to policy, of formulating policy on the basis of emerging practice rather than vice versa, is one which has considerable attraction in a field where change is so dependent on shifts in paradigm at the individual and school levels.

The second form of policy impact suggests a more proactive role for central government. Most of our work has been undertaken in the period following the introduction of a National Curriculum in England and Wales. For the first time, what should be taught in schools was set out in some detail as an entitlement and a right for all children. Moreover, the regulations governing the curriculum were accompanied by guidance (National Curriculum Council) which forcefully articulated the principled view that students with special needs shared in this entitlement, and that the immediate task of schools was to ensure that such students had as full access to the common curriculum as was possible. This position has subsequently been reinforced by mechanisms for the inspection of schools, and for ensuring their accountability for special needs provision (Department for Education 1994; OFSTED 1992).

We have argued elsewhere that, in some cases at least, this articulation of principle supported by specific requirements led schools to rethink their special responses in ways which led to more meaningful forms of integration. We would, therefore, support arguments that there is a role for a 'moral authority' which stands above individual schools, and whose role it is to articulate value positions on behalf of the community as a whole and ensure that those values are realized in practice. In particular, we share the doubts of many of these writers about the inclination of autonomous schools to make themselves responsive to the needs of problematic students, and who argue for an advocacy role beyond the school on behalf of such students.

The implications of these observations for policy are, we believe, well captured in Hargreaves' (1994) recent commentary on school restructuring programmes in Canada and the United States. He argues that there are fundamental dilemmas facing such programmes in terms of the attractiveness to policy-makers of top-down re-structuring versus the counter-claims of bottom-up, school- and teacher-led development. He argues that the emphasis must be on the latter but not to the extent that overarching values are sacrificed. As he puts it:

*in relaxing and relinquishing administrative control, the challenge of restructuring in postmodern times is also one of not losing a sense of common purpose and commitment with it. In trading bureaucratic control for professional empowerment, it is important we do not trade community for chaos as well. (Hargreaves 1994:63)*

This is precisely the challenge we see facing many education systems as they move towards fuller and more meaningful integration. The solution we advocate is a central policy which is formulated with the intention articulating community values, providing advocacy for the vulnerable, and imposing essential obligations and standards – but which respects the diversity of the education systems, supports local innovation, and stops short of prescribing the fine detail of practice.

With this in mind, we wish to suggest some specific areas to which education systems might pay particular attention.

### **The centrality of school managers**

It is evident that managers of education at the local level - the headteachers and the authorities to whom they are accountable - have a measure of autonomy in most education systems. The consequence is that heads become 'key determiners of reality'. The way that educational issues are understood and responded to within schools is heavily determined by their attitudes beliefs and values. In consequence, it is our consistent finding that the response made by a particular school to special needs is intimately bound up with the head's view of special needs. In particular, the common integration strategy of introducing special educators into mainstream schools as advocates for students with special needs is not, without the head's full and active support, sufficient to bring about the necessary developments in the school's practice and approach to special needs. The implication, it seems to us, is twofold. First, any efforts at development, training, persuasion or compulsion must be addressed to the head and other key local managers. It is the constant complaint of special educators in the United Kingdom that training is directed at them when it is their headteachers who should be hearing the messages. Second, any advocacy of integration must accord with the concerns and priorities headteachers and managers. Since, by definition, their prime concerns must be with the learning of the majority of their students, any advocacy of integration as something which benefits the minority at the (possible) expense of the majority is unlikely to succeed. It is for this reason, among others, that we have presented a model of integration which sees it as part of a wider concern for the teaching and learning of all students.

It is also, we would suggest, essential that school managers, in addition to this advocacy, be made accountable for provision for students with special needs at least as fully as they are for all other students. The English and Welsh education systems have recently suffered some minor traumas as some schools have used their new-found autonomy to avoid responsibility for such students. Integration necessarily means surrendering some measure of control over provision for students with special needs to the headteachers of mainstream schools. All national systems, therefore, need to consider mechanisms for making headteachers accountable for their schools' responses to special needs. In the United Kingdom, this has meant both the establishment of formal accountability procedures (referred to above) and the careful consideration of how the delegation of resources to schools can create incentives and disincentives which operate as a mechanism of control.

### **The role of clusters**

Given our mistrust both of top-down reform and of entirely autonomous schools, it is with interest that we note the emergence of clustering in the British context. Such clusters are groups of schools which collaborate more or less closely in developing their responses to special needs. They thus generate various economies of scale, but more importantly, there is some evidence that they achieve a certain broadening of perspectives within participating schools which gives them a greater sense of responding to the needs of a community rather than to their own self-interest. The development of these clusters will need to be followed closely. In the meantime, their promotion may offer a way forward, particularly for education systems which lack an 'intermediary body' able to offer the sort of leadership which English and Welsh LEAs can still (more or less) manage.

### **The curriculum**

In most education systems, central government is able to exercise a greater or lesser degree of control over what is taught in schools. We have already alluded to the role played by the National Curriculum in developments in the United Kingdom, and to the association between meaningful integration and constructivist views of curriculum and learning. These

need to be linked, for where meaningful integration is the aim, two characteristics of the curriculum are crucial:

- that the curriculum be formulated in such a way that meaningful participation is possible by all students, regardless of their individual characteristics;
- that such participation should be a right for all children.

The British experience suggests strongly that the declaration of curriculum participation as a right may actually be counter productive from the point of view of integration if that curriculum is not one in which all students actually can participate. The linking of these two characteristics, therefore, is a difficult but essential strategy for education systems aiming to promote meaningful integration.

## CONCLUSION

The dilemma for anyone writing about how integration might be promoted is that strategies which are effective in one national context might be quite inappropriate for another. It is not simply the nature of the integration process itself which differs from country to country, but systems of school management, the extent of central control, the characteristics of curriculum, the conceptualization of special needs and, indeed, understandings of the purposes of education itself. As Booth (1995) points out, there are real dangers in believing that we all speak a common language in this field.

The general principles we have tried to identify in this chapter, therefore, are no more than that. They are not so much a blueprint for action as a heuristic which educators and policy-makers seeking to promote integration in a wide variety of contexts can use to interrogate and illuminate their own situations. We wish to conclude, therefore, by summarizing these principles:

- Meaningful integration is essentially a process of transforming mainstream schools rather than reforming special education.
- It is a process of 'transformation' because it depends crucially upon paradigmatic shifts on the part of educators and policy-makers in the mainstream system.
- It depends upon assimilating questions of special needs provision into questions about teaching and learning for all students.
- This in turn demands particular forms of 'special response' in schools, and particular understandings of learning and curriculum.
- Such transformations cannot be legislated into being; they have to emerge from local innovation.
- However, local innovation can be supported, catalysed and guided by central advocacy and by mechanisms of both support and accountability.

We suggest that it is the adoption, of principles such as these, rather than the process of legislative reform alone, which will lead in the future not only to more integration, but to more meaningful integration.

# Inclusion : Implementation and approaches

*Cor J. W. Meijer, Sip Jan Pijl and Seamus Hegarty*

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is sometimes defined as the provision of appropriate, high quality education for pupils with special needs in regular schools. Whether or not this happens depends critically on teacher variables, specifically their willingness to take on this task and their ability to carry it out (Hegarty 1994). Inclusion is not just a task for teachers, however. Although much depends on the teacher's attitude towards pupils with special needs and expertise in adapting the curriculum, the inclusion of pupils with special needs requires changes at different levels in education. In the literature on inclusion numerous suggestions can be found relating to teaching and classroom practice, the organization of the school and system factors such as policy and legislation. In our introduction to this book we gave a brief overview of these suggestions.

The factors relevant to inclusion in education have been investigated and successive chapters have offered suggestions regarding the development of inclusive schools. The summaries of these chapters give overviews of the findings, but they may overwhelm by their sheer number and diversity. In this final chapter an attempt is made to integrate these findings and contribute to a conceptual framework that focuses on the various factors that have a major influence on the implementation of inclusion.

## SOCIETY AND POLICY

### A basis in society

The inclusion of pupils with special needs in regular education settings is not a matter just for education. It should be part of an encompassing development in society in which the concept of handicap and the position of people with special needs are changing (Soder, chapter 3; Stangvik, chapter 4). In this perspective they are no longer defined primarily in terms of their need of special care and treatment, which for reasons of efficiency and convenience has to be delivered in special settings, but rather are seen as citizens who have rights within society as a whole. They are entitled to ask for special services without the necessity of being segregated. Inclusion requires that everybody, regardless of disability or learning difficulty, should be treated as an integral member of society and any special services necessary should be provided within the framework of the social, educational, health and other services available to all members of society.

In education it means that pupils with special needs are entitled to have their special needs met in regular education. Inclusion stands for an educational system that encompasses a wide diversity of pupils and that differentiates education in response to this diversity. Inclusion in education can be seen as one of the many aspects of inclusion in society. It is based upon the same principles and views, and its success depends critically on the acceptance of these principles and views in society. It is not possible to create inclusive schools without a solid inclusion-oriented basis in society.

Efforts to create inclusion in education without a societal basis will result in an implementation of inclusion as a rather technical innovation. To include pupils with special needs in regular education, it is necessary to change the regular curriculum, to train teachers, to redistribute funds, to organize support services and so on. Without a basis in society it is very difficult to make these changes in education. Teachers will argue that the pupil's interests

are best served elsewhere, parents will doubt the quality of the adjustments made for their child, policy-makers and administrators will be reluctant to provide the necessary support. And even if all these obstacles are surmounted, change brought about in this way will tend to have a temporary character, just for the pupils involved and only for their time at school. It may well lead to forms of 'inclusion' which entail little more than temporary, minor adjustments to the regular curriculum for particular pupils or even to organizing covert forms of segregation in regular education.

## **Parents**

A basis in society is an important factor in making schools more inclusive, but it is not enough. Even if in society other developments towards inclusion (inclusion in work and housing) are going on and there is general support for inclusion in education, it may be necessary to contend with segregative structures within the education system: legislation, regulations for funding, the existence of separate special institutes for teacher training, special schools and, above all, long existing habits. In many cases parents, especially those of pupils with special needs, have acted as a pressure group. Their willingness to organize a lobby, to go to court, to persuade administrators and teachers and to invest in a regular school career for their children, has regularly brought about changes in education. This is amply demonstrated from experience in the Scandinavian countries, the United States and the United Kingdom (Meijer et al. 1994).

## **Policy**

Societal attitudes and pressure from parents' organizations cannot be ignored by governments. If society is in favour of inclusion and parents and schools are willing to implement it in education, governments are more likely to provide the necessary policy and financial support. Sometimes it may take a great deal of time and campaigning, but if inclusion in education is to be firmly established it must be endorsed by government.

The preceding chapters have made clear how governments can act to support inclusive schools. It is important that a government, in its role as being ultimately responsible for education, clearly states that it supports inclusion (Stangvik, chapter 4; Dyson and Millward, chapter 5). It should formulate a policy statement about inclusion, making it clear to everyone involved what the goals for the educational community are. Local policy-makers, school principals and teachers then know what the government expects them to do. A clear policy statement on inclusion may act as a push in changing the attitudes of regular and special school personnel. The government can also have an important role in stimulating early developments in pilot schools. Schools that wish to implement inclusion should be supported and funded on an experimental basis. The experiences of these schools can be of use in disseminating the message that inclusion is an attainable option for other schools as well.

## **Funding**

A major task of the government is to create the conditions for inclusion in education. In the preceding chapters (Meijer and Stevens, chapter 9) it is shown that legislation and funding can inhibit inclusion and in some cases even stimulate and reward segregation. In general, all regulations resulting in special needs provision in special schools which cannot be made available in regular schools stimulate segregation. Although legislation generally follows developments in society, it may be necessary to change; legislation and funding at an early stage of development in order to prevent the existing rules from becoming a hindrance. This seems to apply to the development of inclusive schools in particular.

Another heavily debated factor is the need for additional funding to support inclusion. Some argue that inclusion in the end will result in a reduced budget for special needs as a result of having fewer expensive, segregated special schools. Others, however, claim that concentrating pupils with special needs in a special school is more efficient and cost effective. A recent OECD study (1995a) suggests that the costs of inclusive systems are lower, but that to facilitate the transition from a segregated to an inclusive system it may be prudent to make temporary additional funding available.

### **The region as an intermediate structure**

It is essential that the implementation of an inclusion policy is delegated to local policy-makers and school principals (Porter, chapter 6). This group of actors in education operate at a level which makes it possible to influence daily practice in schools and classrooms and at the same time they are able to secure co-operation between schools, regional school support systems and special services above school level. Also, schools operate in specific regional/local circumstances that may vary across a country. It is therefore not just for central government to determine how integration should be organized or which features an integration model should have. The implementation of an inclusion policy should always be a process in which appropriate influence at the level of the community or region is guaranteed. By giving local policy-makers and school principals both the means and the authority to start a development towards inclusion in education and, in doing so, to respond to the wishes of society, a clear signal is given to teachers in both regular

and special education about the need to bring about changes in education. That in itself could be a significant step in changing teachers' attitudes.

Most authors in this book have stressed the importance of this issue, drawing attention to the need to adapt to varying regional circumstances, to have clear and short lines of communication to responsible actors and to guarantee the accessibility of local key persons. Thus, without underestimating the role of the government it is clear to all the authors that the real work has to be done in daily educational practice. Fulcher (1989b) stated that: 'Government level policies do not control what happens in schools ... It is in schools that critical decisions are made which initiate integration or exclusions . . . Successful integration appears to have very little to do with issuing central government policies' (18). Dyson and Millward (chapter 5) also point out that educational change is not a "simple top-down process. Thus the task at the policy level is to initiate or facilitate educational change in schools. How can this be achieved? With Skrtic (1987) we feel that schools have to be approached as a sample of 'creative agents' who are continuously involved in a problem-solving process (see also Stangvik, chapter 4, and Dyson and Millward, chapter 5, with their emphasis on the school as a problem-solving team). Skrtic (1987) argues that it is this so-called 'adhocracy' approach that best facilitates educational change. In this approach small teams are given the responsibility, the means and the freedom to accomplish certain goals. The implication for education is that school teams are asked to make their school inclusive and receive access to means and (regional) facilities to do so. The adhocracy approach is contrasted with other approaches, such as the 'machine bureaucracy' approach (in which the teacher is seen as working in a production process) or the 'professional bureaucracy' approach (in which the teacher is seen as a professional working with a client group). Because these work with certain standards and fairly fixed procedures, they easily result in exclusionary solutions. Pupils with special needs do not always fit within the production process or in the well-known client group and therefore are likely to be sent to other 'machines' or 'professionals'. That results in referral to special schools or to more covert forms of segregated special education, like special classes in regular schools. In particular, the phenomenon of special classes demonstrates the wish to show movement towards inclusion to the outside world, without actually changing anything in the educational process itself.

In combining this position with the above-mentioned need to organize inclusion regionally, we feel that the adhocery approach is best initiated and maintained by the intermediate level: the level between schools and the government. This could be the district level, the level of school clusters or any other regional level. It is the task of the workers on the intermediate level, local policy-makers and school principals, to initiate educational change by approaching schools as adhoceries. ?

## **EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

### **Emphasis on regular education**

Educational change relating to inclusion can mainly be regarded as a challenge for regular schools. Its central thrust is not towards change in special schools nor towards creating specialized approaches within regular schools. This does not mean that the consequences of inclusion in education will not be huge for special schools: teachers and other professionals working in special educational settings are being forced to change working practices and have to adapt to a new situation. However, the primary task is to achieve educational change within the regular system. How can this be done?

### **The curricular concept of inclusion**

Schools and their teachers are the 'active agents' (Meijer and Stevens, chapter 9) who are exposed to the daily problems. They have to develop and implement plans that lead to satisfactory outcomes for themselves and for the clients of education: the pupils and their parents. All the authors in this book are quite explicit that integration is in the first place an educational reform issue. It is exactly at this point that the term integration shifts to the concept of inclusion. Mittler (1995) puts it as follows: 'In contrast with inclusion, integration or mainstreaming do not necessarily assume such a radical process of school reform' (105). To put it differently, integration is adapting the regular school curriculum to a pupil with special needs whereas inclusion is implementing a curriculum for all.

The suggestion that a clear distinction exists between pupils with special needs and other pupils is unhelpful and, in any case, invalid. Evans (chapter 10) argues that pupils' learning needs should be viewed in terms of a continuum. The concept of special educational needs itself is nothing more than an artefact of the requirement to discriminate between groups of pupils. Some need more attention, others more time, or a more individual approach and so on; the belief that all these needs are correlated and situated in certain types of pupils is naive and without foundation, as is the assumption that specialists are necessary to help most pupils with special needs. Within the traditional psycho-medical approach this view is predominant. By sharp contrast, the interactive concept of special needs implies a strong focus on the teacher and the educational process itself (Dyson and Millward, chapter 4).

The necessary adaptations in education do not apply only to a specific group of (special needs) pupils. Several authors stress the danger of approaching the inclusion concept as a placement issue. Stangvik (chapter 4) and Dyson and Millward (chapter 5) state this quite firmly. They point out that an inclusion debate in terms of resources, in the traditional educational context, may lead to the wrong solutions. In the traditional context, pupils with special needs might even be better off in segregated schools than in integrated settings.

### **Changes in regular schools**

Most authors refer to this task as a fundamental change in the understanding of the concept of education, the role of the teachers within schools and the curriculum. Inclusion starts from the right of all pupils to follow regular education; teachers and principals should express this

basic entitlement to their pupils, parents and all other participants in the network in which the schools operate. In order to realize this entitlement, education should be based on the differences between pupils; differences between pupils are at the same time the input and the output of education. As a consequence, heterogeneous grouping and multilevel instruction are the key parameters in inclusive education. The differences between pupils may never result in hierarchical streaming, nor in decisions to repeat a year or to refer a child to a full-time or long-term 'treatment' in or outside the regular school.

The curriculum framework should thus cover all pupils, but this does not imply that all pupils do the same work in the same way and at the same speed. Organization within and between classes should be flexible. Indeed, the very concept of a class is too much the result of dividing numbers of pupils by numbers of teachers (cf. Wedell, 1994 for a critique). Within the comprehensive curriculum, shifts between groups should be possible and regrouping should occur frequently.

Most authors show that integration is hindered by a strongly competitive climate. Educational approaches that are largely built on comparing pupils with a certain standard or with a notional average pupil are not conducive to the integration of pupils with special needs. Heterogeneous grouping and multilevel instruction are what is required to integrate students with special needs. Glaesel (chapter 11) refers to studies which demonstrate that group integration is preferred by pupils with special needs over individual integration. A pupil with special needs sometimes feels better in classrooms where there are other pupils with special needs. This finding is consistent with the former: the more likely it is that a pupil with special needs will be judged to be an outsider, the more difficult it is to achieve inclusion.

There are other conditions necessary for achieving inclusive education. The authors in this book have underlined the main conditions at the level of the teacher, the class, the school and the district or region. We will focus on some of these here.

Teacher education is probably one of the first steps in the chain. Teachers must learn how to handle differences in the classroom. In-service arrangements are a key element of the requisite learning. Meijer and Stevens (chapter 9) argue that experiences with integration may enhance positive teacher feelings by increasing self-efficacy and professional satisfaction. This in turn benefits pupils with special needs. Tracz and Gibson (1987) demonstrate that higher personal teacher efficacy positively influences pupil achievements. Teachers who believe in themselves are more likely to see pupil behaviour as changeable, and give more feedback, and this affects pupil outcomes. Thus the experience with inclusion of students who are difficult to teach can stimulate positive teacher attitudes and abilities.

Colleagues are a rich source of motivation and learning opportunities. The support structure within schools should be based on the capacities of the team as a whole. Problem-solving is facilitated by sharing insights with colleagues and reducing teacher isolation within the school.

A cluster of schools may enhance the transfer of effective practice from one school to another. The sharing of materials, methods, knowledge and skills within a cluster is a promising option. For those pupils who need more than within-class support by the teacher, cooperation within a school cluster or a district may be advantageous.

This is particularly the case where low-incidence conditions are concerned. Such co-operation can be organized at a regional level where school support agencies and special schools work together in order to transfer knowledge and skills to the regular school and support teachers in their approach to certain pupils. Furthermore, they may provide short-term or part-time help to pupils either within the classroom or the school or, as necessary, outside the school. As pointed out, special schools and their teachers can play an important role here, but their contribution should not be built on their expert status. They are a resource for the teacher in the regular school, and all the support provided should be initiated by and organized under the responsibility of the classroom teacher or the school team.

## Changes in special provision

The consequences for special schools and workers in special education have been described extensively in this book and are also elaborated in detail in reports of important projects conducted by the OECD and UNESCO (Labon, chapter 7; OECD 1995a; UNESCO 1994a). Briefly, special education has to switch from a pupil-based educational institute into a support structure or resource centre for teachers, parents and others. Its main task is to give support to regular schools, to develop materials and methods, to gather information and provide it to parents and teachers, to take care of the necessary liaison between educational and non-educational institutions, and to give support when transition from school to work takes place. In some cases special educators and special schools arrange short-term help for individual pupils or small groups of pupils. This additional support should be characterized by five simple criteria:

1. as short as possible: in order to prevent too much dependency on special arrangements and to offer opportunities to other pupils as well;
2. as soon as possible: minor problems should not have the chance to become major ones;
3. as flexible as possible: in order to modify an approach or try alternatives when a specific approach does not bring the desired results;
4. as close to home and neighbourhood school as possible: pupils should be provided with special help without moving to other institutions or leaving their own social environment;
5. as unintrusive-as possible: intervention should be as 'light' as possible, so as to minimize any negative consequences for the child.

Zigmond and Baker (chapter 8) stress that special educators have a significant role in inclusion practices and that within a full inclusion model special educators can contribute to the programme and the teaching of pupils with special needs. This may result in short-term and part-time pull-out services. They point out that fully inclusive classes do have some dangers, just as the self-contained special classes have. A continuum of services within regular education that enables individualized planning is the ideal. Sometimes forms of co-teaching are advantageous, sometimes small group or individual work is needed. There is no such thing as a single model that is effective for all pupils with special needs. This supports our argument that inclusion policy is not only a top-down issue: a great deal of flexibility is needed in order to adapt inclusion policies to local/ regional circumstances and wishes.

## NEW PARADIGMS IN RESEARCH ON SPECIAL NEEDS

Evaluation studies concerning the effects of inclusion show a wide range of outcomes (Soder, chapter 3). A number of studies show that inclusion is effective in terms of pupil outcomes (see OECD 1995a; special issue of the *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 8 (1993), 3). Zigmond and Baker (chapter 8) point out that separate special class placements can result in inferior outcomes. But they strongly nuance this statement by showing that short-term help in resource rooms may result in higher academic skills and at least the same self-concept outcomes. However, there are research findings that show that the effects of inclusion are not particularly promising (see, for example, Bless 1995). As is often pointed out, the methodological problems connected with this type of study (for example, the impossibility of randomly assigning pupils to treatments) make it difficult to come up with firm and clear findings. Hcgarty (1993) argues that the failure of comparative studies to show a clear-cut advantage in favour of segregated placements must be taken as an endorsement of integration, on the grounds that it is for segregationists to justify their case; with empirical evidence. Research within the 'effect paradigm' is based on the belief that effects are decisive with respect to the question of whether inclusion is advantageous or not and, more or less

implicitly, whether inclusion should be implemented or not. Soder demonstrates quite clearly that this type of question emerges from the evaluative viewpoint. He argues that these questions do not advance us any further: not only are research findings often quite contradictory, but the level of questioning is also wrong and there are more appropriate questions to be raised. This debate is comparable with the discussion about the so called efficacy studies in which the type of placement (mainstream versus special class or school) is the principal independent variable. Most authors now believe that this type of research is not very productive; research should focus on the nature of interventions and their specific characteristics. This is because in general people are not opposed to efforts towards integration but dispute the conditions under which it is profitable for pupils, parents and teachers. Thus, the question is not whether inclusion is possible or necessary - both are taken for granted - but under which conditions inclusion is enhanced and what kind of effects it has on pupils.

Soder and Stangvik (chapters 3 and 4) focus strongly on the long-term perspective of inclusion: the position of the handicapped in society. They feel that inclusion in education is a means for enhancing participation in society in adult life. Long-term inclusion cannot be achieved just by changing educational processes and resources. Through careful individual planning the social goals of teaching, have to be taken into account within the individual perspective of the pupil with special needs. This shift in thinking has major implications for research focus and orientation. For example, the focus should be more directed to persons with special needs. Research should not try to measure effects in terms of adaptation to the environment or society without taking the situation of handicapped persons themselves into account. Research should also focus more on the type of social relations that emerge, from the perspective of the handicapped individuals themselves. This may lead to quite different conclusions about what should be achieved and how that should be done. For example, friendship relations between pupils with special needs and professionals in their environment and friendships with other pupils with special needs can be of great value (Bogdan and Taylor 1989).

Also the study of prevailing attitudes within society needs more refining. Attitudes are crucial to achieving inclusion, but research should not focus on demonstrating that attitudes are for or against inclusion but should rather give insight into the reasons for different perceptions, trace the development of these attitudes and try to analyse their effects on those with special needs and their peers. In our view, the study of attitudes has not reached that point of sophistication yet.

In conclusion, this book has shown the global compass of inclusion and the extent to which the underlying concepts are converging. Experts from many different countries are agreed in calling for a new concept of education. Inclusion should be based on the premise that children differ from each other and that these differences are fundamental to educational planning and provision.

Making schools more inclusive requires action at several levels. It is a process which depends on support from society, appropriate measures, on the part of the government and the existence of support structures, in addition to reforms in the curriculum, school organization, teacher training and the provision of special services. The multi-faceted character of inclusion explains at least in part why it is difficult to implement. Making schools more inclusive will take a great deal of ingenuity, creativity and persistence on the part of all those involved. However, it is a goal worth striving for and many positive achievements have been made already. We hope that this book will help to build on these achievements and further the process of creating inclusive schools.

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**Principles of good practice in educational integration.**  
**European guide of good practice in educational integration:**  
**towards equal opportunities for disabled people.**

August Dens, Liliane Decock, Cliff Warwick (Edited by EU-Commission)

In the field of educational integration, some **key principles of good practice** are:

1. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to receive an adequate and appropriate education. The aims of education are the same for all learners.
2. High-quality mainstream education is an entitlement for all. Mainstream education systems should be accessible for all pupils. This includes physical access, access to the curriculum and to all other aspects of school life.
3. Learners are entitled to have their special educational needs identified, assessed and provided for. The special educational needs of the disabled learner must be viewed in the context of the whole person in relation to their educational and social situation. This should include consideration of their abilities and wishes, and never be focused simply on their disabilities or difficulties.
4. Education for disabled people should form an integral part of national educational planning, curriculum development and school organisation (13).
5. Within a school, mainstream teachers have the key responsibility for delivery of the curriculum for all learners, including those with special educational needs. Appropriate support should be available to enable mainstream teachers to fulfil this role.
6. Professionals providing support for learners with special educational needs should work together with the school. A key aim of providing support should be to enable schools to meet the needs of learners themselves (self-supporting schools).
7. Appropriate initial and continuing in-service training of all professionals is needed.
8. Parents and advocates of learners with special educational needs must be informed, involved and empowered as partners in the decision-making process concerning the learner - there should be a sharing of responsibility.
9. There should be a continual flow of information between parents, educators and the disabled learners, enabling each group to be educated about the changing needs, aspirations and abilities of the others.
10. Where there is a need, special educational needs provision should be organised to ensure early intervention and extension of education beyond the normal compulsory school age.
11. All educational provisions for people with special educational needs should, in order to provide coherence and continuity, facilitate transition between stages of education and towards adult/working life.

#### 1. Legislation and human rights

The right to equal opportunities for all human beings must be the basis for the development of all legislation concerning special needs education. The educational system should encompass all children whatever their disability.

The concept of ‘disability’ or ‘handicap’ in any piece of education-related legislation must be defined in a relative way; that is, taking into account all school and environmental factors which prevent learners with disabilities from participation in education on equal terms.

Legislation must ensure access to regular schools at all levels of the education system, including higher education. This concerns physical access to the buildings, access to the curriculum and access to the required funding. As to the allocation of resources, a learner with

a disability must get equivalent funding, irrespective of whether he/she is placed in a special or mainstream school.

There is a need to develop a common basic legislation for regular and special education, whereby special education is and remains the full responsibility of the education department.

## 2. Administration - school structures

The educational administration should be structured in such a way that the responsibility for special needs is a coherent and integrated part of the regular educational administration, at all levels.

Review procedures for individual pupils should facilitate flexible transitions between special and mainstream schools. Integration should always be the first option to be considered.

Schools should be required to take responsibility for pupils with special educational needs. A staged approach to interventions which involve structured educational planning within a regular class and school setting is essential before any referral to special or segregated provisions can be considered.

In order to enable teachers to take on responsibility for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, comprehensive initial, specialised and in-service training programmes are needed.

To implement effective integration policies at school and class level, authorities need to enable schools to develop new management roles and functions.

## 3. Whole-school approach

If the integration of children and young people with special educational needs in mainstream education is to be successful, then there needs to be a holistic approach. It is not sufficient to plan wholly on the basis of the specific individual difficulties of a pupil. Effective integration is far more likely to be achieved if the needs of individual children are viewed in the context of the mainstream classroom and the school in which they are being educated.

Experience and research into effective schools indicates that there are a number of key factors in this context:

1. The overt commitment of the senior management of the school to integration and to the needs of learners with SEN is essential. Without positive leadership from within the school integration objectives are likely to be seriously undermined.
2. Within the school each teacher is clearly expected to take responsibility for all the children they teach, including those with special educational needs. Part of this responsibility involves providing for the needs of individuals in the context of a differentiated and flexible curriculum.
3. There must be effective whole-school planning and coordination of provision for children with special educational needs. In most schools it is beneficial for this management responsibility to be delegated to a teacher who is a good organiser and facilitator and is committed to special education.
4. Mainstream teachers need to be supported and receive in-service training from specialist teachers in special educational needs. This support should be provided both from within the school and from external support services. Links with external support services are important in maintaining high-quality provision.
5. The school management role includes the responsibility of assuring the quality of provision for those with special educational needs, making efficient use of available resources. The use of both internal and external monitoring and evaluation are important in this process.

#### 4. Class teachers and individual approaches

Within a classroom the individual differences of all pupils should be recognised and accepted positively by the teacher.

For pupils with special educational needs, a broad and balanced curriculum should be provided, which is based upon a common curriculum for all pupils. The general aims of the curriculum should be the same for all.

Teachers should be willing and able to interpret the curriculum flexibly and adapt it according to the needs of the individual. When necessary, all components of classroom learning and teaching, to include planning, instruction, classroom management, evaluation..., must be individualised (for example multi-level instruction).

Curricula and learning programmes, whatever their source, should be conceived and presented in a way that facilitates flexible implementation. This is necessary to ensure access to the general curriculum for every pupil.

Regularly reviewed individual educational plans are essential for learners with a special educational need. The degree and nature of the plans should vary according to the needs of the individual, but should always be based upon a holistic view of the learner. This should take into account all aspects of the individual's home life and school life. In order to achieve this it is important to ensure the full participation of parents and all professionals involved with the learner.

All teachers should receive training and support, in order that they are aware of individual needs and become competent and skilful in organising individual approaches and in making provision for these needs an integrated element of daily classroom practice.

#### 5. Support Services and Resource Centres

Without high-quality external support, acceptable educational outcomes for those with special educational needs are far less likely to be achieved. Mainstream schools and mainstream teachers require continuing advice, support and guidance if effective integration is to be achieved. Whilst well trained specialist personnel, equipment and materials can be expected in special schools, it is unrealistic to expect this to be replicated in all mainstream schools. A range of external support services is needed to serve the diverse needs of mainstream schools providing for a dispersed population of children and young people with special educational needs.

The preliminary aim of support services and resource centres should be to facilitate independent, self-analytical and self-supportive teachers and schools. Services can operate locally, regionally, nationally or internationally, and can be managed by government agencies, independent and non-governmental organisations, or by special schools acting as resource centres.

In higher education support is often provided by guidance centres. Local and national government staff also need to consult specialist support services and use them to assist with the strategic planning and evaluation of provision. There are very many effective models in existence that provide some or all of the following functions.

The key functions and roles undertaken by support services include:

1. Specialist teaching, for example for the visually impaired, supporting individual learners and their teachers with regard to specific teaching techniques and approaches.
2. Advice and guidance on legal, policy and curriculum issues for head teachers, school governors and special needs and mainstream teachers.

3. Monitoring and evaluation of whole-school and classroom practice undertaken on behalf of the school or local government; providing action plans aimed at improving school provision for all children and young people, including those with special educational needs. This is an important function in helping to assure the quality of educational integration.
4. Specialist equipment, information technology, etc. Advice and guidance concerning the provision of specialist equipment (e.g. standing frames); adaptation of buildings (e.g. ramps); the provision and use of information technology both within the curriculum, as a whole and for individual children.
5. In-service training for special educational needs teachers. head teachers, mainstream teachers, school governors and non-teaching support staff.
6. Differentiation of the curriculum, concerned with making the same curriculum accessible to all children via different means. This should result in the production of exemplary teaching approaches and curriculum materials for individual learners or for use in the in-service training of teachers. This is a particularly important resource for mainstream teachers who are adapting the mainstream curriculum to meet the needs of those with special educational needs.
7. Innovation, research and development.. Projects and initiatives that seek to create new techniques and approaches and disseminate the findings to special educational needs teachers and mainstream teachers.
8. Facilitating networks of schools and teachers. ensuring that specialist teachers are not isolated but remain in regular contact and dialogue with each other. Networks of schools and teachers also provide opportunities for the dissemination of new ideas and good practice.

## 6. Parents

Parents have a key position and continuing role as partners with professionals in the process of integration. Their views and attitudes towards integration will have an enormous influence on the process itself, and on the outcome. Parents must be considered as equal partners and have the opportunity and encouragement to work together with all those responsible for their child's education. Some parents will need to be empowered so that they can participate in an equal way, while others will need advocates.

A young child relates most closely to its parents, so it is particularly important to involve the parents in all aspects of their child's early education, including the identification, assessment and teaching process.

Parents have an important role in supporting the educational process by' being involved in planning. evaluation and decisions about their child's provision. They contribute their experience of everyday life with their child to the expertise of the teacher and other professionals.

Parental involvement can be regarded in terms of:

### **Parents' contributions**

Information:	regarding the child at home.
Collaboration:	reinforcing school programmes, etc.
Resource:	using their time and talents, acquiring confidence, knowledge and understanding of their own children
Policy:	contributing expertise through membership of parents or professional organisations.

**Parents' needs**

Communication:	information regarding rights and responsibilities; and the need to establish a wide range of channels of communication.
Liaison:	regular contact with the school.
Education:	parents welcome guidance on supporting their child.
Support:	parents sometimes need supportive counselling.

Decisions about the child's inclusion in mainstream schooling should always involve parents and parental views should be given the highest priority.

The UN Standard Rules state that 'Parent groups and organisations of persons with disabilities should be involved in the educational process at all levels'.

In the Salamanca Statement (15) it is pointed out that parents, and in particular groups of parents, should play an increasing role in affecting both the planning and the quality of services. This includes the idea that professionals need training in learning to listen to parents and giving them time and space to communicate and participate in their own way.

Good communication, cooperation and mutual respect between parents and professionals will have a positive influence on the integration of children with special educational needs.

**7. Co-operation**

Cooperation between all involved is a pre-requisite for realising integration. Dialogue and interaction are important in the process of ensuring the required expertise to improve the quality of educational provision for all learners, including those with special needs. Networks of teachers and other professionals are an important means to achieve this cooperation.

The two main functions of cooperative networks are:

1. Interdisciplinary collaboration to provide the best service for learners, individually and as a group.
2. To facilitate exchange between professionals for the purpose of staff development and in-service training.

A special needs professional network can include mainstream schools, teachers from special schools, staff from counselling and educational support services, along with professionals from social, health and other relevant services. Such a network needs to involve close cooperation with parents and NGOs. The expertise required in the network has 'to be decided by the teachers and the schools, in developing an individual, child-centred approach, and it should be accessible where necessary.

Within a network it is important to have a positive attitude towards integration as a common concern. "Open-mindedness" among the different agents of the network is important for the motivation and efficiency of the team.

Effective networks require good communication systems. These should include regular meetings, the use of telecommunications and information technology, etc.

The network can also play an active role in awareness and information campaigns, training and staff development at the local, national and European level.

**8. Staff development and training**

All school staff are entitled to continuing professional development which starts with initial training. Further specialised training, usually leading to additional qualifications, is essential in order to provide the range of specialist professionals needed in special education.

The development of professional skills and aptitudes in relation to special education should be nurtured through effective management within school and support from external services. This process is reinforced through in-service training, which is essential when teachers are asked to undertake new areas of work, when there are changes of legislation and policy', or when there are developments in educational research.

The integration of children and young people with special educational needs provides new professional challenges and demands ways of working that require specific training. This training is needed to ensure positive attitudes, effective teaching, an appropriate curriculum and good individual planning. Each member of staff is entitled to help identify their training needs and to have opportunities for staff development on a regular basis. In service training can take a variety of forms:

- In-class training aimed at improving teaching skills,
- Whole-staff training conducted within school, delivered either by an experienced member of staff or by staff' from external support services.
- Centre-based training courses. These can be short courses of half a day, up to two or three days, or longer. They can be delivered in continuous blocks of time or be part-time, spanning several weeks. Courses can be free-standing or can be accredited with an institute of higher education or a university.
- Accredited diploma or degree courses with a university or institute of higher education (specialised training).
- The aims of all staff development and training in relation to special education are to ensure that:
  - every member of staff is aware of their responsibility to help educate all learners, including those with special educational needs;
  - all professionals are skilful and competent practitioners and that classroom management skills and an ability to differentiate the curriculum are established throughout the education system;
  - all staff cooperate as members of a team within a school, collaborating with parents, external professionals and other schools;
  - specialisms are demystified and all involved in the education system are empowered to become effective prac'titioners who are able and willing to reflect critically upon their practice.
- Particular emphasis on the continuing professional development of mainstream teachers and of teacher support assistants is important in the pursuit of high-quality educational integration.

## 9. Transition

The need for integration applies to all aspects of the life of a person with special educational needs. Education for integration is a continuing process affecting every stage and aspect of a person's life. Therefore, transition through the various levels of education, including early intervention, pre-school, primary and secondary school, further and higher education, as well as the transition from special to mainstream schools and transition to adult life. are milestones in the life of the learner.

It is very important to consider the conditions and approaches for facilitating effective transition. The transition process must progressively lead towards autonomy, self-determination and participation in the various aspects of community life. Priority should be given to maintaining stability for the learner during transitional periods.

It is imperative that the educational system should adapt to the person and not just require the person to fit in with the system.

For each transitional phase, the individual with special educational needs and their family should actively participate in planning a strategy to ensure good coordination and the continuity of essential support. Such an “individual route” has the aim of promoting a continuing development and growth towards independent living.

Schools themselves are transitional structures. Transition and progress within the school should prepare people with the specific skills needed to plan their life ahead.

The multidisciplinary teams (professional networks) have the important responsibility of defining the criteria and of planning ‘the necessary actions to ensure smooth transition between the different stages of the individual’s development.

Smooth transition towards employment requires good vocational guidance and a job mediation model directly linked with the educational centres. For this, a legal framework is necessary and professionals need to be involved.

In the education of the disabled adult, it is desirable to establish a permanent educational course which allows the transition from school to the community.

## 10. Role of special schools

In those cases where mainstream schools are unable to provide an appropriate education for a pupil, special schools should continue to offer a valuable alternative.

The existence of a special school, however, should not create an excuse for mainstream schools to fail to provide for special needs pupils.

School factors and parental views should be the most significant elements in deciding between regular and special school attendance.

Close cooperation, between regular and special schools should be given priority, and be supported by authorities.

In the process of moving from segregated to integrated education, the continued provision of specialist expertise and resources, as is often available from special schools, must be guaranteed and made available to mainstream schools.

To ensure a full range of service provision, a regional approach to planning is needed. Most resources can be transferred from special schools to mainstream schools. Specialist expertise, however, will often need to be made available from an external support service such as a special school.

The primary aim of providing special expertise to a mainstream school should always be to empower the mainstream school system and the teachers.

The future special school has the potential to be the centre which coordinates special needs education and other community services and provisions for mainstream schools.

## 11. New technologies/information technology (IT)

Developments in information technology open up new opportunities for extending communication and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriate provision of computer hardware and software, for both teachers and learners, can be a significant factor in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs. Key aspects in this area are:

- Provision of computer and technoi&cai equipment for the individual learner, as a communication or mobility aid.
- Use of information technology, in particular appropriate software programs, within the curriculum or as part of an individual educational programme. The advent of CD-ROM is significantly increases the potential use of IT in the classroom to extend access to the curriculum. Accessibility, usability and quality are the key criteria for the selection of software for use in the classroom.

- Using computers to communicate between schools, services and centres, particularly for the exchange and dissemination of information and for in-service training by distance learning.
- Staff development through the dissemination of information and as a medium for distance learning for in-service training courses and consultanc services.
- Mainstream teachers need continuing in-service training in the use of information technology, particularly relating to special educational needs, so that its use becomes integral to the curriculum.

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# Planning for support in the mainstream

*Gary Thomas (\*)*

Over the last few years a quiet revolution has been taking place in our schools. It has gone unnoticed because there has been no fanfare, no top-down initiative sparking it off. The opening of classroom doors to parents, specialist teachers, welfare assistants, support services and all kinds of volunteers from the community has truly been a revolution. It is a revolution in ideas about community participation in education. It is a revolution in thinking about teachers' autonomy within the classroom. And it is a revolution in terms of the possible advantages for children.

A number of trends have brought about this revolution. There is the general and widespread demand from the community at large for more openness in the institutions which serve it. But more specifically there are two trends which have played a major part in bringing extra people into the classroom. First, there is the trend towards increased participation of parents in their children's education. This has been translated into practice, in some cases, in parental involvement in the classroom. Equally important has been the trend to integrate into ordinary schools children who would formerly have been sent to special schools. This latter trend has resulted in provision being made by many LEAs for special children in ordinary schools: resources and personnel have been provided to help meet those children's special needs within the mainstream class. This change constitutes the single most important means by which integration is being effected.

In practice it has meant that welfare assistants have sometimes been appointed to meet special needs; sometimes specialist teachers, for instance, teachers of the hearing impaired, will be working alongside the class teacher. Sometimes teachers from 'outreach' schemes in special schools will be working with the teacher in the mainstream, perhaps providing advice or resources for special needs or perhaps working with individuals or groups of children. Peripatetic remedial teachers, instead of withdrawing children from the classroom for help, are now providing support within the classroom. Remedial departments in secondary schools are changing the way they work, so that their staffs provide help within the mainstream of the curriculum instead of withdrawing children as they used to.

A survey completed recently (Thomas, 1987) indicates that the trend has gone much further than many might have imagined. In some areas it is the exception to find primary teachers who always work on their own; instead, parents work in nine out of ten classrooms, and a great variety of other people, from school governors to speech therapists to young people on YTS schemes, are involved in classrooms.

These developments are necessary and welcome but they are accompanied by problems. They represent a very new departure in the working practices of most teachers and they confront us with unfamiliar challenges. Prior to these developments the class teacher's territory was very much her own. Similarly, the remedial teacher had a well-defined job, taking small groups of children out of the classroom, in turn, to her own territory. Now all this has changed.

Many problems may arise when people share a task but the effects are multiplied when the practice of working individually is well-established. An analogy may be drawn between current teaming arrangements and team teaching. Team teaching, pioneered with such high hopes in the early seventies, has since declined substantially (see Geen, 1985) because no-one really considered the organisational problems in making it work. In theory it seemed like a good idea, but in practice it raised more problems than it solved.

But the current teaming arrangements are arising for very different reasons from those which gave rise to team teaching. Team teaching was an ideal in itself. Today's teaming has

arisen out of reasons other than the feeling that teaming is in itself valuable. None the less, the practical problems which beset team teaching will certainly recur with current teaming arrangements.

It is essential then that we look at the possible problems which may arise when people share a task and it is essential that we look at the changed parameters of classroom organisation when other adults move into space which has traditionally been the domain of one adult.

Since our concern is for special needs in education (and since many of these extra people are in mainstream classes now to help meet special needs) we also need to look at how these changed parameters may affect the way we meet special needs. Only then will we be able to go on to suggest the best possible ways for these adults to work next to one another.

So I shall first try to make clear my understanding of the term 'special needs'. Unless a revised understanding of what 'special needs' means in a post-Warnock era is made manifestly clear there is the danger that in the move of these extra people into mainstream classes, the same practices will be going on - but simply in a different place. No meaningful shift toward integration will have occurred.

### *Special needs and extra people*

I sometimes feel that human beings have a natural tendency to label, to want to pigeon-hole, to categorise. The manifestation of this trait is nowhere more clearly seen than in the changing of the term ESN to SEN in recent years. Despite the best intentions of Warnock, despite the 1981 Act, the term 'SEN' has become an adjective - another label. We need to remind ourselves what special needs are when considering the work of additional people in the classroom.

This is particularly relevant when thinking about additional people in the classroom because the success of integration pivots around this issue. Integration is not so much about moving the special children — that is relatively easy. The much more difficult task is to integrate and effectively use in mainstream education the resources and the personnel traditionally associated with special provision. If we are going to meet special needs in the mainstream, it is necessary to remind ourselves what special needs actually are in order that the best efforts of these personnel are not wasted. It would be all too easy to move from segregation in special schools or remedial rooms or medical rooms, only to see segregation actually occurring in the mainstream classroom with a special person -perhaps an ancillary helper, perhaps a support teacher - identifying 'SEN children' in that setting and proceeding from there as though nothing else had really changed.

Clearly, this would be a defeat for the aims and ideals of integration. Behind integration is the wider ideal of a comprehensive, mixed-ability curriculum for all - an ideal of schools where children are not stigmatised by being withdrawn from the class. Most teachers would now go along with the aims and ideals of integration and I do not propose to rehearse the arguments for or against here. I take it as a starting point that integration is occurring and I seek ways of making that ideal work without regressing to a kind of disguised segregation: segregation within the classroom. So, if the ways people work in the mainstream classroom alongside the class-teacher are so important for effectively meeting special needs, it is important to define what these special needs might be and how they might be met by those who are coming into classrooms.

Cerebral palsy is not a need. Downs syndrome is not a need. Brain damage is not a need. Learning difficulties are not a need. A need can only be defined in terms of an outcome. We can only say that children need a particular kind of teaching if we have a particular kind of outcome in mind. If we say that it is important to learn number bonds to ten we may then proceed to define the best way of helping children to learn that information. From there, we

could go on to say that children need a particular kind of teaching in order to learn number bonds. A special need then becomes something over and above what is normally needed.

Not all goals in education are as easy to define. The goals of today's teacher will be more to do with communication, cooperation, sharing, developing children's language and imagination. But even here it is salutary to stop for a moment and consider the needs children have, with these goals in mind. Clearly, in the case of cooperation and communication it would be fruitless to have children sitting on their own in rows — they would need to be in groups. But one of the most interesting findings of recent research (see Tann, Chapter 9) is that even when teachers had wanted children to be doing individual tasks they kept children in groups. For individual tasks they would have been better working on their own; in other words, they need a different kind of classroom set-up, because in groups children are more easily distracted. Children who are experiencing difficulties are often particularly easily distracted, losing concentration very quickly. In thinking about their special needs, grouping and other classroom arrangements have to be considered very carefully in order that distraction is reduced. So, special classroom geography might constitute the special need for many children.

I introduced the point about need because it is essential for any understanding of how classroom organisation can be changed. A child's needs for doing a particular task or to become an active participant in groupwork or to master some particularly difficult concept can be defined only in terms of the teacher's goals and in terms of the particular characteristics of the classroom and school situation. Special needs then become merely extensions of the kinds of needs that all children have in mainstream classrooms.

I cannot proceed to an analysis of the ways in which additional adults may work effectively to meet special needs without carrying this exploration a little further. I shall do this by splitting these needs into individual learning needs and organisational needs.

### ***Individual learning needs***

Of all the constellation of factors which seem to affect children's ability to learn, individualised teaching seems to be one of the most important (eg Stallings, 1976). Efforts of educators and psychologists in recent years have been towards refining methods of teaching individual children. Yet evidence seems to show that it is not so much the methods themselves that are important. Rather, it is the amount of individual teaching we provide which is crucial in determining children's learning (Bloom, 1984). In other words, if we can be successful in providing this individual teaching within broadly defined ground rules we can be fairly sure of success in our teaching. So what are these 'broadly defined ground rules'? They might be summarised thus:

1. Regular individual help. It is a commonplace that sometimes children seem almost immediately to forget what they have learned. So they need regular help.
2. Distributed practice. Children appear to learn better from frequent, short doses of teaching than one long session. In other words, six five-minute sessions would in general be better than one thirty-minute session.
3. Keeping things in sequence. Many children can pick up ideas when they are presented in a fairly loose, unstructured way. They learn new ideas through exploration, communication and inference. But some children may be unsuccessful unless we think more precisely about the sequence of ideas in the task we are presenting to them. Although doubt has been cast on the value of, or need for, a formal or rigid sequence in presenting material (see Bennett, 1978; Home, 1984; Stallings et al, 1986), it nevertheless seems clear that some children will benefit from more careful thought being given to the building of idea upon idea.
4. Making sure the learning situation is rewarding. The situation may be inherently rewarding - for instance in an interesting task. But all the attention given to making the

subject matter interesting will have been to no avail if the ambience in which learning is expected to take place is unrewarding - if we are impatient or pressurising, or if we comment negatively on those areas over which a child may be experiencing difficulty.

Accepting that we keep our help broadly within these guidelines, what are the implications for classroom practice? The most immediate and pressing concern is the fact that it will be very difficult to provide this kind of individualised teaching. Teachers may justifiably ask what they are supposed to do with the rest of the class if they are to be doing more of this kind of work with children who have special needs. The involvement of the 'integrated' personnel provides at least one possible key to this dilemma and I shall attempt to put forward a solution after having tackled some other important features of classroom organisation for special needs.

### ***Organisational needs***

I have already mentioned grouping and the need for consideration of the aims of grouping. If we are expecting children to co-operate and communicate, there is certainly a justification for grouping them. However, if children are mainly doing work individually there are probably classroom arrangements which are going to be more effective for this purpose. Moreover, some children are highly distractable and lose concentration very easily. So it may be worthwhile to think of classroom arrangements which minimise distraction and help children concentrate.

The way in which the teacher moves around the class is also relevant here. Classroom management research has shown (eg Anderson, 1980; Brophy, 1979) that effective teachers manage to circulate and provide feedback frequently. But often the arrangement of the children in the class is such that circulation cannot happen very easily. There is clearly a possibility here for thinking about classroom arrangements which will facilitate such kinds of operation. Particularly relevant as far as teaming is concerned is the finding of Cohen et al (1979); they discovered in the classrooms they studied that the layout of the class was the most important factor in determining whether teaming worked well in the classroom.

I do not propose to attempt an in-depth analysis of classroom management research or research on instructional efficacy here. Rather, with special needs in mind, my intention has been to pick out a few key findings in these areas which might serve as a basis from which to proceed in suggesting how additional people might work alongside the classteacher. They might be summarised thus:

- Individual teaching eg regular practice; distributed practice; sequence; a rewarding learning situation
- Factors in classroom organisation eg grouping; placement of resources
- Factors in classroom management eg circulating; providing feedback; providing cues to the children

### ***Effectively using support to meet organisational and individual needs***

The analysis I have just made provides some clues for thinking about the work of the extra people in classrooms. Many, as I have noted, are there in order to meet special needs, yet very little thought has been given to the way in which opportunities are created for meeting special needs in this fundamentally changed environment.

Clearly, great opportunities in terms of improving classroom organisation and the ways in which we meet individual needs are created when these extra people are present. How might we proceed to suggest a pattern for their work? One way might be to look at the difficulties which class teachers customarily experience, given the problems in both managing the body

of the class and at the same time providing individual attention to children. As I have noted, individual attention appears to be all-important for children who are experiencing difficulty. The ORACLE research confirmed (Gallon et al, 1980) what most experienced teachers know: it is difficult to manage the main body of the class if you are devoting your attention primarily to individual children. Here is the central dilemma of integration: how do you manage and teach the larger body of children while at the same time providing the 'special' children with the kind of help they need? There is no formula which will enable one person to mix the different ingredients of classroom life into a solution which is perfect for meeting the needs of all children.

Though no formula exists, guidelines might be sought in the analysis made above. The conspicuously difficult task is in simultaneously providing the individual help of the kind the children with whom we are concerned so often need (ie regular help in frequent short doses), and constructively managing the rest of the class. Clear opportunities exist in differentiating the teacher's task so that each participant takes on a particular role in the new shared classroom.

Such a suggestion, if it is taken up, marks a new departure for today's classrooms. Implicit in the suggestion is the notion of an entirely new kind of classroom — one where there is shared decision-making and shared responsibility for children; where a discrete group of 'special needs children' does not exist and where children's special needs are met through a variety of pedagogic or organisational devices. Such assumptions demand that those who will now be working together to provide support for special needs in the mainstream will be working collaboratively with classteachers. Although planning for the curriculum will remain the class teacher's role, s/he will increasingly be planning for the curriculum and organising the classroom in collaboration with others. Only when this happens will special needs truly have been met appropriately. Until it happens and for as long as 'special personnel' continue to work only with a small group of previously identified 'special children' we shall be perpetuating the existence of segregation: segregation in the classroom.

How might the differentiation work? As I made clear above, no prescription can be given. Each classroom is unique, with a unique collection of children, facilities, organisational problems, and other circumstances. Above all, each teacher is unique and each set of adults who may be working alongside is unique. Each supporting adult is very different: a highly skilled support teacher may be working alongside an enthusiastic yet naive parent. But it is too easy to type-cast. Many parents are sensitive and skilled; indeed, it is often the case that they are in the classroom because they have special skills to offer. Many of the welfare assistants now being appointed to help meet special needs are extremely competent individuals who could, had their circumstances or inclinations been different, have made excellent teachers. Most significantly, though, each brings a particular and a rich experience to the classroom. Each biography offers something different to the children and it is important that the most is made of these contributions. It is important that we do not become deluded by the stereotypes which have for so long constrained the ways in which we think about the contributions of additional people and about special needs.

My point, is that far more imaginative ways may be sought of deploying the extra help that is now in classrooms for special needs. Welfare assistants can do more than work with one individual exclusively for, say, half a day a week. Parents can do more than help with the traditional parent activities like cookery and needlework (see Cyster et al 1979). And there is surely a far larger role for the support teacher than merely visiting a class once a week and working with a group of children; she must now - and often does - work collaboratively with the classteacher to help organise the response they are making for the children who are experiencing difficulty.

With the new openness now coming into our classrooms and with our changed concept of special needs we can think far more fluidly about the ways in which these extra people work. Indeed, modern work on management (see, for instance, Hackman and Oldham, 1980)

indicates that if people are to work effectively and with commitment it is essential that we move outside the constraints which have hitherto bounded our thinking about their contributions. People have to be involved in the task (in this case, teaching) and not feel that they are merely 'skivvying'; they have to have variety in their work - and not always be allocated the same child or given the same work to do; they have to have some autonomy; and they have to have feedback on the way they are working.

What does this imply? First and foremost it implies that planning for special needs has to be a joint exercise involving all the adult classroom participants. It implies that people's strengths and weaknesses are identified at this planning stage. It implies that a fairly clear definition of classroom tasks and activities be made in order that roles can be devolved and exchanged. It implies that each person's contribution is valued. Last, it implies that the group (which may be only two people) meets regularly to discuss and evaluate the way that they have been working.

I should like to suggest a model which incorporates these features and which incorporates the possibility of differentiating the teacher's role in order that special needs might be met according to the crude taxonomy outlined above.

### *A model*

To recapitulate, children's special needs may be met in a variety of ways; some of these are outlined above. When adults (from whatever background) are working together in the new shared classrooms they, too, have needs if they are to work effectively; some of these also have been identified. A model for the various different participants in the classroom to follow might now be proposed.

The model should be based on knowledge about the ways children learn and about effective methods of classroom organisation and management. It should, in very general terms, have something to say about what the teacher has to do in order to meet special needs. From these specific descriptions it should be possible to delineate the kinds of activities which need to be undertaken by the class teacher. Packages of activities — activities which hang together and are united by a theme - might be bundled together as appropriately undertaken by particular individuals. With the focus on the discrete activity it should be possible to foresee negotiations among participants on the ways in which activities are undertaken.

The following 'room management' (adapted from M. Thomas, 1985) provides one such model. It starts by specifying a number of job descriptions for the various participants.

***Individual helper*** The individual helper concentrates on working with an individual on a teaching activity for 5—15 minutes. So, in an hour it should be possible to arrange between four and twelve individual teaching sessions.

***Activity manager*** The activity manager concentrates on the rest of the class, who will normally be arranged in groups of between four and eight. S/he will quickly circulate, keeping them busy and providing feedback. Mover The mover deals with all interruptions to routine, eg visitors, spillages, etc in order to keep the activity manager and individual helper free from distraction.

The model goes on to specify a number of basic tasks which have to be completed by each of the participants undertaking these roles:

#### **1. What an individual helper does:**

##### **Before the session:**

- a. has available a list or rota of children for individual help and the activities and materials required for each;
- b. helps the activity manager to organise the classroom for the session;
- c. assembles materials needed for each child's work in the area to be used for individual work. For example, if it is to be a one-hour session with fifteen minutes for each child, four children will be seen in the hour and

four sets of activities should have been prepared ready for each child to start straight away when s/he is called.

**During the session:**

- a. asks the first child on the list to come and work. Fifteen minutes should be the maximum for an intensive individual activity. In order to minimise the possibility of the session becoming frustrating and failure-laden it should be stressed to the individual helper that the emphasis should be on praise and gentle encouragement;
- b. asks subsequent children on the list to come and work.

**2. What an activity manager does:**

**Before the session:**

- a. organises a variety of tasks/activities for each group;
- b. informs the individual helper when s/he is ready to begin.

**During the session:**

- a. ensures that each group member has appropriate materials/books/equipment;
- b. quickly prompts children to start working if necessary;
- c. supervises use of shared materials;
- d. moves around the group to praise children who are busy, and to give feedback on work. Thus, the activity manager moves from one busy group member to the next, commenting on her/his activities, giving help and praising those who are busy. S/he also very briefly prompts group members who are not busy.

**3. What the mover does:**

**Before the session:**

- a. helps the activity manager to prepare materials for the session;
- b. checks there are adequate supplies of pencils, paper and other relevant materials.

**During the session:**

- a. deals with interruptions, such as visitors;
- b. deals with crises such as spilt water;
- c. monitors smooth housekeeping, for instance in the use of shared facilities;
- d. becomes another activity manager if everything is flowing smoothly.

Although a study (G. Thomas, 1985) has shown that such a system can work well in the primary classroom (and reports indicate that it is also working in secondary settings) it cannot be stressed strongly enough that this model cannot be proffered as a prescription. All classrooms will have their own needs and such a model, as outlined here, will only go some way to meeting them. Ultimately, teams will have to formulate their own models uniquely suited to their own sets of circumstances. It may not be appropriate, for instance, to think of including a mover; indeed, such a function would only be appropriate for a class of younger children.

However, such a model does provide at least a draft on which teachers may base teamwork for special needs in their classes. It takes account of the learning needs of the children and of the complex and difficult problems found in classrooms. It allows for people changing and negotiating their roles and working practices. It provides a framework upon which teams can build their own arrangements.

This discussion — about negotiation — leads to a second but no less important feature of successful teamwork: the processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation. The lessons learned from teamwork in other classroom settings (see, for example, Cohen, 1976) are that these processes are essential for successful teamwork. Moreover, without the participation of all team members — not just the professionals - there is unlikely to be meaningful involvement. In practice it will be difficult for teachers to find time for planning and evaluation with others. But the warnings are clear: if time is not found, this kind of complex collaborative exercise is likely to end in failure. It may well be that support teachers in particular (who will find it most difficult to find time for this kind of exercise) will have to earmark time for planning and monitoring in the re-scheduling of their work.

Such rescheduling is essential, given the innovatory nature of the changes that are taking place in classrooms. The organisational implications of changing from solitary working to

teamwork have been grossly underestimated. An ill-conceived or poorly evaluated innovation may not simply disintegrate; its debris may act as a barrier to further development, or to innovation in other areas, long after the event.

What then are the ingredients for successful planning, monitoring and evaluation? Because these developments are so new in education there are few examples from which to draw in seeking advice. Spreading the net wider, though, there is advice to be gleaned from the ways in which groups work in other settings (eg Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Robson, 1982; Herkimer, 1984). Key elements appear to be communication among participants; acceptance of the ideas of others; and willingness to make changes. These may seem so obvious as elements of successful teamwork that it is hardly worth mentioning them. But it is all too clear that unless they are explicitly spelt out they are often ignored: the obvious eludes us and common sense often flies out of the window when we work under the weight of the organisational culture. These 'obvious' elements might be incorporated into the new teamworking arrangements thus:

1. The team (comprising perhaps a classteacher, a support teacher and a parent) meet to discuss the way they are going to work. Others, such as an ancillary helper, the headteacher or the educational psychologist, might also be involved. Some kind of structure is essential for this meeting if it is not to become a mini case conference postulating quasi-diagnostic explanations for individual children's problems. The focus is most usefully organisational with the draft of a system such as 'room management' used as the basis for the discussion. People need to discuss the roles they are to be fulfilling and whether, for instance, they would feel comfortable undertaking a particular set of tasks. Role swapping can also be discussed here. Depending on the composition of the group, curricular issues might be discussed -for instance, how the support teacher is going to make adaptations to the mainstream curriculum for children with reading difficulties.
2. The planned scheme is put into operation. Participants are encouraged to look for problems and ways of improving the system. People should be encouraged to remember that the system is not sacrosanct; it has merely been devised as a way of effectively meeting special needs. As such it has to be adapted as problems are seen to arise.
3. The team meets again to discuss the running of the system. The openness of a 'quality circle' should be the hallmark of such a meeting; in other words, the atmosphere should be informal, with people being encouraged to come up with ideas. Such a meeting ought to take place regularly — at first, perhaps once a week.

## *Conclusions*

Few attempts have been made to analyse the problems and opportunities in the organisational accompaniments to integration. The influx of extra people into classrooms is the most important of these accompaniments; it is now happening on an unprecedented scale. A host of questions has arisen about the working of the new arrangements but this is no reason to abandon them. If we wish to realise the ideal of integration we have to look for guidance to fields unfamiliar to those of us who have worked in the special sector. Though the ground will be unfamiliar in this new diversion, the road is by no means uncharted. If we follow it, the destination promises to be one where there is less segregation, more openness and a nearing of the ideal of a comprehensive education for all children.

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(\*) In: Gary Thomas & Anthony Feiler, *Planning for Special Needs, A whole school approach*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988, p. 139-153.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT IN ESTONIA (\*)

According to the Education Act, Estonia has an inclusive education policy and every child has a right to attend a school of his or her residence. However, due to a student's special needs, it is also possible to acquire education at schools or classes for students with special needs, to which students are referred on the basis of recommendations of counselling committees.

A pre-primary institution for children with special needs is generally a mainstream kindergarten

and in certain cases a kindergarten for children with special needs (in Estonia, there are only 3 of these).

In a childcare institution, children with special needs may attend an integration group (1–2 children together with other children) or a special group (137 pre-primary institutions have special groups for children who need special care and special instruction).

The number of children in a special group is as follows:

- group of children with physical disabilities – up to 12 children;
- opportunity groups for children with specific developmental disorders – up to 12 children;
- development groups for children with mental disabilities – up to 7 children;
- group of children with sensory disabilities – up to 10 children;
- group of children with multiple disabilities – up to 4 children;
- group of children with pervasive developmental disabilities – up to 4 children.

In an integration group, the maximum allowed number of children is smaller than in other groups of a pre-primary institution as the calculation holds that one child with special needs fills the place of three children.

### 10.1. Historical Overview

In Estonia, the teaching of children with special needs began already in the 19th century: in 1866 a school for deaf people was founded, in 1883 a school for blind people, in 1895 the first institution for people with mental impairments and in 1920 a school for children with physical impairments. The first classes and schools for children with learning difficulties were founded in 1921–1925, and clinical speech therapy was started in the 1920s.

During the Soviet period, education was available only for children with slight mental disabilities (support schools); children with moderate, severe and profound mental disabilities were sent to a nursing home and they were regarded as non-teachable. In the 1990s, the obligation to attend school was expanded to children with moderate, severe and profound mental and multiple disabilities. Only after restoration of independence all the discriminatory restrictions were removed and according to current legislation of the Republic of Estonia, all children have a right for education suitable for their abilities and their studying is supported by implementation of necessary support systems.

According to the Education Act, children with special needs have the right to attend the school of their residence.

From 1968, the University of Tartu started to educate specialists on handicaps in children (from 1994, special education teachers). In 1989, a congress of the United Nations was held in Estonia, where the problems of education of persons with special needs, their integration into the education system and society, and labelling terminology were discussed. Since the year 2000, the teachers' training curricula of universities comprise an inclusive education and special pedagogical module.

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 (\*) Source: Eurybase - Estonia - (2007/08) [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org) p. 166-174

In 1995, the General Concept of the Disability Policy of the Republic of Estonia was adopted on the basis of UN standard rules on equal opportunities that turned the idea of inclusive education into official education policy.

In 2004, the Social Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) was adopted, where, in the chapter of inclusive education, objectives were set for improving inclusion in schools with the goal to improve inclusion in the society. An action plan (NAP) was also developed for reaching the goals set in the memorandum. In 2007, a UN concept on disabled people was signed.

## **10.2. Ongoing Debates and Future Developments**

Debates are held on the question how to ensure inclusive education and equal opportunities, which are, according to the education policy, our priorities.

Reorganisation of the terminology and implementation of international classifications continue, in order to ensure possibilities for comparison with other European countries. Labelling terminology has been removed from the legislation, replacing terms like "handicapped" with "child/student/person with special needs".

In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the classifications used in databases are being homogenized, in order to facilitate cross-usage and to provide early information on the needs of disabled children for support systems (readiness of textbooks in Braille in due time, compilation of study materials in sign language).

Medical diagnoses in educational legislation are replaced with pedagogical ones in order to avoid labelling and a disability-centred approach, and to base education on the abilities of a child and on adapting the study environment to the needs of every child. Assessment has become flexible taking into account the student's special needs, and in organising examinations, special needs of learners are taken into account and examinations are organized in a manner suitable for the student.. In appointing a person to remedial study, medical diagnoses have been replaced with pedagogical ones and in assessing the results of basic school põhikool final examinations, the requirement for a result of a minimum 35% as the pre-condition for passing an examination was established for children with special needs. See also 4.2.

## **10.3. Definition and Diagnosis of the Target Group(s)**

The differences as significant from the usual in the abilities, background and personal characteristics of a student that they do not enable satisfying the student's educational needs in an easily accessible way, are regarded as special educational needs. In education and schooling, special educational support or a curriculum of a different level has to be applied or changes to the organisation of studies must be made.

The term "student with special educational needs" is used regarding a student whose particular talent, learning or behavioural difficulty, health problem, disability or long-term non-attendance to study activities causes the need to make changes or adaptations in the contents of study (individual curriculum) and/or in the study environment (study aids, study rooms, learning methods, language of communication, teachers with a special qualification, support personnel, etc.) and/or in the work plan that a teacher has elaborated for work with a specific class..

Special educational needs are:

- general or special talent;
- learning disabilities (specific, temporary and permanent);
- sensory disability (deafness and hearing impairment; blindness and visual impairment);
- movement disabilities;
- socio-emotional and conduct disorder;

- speech impairment;
- intellectual disability and multiple disabilities;
- addiction disorder;
- immigrant background.

On the basis of medical, psychological and pedagogical research, children with special needs are recommended a suitable kindergarten, lasteaed or group or a curriculum or school suitable for their abilities. A child with special needs is admitted to an integration group or a group, class or school for children with special needs on the basis of written application from a parent (caregiver) and a decision of the counselling committee. The foundation of counselling committees is established by the Education Act and the Basic Schools pōhikool and Upper Secondary Schools Act. A counselling committee shall be founded in a county or town and shall comprise five members. A counselling committee shall include a special education teacher, a speech therapist, a psychologist, a social worker, a special medical specialist (if needed) and a representative of the county government or of the city government accordingly. A counselling committee is competent to:

- assign to a child with special needs a curriculum or a form of study suitable for his or her abilities;
- refer a student with special needs to a school or class for students with special needs with the consent of a parent (caregiver);
- decide, at the request of a parent, on postponing the obligation to attend school.

After attendance of a school for students with special needs is no longer necessary, a student continues his or her studies in his or her former school.

In a state or municipal school, the Ministry of Education and Research or the local municipality or town government shall form the following classes, if necessary:

- classes for children with physical and sensory disabilities, speech impairments, and mental disorders;
- opportunity classes for teaching children with specific learning difficulties;
- supplementary learning classes for teaching children with slight intellectual disabilities;
- coping classes for teaching children with moderate intellectual disabilities;
- nursing classes for teaching children with severe and profound intellectual disabilities.

#### **10.4. Financial Support for Pupils' Families**

According to the Social Benefits for the Disabled Persons Act (1999), disabled child allowance shall be paid monthly until the child attains 16 years of age, and caregiver's allowance shall be paid to a person who cannot work due to raising a disabled child. According to paragraph 10 of the same act, study allowance shall be paid to disabled students studying in upper secondary school, vocational school or higher education institution. (See also 4.7., 5.9. and 6.8.)

#### **10.5. Special Provision within Mainstream Education**

Education and schooling of children with special needs in mainstream schools is organised according to the Education Act and the Basic Schools pōhikool and Upper Secondary Schools Act. According to the Education Act, each child has the right to attend the school closest to his or her

residence and follow a suitable curriculum (the national curriculum for basic schools pōhikool and upper secondary schools gümnaasium the simplified national curriculum for basic schools pōhikool the national curriculum for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties (see 4.3., 4.10.); and to get different kinds of support study. According to the law, children with special needs shall, if possible, be taught in mainstream schools, in order to ensure their integration into the society.

### **Classes for children with special needs can be established in mainstream schools (see 10.3.).**

The aim of support systems is personal development of a student, considering his or her individual learning needs in organising education and schooling. The following support systems are available in schools:

- individual curriculum;
- remedial study for overcoming learning difficulties;
- speech therapy;
- learning in long day groups;
- studying at home with attendance in lessons of subjects related to skills, if possible;
- classes for students who have behavioural problems;
- boarding school facilities for children who have social problems (see also 4.7., 4.9.2.);
- support from a support teacher;
- support from a psychologist.

#### **10.5.1. Specific Legislative Framework**

The Constitution guarantees everyone's right to education and the accessibility of education. The Education Act and the Basic Schools põhikool and Upper Secondary Schools Act state that every child has an equal right to study at a school of their residence, or, if suitable conditions are not found and the parents agree, to study in another school complying with relevant conditions.

The regulation of the Minister of Education and Research establishes possibilities and conditions for all students with special needs to study at a vocational school, and necessary support systems are implemented.

In 1995, the General Concept of Disability Policy of the Republic of Estonia, prepared on the basis of UN standard rules of equal opportunities, was adopted, that turned the idea of inclusive education into official education policy. In the years 2000/2001, an action plan until the year 2006 was adopted in order to ensure the implementation of the General Concept.

In 2004, an Inclusiveness Memorandum (JIM) was adopted, setting a goal in the inclusive education chapter to enhance inclusiveness at school, thereby ensuring inclusiveness in the society. An action plan (NAP) was also developed to achieve the goals set out in the Memorandum. A national development plan for social protection and social inclusion for the years 2006-2008 has been developed.

#### **10.5.2. General Objectives**

The general objectives of education of students with special needs are not different from the general objectives of the corresponding education levels (see 4.4. , 5.4. , 6.4.) and do not depend on whether it is conducted in mainstream or in special groups (schools, classes).

According to the general concept of disability policy of the Republic of Estonia, equal rights for people with special needs to pre-primary, basic, secondary and higher education must be guaranteed. People with special needs have the right for inclusive education guaranteed by the state. The teaching of people with special needs must be an integral part of national education planning, creation of curricula and organisation of schools. Instruction in a mainstream school presumes the existence of translation and other support services and equipment. These services must meet the needs of people with all types of special needs. Associations of parents and associations of persons with special need must be involved at all levels of education. Since the universal obligation to attend school is applicable in Estonia, education must be guaranteed to everyone, also including children with the most severe impairments. Particular attention must be paid to pre-primary education and the preparation for school of children with special needs, as well as to in-service training and re-training of adults with special needs.

For teaching children with special needs, the state is obliged to:

- have a clear education policy that is understood and accepted by schools and the whole society;
- permit amendments, supplements and adaptations of curricula, depending on a student's special needs;
- ensure the quality of study materials, teachers' in-service training, and the existence of support teachers.

In Estonia, there is a network of schools for children with special needs but the trend is towards inclusive education.

### **10.5.3. Specific Support Measures**

According to the legislation, students with special needs may study at mainstream schools, in special classes of a mainstream school and get different kinds of support study:

- support of a special education teacher, speech therapist, social teacher, psychologist;
- remedial learning classes to overcome learning difficulties;
- studies according to a curriculum of a different level (see 10.5.);
- studies according to an individual curriculum (see 4.10.);
- studies in smaller classes (in classes for children with special needs, the number of students is smaller, see 10.6.5.);
- additional learning and rehabilitation subjects (music therapy, etc.);
- communication support (sign-language interpreter, study material in the Braille system, adapted textbooks and study materials, etc.).

The evaluation of students with special needs takes into account the provisions of the individual curriculum.

### **10.6. Separate Special Provision**

A pre-primary institution for children with special needs is generally a mainstream kindergarten lasteaed and in certain cases a kindergarten lasteaed for children with special needs (there are only 3 of these in the whole country, with 180 students). Special groups have been opened in 137 mainstream kindergartens lasteaed in order to better provide various support services to children with special needs. For further information, see 3.13.

Schools for students with special needs are intended for students with physical disabilities, speech impairments, sensory disabilities, mental disorders or severe somatic diseases, and for students who need special treatment due to behavioural problems.

According to the Basic Schools põhikool and Upper Secondary Schools Act, the obligation to attend school may also be fulfilled by studying at home. The conditions for studying at home are established by the relevant procedure.

In academic year 2006/2007, there were 47 schools for children with special needs, 30 of them were state owned, 13 were municipal schools and 4 were private schools. 69 classes for children with special needs were created in mainstream schools and there were also children with special needs who studied in mainstream classes of mainstream schools. Out of the 47 schools for students with special needs, 2 are for students with hearing impairment, 2 for students with multiple disabilities, 1 for students with movement disabilities, 1 for students with visual impairment, 5 for students with socioemotional problems (students with behavioural difficulties and psychological problems) and 4 for students with health disorders. The rest are for students with different levels of sustained learning difficulties (intellectual disabilities).

The ratio of students with special needs among students of the diurnal form of study of general education has constantly risen. A growing number of students with special needs

studies in mainstream schools but the number of children studying in schools for children with special needs has remained stable.

#### **10.6.1. Specific Legislative Framework**

See 10.5.1. There is no special legislation concerning study in groups for children with special needs.

#### **10.6.2. General Objectives**

See 10.5.2.

#### **10.6.3. Geographical Accessibility**

In Estonia, there is a network of special classes of mainstream schools and schools for children with special needs that covers the needs of students with special needs. In most cases also boarding school facilities have been created at such schools. A state-financed project has been launched to develop family-type student homes and create a respective network.

#### **10.6.4. Admission Requirements and Choice of School**

According to the legislation, a school can be freely chosen; a student is admitted to a school on the basis of parent's application. Children with special needs are recommended a school or class suitable for their needs by a counselling committee but a parent decides whether the child shall go to the recommended school for children with special needs or to a mainstream school. About the competencies of the counselling committee, see 10.3.

If a student of years 1 and 2 of basic school põhikool cannot fulfil the requirements of the curriculum, the school shall direct him or her with the consent of a parent to a special education teacher, speech therapist, social teacher, educational psychologist or, if necessary, to a psychiatrist for consultation where the reasons of the difficulties shall be identified. After the reasons of the difficulties have been identified, respective support services and study aid is used, in order to guarantee to the student with learning difficulties all opportunities to acquire an education suitable for his or her abilities.

#### **10.6.5. Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils**

For classes for children with special educational needs, a smaller maximum limit for the number of children applies:

- 12 students in a class for children with speech impairments, sensory and physical disabilities, and behavioural disorders;
- 16 students in a class for children with mental disorders, an opportunity class and supplementary learning class;
- 7 students in a class for children with multiple disabilities, a coping class and a nursing class;
- Up to 4 students in a class for children with autistic spectrum disorders.

#### **10.6.6. Organisation of the School Year**

The organisation of an academic year in groups (schools) for children with special needs does not differ from the organisation of an academic year in basic school põhikool, see 4.9.1.

#### **10.6.7. Curriculum, Subjects**

In groups (kindergartens lasteaed schools) for children with special needs, national curricula of the relevant education level are applied as general framework curricula.

Education and schooling in pre-primary institutions is based on the pre-primary education framework curriculum (see 3.9.2., 3.10.). Children have the right to get assistance from teachers in acquiring the content determined by the curricula.

In basic schools pōhikool and upper secondary schools gümnaasium the national curriculum for basic schools pōhikool and upper secondary schools (see 4.9.2. , 4.10.) is valid for all students (including students with special needs) as a general framework curriculum. In addition, the simplified national curriculum for basic schools pōhikool (for students with slight permanent learning difficulties) and the national curriculum for students with moderate and severe permanent learning difficulties have been adopted by the regulation of a Minister of Education and Research. For students with special educational needs, an individual curriculum must be compiled on the basis of any of the above national curricula (see 4.10.) to take into account their abilities and peculiarities.

The duration of study and daily timetable for students with special needs is established by the regulation of the Minister of Education and Research.

The duration of study of students with special needs in basic school pōhikool is the following:

- basic education study for students with speech impairments in mainstream schools: 10 academic years; the duration of study in the I stage of study is 4 years (usually 3 years);
- basic education study for students with hearing impairments in mainstream schools: 11 years;
- the duration of study in the I and II stage of study is 4 years in each stage (usually 3+3 years);
- basic education study for deaf students in special schools: 10 years, the duration of the II stage of study is 4 years;
- basic education study for students with visual impairments in special schools: 10 years; the duration of the III stage of study is 4 years;
- the duration of basic education study for students with learning difficulties who study on the basis of a simplified curriculum may be prolonged by one year;
- the duration of basic education study for students with severe learning difficulties who study on the basis of the national curriculum for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties, may be prolonged by up to three years;
- the duration of basic education study for students with profound learning difficulties who study on the basis of the national curriculum for nursing schools may be prolonged by up to three years (with the Basic Schools pōhikool and Upper Secondary Schools Act, also the curriculum of nursing schools is being approved).

In schools for students with special needs where students with health problems are studying, the timetable established by the national curriculum of basic and upper secondary education is applied, taking into account the students' additional needs.

#### **10.6.8. Teaching Methods and Materials**

In ensuring the availability of education to students with special needs, the individuality of each student is considered. Instruction is ensured in a manner that it corresponds to the individual needs of a student and develops students' physical and mental activity. Students with visual impairments are supplied with books in the Braille system and with other study materials. In teaching deaf students, sign language is used in combination with oral instruction (bilingual teaching) and the duration of study is prolonged by 1 year. Students with hearing disabilities are taught orally and the duration of study in basic school pōhikool is prolonged by 2 years. In upper secondary schools gümnaasium vocational schools kutseõppeasutus and higher education institutions, sign language interpreters are used where necessary. In the case of students with physical disabilities, adaptation of the learning environment and provision of support services are used to guarantee the acquisition of education. In the case of students with severe and multiple disabilities, various methods such as imitation learning, modelling, etc. are used. In pre-primary education, attention is paid to creating a basis of study materials to encourage development (construction games, puzzles, respective games).

In vocational education, an educational institution compiles a curriculum for a special group (small study group) and an individual curriculum for a person with special needs who is studying in a mainstream or special group; prior to that, a developmental discussion/student evaluation is held where the student's additional needs and strengths are identified. Following the national curriculum for the corresponding vocation or profession, the special needs of the person and his or her rehabilitation plan, communication support (sign language interpreter, speech synthesizer, etc.) and different kinds of study support (ICT support, adapted study materials, individual adapted study materials and study materials in simplified language) are used. For a student with special needs, a transfer plan is developed to support the transfer from vocational school to work and a better engagement in work.

#### **10.6.9. Progression of Pupils**

In case of students with special needs, individual curricula are used, making it possible to evaluate the acquired knowledge and skills, taking into account the individual characteristics of a student. In conducting basic school põhikool final examinations, special needs of students and the aims set up in the curriculum are taken into account. In case of studying according to the national curriculum for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties, basic school põhikool final examinations with integrated materials are not conducted. See 4.12. and 4.13. .

#### **10.6.10. Educational/ Vocational Guidance, Education/Employment Links**

According to the Education Act, the counselling of children and youth is the task of local authorities.

Counselling commissions have been formed in all counties (see 10.3.), advising children with special needs and their parents and recommending a suitable curriculum or school. An integrated network of counselling centres is under development through which all children and young people of a county could have access to counselling services. In all counties, there is a career counselling centre, the development and integration of which with counselling and study aid centres is currently underway.

#### **10.6.11. Certification**

Irrespective of the curriculum followed, all students, if their study results of the whole academic year are positive, shall be awarded similar basic school põhikool leaving certificates. A basic school põhikool leaving certificate may also be given to a student whose grades for the whole year or final examination grades in up to two subjects are "poor" or "weak". The title of the curriculum according to which studies were conducted shall be indicated on the basic school põhikool leaving certificate.

#### **10.6.12. Private Education**

Of all schools for children with special needs (47), four are private schools.

### **10.7. Special Measures for the Benefit of Immigrant Children/Pupils and those from Ethnic Minorities**

At present, non-Estonians constitute about 30% of the population and about 19% of all children of school age. Estonian legal acts do not use terms like immigrant, national minority or foreigner, they are being referred to as people without Estonian citizenship. Most of the foreigners living in Estonia live here for the second or third generation. The number of new immigrants (lived in Estonia for up to 3 years), applicants for asylum and refugees is marginal: in academic year 2007/2008, nearly 80 pupils whose mother tongue differs from the language of instruction of their school and who have lived in Estonia for less than 3 years are studying at school.

From 1999 until today, there have been 7 schoolaged refugees and asylum seekers but they have not resided in Estonia for more than 6 months. The Estonian education legislation regards these pupils similarly to Estonians as subjects of education and all children of school age, except for the children of diplomatic representatives, have the obligation to attend school.

As supplementary opportunities and measures in the education organisation of such children, the following possibilities exist:

- schools with Russian as the language of instruction (the biggest national minority), the number of students in these schools constitutes about 19% of the total number of students in Estonia;
  - the opportunity to learn one's mother tongue two hours per week, provided that the mother tongue (home language) of a student is different from the language of instruction of the school and there are more than 10 applicants;
  - application of an individual curriculum (incl. teaching Estonian individually or in a small group);
  - teaching Estonian (the official language);
  - free courses of Estonian to applicants for asylum and/or refugees.
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# Effective Classroom Practices for Inclusive Education

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education  
Summary Report, March 2003

## CHAPTER 3 : SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

### 3.1 Conditions

As pointed out before, our focus is on the classroom. The goal of this study was to find approaches within the curriculum that work within inclusive classes. The goal was not to provide a detailed overview of all the conditions that should be met in order to implement inclusive education, nor to draft the steps that should be taken in order to 'build' an inclusive school. Our interest was to focus on the features of an inclusive curriculum and to demonstrate these for a wider audience. But, having said this, inclusive education does not take place in a vacuum and the study has gathered information concerning the prerequisites for inclusive education. Not only the (research) literature that has been studied, but also – and mainly – examples of good practices and discussions between experts, revealed that a number of clear conditions needed to be met. Below an indicative overview of the necessary conditions is presented.

#### 3.1.1 Teachers

Of course, inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs, on their view on differences in classrooms and their willingness to deal with those differences effectively. Generally, the attitude of teachers has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive. If class teachers do not accept the education of all pupils as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the specialist teacher) takes responsibility for pupils with SEN and will organise covert segregation in the school (e.g. the special class).

The case studies suggest that teachers who are committed to inclusion often refer to pupils with severe educational needs as positive assets to the classroom rather than 'problems to overcome'.

However, positive attitudes are not enough for dealing with differences in classrooms. Teachers also need adequate methods and materials but also the time available for instruction and knowledge and skills acquired through training (ITT and IST) and experience. All these are relevant when handling differences in classrooms.

Teaching pupils with special needs in the mainstream classroom no doubt implies adaptation of the standard curriculum. Teachers are confronted with the question of how to instruct these pupils. Pupils with special needs may require more instruction time or other learning methods and professional knowledge. In that case, teachers will feel the need for more time, materials and knowledge. Generally, this can be achieved in two ways: by an increase in resources (more time allocated to teachers) or by re-arranging available resources (alternative use of available time).

Increasing available time (e.g. through the use of educational assistants) or enhancing teachers' professional knowledge (e.g. by IST, colleagues or consultation teams) are ways of increasing the necessary resources for inclusive education, but teachers may also need to rearrange available resources across the pupils in the classroom. Teachers can, for example, encourage above-average pupils to work more independently, to work with computers and to help each other (peer tutoring), so that more teaching time is left for pupils with special needs.

A final important issue at the teacher and classroom level is a teacher's sensitivity and skills in order to enhance significant social relations between pupils. Particularly for pupils with SEN (and their parents), meaningful interactions with non-disabled peers are of the utmost importance. The teacher should have the right attitude, but also needs a good understanding of how to develop these interactions and relationships.

### **3.1.2 The school**

It is clear that caring for pupils with SEN is not only a question of the necessary resources at classroom level. It should be recognised that the organisational structure at the school level also determines the amount and type of resources teachers can use in teaching pupils with special needs. Flexible support from inside the school, for example through colleagues, the head teacher, and/or a specialist teacher is needed.

Support can also be made available through other support services such as school advisory centres or special visiting support staff. In some countries co-operation between (mainstream) schools means additional resources can be provided for the care for pupils with special needs. It is clear that the creative strengths, knowledge and expertise, as well as the facilities of a group of schools, exceed those of a single school. The ability of co-operating schools to find ways to handle special needs may be essential for integrating pupils with special needs into mainstream settings.

Some of the projects that have been described and analysed for this study pointed at the fact that co-operation between schools is crucial.

Too great a degree of autonomy may threaten development towards inclusive schools. The support for pupils with special needs should be co-ordinated between schools, especially when the size of schools is generally small.

Special attention should be given to the role of the head teacher or senior managers. Not only is the head teacher important for the provision of all kinds of support to teachers, but also his or her leadership is a decisive factor in inclusive education. He or she is often the key person that can implement changes in schools and initiate new developments and processes. The main responsibility here is to organise a team approach and to maintain focus on key issues.

The use of resources within schools should be organised in a flexible way. Our examples of good practice demonstrated that schools should have many degrees of freedom in using financial resources according to their own wishes and views. Bureaucracy should be avoided to the largest extent and also pupils with no or minor special needs should be able to profit from resources within classes or schools if needed or wished by the teacher.

Sometimes it is necessary to pay attention to small groups of individuals with special needs. The evidence suggest that some withdrawal session may, in fact, enable a pupil to be maintained in the mainstream classroom and teachers do sometimes make use of arrangements outside the classroom. It is Important that these arrangements have a natural and flexible character and are not only used for certain pupils with special needs but also, occasionally, for all pupils in the classroom.

The criteria that should be used when offering part-time special provision to pupils are that they should be: (1) as early as possible; (2) as flexible as possible (if one approach is not working, choose another); (3) as 'light' as possible (without negative side effects); (4) as close as possible (therefore preferable within the mainstream class and within the mainstream school); and (5) as short as possible.

The involvement of parents in inclusive schools should not be underestimated. They should not only be seen as 'clients' of education but also as 'participants'. It is crucial that their needs can be addressed as well and they often need a person upon whom they can rely. They should have a significant role and voice and be informed concerning all details of the planning,

implementation, evaluation and the structure and content of the co-operation, especially regarding co-operation between the school, outside agencies and other professionals.

Furthermore, parents play an active role in the development, implementation and evaluation of IEPs. On some occasions they can serve as ‘a pair of extra hands’ in or outside the classroom.

### **3.1.3 External conditions**

#### **Policy and funding**

Inclusion in schools is greatly supported where there is a clear national policy on inclusion. For the process of implementation of inclusive education, the government should firmly support inclusion and make clear what the goals are for the educational community.

Furthermore, governments should create the conditions for inclusion in education. More specifically, funding arrangements should facilitate inclusive education and not hinder them. Necessary provisions should be made available in a flexible and co-ordinated way. Funding arrangements and the incentives that are included in these arrangements play a decisive role as was demonstrated in the Agency study *Financing of Special Needs Education* (1999)

A so-called throughput-model at the regional (municipality) level seems to be the most successful funding option. In such a model, budgets for special needs are delegated from central level to regional institutions (municipalities, districts, school clusters). At regional level, decisions are taken as to how the money is spent and which pupils should benefit from special services. It appears to be advisable that the institution, which decides upon the allocation of special needs budgets, first can make use of independent expertise in the area of special needs and secondly has the tools to implement and maintain specialist strategies and services.

It is apparent that inclusion can be more easily achieved within a decentralised funding model as compared to a centralised approach. From a centrally prescribed plan, too much emphasis may be put on the organisational characteristics of that specific model without inclusive practices being realised. Local organisations with some autonomy may be far better equipped to change the system. Therefore, a decentralised model is likely to be more cost-effective and provide fewer opportunities for undesirable forms of strategic behaviour. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the central government concerned has to specify clearly which goals must be achieved. Decisions concerning the way in which such goals are to be achieved may than be left to local organisations.

#### **Leadership**

Leadership is of the utmost importance. Policy-makers, not only at a national level, but at the level of communities, school districts or school clusters, have an essential role in translating governmental policy into practice and implementing it. Also within school leadership there is a prerequisite for effective inclusive education.

Our study shows that promotional activities may be required to enhance the motivation and enthusiasm of all parties involved. Inclusion needs support from outside the school and, especially in early phases of development, the promotion and demonstration of good practices may allay fears and remove scepticism.

#### **Regional co-ordination and co-operation**

Our findings show that co-ordination and co-operation between all involved agencies (health, social, educational, psychological) outside the school and between the school and parents is to the benefit of pupils with SEN. Additional help should be provided in a planned and orchestrated way.

## **3.2 Effective practices**

The countries that participated in the classroom practice project have, albeit in very diverse ways, reported about their best practices in inclusive education. In this chapter the synthesis of findings will be presented alongside three topics. In the first place it is important to reflect systematically upon the type of special needs that bring the most challenges to the daily practice of teachers and other professionals. Here the focus is on the characteristics of pupils who are being included (or excluded). In other words: which groups of pupils cause the most problems within mainstream settings?

Secondly, it is intended to provide an overview of the challenges within education processes itself: what are the main (educational) problems in countries concerning the issue of classroom practice within mainstream classrooms that include pupils with SEN? Countries have reported an extensive overview of the current challenges within education when attempts are made to achieve inclusive education.

Thirdly, and this refers to the main task of the current study, countries have provided an answer to the question related to the educational practices and factors that were found to be effective for inclusive education. The findings regarding the examples of good practice contributed to a more detailed focus on how these interventions and factors are being shaped and dealt with in daily practice.

### **3.2.1 The most challenging types of special needs**

In answering the question concerning the most challenging types of special needs, countries have reported in a not surprisingly unanimous way. Behaviour, social and/or emotional problems are mentioned by almost all countries as being the biggest challenge within the area of inclusion of pupils with SEN. This includes problems relating to unmotivated pupils and to disaffection.

Of course quite a number of countries report difficulties in answering the question that is put in terms of pupil characteristics. Within most special education policies such an approach is rejected in favour of a more environment-interactive approach to SEN. It is within the educational context where challenges are being met and where the need for interventions is centred, instead of putting child characteristics at the centre of the debate. Although this position is in accordance with other current views on special needs, a view that is shared widely within member states of the European Agency, the Working Partners reported the fact that the biggest challenges relate to pupils with behavioural problems.

Some countries referred to other – and sometimes very specific – types of special needs that were considered to be challenging within the area of inclusive education. Examples of these were ADHD, dyslexia, autism, specific learning and writing difficulties, mental and intellectual disabilities, severe hearing impairments and multiple disabilities. However, only a few countries mentioned these, whereas the position of pupils with all sorts of behavioural and emotional difficulties was generally reported as being challenging.

### **3.2.2 Educational challenges within the context of inclusion**

Handling or dealing with differences or diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest challenges within European classrooms. Inclusion can be organised in several ways and on different levels, but in the end, the teacher has to deal with a larger diversity within his or her class and has to adapt or prepare the curriculum in such a way that the needs of all pupils, those with special educational needs (SEN), gifted pupils and their peers, are sufficiently met. In other words, handling diversity is the key issue at the classroom level. When dealing with differences in the class, teachers need an extra pair of hands or extra support from either colleagues (or special education teachers) or other professionals. At times a pupil with SEN needs specific help or instruction that cannot be given by the teacher during the daily

classroom routine. Here other teachers and support personnel come on to the scene and the issue of flexibility, good planning, co-operation and team teaching forms a challenge. This is not only relevant at the level of the classroom in the case of co-operative teaching, but also on the school level. In some cases professionals from regional support services are needed and this amplifies the need for flexibility, good planning, co-operation and co-ordination. Inclusive education implies more than just dealing with diversity in classrooms. It leads to the challenges of co-teaching (classroom level), team teaching and the need for good co-operation between teachers on the school level and co-ordination with professionals from other support services.

## **Effective practices within the context of inclusive education**

The study points to at least five groups of factors that seem to be effective for inclusive education. Both the literature study and information regarding examples of good practice demonstrated the importance of these factors. Generally, findings in literature and opinions of experts show that pupils (with and without special needs) and teachers do profit from the approaches elaborated below.

### **Co-operative teaching**

The study reveals that inclusive education is enhanced by several factors than can be grouped under the heading of co-operative teaching. Teachers need to co-operate with and may need practical and flexible support from a range of colleagues. Both for the development of academic and social skills of pupils with SEN this seems to be an effective way of working. Clearly, additional help and support needs to be flexible, well co-ordinated and planned.

### **Co-operative learning**

The study shows that peer tutoring or co-operative learning is effective in both cognitive and affective (social-emotional) areas of pupils' learning and development. Pupils that help each other, especially within a system of flexible and well-considered pupil grouping, profit from learning together. Moreover, there are no indications that the more able pupil suffers from this situation, in terms of missing new challenges or opportunities. The findings point to progress within both the academic and social areas.

### **Collaborative problem-solving**

Particularly for teachers who need help in including pupils with social/behavioural problems, findings in our countries and in the international literature review show that a systematic way of approaching undesirable behaviour in the classroom is an effective tool for decreasing the amount and intensity of disturbances during the lessons. Clear class rules and a set of borders, agreed with all the pupils (alongside appropriate incentives and disincentives) have proven to be effective.

### **Heterogeneous grouping**

Heterogeneous grouping and a more differentiated approach in education are necessary and effective when dealing with a diversity of pupils in the classroom. Targeted goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the abundance of homogenous ways of grouping enhance inclusive education. This finding is of high importance given the expressed needs of countries within the area of handling diversity within classrooms. Of course, heterogeneous grouping is also a prerequisite for co-operative learning.

### **Effective teaching**

Finally, the focus on effective education should be emphasised here: the findings of the effective schools and effective instruction literature can be adapted to inclusive education:

setting goals, education based on assessment and evaluation, high expectations, direct instruction and feedback. The case studies further stress the importance of the use of the standard curriculum framework. However, accommodation of the curriculum is needed, not only for those with SEN at the lower end of the continuum, but for all pupils, included the gifted. With regard to pupils with SEN in most countries this approach is defined in terms of the Individual Educational Plan. An important consideration out of our examples of good practice is that the IEP should fit within the normal curriculum framework.

Finally, our experts involved in the project also suggested that there could be the risk of there being too strong a focus on individualisation within inclusive schools. Heterogeneous grouping does imply forms of differentiation, where pupils are allowed to achieve different goals through alternative ways of learning. But it should be stressed that this could be arranged within an effective and targeted approach.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Through an international literature review, case studies in 15 European countries, expert visits in seven countries as well as various discussions involving experts and the Agency Working Partners, inclusive classrooms have been studied. The project attempts to reveal, analyse, describe and disseminate effective classroom practices in inclusive settings. The following questions were studied. In the first instance, an understanding of what works within inclusive settings is necessary. Furthermore, a deeper comprehension of how inclusive education is working is needed. Thirdly, it is important to know why it is working.

A main finding is that behaviour, social and/or emotional problems are the most challenging within the area of inclusion of pupils with SEN. Secondly: dealing with diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest problems within classrooms. Thirdly, our case studies and expert discussions suggest that what is good for pupils with SEN is good for all pupils.

Finally, approaches referred to as co-operative teaching, co-operative learning, collaborative problem-solving, heterogeneous grouping and effective teaching seem to be contributing to the realisation of inclusive classrooms.

## SUMMARY

Based on an international literature review, case studies in 15 European countries, expert visits in seven countries as well as various discussions involving experts and the agency working partners, a number of central ideas regarding the development of inclusive classrooms have been identified. It would be impossible and naïve to take these results as precise steps for policy-makers, professionals or practitioners. There are many ways to Rome and in this sense adaptations to local and regional circumstances are always necessary. At best, the findings could be regarded as possible strategies for improving inclusion within schools. In addition, the country case study reports and the reports of the exchange site visits provide elaborations upon some of these identified strategies.

- A first conclusion of the study is that case studies and expert discussions reveal that inclusive classrooms do exist throughout European countries. The evidence also suggests that what is good for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good for all pupils.
- A second main finding is that behaviour, social and/or emotional problems are the most challenging within the area of inclusion of pupils with SEN.
- Thirdly: dealing with differences or diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest problems within European classrooms.

On the basis of the single, selective case studies and the submitted country reviews, the following conditions seem to play a central role for inclusive classroom practices:

- Inclusion depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs, on their capacity to enhance social relations, on their view on differences in classrooms and their willingness to deal with those differences effectively.
- Teachers need a repertoire of skills, expertise, knowledge, pedagogical approaches, adequate teaching methods and materials and time if they are to address diversity effectively within their classrooms.
- Teachers need support from inside and outside the school. Leadership on the level of the head teacher, school districts, communities and governments is crucial. Regional co-operation between agencies and parents is a prerequisite for effective inclusion.
- Governments should express a clear view on inclusion and provide adequate conditions, which allows a flexible use of resources.

The findings regarding classroom practices reveal five groups of factors that are effective for inclusive education:

- Co-operative teaching: Teachers need support from, and to be able to co-operate with, a range of colleagues within the school and professionals outside the school.
- Co-operative learning: Peer tutoring or co-operative learning is effective in cognitive and affective (social-emotional) areas of pupils' learning and development. Pupils who help each other, especially within a system of flexible and well-considered pupil grouping, profit from learning together.
- Collaborative problem-solving: Particularly for teachers who need help in including pupils with social/behavioural problems, a systematic way of approaching undesired behaviour in the classroom is an effective tool for decreasing the amount and intensity of disturbances during the lessons. Clear class rules and a set of borders, agreed with all the pupils (alongside appropriate incentives) have proven to be effective.
- Heterogeneous grouping: Heterogeneous grouping and a more differentiated approach in education are necessary and effective when dealing with a diversity of pupils in the classroom. Targeted goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the abundance of homogenous ways of grouping enhance inclusive education.
- Effective teaching: Finally, the arrangements mentioned above should take place within an overall effective school/teaching approach where education is based on assessment and evaluation, high expectations, direct instruction and feedback. All pupils, and thus also pupils with SEN, improve with systematic monitoring, assessment, planning and evaluation of the work. The curriculum can be geared to individual needs and additional support can be introduced adequately through the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This IEP should fit within the normal curriculum.

# **Educational consultation.**

## **Discussing pupils in a professional way**

**Wim Meijer**

Every school has its own famous ex-pupil, a writer, a poet, or a scientist. His or her name appears in jubilee-editions in which the school proudly presents her contribution to the development of this great talent. This pride betrays nothing about the way the celebrity was discussed during his schooldays. In the television series “Herinneringen” (Memories), the writer and plastic artist Armando commented on his meeting with an ex-teacher of his. She remembered him as a boy who excelled in writing wonderful essays. This, however, is a lie. Armando had often neglected his schoolwork because he thought other things more important, and he had only once turned in an essay. He only started to write at a later stage in life. It is highly probable that he was talked about in exactly the same way as the other pupils during his schooldays. And today, many teachers discuss their pupils in the same way.

This article deals not with memories, but with the discussion of pupils. Most pupils will never appear in jubilee-editions. If pupils should encounter problems, their teachers are mostly not proud, but rather desperate or even indifferent. Problems, unlike success, are often attributed to the pupils or their parents. In psychological terms, we talk about attributing: positive results are the teachers’ merit, negative ones are the pupils’ own doing. Some teachers really think like that, and even some pupils, too. This is bad for both parties, because in the end, such negative attributions will consolidate themselves.

To prevent this from happening, we will present you with a professional way of discussing pupils in this article. This way of working is part of a methodology called educational consultation (Elliott & Sheridan 1992). It differs from the everyday conversation in the teachers’ room in that it is aiming to result in constructive attributions and in new ways of dealing with pupils’ problems.

There are many secondary schools where a consultation practice starts to grow falteringly. One or two teachers fulfil the role of consultant. And consultants from outside the school make their contribution. Primary schools already have more experience in this field. When we analyse these experiences critically, we find that traditions are often a hindrance to positive results. If a pupil has problems, the causes and solutions are often looked for outside the school, or one simply assumes that teachers cannot change.

The purpose of educational consultation is to optimise the facilities of the school. The first results have been encouraging, but we have not yet reached an exhaustive practical model. We are more talking about a set of basic assumptions that deserve further thought. Therefore, this article must be seen as a contribution to the discussion amongst professionals (remedial teachers, consultants from the educational guidance centre, educationalists and psychologists) about the future of counseling and remedying pupils who need extra care.

### **The current consultation practice**

If pupils have problems, it is useful for teachers to discuss these pupils inside the school. More and more teachers are getting used to this idea, and an increasing number of schools have developed a framework for this kind of discussions. Professionals from inside and outside the school can be involved. Typical for the fact that these frameworks are being

developed inside the schools is that there is an increasing assignment of tasks to teachers and consultants.

These professionals are developing their own professional operating procedures. They lead to a clearly defined task assignment and mutual expectations. For example, it is customary for teachers to refer a conspicuous pupil to a consultant, while expressing the assumption that the pupil in question suffers from test anxiety, or dyslexia. The consultant is then expected to cast light on the backgrounds and causes of the problem. He then tries to make a diagnosis, with or without the help of clear criteria, and works out a plan of action on the basis of this diagnosis. He expects the teacher to bring this plan of action into practice.

In spite of all good intentions, the co-operation between teacher and consultant does not always go smoothly. This has to do with pragmatic and more fundamental points. To start with, it is not always clear in the discussion of a pupil which problems caused the teacher to start worrying about the pupil. The consultant probably has an idea about this, and so does the teacher. But the clear and correct description is often lacking, resulting in the danger that the teacher and the consultant are talking and working at cross purposes. Moreover, this situation complicates the creation of a plan of action that fits in with the day-to-day life in the classes.

And indeed we often find that both parties argue for a form of support outside of the school sector, for example, a stress management training to get rid of test anxiety, or a training of the eye muscles. This kind of support is not necessarily bad, but it often remains unclear whether the support actually helps to solve the problems of the pupil in the teaching/learning situation. The reason for this is that the regular teaching schedule will mostly not be put on hold until the problems of the pupil have been solved. In short, we can say that the counseling often starts out from vague and not clearly delineated problems, which may lead to recommendations that are unrelated to the teaching/learning situation, or that are hard to put into practice in the school.

So the question is this: why do the pupil conferences so often shed insufficient light on the actual problems which the pupil experiences in the classroom? Actually, terms like "dyslexia" and "test anxiety" are in themselves already a kind of explanation for the fact that the problems are insufficiently delineated, i.e. something must be wrong with this pupil. Most probably, the teachers adopted the term from the consultants, and most often, the consultants confirm the teachers in this terminology. But this practice does not take into account the criticism on the traditional explanation of learning and attitude problems. This criticism has evolved over several years and can be summarised as follows (Meijer 1995):

During the more than 100 years of theorising and diagnostic work, several explanatory models have been developed. In explaining reading problems, the attention has shifted from innate and acquired physical defects (such as congenital word-blindness) via functional problems (such as incomplete hemisphere dominance and faulty lateralisation) to arrears in intelligence and function-development. With the development of intelligence and function tests, these ideas have been gaining ever more weight in the reading-problem approach. Psychological explanations replace physical explanations, but the diagnosticians still use the terminology and the characteristics of the medical approach, in which learning problems are seen as symptoms of a defect with a cause that should in principle be demonstrable (see for example Bateman 1981).

With the aid of certain tests, a profile with strong and weak points is developed, as a starting point for the treatment. The treatment itself consists of fighting the "cause" by strengthening the weak points of the profile. The tendency to point out only one factor as the cause of the problem remains present, even when, as is the case in the more recent explanatory models,

more attention is paid to other factors, such as the context of the learning problems, the task itself, and the way the pupil processes information.

The idea that you can solve a problem simply by taking away the cause of it, or by training the weak function, doesn't apply to social problems in general, and to learning and attitude problems in particular. The reason is that there is seldom a univocal relationship between cause and effect. Mostly, the situation consists of several factors influencing each other. Moreover, when a pupil and teacher are dealing with a reading problem, the roles they play are different from those of a doctor and patient whose leg needs mending. Their own perception of the problem and their dedication in looking for a solution are of overriding importance. The consultants will have to make a choice, because there is no all-encompassing theory about learning difficulties, and because practice will face problems for which there is no theory, or for which there are several theories to choose from. Every child, every problem will need examining to determine which factors actually play a role in the genesis and persistence of the problem.

In practice, there are many different factors playing various roles. Many consultants and teachers, going by tradition, attach more value to the earlier models. They consider physical factors as the real causes, and they regard support directed at other factors as a purely symptomatic treatment. But that preference cannot be substantiated theoretically starting from causal relationships between symptoms and causes. The result of all this is that the given advice is often quite unrelated to the teaching/learning situation, or simply not practicable in class.

### **Consultative pupil guidance**

Educational consultation is a method trying to circumvent the difficulties in traditional pupil guidance. Unlike what the term would suggest, the consultation is entirely focused on the teacher. The teacher draws attention to a pupil's learning or attitude problems, and the consultation tries to help this teacher to find solutions for these learning and attitude problems. The method is founded on two notions.

In the first place, the consultant and teacher together go through the different phases of the problem solving process, along established lines. Together, they will then describe the problems as accurately as possible, together they will analyse which factors play a role in this particular case, and together they will look for solutions. Then, they will try to work out how these solutions can be brought into practice, and together they will afterwards evaluate whether the solutions have really worked. The traditional assignment of tasks will be replaced by a plan of action in different steps, in which teacher and consultant will decide for each step who will do what next. In practice, this leads to a very flexible approach of the process, depending on the actual situation: the nature of the problems and the possibilities of the teacher and the consultant. During one pupil discussion, more steps can be dealt with at once, but it is also possible that a pupil discussion is concluded with the agreement to first gather more information, and to move on to the next step only in the next meeting.

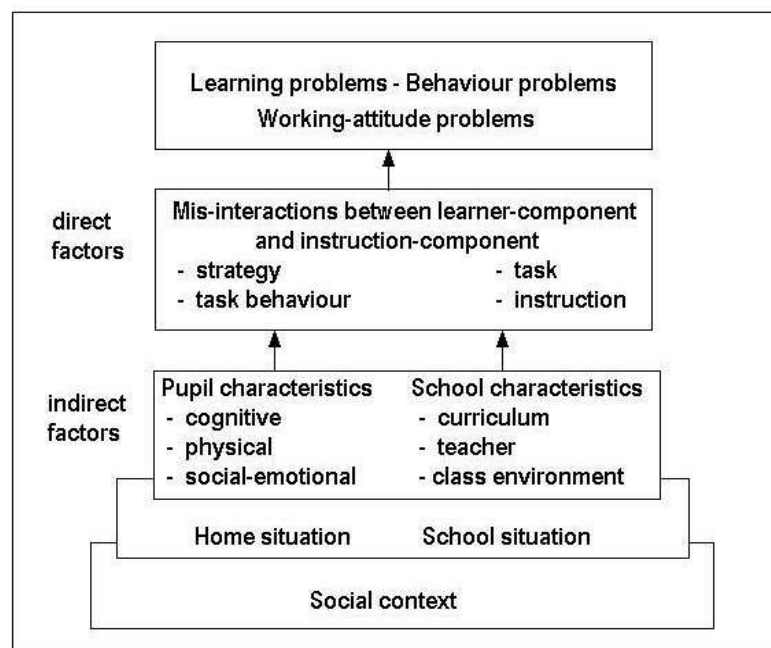
The second notion of educational consultation has to do with the contents. In analysing problems, a reference frame is used which distinguishes between direct and indirect factors. Elsewhere (Meijer 1993), we have shown what such a terminology framework looks like. In short, the line of thought comes down to this: learning problems are the result of an interaction process between child factors and teaching factors. In analysing problems, we have to pay attention to both sets of factors and to their mutual correlation. In other words: if the learning process is stalled, this is the result of a wrong interaction between teaching and

child factors. Solving the stagnation means manipulating these factors of the teaching/learning situation in such a way that the interaction can once more lead to learning results.

A teaching/learning situation cannot be manipulated infinitely. The boundaries are set by many different factors: the capacities of the pupil, the limitations of the school organisation, the social context in which the school functions, the capacities of the teacher, etcetera. To prevent that the attention is diverted from problem-solving capacities as held by the school itself, we will make a distinction between direct and indirect factors.

Direct factors are factors that are an inherent part of the teaching process. Indirect factors don't influence the stagnations directly, but they work indirectly, by way of the teaching process.

Every teaching/learning situation consists of a teaching component and a learning component. The teaching component consists of two mutually connected factors. First of all, there is the task presented to the child, for example answering questions to a text. The task determines which knowledge and skills the child will need. Secondly, there is the instruction; that is the way in which the teacher coaches the learning process, for example the extent to which the teacher explains the goal of the reading of the text, or gives instructions for answering the questions.



Picture 4: direct and indirect factors when analyzing learning- and behaviour problems

We can also distinguish two interrelated factors in the learning component. First of all, the strategy of the pupil; that is the way in which the pupil fulfils the task he or she was set. From the learning strategy of the pupil, it becomes clear in which way the pupil uses the knowledge and skills available to him. In the second place, we distinguish the task behaviour of the pupil; this is the way in which the pupil plans, fulfils and evaluates the task he was set. Because every teaching/learning situation is built on the basis of these same factors, the direct factors are central in the educational consultation. At the same time, these factors refer to the support: teaching help always consists of offering different tasks and/or adjusting the instructions. The reason for this is that one wants to influence the strategy of the pupil, or the way of dealing with a task (task behaviour).

In making concrete choices for help, two kinds of considerations can be made.

First of all, we ask ourselves the question to what extent the educational process was optimally conducted in the preceding period. In case we discover that there have been apparent misinteractions, this will lead to the immediate implementation of adjustments in the teaching/learning situation for the pupil. This is the case if, for example, the task is not in keeping with the foreknowledge of the pupil, or if the instruction was incomplete.

A second consideration lies in the influence of the indirect factors. Because there is no question of direct causal relationships in this case, the influence has to be proven and made plausible in each individual case. It will thus not be accepted on the basis of tradition. For example, pupils with a comparable average intelligence can still reach a different level of performance.

This way, teachers may be impressed by certain extremely tragic familial circumstances, but these circumstances only become relevant if it is made clear to what extent they have had an influence on the pupil's strategy or on his way of dealing with a task. The same goes for all the direct factors.

Indirect factors that can have an influence on the learning component are cognitive, physical and socio-emotional characteristics of the pupil and the home environment. Indirect factors that can have an influence on the learning component are characteristics of the teacher, the curriculum, characteristics of the group and of the school. These indirect factors can in turn be influenced by the social context in which the school operates.

If the consultant really wants to do justice to the basic principle that learning difficulties arise from misinteractions, and if he really wants to contribute to finding a solution for the problem, his diagnostic actions will have to meet some requirements. Firstly, the analysis must not be one-sided. Secondly, the analysis must refer to possibilities for adjustments. And thirdly, the consultant should co-operate closely with the teachers. This last aspect is necessary for two reasons: first of all, only teachers can supply them with an indispensable part of the information, namely shedding light on the tasks to be fulfilled and the instruction that goes with them. The second reason is that the teachers play a key role in implementing an advisory guideline, because it will inevitably imply a reorganisation of the teaching/learning situation. Even when the concrete support is offered outside the class environment, it will have to be optimally tuned to the class situation if a result is to be expected.

### **Consequences for the consultants**

In educational consultation, the teachers and the consultants involved, and also the consultation framework outside the school, will have to meet stringent requirements. We will not deal with organisational aspects within the scope of this article, but we can indicate some concrete consequences of consultation, dissociated from any particular form of organisation. Consultants can increase the efficiency of the support by doing the following:

- not going into the vague complaints and descriptions about learning difficulties that some teachers provide them with. They will have to help the teacher to describe the problem accurately. This can be done by asking the teacher during a pupil discussion to indicate precisely which tasks the pupil has to fulfill at home and in the classroom, how the pupil deals with these tasks and how he tries to complete them successfully, which strategy the teacher expects the pupil to use, which instructions were given, etcetera.

- considering the support as an adjustment of the teaching/learning situation. The effect of special pupil support does not lie primarily in the use of special programmes or exotic tools, but depends rather on the accurate tuning of the tasks and instructions to the special needs of the individual pupil.

- looking for feasible solutions. Rather than coming up with the most ideal solution, the consultant should try to contribute to finding and implementing the most feasible solution in practice. There are many possibilities available to the consultant to reach this goal. Firstly, he and the teacher can try to find solutions that will require a relatively small amount of energy from the teacher, and he can try to temper the all too ambitious plans. In the second place, he can make clear arrangements with the teacher and regularly give feedback.

This short description of educational consultation should have made clear what are the most central terms in the methodology: co-operation, making arrangements, justifying one's actions and assessing effects.

Many of the traditional tasks of a consultant, such as carrying out the diagnostic investigation, will not be completely omitted, but they are part of the arrangements between teacher and consultant. The main difference with traditional pupil guidance lies in the fact that all parties know exactly what the goal and the function is of collecting the diagnostic information for reaching solutions. By making arrangements for each individual situation, the negative side-effects that arise from a standard assignment of tasks to teacher and consultant are avoided.

In short, educational consultation is a professional way of discussing pupils and their problems. Pupil conferences are not meant to confirm the idea that teachers can hardly do anything to help the pupils solve their problems. Neither is educational consultation a *deus ex machina* to end all tragedies, not all pupils will turn into famous celebrities. But it provides us with a sensible method, oriented towards teachers who have realised the best feasible solutions, and who can give account for that.

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Wim Meijer

Vakgroep Pedagogiek & Onderwijskunde, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, NL.

(translation EN. for: [www.edu-consultation.org](http://www.edu-consultation.org))

# Peer Learning Groups for Teachers. A Norwegian Innovation.

Elaine Munthe and Unni Vere Midthassel

**Abstract:** This paper presents a method used in Norwegian schools to enhance learning and development in groups of teachers. It is a peer based mentoring method that was first introduced in the 1980s and has developed in different ways over the years. Our focus is on the uncertainty that is characteristic of teaching and schools and the consequent need for teachers to be able to get together in organized groups to dwell on topics or problems in a reflective, critical and constructive way.

Teaching has long been acknowledged as a many-faceted occupation involving on-the-spot decision making and little time for reflection. It is an unpredictable profession and because of its unpredictability it is also fraught with uncertainty.

Lortie (1975) ascribed the endemic uncertainty that he found among teachers in his study to the demands from society and the inability of the school system to provide a means of self-assessment or a system of rewards. Teachers were basically left to work on their own in a school characterized by presentism <sup>1)</sup> and individualism. Their uncertainty was to a large extent related to not being sure that they could “make all their students learn” (1975, p.132). This conception of uncertainty is echoed in Rosenholtz’s work (1989). She understands uncertainty as “few well-established techniques – codified technical knowledge – to help teachers meet students’ widely varying needs” (p.4). Jones and Godfrey (1993) as well as Metz (1993) refer to uncertainty as the daily questions that the teachers continually ask of themselves: “Am I doing enough?”; “Am I too lenient or too tough?”

Uncertainty will continue to be endemic to teaching because so much of teaching is unpredictable and uncontrollable. It is important to stress that the goal is *not* to eliminate uncertainty either (Lange & Burroughs-Lange, 1994; Munthe, 2001a, 2001b). That would mean the same as believing one has all the correct answers, being completely certain about everything. Teachers need to question their methods, they need to question how they interact with parents, whether students are learning enough, whether they are dealing with bullying in a good way, and so on. There are matters where we might even need to be more uncertain than we have been. Uncertainty is positive in that it has potential for change and for learning. Without uncertainty there would be little development. In our decision-making, uncertainty also plays a key role and should be acknowledged as such, needing to be regarded as information, not as ignorance (Funtowicz & Raventz, 1990). Thus, teachers need to be able to cope with uncertainty. They need to be able to deal with uncertain situations and make adequate decisions, or in other words, they need to be professionally certain in relation to professional uncertainties (Munthe, 2001a, 2001b). Being able to cope with uncertainties implies being able to answer questions or doubts with new insights. As Peter Marris (1996, p.88) maintains: “In the face of uncertainty, room to manoeuvre may be as crucial as the resources one controls.” Room to manoeuvre includes contingencies, knowing about and being able to implement and choose between several options.

Learning to cope with or master uncertainty is considered a major part of developing professionally (Schøn, 1983; Eraut, 1994). Reflection over actions as well as reflections over thoughts is required. This is in line with the views of Argyris & Schøn (1974) who emphasize the link between one's professional behaviour and "theory of action".

A key to development and change, authors maintain, is in the examination of the relationship between explicit "espoused theories" and the actions carried out in school, or the "theories-in-use". However, since researchers have consistently found a positive relationship between school context variables such as support, collaboration, learning possibilities and teachers' professional certainty (Rosenholtz, 1989; Munthe, 1997), we can assume that the individual's professional development is also contingent on the school she/he is employed at. The role of the principal or the governing body of the school is vital in securing the means for adequate professional development of the staff. Introducing ways to let uncertainty become fruitful rather than detrimental is therefore regarded as a school-level responsibility.

In this article we will present one method that we have worked with for nearly a decade. The Centre for Behavioural Research, where we are both employed, is a national competence centre within the field of social and emotional problems among children and adolescents. One of the ways that we help schools work to prevent such problems from increasing, and promote positive development among their students, is to introduce teacher mentoring or learning groups as a school-level strategy. This is a group method for teachers where they are allowed the time and opportunity to present their uncertainties and reflect on various ways of understanding them, as well as to consider various ways of coping with them.

## **Peer Learning Groups for Teachers**

Since the 1980s, peer mentoring among teachers has been advocated in Norway as one way to enable teachers to enhance their professional development. The first to make an impact in this area were Per Lauvås, Gunnar Handal and Kirsten Hofgaard Lycke (Lauvås & Handal, 1990, 2000; Lauvås, Lycke & Handal, 1992). Since then, others have entered on-stage, emphasizing different aspects of mentoring, for instance a systems perspective (Gjems, 1995), and emotions (Killén, 1992; Tveiten, 1998). Our own work in this field has mainly been focused on mentoring as a method for teachers to deal with uncertainties relating to students whom they perceive as having social and/or emotional problems (Midthassel, 1997).

The learning model that has evolved over the past decade at the Centre for Behavioural Research, is to a large degree based on the example set by Lauvås, Lycke, and Handal (1992). The model has maintained the rigid structure proposed by these authors, but focuses more on time for reflection, since the "problem area" in focus has always been social and emotional problems. The model also includes a system perspective, and teachers are encouraged to ask questions that highlight relationships in the systems in question.

Which concept to use to describe the activity we have in mind is always a difficult choice when there are several possibilities. Supervision, mentoring and counselling are basically the concepts that have been used, and that we also have used in our work. However, all three concepts can imply a difference in status. A supervisor may have a higher position than the person being supervised. A mentor may be more experienced. A counsellor may have more knowledge about certain things. The key words for us are "peer", to describe that the activity takes place among equals, and "learning", to focus on the main goal of the activity. All of the teachers in the group are expected to present concerns and questions that they wish to learn more about, and all of the teachers in the group are expected to help each other think, plan and

learn. This also means that members are not to be held responsible for others' actions. Each teacher is responsible for his or her own actions.

The group of about 6-8 teachers meet regularly throughout the school year, about every month. The members form a learning community where their own knowledge, experiences and challenges are the main material. One of the persons in the group is the designated group leader and calls in and leads the meetings. If the group has decided to keep a log, this will also be the group leader's responsibility. The group leader has previously attended a three-day course to learn about peer group learning and to practise using the model. The time that is set aside for the group session is about 1 1/2 – 2 hours.

The main group session is, however, only one of four stages in the learning process. The stages are given in Table 1 below:

<i>Table 1</i>	
<b>Peer Learning Groups: A Process</b>	
1.	Preparation for the peer learning session
2.	Peer learning session
3.	Further work with the problem/theme outside the group
4.	Follow-up in the learning group

### **Stage 1: Preparation**

Each teacher knows when it will be his or her turn to present a topic or problem to the group. This has already been decided on at the first meeting. As an example, we can imagine Karen, a secondary school teacher who knows that it is her turn to present something to the group next month. She will spend some time thinking and planning what to present, and before the meeting she will also have written between half a page and one page about her topic to be presented to the group. This document will have a concluding question posed by Karen, and this is the question that Karen wishes to learn more about or be given the time and opportunity to think more about. Perhaps she is planning a meeting with parents and needs help to find out how to do this? Perhaps she is worried about one of the children in her class – is a girl being bullied? What can she do? Or perhaps she is uncertain about her own role as a teacher – is she too demanding of certain students?

### **Stage 2: Group learning session**

The purpose of the learning group is to investigate the problem or uncertainty brought forward by one of the group members (“the seeker”), to help the seeker to reflect about his or her actions, reasons and justifications with regard to the problem or uncertainty brought forward. Furthermore, the group is expected to help the seeker reflect about the actions she/he plans to take and also to find and evaluate alternative actions. (See Table 2 for an overview of the eleven steps in the mentoring group session.) If the seeker wants help from someone else in the group, she/he can ask for this at the end of the session. If Karen's topic is bullying, she can ask a teacher she knows has done a lot of work in this area to help her.

### **Stage 3: Further work**

During the third stage, the seeker works on the problem and tries to improve the situation in question or learn more about it. If the topic presented was a parent meeting, Karen will hold the meeting, carrying out some of the things she planned while in the group session. She will experience how the meeting goes, and can then assess it. If the topic presented was the girl Karen was worried about, she may have decided in the group session that she had to talk to

the girl, and may have planned how to conduct this talk. During stage three, Karen would carry out this talk and gain experience from it.

#### **Stage 4: Follow-up**

The purpose of the follow-up meeting is for the seeker to report to the group the results of the work carried out. This represents a good opportunity to share experiences and assessments, providing a learning opportunity for both the seeker and the other group members. Making sure that follow-up is part of the process also puts some pressure on the seeker to actually do something. Furthermore, it provides the possibility of giving feedback to the seeker on work that has been carried out, something which is sorely missed in many schools.

### **A Closer Look At the Group Learning Session**

The stages that we will look more closely at are stages two and four. In Table 1, follow-up is listed as stage four. However, in the learning group, the monthly meeting starts with time for follow-up of a previous problem or topic (about 20+ minutes) if that has been agreed on, and then moves on to the presentation of a new problem or topic. In our presentation, we will follow the stages in Table 1, thus starting with stage two and the presentation of a topic or problem for the first time.

The setting for this process is as follows: Six to eight teachers sit in a circle or around a table so that they can all see each other. One person is the “seeker”, or the teacher to present a topic/problem. One person is the group leader. The other four to six people are the “mentors” for this session. The group leader has access to a flip chart. Each member of the group has been introduced to the group learning model and has a copy of the 11 steps (See Table 2).

**Table 2 : Peer Learning Groups For Teachers: The Main Session**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seeker introduces the problem/topic and states clearly what she/he wishes help with.</li> <li>2. Questions posed by mentors to understand the problem/topic. One question each, but several rounds are possible.</li> <li>3. Mentors write what they believe the seeker wishes to learn more about.</li> <li>4. Mentors read their understanding aloud and seeker comments on each. Seeker states again what she/he wishes to focus on in this session (can be revised).</li> <li>5. Mentors pose questions to enable Seeker to reflect on problem/topic from several perspectives. Questions must be open-ended and not include advice (implicit or explicit). One question each, but several rounds are possible.</li> <li>6. Seeker states and reasons around goals for this problem/topic. Group leader writes goals on flip chart.</li> <li>7. Seeker states and reasons on strategies/possible actions to reach these goals. Group leader writes all suggestions on the flip chart.</li> <li>8. Mentors give Seeker suggestions on possible actions and also provide some reasoning. One suggestion each, but several rounds are possible.</li> <li>9. Seeker explains and reasons on what she/he wishes to do after having listening to all of the suggestions.</li> <li>10. Seeker can ask for assistance from a group member.</li> <li>11. Group leader thanks the Seeker for having presented this problem or topic, and gives the sheets of paper to the Seeker. Group leader asks Seeker when a follow-up session is possible and a date is set.</li> </ol> |
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The structure presented in Table 2 consists of four parts:

- A. Presenting and understanding the problem (includes steps 1 – 4).
- B. Reflection (step 5).
- C. Possible strategies and planning (steps 6 – 10).
- D. Follow-up (step 11).

**Step One** is to present a problem or “an uncertainty” to the group. The teacher will read aloud what he or she has written on the document which has been prepared. Some groups request a copy of the document in advance so the mentors can also be more prepared for their job, but this is not necessary. If a teacher chooses to distribute a document to all members in advance, the group also needs to have a routine for destroying the copies afterwards.

**Step Two** is for the other members to ask questions to learn more about the situation presented by the seeker. Each mentor is allowed to ask one question before passing the word to the next mentor. Questions that are asked here tend to be more technical. The mentors are interested in learning more about the factual situation before moving on to more reflective questions. In Karen’s case, her colleagues might need to know how many lessons per week Karen teaches the girls, or how many friends the girl appears to have in class. The seeker answers questions as they are asked, one at a time, trying to give answers that might help the mentors understand the facts in the situation better. Two rounds of questions are usually enough, but the group leader can ask whether there are more questions after two rounds. The mentors can also say “pass” if they have nothing they wish to ask in this round.

**Step Three** involves individual work for the mentors and gives the seeker time to relax and think. Each member formulates the essence of the problem presented from the seeker in his or her own words in writing: “What is the problem which the seeker wants help with?”

**Step Four** is the step where one by one the mentors read their formulations made in step three aloud, and the seeker listens. When all have been read, the seeker comments on the formulations and concludes by specifying the problem which she/he wants help with. This might be identical with what was said in **Step One**, but it might also have changed somewhat. This step can sometimes appear irrelevant, but every so often it does in fact provide the opportunity for the seeker to “get the group back on track”, or to revise his or her original question, after hearing the first round of questions and the way the group members have understood the problem presented.

**Step Five** is when more reflective questions are asked. The mentors ask questions – answered one at a time – providing the seeker with the possibility to reflect over his or her actions so far, understanding of the problem, the various aspects of the problem and understanding of these, as well as his or her reasoning and justification. According to Handal (1991), actions, practical and theoretical reasons and the ethical justification form a practical theory that needs to be reflected upon in order to develop. This is in line with Argyris and Schön (1974) and Day (1999), among others.

To maintain the structure and prevent any of the mentors from dominating the others, each mentor is allowed to ask one question and listen to the response without interfering with what the seeker replies, before passing the word to the next person. The questions have to be open-ended to make reflection possible. Examples of such questions might be: “How did you come up with that conclusion?”, “What made you change your mind?”, “Why do you think she behaves this way?”, “How do you think the other students react to the situation?”, “How do you think this problem of yours affects your working situation?”

The group leader has to be especially aware at this time to ensure that the questions posed take into consideration various perspectives. This is especially necessary in cases where the topic is a problem that the teacher has struggled with for a long time, or has become emotionally drained over. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to see other perspectives than one's own. The mentors need to ask questions that enable the seeker to see other viewpoints. This can be to see the problem from another person's angle, but it can also be to see the problem or topic from another theoretical position. If the group is unable to provide good questions for reflection, the group leader takes a time-out to focus on this and remind the mentors to include various perspectives in their questioning. Besides helping the seeker to become aware of his or her practical theory and see the topic/problem in a more differentiated way, these questions also make it possible for the mentors to understand how the seeker reasons.

**Step Six** marks the transition to action or possible strategies and planning. Here the focus is on the seeker's actual action strategies for further work. The group leader asks the seeker to state his or her aims for the work. What are his or her goals? This information is helpful both for the seeker who has to focus on a future goal, and for the mentors who will be asked to give the seeker advice. The group leader writes the goals on a flip chart exactly as the seeker words them.

**Step Seven** focuses on the seeker's strategies for attaining the goals. Furthermore, the seeker is asked to think through possible future strategies using his or her practical theory. The group leader writes the strategies on the flip chart as the seeker formulates them.

**Step Eight** is when the mentors are able to give the seeker specific advice to help further activity on the problem/uncertainty. They are each asked in turn to give one suggestion in relation to the topic, and to elaborate on why they see this suggestion as relevant, referring to their own practical theory. The group leader writes all the suggestions on the flip chart. If there are more suggestions after one round, the group leader can suggest a second round. The others should not discuss the suggestions given. They are simply given, justified and written.

This is often the step that is found most difficult and "unnatural" at first. "Why can't we give advice before?" Very often, members of a group already know what advice they want to give after **Step One**, but according to this model they have to wait another hour. Waiting can be difficult for a teacher who is used to action. This model emphasizes due respect for the matters raised as complex problems that need to be thought about and studied from various angles before solutions or possible strategies can be sought. It also recognizes that the seeker is the person who should find out what to do because she/he is the person who will be acting on it – not the other members.

**Step Nine** invites the seeker to comment on the advice given and to tell the group what she/he plans to do. Comments made should also include underlying reasoning, and thus inform the group why these preferences are being made.

**Step Ten** gives the seeker opportunity to ask one or two of the group mentors for support in the work, which follows this main session (stage three). It might be an advantage for the seeker to have "an involved colleague" to discuss and perhaps to work with, when trying to deal with the problem/uncertainty.

**Step Eleven** concerns the follow-up session. The group leader asks the seeker when she/he wants to report her further work to the group, and they agree on a date. The activities in this follow-up session are given in Table 3, the following page.

In the follow-up section the previous seeker is called a “reporter” and the other group members are mentors. The procedure follows through the steps in the table, in sequence. At the end, it is the responsibility of the reporter to decide what should be done, depending on the outcomes achieved.

**Table 3: Peer Learning Groups for Teachers: the Follow-up Session**

1. The reporter reports on what she/he has done with the problem and what has happened since the group session when it was the topic.
2. The reporter shares his or her reflections and feelings with regard to the actions performed.
3. The mentors ask questions to get a deeper understanding of the situation described by the reporter. Each mentor is allowed to ask one question and listen to the response before passing the word to the next mentor.
4. The reporter decides what will be done next. There are several possibilities; the problem is solved, she/he will continue to work on it the way she/he already is, or the problem needs to be worked on differently and she/he asks to raise the problem in a main session again.

### **Introducing Peer Learning Groups in Schools**

An important part of the course we offer deals both with theories of change, and with research on change in schools (Fullan, 1991, 1993; Hopkins, 1996; Midthassel, Bru & Idsøe, 2000; Midthassel & Bru, 2001; Rogers, 1995; Sarason, 1996; Senge, 1992; Senge et al., 2000; Stoll, 1998). Introducing peer mentoring groups can be characterized as a revolutionary action in some schools, or simply another step in an existing programme of professional development for others. We still find that being uncertain is considered “unprofessional” in many schools. In such schools teachers feel the need to hide uncertainties from colleagues. Uncertainty has been found to correlate positively with routine behaviour (Rosenholtz 1989), and the schools in question where uncertainty is hidden, tend to be the traditional schools where little innovation occurs.

Through the years that we have been involved introducing peer learning groups, we have encountered some key questions raised by the schools or by group leaders who have attended our courses or worked with us during the change process. We believe that many of the questions will prove to be general questions that are of relevance also for schools in other countries. An overview of some of these questions is given in Table 4, the following page. None of the questions have easy answers, just as introducing peer learning groups in a school is no easy route to a “quick fix”.

While some schools organize learning groups of teachers from different grade levels within the school, others prefer to establish groups within the same level across schools. There seem to be advantages and disadvantages with both forms. Within-school groups provide sharing and learning in the same school environment (Midthassel & Bru, 2001). Besides the effect this could have on the learning and development of the teachers involved, it might also have a positive effect of creating a culture for learning (Schein, 1992; Senge, 2000). But an obvious disadvantage of the within-school organisation is that the teachers will lack the perspective and ideas brought in by someone outside the school.

We have met several schools where the teachers report having stopped using peer learning groups, for various reasons. This has to be expected of course. Peer learning groups are not designed to be the answer to all our troubles. The method is one way amongst several that schools can use. What we do experience, however, when inquiring further about how the learning groups were used, is that there is often a flaw in either the organisational aspects or the quality of the mentoring that took place. What role has the principal played during the implementation of the groups or in the ongoing learning process? Is time set aside on the teachers' plans? How are the groups followed up, and how is the quality assessed? Teacher collaboration can also reinforce habits which are not well informed (Little, 1990), and group learning may simply be a vehicle to maintain the status quo if it is not carried out in a critical reflective way.

**Table 4: Questions to discuss when deliberating whether and how to introduce peer group learning in a school**

- Is this relevant for us? Do we need this kind of collaborative mentoring model? Why? How? For whom? For what?
- Should peer learning be voluntary or mandatory?
- What kind of implementation strategy should we have? Who – when – where – how – why?
- How can we develop a strategy? Who should be involved?
- Should we introduce peer learning on a school level or let one group start?
- How do we introduce the topic to the teachers? In groups or plenary?
- Where do we find the time for this?
- How do we put together groups? Same grade level? Different grade levels? Within school or between schools? Existing teams or new teams? Why?
- Who should be group leaders? Should all members of a group be group leaders eventually?
- Should the principal be a member of a group if the principal also teaches?
- How do we make sure that what goes on in the groups remains within the group and is not discussed openly afterwards?
- How do we evaluate this? When?

**Note:**

1) Presentism is a word that Dan Lortie uses to describe an aspect of teaching, and since the publication of his book in 1975, it has been used quite frequently to indicate that career rewards in teaching are present-oriented rather than future-oriented. “Most teachers will therefore emphasize rewards they can earn in the present; this propensity affects the kinds of rewards which will matter to them”, Lortie explains (1975, p.101).

**The authors**

**Unni V. Midthassel** is associate professor at the Centre for Behavioural Research, where she has been employed since 1994. Her main research interests are in the field of school development and change. She is actively involved in development of, and ongoing work in, a national three-year program intended to engage school psychologists in more systemic work with schools (Samtak, 2000-2003).

**Elaine Munthe** is assistant professor at the Centre for Behavioural Research where she has been employed since 1995. Her main research interests are in the field of teacher development and change. She is currently funded by the Norwegian Research Council to study the development of teachers' professional certainty/uncertainty in a longitudinal research project.

## Ten Questions on Inclusive Education

Source: <http://www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education/10-questions-on-inclusive-quality-education/>

### 1. Beyond the figures, what do we know about the excluded?

Exclusion has many faces. Despite real progress since 2000 towards universal primary education, 72 million children are still not enrolled at all in school. More than half are girls. Seven out of ten live in sub-Saharan Africa or South and West Asia. Poverty and marginalization are major causes of exclusion. Households in rural or remote communities and children in urban slums have less access to education. Disabled children suffer from blatant educational exclusion – they account for one third of all out-of-school children. Working children, those belonging to indigenous groups and linguistic minorities, nomadic children and those affected by HIV/AIDS are among the vulnerable groups. Some 37 per cent of out-of-school children live in 35 states defined as fragile by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, but these do not include all places facing conflict and post-conflict situations. In every case children are at enormous risk of missing out on an education.

### 2. Research on out-of-school children suggests that many countries are now promoting access to school but not ensuring decent education quality. Why?

Once you identify who the excluded are and why they are not in school, strategies can be developed to get them into school and keep them there. The challenge is to implement policies and practices to overcome the sources of exclusion. It is necessary to look at what happens in and out of school – from children's daily reality in their homes and communities to what happens when they go to school: what they are actually learning and in what conditions.

### 3. How does inclusive education promote successful learning?

Efforts to expand enrolment must be accompanied by policies to enhance educational quality at all levels, in formal and in non-formal settings. We have to work on an 'access to success' continuum by promoting policies to ensure that excluded children get into school coupled with programmes and practices that ensure they succeed there. It is a process that involves addressing and responding to the diverse needs of learners. This has implications for teaching, the curriculum, ways of interacting and relations between the schools and the community.

### 4. What are the principles of inclusion?

Inclusion is rooted in the right to education as enshrined in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A number of treaties and normative instruments have since reaffirmed this right. Three deserve specific mention. UNESCO's 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education stipulates that States have the obligation to expand educational opportunities for all who remain deprived of primary education. The 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reaffirms the right to education for all and highlights the principle of free compulsory education. Finally, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty, spells out the right of children not to be discriminated against. It also expresses commitments about the aims of education, recognizing that the learner is at the centre of the learning experience. This affects content and pedagogy, and - more broadly - how schools are managed.

### **5. Why is the notion of inclusion still associated with children who have special needs?**

Too often programmes targeting various marginalized and excluded groups have functioned outside the mainstream – special programmes, specialized institutions and specialist educators. Too often the result has been exclusion – second-rate educational opportunities that do not guarantee the possibility to continue studying. In developed countries, the move towards more inclusive approaches is often complicated by the legacy of segregated or exclusive education for groups identified as “difficult” or “different”. But there is increasing recognition that it is better for children with special needs to attend regular schools, albeit with various forms of special support. Studies in both OECD and non-OECD countries indicate that students with disabilities achieve better school results in inclusive settings.

### **6. How does education need to change to accommodate everyone?**

The overall goal is to ensure that school is a place where all children participate and are treated equally. This involves a change in how we think about education. Inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It means enhancing the quality of education by improving the effectiveness of teachers, promoting learning-centred methodologies, developing appropriate textbooks and learning materials and ensuring that schools are safe and healthy for all children. Strengthening links with the community is also vital: relationship between teachers, students, parents and society at large are crucial for developing inclusive learning environments.

### **7. How do curricula need to change to improve learning and encourage the inclusion of all pupils?**

An inclusive curriculum addresses the child’s cognitive, emotional and creative development. It is based on the four pillars of education for the 21st century - learning to know, to do, to be and to live together. This starts in the classroom. The curriculum has an instrumental role to play in fostering tolerance and promoting human rights and is a powerful tool for transcending cultural, religious and other differences. An inclusive curriculum takes gender, cultural identity and language background into consideration. It involves breaking gender stereotypes not only in textbooks but in teachers’ attitudes and expectations. Multilingual approaches in education, in which language is recognized as an integral part of a student’s cultural identity, can act as a source of inclusion. Furthermore, mother tongue instruction in the initial years of school has a positive impact on learning outcomes. In Zambia, for example, mother tongues are used as a medium of instruction for the first three years of schooling with positive effect.

### **8. Teachers have a foremost influence on learning. Yet their status and working conditions in many countries make it difficult to promote inclusion. What can be done to improve their lot?**

The way teachers teach is of critical importance in any reform designed to improve quality. A child-centred curriculum is characterized by a move away from rote learning and towards greater emphasis on hands-on, experience-based, active and cooperative learning. Introducing inclusion as a guiding principle has implications for teachers’ practices and attitudes – be it towards girls, slow learners, children with special needs or those from different backgrounds. Adequate pre-service and in-service teacher training is essential to improve learning. Moreover, policies must address their status, welfare and professional development. But there exists not only a severe teacher shortage, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, but a lack of adequately trained teachers. This shortage has unfortunate consequences for the quality of learning. A new curriculum cannot be introduced without familia-

ricing teachers with its aims and contents. Assessment can help teachers to measure student performance and to diagnose difficulties. But teachers need to understand the value of good assessment practices and learn skills to develop their own tests.

### **9. Is inclusive quality education affordable?**

It is inefficient to have school systems where children are not learning because of poor quality. Schools with high repetition rates often fail to work in preventive ways. The expenditure incurred by schools when students repeat a grade would be better used to provide additional support to those who encounter difficulties. Several cost-effective measures to promote inclusive quality education have been developed in countries with scarce resources. These include training-of-trainer models for professional development, linking students in pre-service teacher training with schools and converting special needs schools into resource centres that provide expertise and support to clusters of regular schools.

### **10. Does inclusive quality education lead to more inclusive societies?**

Exclusion starts very early in life. A holistic vision of education is imperative. Comprehensive early childhood care and education programmes improve children's well being, prepare them for primary school and give them a better chance of succeeding once they are in school. All evidence shows that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children benefit most from such programmes. Ensuring that adults, particularly mothers, are literate has an impact on whether their children, and especially their daughters attend school. Linking inclusion to broader development goals will contribute to the reform of education systems, to poverty alleviation and to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. An inclusive system benefits all learners without any discrimination towards any individual or group. It is founded on values of democracy, tolerance and respect for difference.

### **Other Publications by Unesco : Key documents on quality inclusive education.**

#### **[A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials](#)**

Inclusive quality education depends on appropriate, adapted textbooks and learning materials. This publication provides a single, coherent approach for their development.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001437/143736eb.pdf>

#### **[Education in a Multilingual World](#)**

UNESCO states its position on languages as a factor of inclusion in education and provides essential guidelines and principles. Language is not only a tool for communication, but fundamental to cultural identity and empowerment. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>

#### **[Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments](#)**

This toolkit provides ideas and activities to improve access to schools and learning for out-of-school children with diverse backgrounds and abilities. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001375/137522e.pdf>

#### **[Salamanca Statement](#)**

A statement that reaffirms the commitment to Education for All, recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for all children, young people and adults and the principle that ordinary schools should accommodate all children. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000984/098427eo.pdf>

#### **[Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms](#)**

This guide gives both a theoretical outline and practical ideas on helping children with learning difficulties. It aims to assist teachers who have children with special needs in their pre-school or primary classes.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001243/124394e.pdf>

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