Introduction to Special Education & Inclusion in UK

Main Focus

To raise questions and issues around the concept of inclusion in the light of the recent government reforms to Special Educational Needs.

Olive lecture – 17th June, 2017. Graham Robertson
Teachers.....

Teachers sow seeds of knowledge that grow forever in the hearts and minds of those they encounter.

Teaching is a relational activity – Noddings (1992)

What do we mean by ‘special education’?

Children’s & Families Act 2014:-
A young person only has ‘special educational needs’ when special provision is required to meet them: learning difficulties do not in themselves constitute such a need.

What is ‘Learning Difficulty’? - Education Act 1996 part 1v
‘significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of same-age peers, or, …..has a disability which prevents them from making use of (educational) facilities of a kind ‘generally provided’ for same-age peers in mainstream educational institutions.'
Special Education Code of Practice. (DFE 2015)

Four broad areas:-

- Communication & Interaction
- Cognition & Learning
- Social, Emotional & Mental Health
- Sensory and/or physical needs

Described by Wearmouth (2017) as an ‘administrative convenience’

- Overlap in areas
- Can be more than one
- ‘need’ can be conceptualised in a number of ways

Special Education Code of Practice. (DFE 2015)

Four broad areas:-

**Communication & Interaction**

- Thought & language closely linked (Vygotsky 1962)
- ‘receptive’ – ‘communicative’
- Pragmatic impairment – appropriate social use of language

Special Education Code of Practice. (DFE 2015)

Four broad areas:-

**Social, Emotional & Mental Health**

- Anti-social behaviour
- Emotional concerns – attachment
- Mental Health – CAMHS – ‘Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services’
- Bereavement
- Therapeutic involvement

Special Education Code of Practice. (DFE 2015)

Four broad areas:-

**Sensory & Physical Difficulties**

- Hearing – ‘auditory’ and ‘oral’ (hearing aids etc)
- Sign bilingual – British Sign Language
- Total communication – combination
- Visual impairment
- Multi-sensory impairment (visual/auditory/kinaesthetic)
- Neurological disorder – Tourette’s etc.
- Muscular dystrophy – severe motor difficulties

Special Education Code of Practice. (DFE 2015)

Four broad areas:-

**Cognition & Learning**

- Information processing related to problem solving, language, perception and memory, development of concepts
- Moderate – Profound learning difficulties.
- Autism, Down’s Syndrome etc.
- IQ 50 etc
Selected ‘potted’ history

• **1972 Education Act** – all children have a right to education no matter how severe their disabilities.
• **1978** – *Warnock Report* into SEN
• **1981** – *Statements for children with SEN* – ed. cuts.....
The Special Needs & Disability Act – revised statutory framework for inclusion.
• **2004** – *Removing Barriers to Achievement* – heads & Govs criminally ‘liable’.
• **2004** – *OFSTED* – SEN students not properly catered for...
Historical interpretation of the development & interaction of ideologies.
“In 2010/11, government figures revealed that 21 per cent of children in England had a special educational need, equating to around 1.70m children. At age 16, young people with SEND are twice as likely not to be in any form of education, employment or training as their non-disabled peers.”

(SEN Magazine No.72)
Problems with the ‘old’ pre 2014 system.

• Parents having to battle to get SEN support
• SEN Statements not ‘joined up’
• Children ‘falling between gaps’
• Multiple assessments
• Layers of bureaucracy
• Adversarial assessment process
• OFSTED – over identification of SEN.

House of Commons Library SN/SP/6420
Children’s Minister Edward Timpson 2014

When Parliament passed the new SEN and disability reforms as part of the Children and Families Act, they were hailed as…….

“…..the most fundamental reform to the system for SEN and disability for 30 years,” and a, “landmark moment”.

(SEN Magazine No.72)
Special Education Code of Practice. (DFE 2015)

- **Goal** = to bring together Health, Education & Social Services – joint commissioning
- Each Council to publish a *local offer* listing all the support available
- **Parents** able to *take control* of funding
- Replace Statements with *combined Ed & Health plan 0-25*
- Replace SA/SAP/STAT with school based category.
- Move away from ‘individual need’ to ‘outcomes led’
- Overhaul teacher training & professional development
- Focus on raising attainment
- Greater independence from Local Authorities
- Greater choice of schools for parents.

*House of Commons Library SN/SP/6420*
Sept. 2014

“The Act risks being high on aspiration at the legislative phase but low on delivery when it comes to cultural change”

Shadow Children’s Minister Steve McCabe (SEN Magazine No.72)

In a debate on the new policy on the 16 July, there was minimal turnout from both sides of the House, with footage showing those few who were in attendance looking entirely disinterested, texting on their phones, and some even appearing to be asleep.

The following day, a discussion on educational provisions for autism saw just 11 MPs in the chamber.

Rachel Collinson is Marketing Manager at LDA (SEN Magazine No. 72)
UEL’s RITE

New Code of Practice

Cracking the Code: reflections on the implications for teacher education and professional formation in England following the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014

Beate Hellawell

RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Questions of ‘teacher ethics’; training & trust.
Special education – an emotive issue

‘contradiction in UK education between –

‘intention to treat all learners as essentially the same and an equal and opposite intention to treat them as different.’ Dyson (2001)

• ……to treat ‘differentness as ordinary and to take responsibility for all learners’. (Nind 2002: 78)

• Makes it difficult to produce a ‘coherent policy’ for special education

• The ‘reality’ that many children with special needs are denied an **appropriate** education in mainstream.

• Concerned about the appropriateness of education for all children ‘under the same roof’

• In particular - those needing specialised support including autism, severe needs, emotional, behavioural difficulties etc.


Questions about the role of schools in society.

• Schools are not political institutions or microcosms of society.

• Not there simply to reflect the diversity of society but to focus on learning and teaching.

• Critical of political ideology of ‘inclusion’ – especially applied to education.

• ‘Social inclusion springs from hearts in the right place’


Questions about the role of schools in society.

• The right to ‘appropriate’ education **rather than** ‘all’ educated together.

• Advocates for special & ‘hybrid’ schools.

• The most vulnerable – small, specialist schools.

• Resources, expertise allowing the children to feel secure – facilitating learning.

‘Confused’ definitions of Inclusion

“... Abstract and multi-faceted nature of the concept, which makes it hard to ‘apply it in everyday policy & practice’

Norwich in Terzi 2000 (p. 100)

“... inclusion into what...” Corker 2000

Norwich (2000)

Critical of Warnock’s stance

• ‘Under one roof’ – more than simply ‘placement’.
• Ignores effects of pedagogy & curricula.
• Separation of schooling from society – ignores the ‘common social context’
• Ignores social learning from participating.

Norwich (2000)

• Inclusion based upon a complex interrelation of the values of respect for individual differences ...equality and common provision.

Dilemma –

• Whether to emphasize individuality & difference.
• Or to accentuate sameness & equality.

Creation of –

• System underpinned by a plurality of values ..... Accounting for individual differences...common entitlements...no preclusions...strong inclusive values....

Terzi (2000)

Advocates a ‘capability’ approach.

• Recognises the capabilities people have to achieve ‘valued functionings ‘ & well-being.
• Education plays important role in promoting ‘well-being’
• Emphasis on equipping students to become equal participants in their social framework.
• Debate needs to shift from ‘location’ to ‘equality’.