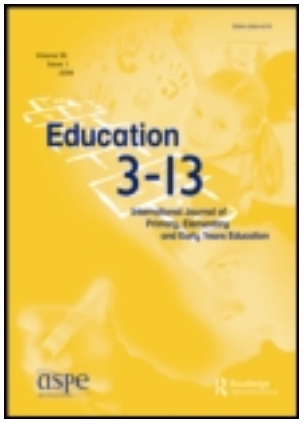

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Mixed feelings: towards a continuum of inclusive pedagogies

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This paper presents approaches to inclusion taken by primary teachers and discusses the institutional contexts in which these are located. Focusing on the development of enabling practices for the inclusion of children accredited with 'special educational needs' (SEN), a continuum of approaches is identified, ranging from inclusive to integrationist and exclusionary orientated stances. Here we draw on data gathered through interviews with teachers in seven primary schools in the North of England. The implications of schools' and teachers' understanding of inclusion and attitudes towards its implementation are explored with reference to wider Local Education Authority policies. A range of strategies towards inclusive school cultures are highlighted. A number of barriers are identified and we explore the potential impacts of more restricted practices and circumstances. The paper concludes by highlighting the need for schools to establish cultures which minimise assumptions of difference and which give rise to genuinely inclusive teacher practices.

Keywords: inclusion; inclusive education; inclusive pedagogies

Background

Ostensibly, educational inclusion is now firmly on the national and international policy agenda. The achievement of an inclusive education system is a major challenge facing countries around the world. Such efforts form part of a broad human rights agenda which can be traced back to the Salamanca World Statement on principles, policy and practice in Special Educational Needs (SEN) issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 1994). The declaration, which was signed by delegates representing 92 governments (including the British government) and 25 international organisations, asserts the fundamental right of every child to education and advocates the development of inclusive mainstream schools which '... are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (Clause 5, paragraph 2). Similar commitment to inclusive schooling within mainstream educational environments is made in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) on the basis of equality of opportunity and the adaptation of learning practices to the diverse needs

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of children. However, 'inclusion' is a contested discourse and different understandings of the concept lead to different practices.

In the UK, for example, recent legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), the Special Needs and Disability Act (2001), and the Equality Act and the Disability Equality Duty (2006) make, in principle, discrimination against disabled people unlawful. But there are caveats for children accredited with special needs. Currently, it is possible for discrimination to exist on the basis of parental choice, suitability of schools, cost and resources, and when the education of the particular child is not compatible with 'efficient education for the children with whom he would be educated' (CSIE 2008).

Unsurprisingly then, the imperative for inclusion has been interpreted in a number of very different ways, creating a spectrum of approaches, some of which co-exist within schools' practices. Many schools have improved access, enabling full-time attendance for children accredited with special needs at different stages of the Code of Practice (on School Action or School Action Plus stages and for children with statements). Others see dual placements as the best answer for some students – a view also shared by many parents (Nind, Flewitt, and Johnson 2005). Generally, it is perceived that certain 'needs' that remain unmet in mainstream schools can be addressed through part-time placements, which are geared towards children with impairments and combined with attendance in local school classes. Nind, Flewitt, and Johnson's study of parental choices for provision in Early Years settings demonstrates the significance of parents' perceptions of lack in both mainstream and 'special' forms of provision, the former being perceived as deficient in their means to promote good academic outcomes and the latter failing to provide a 'normal' or more social dimension (2005, 5).

Paradoxically, there has also been a renascence of pro-segregative ideas, in the name of inclusion. Inclusion can be examined in many ways and may be invoked in terms of the value, participation and the sense of belonging enjoyed in any one setting. Most notably, in Baroness Mary Warnock's 'new look' at inclusion and statementing (Warnock 2005), the assertion that bullying is inevitable in mainstream schools moves the focus back, away from how schools can become more inclusive to how individual children can *feel* included. Using an individualist perspective on processes of exclusion, advocates of this position argue that stigmatisation and bullying will persist, blighting lives (Moore 2007; Murray and Lawson 2007). Furthermore, there have been suggestions that it is easier to maximise some children's self-esteem, pride and feelings of belonging in segregated schools (Kauffman and Hallahan 1995; Colley 2007). This type of position overlooks the links between schools, local communities and friendship networks and has little regard for children's future integration in broader society.

Following scholars such as Barton (Barton, Ballard, and Fulcher 1992; Barton 1997; Barton and Slee 1999), we take a wider view of inclusive practices, where students' access to learning and social opportunities acknowledges their social needs, recognising them as members of wider communities, now and in the future. Unlike a one-track approach (Brusling and Pepin 2003), which may still work on an integrative rather than inclusive basis, inclusion is seen here as a process (Booth, Ainscow, and Dyson 1998) that combats educational exclusion in all its forms. In such schools, there would be work undertaken for 'socially just' (Goodley 2007) and 'critical pedagogies' (Gabel 2002). Fundamentally here, exclusion from education and social life is understood as a social construction.

Exclusion, like inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2002) is seen as a continuous process, experienced in any strand of the school's fabric. Inclusion, then, is a goal which combines locational and social forms of mainstream integration (Bayliss 1995) with cultures and processes that maximise participation, involvement and feelings of belonging.

Far from regarding inclusion as integration, where children accredited with special needs are conceptualised as 'just being there' (Pijl 2007), inclusion is regarded here as a process where systematic barriers to learning and participation are reduced as far as possible. The process also requires the development of an inclusive school ethos, with teachers actively removing barriers to social opportunities as well as adopting strategies conducive to the development of friendships. It is towards reviewing briefly the literature on inclusion pedagogies that we turn next.

Pedagogies for inclusion: a brief review of the literature

It is generally agreed that the move towards a more inclusive education system requires substantial reform of mainstream schooling. Indeed, a large body of research in primary and secondary settings has sought to identify organisational structures and practices which may be associated with facilitating or impeding the development of inclusion. Interestingly, a range of different studies conducted in different countries and using different methodologies have reported conclusions which show substantial overlap. Ainscow (1999), for example, drew on findings from the UNESCO Teacher Education Project 'Special Needs in the Classroom' in identifying conditions necessary within a school if it is to restructure so as to provide effective education for all. Such conditions included:

- effective leadership, not only by the headteacher, but spread throughout the school;
- involvement of staff, students and community in school policies and decisions;
- a commitment to collaborative planning;
- coordination strategies;
- attention to the potential benefits of enquiry and reflection;
- a policy for staff development.

Along similar lines, in the USA, Lipsky and Gartner (1998) identified seven factors conducive to inclusion based on a national study in 1000 school districts:

- visionary leadership;
- collaboration;
- refocused use of assessment;
- support for staff and students;
- funding;
- effective parental involvement;
- use of effective programme models and classroom practices.

However, a caveat needs pointing out here. The list of factors mentioned above (which are applicable in both primary and secondary settings) are very general and tend to overlook the ambiguity, tensions and complexity of schooling (Norwich and Kelly 2005). Further, being descriptions of inclusive schools, it remains unclear

whether these factors are causal of inclusive development or simply defining characteristics of inclusive schools.

Interestingly, similar conclusions were reached by Dyson, Howes, and Roberts (2002) in their review of international research on school-level actions to promote participation of all students. The evidence suggested that an 'inclusive' culture (defined in terms of norms, values and common practices) produces an overall enhancement in 'participation'. Specifically, in schools with an 'inclusive culture' there is:

- consensus among school staff around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all students access to learning opportunities;
- staff collaboration and joint problem solving so that the school's capacity to respond to difference is enhanced;
- a community in which all individuals – staff and students – are valued;
- strong school leaders committed to inclusive values and non-autocratic leadership styles allowing participative decision-making;
- flexible and integrated school structures;
- student collaboration and engagement in collaborative learning.

Again, it is unclear whether the aspects of inclusive culture mentioned above were causal of inclusive schools or defining of them and, therefore, Dyson, Howes, and Roberts' review is also open to the criticism directed at the other writers above. Nevertheless, the recommendations offered by all these researchers can be viewed as 'levers for change' or organisational actions that can move school systems in an inclusive direction.

Researching teachers' approaches to inclusion

The study upon which this paper is based formed part of a large project examining the social impacts of inclusion on pupils accredited with significant SEN and their mainstream peers in Year 5 and 6 classes drawn from a sample of mainstream schools. The multi-method research design adopted consisted of sociometric techniques ascertaining the social position of pupils accredited with SEN and detecting the predominant patterns of friendship and social interaction in their classrooms; a psychometric assessment of pupils' perceptions of themselves resulting in an in-depth exploration of the multidimensional nature of their self-concepts; and observations and interviewing of professionals in the participating schools with a view of gaining rich insights into the schools' culture and practices. The employment of the latter ecological methods reflected our belief that a fundamental aspect of the children's educational environment lies in the school and the Local Education Authority's (LEA's) ethos towards inclusion. Indeed, the ways that marginalised students experience exclusionary practices and environments need to be understood within local contexts giving sufficient attention to the significant minutiae of everyday interactions. In this way, to understand how conditions conducive to the development of inclusion may be created, we sought to gain deeper understandings of the factors which contribute to the construction of exclusion; in the classroom, the playground, the lunch hall, the toilets,[1] in wider school discourses and in the relationships between school, community and homes. Common to all these dimensions of school and extra-curricular life was friendship, or the lack of it.

This concern lay at the heart of the investigation reported in this paper into the personal (teacher) and institutional approaches to inclusion.

Sampling and procedures

Fieldwork was conducted in one LEA in the North of England. In order to assess the impact of formal approaches taken towards inclusion our sample of schools was chosen to examine a number of 'tracks' taken towards inclusion. Hence, in choosing seven schools, we took care to include two schools (Elm and Willow schools) with resource units of different types, and one school which took an active part in supporting dual placements (Berry), which were designed to culminate in full mainstream integration. Two (Roselands and Hook schools) of the remaining four schools were chosen on the basis of an examination of their OfSTED reports, evaluated with indices for inclusion taken from the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2002). These schools were drawn from a long list of potential schools discussed with the LEA and determined by the numbers of children accredited with special needs, with statements, or on School Action, or School Action Plus. As there was a bias in this larger sample, towards schools in suburban areas, a further school was chosen from a less economically advantaged area (Fairlight). Finally, a seventh school (Healing) was chosen (also drawn from the long list) because they had given us a very positive expression of desire to be included, following receipt of our invitation to all schools in the area.[2]

Interviews were conducted with 27 professionals from the selected schools. Our sample included all teachers from the Year 5 and 6 classes participating in the sociometric part of the study; two teachers from the resource units; and the SENCOs of the schools. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured schedule which consisted of questions eliciting the respondents' understanding of inclusion; their knowledge of and attitudes towards national and local inclusion initiatives; their perceptions of barriers and factors affecting the successful implementation of inclusion; their perceived academic and social outcomes of the process; and, finally, their most innovative inclusive practices. Thus, our interviews with teachers and SENCOs of the schools investigated the 'habitus' of school life, in an attempt to unearth the 'doxa' (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992) of emergent ideas on inclusion.[3] In other words, we attempted to contextualise teachers' perceptions of their roles, in the surrounding field of education, with its particular educational principles, policy and practices.

All the interviews were carried out individually and were recorded, following an assurance to participants that their responses would be kept in strict confidentiality. Generally each interview lasted around 40 minutes. Data were transcribed and imported from a word processing program into Atlas/ti, a text-sorting program designed to assist in qualitative data analysis. Following this, the data were coded and analysed according to the 'three levels' model advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994). This approach involves the coding of the data, identifying patterns (pattern coding) and, finally, developing propositions (theory building). The data on each school were first processed via a 'within-site' and then a 'cross-site' analysis to find similarities and differences between the different cases. In this paper the results of the 'cross-site' analysis are stressed.

Primarily, the evidence discussed here emanated from those sections of the interview schedule which elicited the teachers' understanding of inclusion,

their attitudes and associated practices. Although some references are made to pupils' views to corroborate the teachers' accounts, it is clearly not possible to perform a systematic cross-referencing of the two datasets in the space of this article.

Findings

Following a brief discussion of the respondents' understanding of inclusive education and their perceived barriers to its implementation, we critically examine the approaches taken towards inclusion and the resulting 'cultures' in the seven participating schools. The teaching practices reported by individual teachers and SENCOs are, therefore, contextualised within their schools' 'ethos' and support given by the LEA. In so doing, a complex continuum of segregative/integrative/inclusion orientated practices within mainstream schools is identified and the shortcomings of the LEA's policies and arrangements are highlighted. In the concluding section, we advocate the need for a significant shift in policy and the formulation of 'productive' school pedagogies in which issues of social justice and equity are foregrounded.

Teachers' understanding of 'inclusion': the significance of perceptions of impairment

As discussed in the previous section, inclusion is a term which has been used to refer to a number of educational practices taken towards those who are marginalised by social and educational practices. Here, it is used to refer to the inclusion of children designated with the status of 'special educational needs' (SEN) into mainstream schools. Broadly speaking, we found a wide variety of attitudes to impairment and differing approaches to inclusive principles. All teachers felt that inclusion is a positive value but very few recognised that *all* students deemed to experience SEN should be included in mainstream schools. Expressions like 'wherever possible' and 'those who are able to come in' were given frequently by the respondents to indicate that not all students should be included:

> I don't think you can sort of categorically say whether for *all* children inclusion is good or bad because there are just so many different individual cases that I've experienced … from severely impaired children, which I've found very hard to include in education, to, you know … very simple needs which are obviously a lot more easier to include. So there is a broad range … I can see the benefits for some, but I don't think you can sort of sweepingly make the statement of 'It's right for all children' … (Roselands, Year 5 teacher)

> Generally it's a very very good thing. I've got … I think its very important including as many children as possible … Um, I can think of specific examples from my current class and classes I've had previously where it has been a lovely experience for everyone involved. Um … I think occasionally it can be a challenge, if there are severe difficulties, inclusion can be problematic. I'm sure I can think of such examples. (Berry, Year 6 teacher)

Common exemptions include children accredited with behavioural difficulties and children who they define as having complex learning needs, or those who are not deemed to be 'neurotypical' (e.g. Aspergers and others on the autistic spectrum). In some cases, anti-inclusion views were linked to remarks made about divided loyalties between children with impairments and the 'rest of the class':

> ... your lessons are being hijacked by the poor behaviours of one child, then there are equality issues again with the other 26 children. (Hook, Year 6 teacher)

Other teachers expressed their anti-inclusion views more strongly. These opinions often made appeals to the welfare of more 'average' or 'normal' children:

> ... the children that are quietly underachieving don't get the right support because it tends to be the children that make the most noise and the most disruptive that do get the most support. (Willow, Year 5 teacher)

This was often linked to ambivalent or exclusionary opinions towards children with 'behavioural problems'. One Year 6 teacher from Willow school told us of her experiences, resulting in the transfer of a child to another school:

> There were all sorts of health and safety issues ... he was trying to get out the window on the second floor and all sorts of things ... attacking teachers ... he had all sorts of problems ... and it's very difficult actually ... because most children are included now in mainstream, it's actually very difficult to say 'Look, this is not the right place for the child' ... (Willow, Year 6 teacher)

These remarks illuminate the bias towards a 'deficit model' of disability found in many teachers' accounts. The doubts cast on inclusion by attitudes to behaviour lend themselves to ideas of non-disabled children as undifferentiated learners who would function well socially and according to set standards, reinforcing stereotypes of and attitudes to disabled people as a whole. Serving to stigmatise children with specific behaviour-related impairments or social circumstances further, a hierarchy of impairments and disability is reinforced, undermining developments in the inclusive processes for all. Even where integrative guidelines may be followed these qualms are communicable to school children, especially where inclusive values are ambiguous. For example, one teacher (Hook, Year 6) remarked how she had begun a year with doubts about including children with behavioural difficulties and that by the end of the year the other children in her class were complaining that those accredited with emotional or behavioural related needs were receiving 'special treatment'.

The 'deficit model' of disability was also reflected in the widely held belief that the successful implementation of inclusion required specialist knowledge and expertise not currently available in the majority of schools. Indeed, a significant majority of teachers expressed a desire for more training in meeting the needs of children attributed with SEN. Additionally, inclusion, particularly as regards resources, knowledge and equipment, was perceived to be far better in the resource centres. Conversely, it was apparent that many teachers had to learn how to teach and include children accredited with special needs as they came along, a difficulty which is exacerbated when there is no teaching assistance or in-class support. When teachers spoke of their knowledge of inclusion, this was invariably discussed in terms of information on 'special needs'. They regularly commented on the need for impairment-related knowledge and the need for advice on specific interventions for particular groups (e.g. children with impairments on the autistic spectrum). Information on impairments and appropriate teaching strategies was often considered to be inadequate, usually learned on the job, through trial and error, when the children moved into their class. One teacher complained:

> ... we've got no training whatsoever on Special Needs, on any aspect of Special Needs to be honest ... so I think we'd fall down greatly there. (Fairlight, Year 5 teacher)

Further, the support provided by external agencies was frequently rated as inadequate:

> I would say I don't have very much faith in the Special Needs service. I have tried numerous times to get more support for my kids, to get people in to see them and I personally don't think that we get an awful lot of support from outside agencies ... unless you push and push and push .... (Elm, Year 6 teacher)

It is worth noting here that the concerns about lack of training opportunities and inadequate resources raised by the teachers in our study are well documented in the literature and have been consistently found to be associated with negative attitudes to inclusion across different national school systems (Avramidis and Norwich 2002).

Inclusive pedagogies? Assimilationist approaches and the predominance of deficit discourses across schools

> It is because traditional education is objectively addressed to those who have obtained from their social milieu the linguistic and cultural capital that it objectively demands that it cannot openly declare its demands and feel itself obliged to give everyone the means of meeting them. (Bourdieu 1976, 195)

The reservations expressed by teachers in the previous section indicate that inclusion is understood by teachers, and the LEA at large, as an adaptive policy. Most frequently, the inclusion of children with unmet needs was interpreted in practice as a process of assimilation related to locational or functional forms of integration (Bayliss 1995). Hence, inclusion is frequently used to denote ways of increasing the participation of students with impairments in mainstream education through extra provision for needs unmet by conventional educational practices. Only in a few cases were barriers to learning and participation addressed in terms of a whole class or whole school issue. Consequently, social integration was less apparent, in the sense of psychologically meaningful integration where both groups develop relationships and understand each other's needs (Bayliss 1995).

In the UK inclusion is usually interpreted in individualistic terms, where 'reasonable adjustments' are made for those who are deemed incapable of benefiting from ordinary (mainstream) provision. Under the SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001), it seems understood that as many of these needs as possible should be met through differentiated instruction, whereby teaching approaches are tailored to all learners' needs. Generally, this Code of Practice has the aim of maximising school inclusion and increasing the potential of children who have been accredited with special needs. However, there is evidence that differentiation is often understood and used in a less inclusive manner. For example, speaking of the varying concepts and applications of differentiation used by teachers, Hartas (2005, 3) explains that differentiation is 'less likely to support inclusive education' when it is seen as a method to teach 'different aspects of the curriculum to meet children's needs'. As she advises, differentiation is more inclusive when teaching methods are matched closely with curriculum requirements and the children's differing skills and needs, thus providing the same curriculum for all.

For those whose needs cannot be provided for by differentiation, enhancements to children's learning environments usually take the form of individual provision such as additional equipment and in-class teaching assistance. Adaptations such as communication aids can be used in ways that support inclusion, at best, allowing children's participation in lessons and social opportunities that would otherwise be denied to them. Other forms of support such as individual teaching assistance, withdrawals for separate types of tuition, and therapies such as psychological or speech support, tend to take children further from a shared curriculum. As Brusling and Pepin (2003) indicate, in sum, the range of interventions from School Action, School Action Plus to Statements create a multi-track approach, favouring a mixed variety of strategies, moving further away from the two-track system of mainstream and special schooling.

In practice then, the interventions made to meet children's needs vary in inclusivity, and are even segregative in some respects. When teaching methods are matched closely with the children's differing skills and needs, within an inclusive curriculum, it is likely that perceptions of similarity between peers will be maximised. Conversely, where children only have limited access to parts of the curriculum or have more frequent and longer withdrawals from the class than other pupils, differences will be reinforced. Generally, the more intervention there is, the greater challenges are presented for teachers to promote inclusion, particularly where withdrawal is predominantly done on the basis of 'remediating special needs'. This individualised form of support is more likely to distance or separate children from their peers rather than assist in processes of social inclusion (Thomas, Walker, and Webb 1988):

> Some of them actually spend a lot more time out of the classroom than in the classroom. But pretending that is being inclusion . . . . (Fairlight, Year 5 teacher)

This seems less problematic when class withdrawals are more evenly distributed; a few teachers reported a deliberate policy to equalise the removal of all children from class, for a range of reasons including a diverse range of 'special interests' or responsibilities. One teacher at Elm school expressed the strategy this way:

> In my class everyone goes out, the middle goes out, everybody goes out and so there is no stigma attached to it at all. (Elm, Year 5 teacher)

Of course, many needs are met with necessary forms of in-class support (teaching assistants and technical aids) which enable children's inclusion, whilst simultaneously highlighting their differences. Facing these challenges to inclusion, a central issue seems to be the availability of teaching assistance and, more importantly, *how* this support is utilised. There is evidence in our data that teaching assistants (TAs) seem to be more plentiful in schools in more advantaged areas, and that teachers without sufficient support face considerable difficulties in meeting all children's needs. At the same time, however, it was also reported that the constant presence of TAs often impeded *real* social inclusion, precluding the formation of friendships with peers:

> Yes, building a fantastic relationship with the teaching assistant or his support person but that being it, him not having a relationship with his teacher and the

> children within his class … because he is included but excluded. (Roselands, Year 5 teacher)

This teacher's comments are quite interesting as she expresses considerable concern about the social aspects of the children's daily experience. So, although the support offered by TAs within mainstream classes is seen to be more inclusive than segregated classroom or school provision, the reality of support often results in greater academic inclusion but divisive social experience. Two schools, Healing and Fairlight, spoke of forms of teaching assistance where TAs often worked with different members of the class, wherever appropriate, spreading support given and decreasing stigma and segregation. However, such forms of teaching assistance are not always possible, particularly where other resources or facilities are scarce. It is this issue of targeted facilities, expertise and equipment that resource units have attempted to resolve.

Resource units, dual placements, and marginalisation

As part of the process of moving from special school provision towards mainstream provision, 'integrated' resource centres or units have taken a prominent role. It has been suggested that integrated resource centres provide the greatest combination of social and academic benefits to children accredited with SEN (Lindsay 2007, citing Mills et al.). Students attending these units often do so as part of 'dual placement' arrangements.

There was a significant range of opinions about the value of dual placements (within the same school or across school settings) held by teachers in the two schools with units (Willow and Elm). Both of these schools had children attending their resource units who had greater and lesser degrees of access to mainstream classes. While the operation of the units was seen by many teachers as a 'pragmatic' model of provision, a number of problems associated with the children's sporadic integration in the mainstream classes were mentioned. One teacher (Year 5, Willow) commented that she sometimes forgot to include children from the resource centre in her preparation plans as the latter were irregular members of the class. Another teacher (Year 6, Elm) remarked that accommodating children on a part-time basis meant the disruption of class-based projects. Underpinning these teachers' accounts was a clear demarcation between 'us', as the mainstream, and 'them', as the unit and children on dual placements in their school:

> What we do is we try to encourage them in the playground, we try to encourage them to let the 'unit' children join in with their games and things like that – but I also think it would be … as well as the 'unit' children coming into *our* classroom in the afternoon, it might be an idea for *our* children to see what *they* do … because *I've* never even been in a 'unit' class to see what *they* do … so, it might be an idea, you know, sometimes for *our* kids to see what *they* do … . (Year 6, Willow)

This teacher's comments are quite interesting as she understands the need for greater functional integration, i.e. in bringing children into closer contact. There seems to be a sense that she understands the need for social integration in her desire to see 'psychologically meaningful integration' (Bayliss 1995), where children understand more of each others' needs. However, her comments are also clearly marked in terms of 'us' and 'them', a common response in the remarks of teachers and children in this

project. Moreover, very little is known by teachers of mainstream classes about the workings of the unit. In this case then, the enthusiasm to learn more and promote greater inclusion seems evident, but the considerable degrees of separation between the school and its SEN unit and the lack of knowledge on inclusion militate against it.

Ostensibly working within a similar model of provision a teacher from Elm described a much different ethos, commitment and knowledge of how to promote inclusion and equality of service, rather than simply opportunity (Connell 2002):

> Like multi-sensory approaches to teaching. I would say always do the multi-sensory approach … things like when you write instructions on the board I put pictures by them, naturally. That is for everyone. Even when I give clear instructions and the deaf children are writing their IEPs I like the way it's ordered, and I like the way Mr. X gives instructions. That's not for them. That is for everyone. (Elm, Year 5 teacher)

Similarly, a teacher from Elm's unit mentioned a number of innovative ways of facilitating the social inclusion of children from the resource unit:

> I do masses with these kids to get them to become full members of our school community in terms of working with friendship groups, setting friendship groups when they are gone so that they've got people in the other classes they can relate to … certainly a lot on the social side of inclusion … again it's mixing them, getting them together and working together, my children and mainstream class … mainstream children … having them involved in things like running the school book fair, so that they're actually doing something that's integral to the school and which has kudos also … I get people that come into school who are dyslexic, adult dyslexics, something that they can share with the kids, something that they've done, or what kind of life they're in … be it a chef, be it an artist, be a pilot or whatever … and to actually have them talk to our children or work with our children but also to talk to the mainstream school if they're willing, not everybody is but … perhaps they will lead an assembly in talking about the dyslexia and the types of issues that they've had and the brilliant things that they do … . (Elm, unit coordinator)

Although, similar to Willow, there are degrees of separation to be found in Elm, the unit coordinator seems to be more knowledgeable and has developed strategies to maximise integrative strategies, working towards greater inclusion. Social inclusion is emphasised in fostering favourable conditions for friendship groups. The need for role models, involvement and responsibility is also addressed. Here, the emphasis on assimilation, acceptance and dependence has been shifted somewhat to reflect a position closer to participation, independence, social opportunities and more equal 'rights'. As Bayliss (1995) has suggested, this model of integration is more empowering in its focus on interdependence and the recognition of a need for a 'joint culture' (Bruner 1996).

The efforts mentioned by the teacher above are particularly important in the light of evidence that children from the units tend to form friendships with other peers from the units. Despite efforts and 'encouragement' made to provide social opportunities at playtimes, most teachers report that these children remain in their everyday social groups in the playground. According to a teacher from Willow:

> They don't … they tend not to form close friendships *at all* actually with children in the mainstream … casual ones, but they'll always go back to the close friends, you know,

> from the Unit ... So I can totally understand that if a child ... one child goes from here on a Friday to a totally different school and it's a little bit of a struggle in that respect. (Willow, Year 6 teacher)

It is worth noting here that our interviews with pupils in Willow[4] confirmed that children from the unit played in separate groups and, interestingly, the marginalisation of children with impairments from the mainstream class. Underlining the status of children with impairments or unmet needs, Milly, a relatively isolated girl from the mainstream, was described by one of her classmates in the following terms: 'She's like one of the unit kids. Nobody plays with her in the playground'.

As a child who was identified in terms of School Action, Milly was placed wholly within mainstream provision but was not perceived as one of 'us' by her peers, a perception which was echoed in her own interview. Along with one other girl, also on School Action Plus, she received only one friendship nomination, in contrast to multiple nominations of most other class members. Interestingly these nominations were received from a relatively popular boy, Andrew, also on School Action Plus, suggesting a degree of identification on the basis of shared stigma. Having greater social links with the children from the Unit, Milly seemed to occupy a subliminal position, defined primarily in terms of alterity. She seemed very visible to teachers, mainstream children and unit children; she was neither an 'insider' nor an 'outsider' in a school which had a considerably divided culture. It is unsurprising that children accredited with SEN in mainstream classes, within these schools, experience this double sense of marginality.

Further, there is evidence that for those pupils on dual placements who attended other schools for their mainstreaming experience, there appeared to be even fewer social opportunities in Willow, outside deliberate strategies such as 'circle time'. Social events invariably occurred outside school hours when children had returned to their own localities. For this reason, one teacher suggested the need to build stronger links between children using the resource unit and their mainstream schools. Currently, it was pointed out that these children never stayed in one place long enough to make friendships. Assuming similar social dynamics in other schools she suggested that more frequent contact, intermittently, during the week would improve children's sense of belonging. Strategies such as this would clearly mean frequent commuting between schools, demanding extra resources from parents, schools or the LEA.

Notwithstanding the concerns raised about the social participation of pupils educated in resource units, overall, teachers who worked in mainstream schools with such centres had favourable attitudes towards this form of provision. This was largely expressed in terms of specialist teachers' expertise or impairment-related knowledge and the capacities for children's greater social involvement. Generally it was perceived that better academic outcomes were expected in segregated provision. Although a considerable number of teachers had little knowledge of the resource centre in Willow school, it was seen to be a valuable source of information and knowledge to other teachers and schools, for 'picking up on practices' (Willow, Year 5 teacher). Overall, the presence of specialist facilities and knowledge seemed to contribute to a belief that schools were becoming as inclusive as possible, despite clear evidence that children in specialist centres had a wholly different experience of schooling to their mainstream peers.

Innovative strategies and whole school approaches

The divided cultural ethos demonstrated by Willow also predominated in the majority of mainstream schools without units. For example, some teachers' accounts of innovative inclusive strategies reflected attempts to maximise functional forms of integration in their classes through mixed-ability grouping arrangements and 'circle time' sessions designed to expand social networks and break down social barriers between children. Additionally, many teachers referred to aspects of provision which were believed to reinforce feelings of belonging and support, but which were delivered within segregative settings. Typically this was found in 'nurture groups' between lessons:

> ... we have had to adapt our practice to accommodate an increasing number of children for whom this National Curriculum was not really meeting their needs ... and these children needed to have small group nurturing provision not all the time, not every day, but pockets of time where they go and we could support them with things like communication skills, their social skills, some of their behaviour needs, but in a very caring nurturing environment. (Roselands, SENCO)

It was quite widely believed that such extra-curricular social or play-based groups for children with unmet needs were a valuable innovation. We also received positive comments from children that indicated that in such groups they could get on with activities they liked without undue social pressure. However, these groups were typically held at lunches and playtimes, one of the greatest opportunities for social contact and interaction, effectively separating children with unmet needs further from their peers. Further, it was evident that the mainstream teachers were not always aware what children were doing in these groups or how these were linked with other forms of provision in the school. This seems to be at odds with the integrative ethos that most schools take. The children are placed in a 'predictable' environment (Boxall 2002) with the objective of improving their communication skills and behaviour in the absence of their peers. Yet despite the consequent restrictions placed upon their social opportunities, the emphasis was invariably placed on assimilation in the classroom. A deficit view of children identified with special educational needs was rarely challenged in practice.

By contrast, a 'whole school' ethos was evident in Healing, the school that had requested involvement with the project. In this school, there was a strong commitment to offering all pupils access to learning opportunities and less talk of the need for extra specialist staff and material resources. Withdrawal for remedial tuition was minimal and classroom support was provided by teaching assistants working with different members of the class rather than being attached to specific pupils with SEN. This resulted in teachers actively modifying their practices to accommodate children with SEN rather than solely relying on the additional support available. For example, although this teacher had received no training in SEN, he reported considerable forward planning to meet the needs of children with impairments:

> I had a visually impaired girl in my class last year and she had support with her and that was quite an eye opener and to see that these things are going on, it did make me think that I need to adapt the way that I taught ... It brought to the front things I hadn't considered before, I thought it made it a lot more real for me, it made me think about

> that particular child and issues other children might have as well. It is powerful really in terms of changing your teaching strategies … Once I got over that initial worry and started teaching it wasn't just her being affected by, it was a very positive thing … It made me think about the strategies I was using for everybody. It opened my eyes and different ways of looking at things. (Healing, Year 6 teacher)

Implicit in this teacher's account is the recognition that the teaching modifications he was forced to make to accommodate the visually impaired pupil were also beneficial for the rest of the class. Indeed, whereas many teachers within this project spoke of additional SEN provision such as adaptations, the majority of teachers in Healing tended to work in ways that supported whole class teaching. Moreover, Healing was the only school that reported a deliberate policy of promoting inclusion across the school through scheduled activities in Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) lessons. All the other schools worked with a model of Special Needs Provision, where information and knowledge of special needs, impairments and inclusion were vested in the SENCO. In this particular school, it was clear that information and knowledge were cascaded amongst all staff and information on pupils was shared. They were the only school who had any knowledge of the Disability Equality Duty but acknowledged that there was much more to be learned on inclusion and relevant policy, from the LEA and elsewhere. As such there was recognition of inclusion as a process.

The data from Healing also demonstrate the important role that effective leadership plays in the promotion of inclusion within schools (Booth and Ainscow 2002). All teachers in Healing mentioned their headteacher's unequivocal commitment to inclusive values and her role in enhancing staff collaboration and joint problem solving. In so doing, it was felt that the school's capacity to respond to difference had been enhanced despite the apparent lack of training opportunities and the limited resources available. Indeed, most teachers in Healing spoke of 'learning on the job' and felt that the external expertise provided was 'piecemeal' and disruptive of the school's rhythms. The following quote is indicative of the headteacher's struggle to coordinate, and thus maximise the effectiveness of the external support on offer:

> With Helen there are so many agencies coming in, the visually impaired person, hearing impaired person, the multi sensory person, all coming in at separate times giving separate advice giving them different exercises … well the head, who is just superb, said 'hang on this isn't fair on the teachers, this isn't fair on the TA, or the child. Let's get all the agencies, in at the same time same day, once a half-term. You do it together and you come up with one set of advice and one set of suggestions'. I think that is going to be the way to go with these children with SEN … the agencies have got to come together a lot more. (Healing, KS1 Co-ordinator)

Elements of the 'whole school' ethos characterising Healing were also detected in Fairlight, the school from a less advantaged area. Far from maintaining segregative structures, learning support in Fairlight was typically provided in the mainstream classroom where teaching assistants worked with as many children as possible instead of being constantly attached to individual members of the class. Moreover, there was a clear recognition in Fairlight that praise from teachers was necessary for children's self motivation to become included and to appreciate acceptance from their peers. This was reflected in the fostering of a culture where children seemed keen to acknowledge other children's achievements and work towards individual and

collective rewards, such as 'Golden Time'. Strategies were employed to teach children 'how to watch out for each other' and as much 'Circle Time' and play opportunities were provided. One teacher had a deliberate policy of actively discouraging exclusive friendship groups, making children work with new partners whenever it was possible, thus facilitating the social participation of all pupils. Finally, unlike other schools, it was widely accepted that the needs of pupils with behavioural difficulties could and ought to be met within mainstream environments. One Year 6 teacher said:

> I do have children with behavioural issues and I think they should be included because they can be won round … as long as they have the support and the respect from the teacher, you know, they can be they can be dealt with in the classroom. (Fairlight, Year 6 teacher)

Fairlight seems quite typical of schools with relatively high levels of inclusivity in disadvantaged areas (Dyson et al. 2004) despite the daunting task of promoting higher levels of attainment alongside considerable numbers of children from impoverished backgrounds. This school had a higher percentage of children accredited with emotional and behavioural difficulties, but ironically, due to resource limitations, these children were rarely taken out of their class. Further, these classes had become quite small as a considerable number of parents had begun to seek alternative schools from Year 5. This reflects a wider tendency for children to move to other primary schools at the age of 9–10. It was suggested that these decisions were probably influenced by impending competition for secondary school places and to seek accommodations for unmet needs such as dyslexia.

Even though Fairlight school's practices were inclusive in many senses, teachers here also reported considerable stress in trying to meet disparate needs within the class and felt that the LEA's support for inclusion was inadequate. Experienced teachers in Fairlight reported that this school's access to resources was much lower than in other schools they had worked in and they often had to rely on volunteers for classroom help. Indeed, a Year 6 teacher noted that the recent OfSTED inspector had remarked 'I can't believe you're in this class unsupported'. Fortunately, for this school, parental involvement was considered to be good, brought about in part from the deliberate strategy to work closely with parents.

Conclusion

From our interviews with teachers, members of the special educational needs team of the LEA, and our own observations in the schools, it is apparent that there is a complex continuum of practices described as 'inclusive provision', which interestingly contains segregative practices within provision that has been designed to integrate children on an assimilative basis. Only one of the participating schools had a whole school inclusive ethos, appearing to be fully committed to implementing inclusion in fuller terms – as identified in the Index for Inclusion, or by organisations such as the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE). By contrast, in all other schools we found a wide variety of attitudes to impairment and differing approaches to inclusive principles. In line with previous research, most of our respondents stated that inclusion is a positive value, but very few thought it should apply to everyone (Avramidis and Norwich 2002). Moreover, the majority of teachers demanded more resources and more training with a narrow focus on specific

or distinctive groups of learners. This is fundamentally paradoxical in the absence of distinctive special pedagogies for pupils labelled as having SEN (Lewis and Norwich 2005)[5] and reflects the LEA's deficit approach to SEN (or 'doxa' in Bourdieusian terms). Implicit in this doxa is the assumption that there is a group of children, identified as having SEN, who belong to a different pedagogical category, and therefore require specialist teaching and additional resources in order to cope with and be included in the mainstream of education. By extension, these extra resources should be directed as efficiently as possible towards these children to facilitate this process (Lloyd 2008).

Indeed, the LEA's 'compensatory' approach to provision and practice had resulted in the 'ghettoisation' of particular impairment groups within a small number of mainstream schools. For example, in this LEA, there were schools which made deliberate provision for 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' (SEBD) located in or near socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Similarly, in the two schools with units taking part in this study (Willow and Elm) there were clusters of pupils with language and communication difficulties and dyslexia respectively. Whilst 'ghettoisation' has a number of benefits in relation to the provision of resources and the promotion of the sense of belonging to a group, it also creates barriers to socialisation between all children in the school, as boundaries between 'us' and 'them' or divided cultures are reinforced. As Liasidou (2007, 338) has cogently argued: 'Resource units are a prime example of the resurgence of special education imperatives whereby disabled children are marginalised and excluded within an ostensibly inclusive mainstream setting'. Furthermore, such arrangements reinforce the dominant (hegemonic) ideology of 'expertism' (Vlachou 2004) amongst teachers, that is, the over-reliance on professionals for 'normalising' or 'remediating' the 'deviant' pupils, which ultimately hinders efforts to create more inclusive schooling environments.

Such uncritical reliance on experts was evident in the teacher accounts from Willow, where disabling barriers in the school were rarely recognised, while talk of extra training and knowledge were invariably framed in distinctive impairment terms. In this respect, Willow can be seen as the setting most representative of the current 'orthodoxy', that is, those sets of beliefs and values that constitute the received wisdom and the status quo within the field (Webb, Shirato, and Danaher 2002). By contrast, the teacher accounts from Healing clearly challenged the LEA's 'regime of truth' (Foucault 1980) and, therefore, the school can be seen as representing the 'heterodoxy' in the field. Such practice could be largely attributed to the school's socio-cultural context. Being a small school in a suburban area committed to catering for its surrounding community may explain the school's adherence to inclusive values and dedication to meeting the needs of all students in its locality. Crucially, this is achieved against the odds of under-resourcing and without reliance on specialist expertise. It is the 'institutional habitus'[6] of the school, therefore, which impacts on the attitudes of individual teachers and guides their practices towards genuinely inclusive directions.

In conclusion, we argue that there is a need for a significant paradigm shift away from pathological deficit models, and towards a pedagogy foregrounding issues of social justice and equity. This shift should be reflected in policy initiatives and disseminated through adjustments in existing SEN training. These adjustments should highlight the idea that inclusive education is not about training 'special educators' for 'special children', but about getting teachers to challenge the way they

conceptualise difference and educational failure (Avramidis 2006). Specifically, any training (whether at the pre- or post-service levels) should emphasise that teachers can and should take responsibility for both the educational and social inclusion of all learners. Ultimately, educators should be encouraged to modify their practice in ways that are conducive to meeting the needs of *all* learners, within inclusive holistic frameworks.

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Notes

1. Many children in this study spoke of dissatisfaction with school toilets. It was apparent from school visits (preceding interviews with children and observations) that disagreements were commonly addressed within toilet areas.
2. Only 5% of these schools expressed any interest in involvement. Pseudonyms are used here to protect the anonymity of the participating schools and individual pupils, wherever mentioned.
3. For Bourdieu, 'habitus' is the set of durable dispositions that people carry with them that shapes their attitudes, behaviours and responses to given situations. Habitus can therefore be understood as, on the one hand, the historical and cultural production of individual practices and, on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices. 'Doxa' is used by Bourdieu to refer to a set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary (see Webb, Shirato, and Danaher (2002) for an introduction).
4. To avoid potential ethical problems inherent in sociometric research, our assessment of the pupils' social status formed a small part of a much broader interview addressing a wide range of issues.
5. In their review of relevant literature Lewis and Norwich concluded that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of distinctive special pedagogies for particular groups of pupils with SEN. Rather, the notion of 'continua of teaching approaches' is useful, as it implies that children with SEN simply require more intensive and explicit teaching.
6. The concept of 'institutional habitus' suggests that an individual's behaviour is mediated through the organisation. It should be understood as more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded and informing practice.

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