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3. SPECIAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Discussions about special educational needs (SEN) are complex, with definitions and understandings of SEN in international, as well as local, contexts varying widely from a focus on 'disability', or 'handicap' to a broader understanding of SEN linked to a wide range of cognitive, behavioural or physical needs and difficulties. It is therefore essential that we acknowledge the significant impact of the national context in which we locate discussions about SEN, and the ways that 'special education is conceived and interpreted differently in different cultures' (Stangvik, 2010, 350–351).

One of the key challenges and difficulties with discussions about concepts such as SEN and Inclusion, is the fluid and interchanging ways that these terms are used and understood, not only internationally, but also much more locally, and even within the same school context. There is a danger that as the terms have become so commonplace within educational policy and discourse, there is an assumption that the terms are understood with shared understanding of the meaning of those terms.

A critical approach taken to exploring the underlying meanings, attitudes and implications for practice embedded within different uses of the term is therefore essential. As Riddell (2007) identifies:

> 'discourses are malleable and words such as inclusion can be used by different interest groups to refer to almost diametrically opposed concepts' (Riddell, 2007, 34).

Even when colleagues working in the same school context use the same terminology, their understanding and the attitudes, expectations and assumptions about pupils labelled as having 'SEN' may vary widely, from the teacher that sees the label as a signpost to ensure that she considers a range of ways to meaningfully include the child, and this may include changing her preferred teaching style and methods to more appropriately include key pupils; to other colleagues who may see the 'SEN' label as meaning that the child requires different specialist input, and therefore looking at ways to withdraw or 'exclude' the child from the mainstream classroom activities. The ways that the term is enacted in practice may therefore be very complex and

G. M. Ruairc, E. Ottesen and R. Precey (Eds.), Leadership for Inclusive Education: Vision, Values and Voices, 19–33.

dependent upon personal attitudes and values in relation to how we view education and inclusion more broadly.

Having acknowledged these complexities, this chapter is therefore not about providing detailed prescriptions of practice, as they would fail to respect the differing cultural understandings of SEN that colleagues working in different countries are coming from. Rather this chapter focuses on raising some critical discussions about underlying assumptions embedded within the concept of SEN, which will then lead to some broad principles for practice for leading SEN within the context of an inclusive school setting.

SEN, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Internationally, as well as within separate national contexts, there are continuing debates and discussions about the appropriateness of SEN within broader understandings of 'inclusive education', with special education 'through history, simultaneously hailed and condemned as both a means of achieving equal educational opportunities and a perpetrator of injustice in education.' (Florian, 2007, 7)

It is therefore important to start by unpicking the issues related to the various concepts of SEN, Inclusion and diversity in order to aim to reach a better understanding of how to provide effective leadership of SEN within inclusive school contexts. This book emphasises the importance of school leaders considering appropriate, and innovative inclusive approaches to developing an 'education for all', and this will necessarily include a full consideration of how to meet the needs of those pupils with SEN within those discussions. Yet, the links within discussions about SEN and inclusion are complicated on a number of different levels:

1. There is a danger that discussions about inclusion are reduced to a narrow focus only on SEN
2. There can be criticisms that 'inclusive approaches' fail to recognise and address the individual needs of pupils with SEN
3. There can be opposing criticism that 'SEN approaches' focus too strongly on the individual needs or difficulties of the child.

Leaders must engage in critical understandings that position and locate 'SEN' practices and understandings within a broader inclusive framework. At times, discussions about inclusion have become too narrowly focused and the concept of inclusion has come to mean the placement and provision of pupils with SEN and discussions about inclusion are reduced to discussions about the needs, or usually the difficulties, of pupils with SEN. This narrow focus can close down opportunities for reflective practitioners to really engage with the wider notion of what it means to include all pupils within the given school context.

Thus, we need to acknowledge that the term 'inclusion' does not just equate with the meeting of needs of those pupils with SEN. A much broader awareness and conceptualisation of the term 'inclusion' needs to be agreed and shared within the

school context to ensure that ALL pupils are valued and are given equal opportunities to access and participate in all learning opportunities provided. One key notion that will be developed throughout this chapter, therefore, is that, whilst this chapter does focus on approaches and ways of thinking that will support leaders to develop strategies to include pupils with SEN, SEN does need to be seen within a wider context of including all pupils. For some, this may immediately seem a contradiction in terms, and thus the complex inter-relationship between SEN and inclusion needs to be examined.

On the one hand there is concern (which will be fully explored later in the chapter) relating to the moral and ethical practices of perpetuating labels such as SEN, and whether such a practice can ever fully fit within inclusive approaches to education. On the other hand, in some national contexts, there are contradictory forces and tensions which, at times, link the concepts of inclusion and SEN, whilst at other times separate the two concepts. This can provoke confusion within practitioners attempting to enact the contradictory policies and practices. Troubling in the current UK context, therefore, is the new coalition governments pronounced commitment to 'removing the bias towards inclusion' (DfE 2011: 4), which immediately presents SEN practices in opposition to inclusive practices rather than as part of a wider inclusive approach. This separation seems to highlight and encourage more segregationary and exclusionary practices to evolve. Special education may therefore once again embody a 'discourse of exclusion' (Barton, 2010).

Whilst there therefore does need to be a clear recognition and acknowledgement of the individual needs of pupils with SEN, within any approach to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN within inclusive school settings, the discussions do need to be broadened out to consider more fully ways that difference and diversity can be seen as strengths, rather than as barriers to be overcome. Discussions about inclusion and managing the needs of pupils with SEN within inclusive school settings therefore need to also include consideration of wider needs, and ways to approach that with a recognition that:

'Difference is not the problem: rather, understanding that learners differ and how the different aspects of human development interact with experience to produce individual differences become the theoretical starting point for inclusive pedagogy' (Florian, 2010, 66)

WHAT IS MEANT BY SEN?

The notion of 'SEN' is complex, and yet I fear that all too often it is a concept that is taken for granted and not examined in relation to what it tells us about the beliefs that we hold about individual learners, and the implications of the label upon the longer term outcomes for individual pupils with 'SEN'. Whilst it is acknowledged (Hegarty, 2007) that progress has been made in relation to the education of children with SEN and disabilities: i.e. internationally, we have moved from a position where certain groups were considered 'uneducable' into wider considerations of how we most

appropriately educate all pupils, yet still deeper inconsistencies and underpinning assumptions about the inherent existence of SEN continues to need to be challenged.

In many international contexts the terminology around 'SEN' has arguably become so over-used and over-familiar, that practitioners have little understanding of the actual impact and meaning of the term. The term is an ambiguous and confused one: open to interpretation and variability not only across different countries, but also within the same country, and at a deeper level, different interpretations may exist even within an individual school setting. Within an international context, the issue is obviously emphasised, with widely differing meanings of the term SEN, from SEN solely relating to concepts of disability or 'handicap' (Turkey), to other contexts where the term SEN has moved away from a categorisation of medical difficulty, into a broader conceptualisation of a wide spectrum of learning difficulties and disabilities (UK).

Thus, whilst in some countries SEN may have contextualised meaning linked to the inclusion of pupils with significant physical difficulties, or 'handicaps', in others it will increasingly include a wide range of pupils with learning difficulties, including:

– Cognition and Learning- anything from general or moderate learning difficulties, including needs such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, to severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties;
– Communication and Interaction- anything from speech and language delay, to autistic spectrum difficulties and disorders
– Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties- including emotional, social and behavioural needs, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders
– Physical and Sensory Difficulties- including hearing or visual impairment, deafness or blindness, being in a wheelchair.

Even where there are different categories of SEN identified, such as in the UK system above, yet, what often occurs when applying the term 'SEN' to a group of pupils, is that in reality pupils are discussed as a homogenous group: the 'SEN pupils', rather than as individuals, with widely differing needs and difficulties. Thus, the premise of a single category of pupils, the SEN pupils, 'with the government [using] it as if it is the same problem to include a child in a wheelchair and a child with Aspergers' (House of Commons 2006, 16) is 'fundamentally flawed' (House of Commons 2006, 16), and an issue that needs to be critically re-examined. The difficulty with categorising need and the 'apparent inadequacy of the special schools typology' (Lebeer et al 2010, 377) is also acknowledged within the Belgian system. In this case it is noted that such practice leads to confusion and false attribution of labels: 'where do we put children with multiple impairments?' (Lebeer et al 2010, 377).

In the UK, there has also been recent criticism of the concept of special educational needs, as the application of the term 'SEN' has become so widespread as to move away from pupils with definable 'special educational needs' and to now include a number of pupils who are simply underachieving and in need of differentiation

and support within the classroom context. These huge variations in the meaning and application of the term 'SEN' therefore make it very difficult to compare and contrast practices across international contexts, and, as outlined in the first section, practitioners should continually be aware that even within the same national or school context, colleagues do not always have the same understandings of the concept of SEN.

In some countries (e.g. UK, Ireland, Norway, Spain), where the concept of SEN is a broad notion of learning difficulties, rather than just associated with a specific 'handicap' or disability, statistics show that there is a significant over-representation of particular 'vulnerable groups' within the data gathered for pupils with SEN. Therefore, pupils who are summer born are 60% more likely to be identified with SEN than peers born earlier within the academic year; looked after children are three and a half times as likely to be identified with SEN, pupils coming from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are more than twice as likely to be identified as having SEN. What these figures demonstrate is the difficulties inherent in any classification around SEN, and the narrowing and marginalising of pupils who actually may not have any specific 'SEN' or learning difficulties or disabilities, but instead learn in different ways, either due to being up to a year younger than the peers with whom they are compared, or as a result of not having as much support from home as others.

Any system based on a simplistic categorisation of need within one 'category' will be flawed as this does not acknowledge the complexity of individual needs. Pupils with 'SEN' are not a homogenous group, and we need to ensure that practice moves away from assuming that the same approach will work for all, just because they have the same label. Similarly, even pupils with the same identified need: autism, dyslexia or Downs Syndrome, for example, and also not a homogenous group. Any teacher working with a group of pupils with autism, for example, will immediately understand that the presentation of needs and difficulties for each child, even when given the same 'label' will be vastly different. As Warnock (2010) has recognised, therefore,

> 'one of the most crucial changes must therefore be that the concept of special educational needs is broken down. We must give up the idea that SEN is the name of a unified call of students at whom, in a uniform way, the policy of inclusion can be directed' (Warnock, 2010, 34).

With such vast differences in the usage of the term SEN, at a fundamental level, there is therefore a need to critically re-examine and re-evaluate the usefulness, and indeed moral rightness, of the term and concept within inclusive school settings and educational systems.

What are 'special educational needs'? What does the label, widely and inconsistently applied to pupils across the world actually mean? By identifying pupils with SEN, and labelling them as out 'SEN pupils'? what does this actually mean to practice and the education that they receive. Is SEN as a concept just needed because of the 'inability of general education to accommodate and include the full diversity of learners' (Reindal, 2010, 2)? Also, what does it say about us as practitioners?

What does it say about our values, and how we think about individual differences, when we perpetuate a system where we continue to 'label' and marginalise one particular 'vulnerable group'?

One of the key difficulties is that any discussion of SEN as a concept is based on an assumption of the 'rightness' or appropriateness of models of difference: that there is a stable and shared understanding of what is 'normal' and anyone deviating from that notion of normal must therefore be labelled as having SEN'. But, in the 21st Century, as, internationally, we move towards more increasingly democratic and supposedly inclusive societies, is this distinction between normal and 'not normal', as Norwich (2009) calls it, the 'dilemma of difference' right? Currently, the term 'SEN' is based upon subjective notions of what is 'normal' and what is 'different' and, as reflective practitioners and school leaders, we need to question whether SEN is about 'difference from the norm or about unique individual needs'? (Norwich, 2010, 84). Thus, as Florian (2007) identifies, there are 'two interdependent problems facing the field of special education. The first is the concept of normal as usual and good, the second is the dilemma of difference' (Florian, 2007, 11)

There is a clear need for radical re-examination of the concept and practice of SEN within inclusive school concepts. Therefore, whilst on the one hand, there is a notion that labelling SEN may actually serve to protect and preserve rights for the child where 'identification establishes eligibility to accommodations and to civil rights protections of these adaptations' (Norwich, 2009, 449), we must question why a child needs to be labelled as having 'SEN' in order to get the provision and teaching and learning approaches suitable to meeting their needs? Why, in the 21st Century, is it not possible to develop an approach to understanding and valuing diversity of learning styles and individual differences, and work to include everyone?

Hart (1996), writing over fifteen years ago argued that:

> 'in order to open up new possibilities we can and should not set aside once and for all the language of 'learning difficulties' and 'special needs'. This language shapes and constrains our thinking, limiting our sense of the scope available to us for positive intervention to a narrowly circumscribed set of possibilities. It has discouraged mainstream teachers from using their knowledge, expertise and experience as fully and powerfully as they might in pursuing concerns about children's learning.' (Hart, 1996: x)

Moving away from the terminology around 'SEN' however, is an incredibly difficult thing to achieve. It will involve substantial culture shifts in thinking and practice, nationally and internationally; it will need to involve consideration of how to 'protect' the rights of pupils with SEN and disabilities without them having been assigned the 'label'. Also, if it really were possible to eradicate use of the term SEN from our educational discourse, what terms or phrases would be used to replace it? And would they really be any better, and have more impact upon positive outcomes for the individual, than the current term 'SEN'?

These are challenging questions, with no real or easy answer. But yet, the questions do need to be raised in our consciousness in order to develop leaders who are able to engage reflectively in the issues, and who are able to support their colleagues to develop more inclusive ways of thinking and working.

There may therefore be a need to look past the classification of need, and focus more closely on the individual needs as presented by each individual child: therefore ensuring that 'classification of a disorder or disability does not come to be seen as a classification of the child' (Farrell, 2010, 55). An alternative to traditional deficit labels, are labels of opportunity, which 'clearly position the barriers faced by individuals within the school structures around them, not within the individuals themselves' (Rix, 2007: 28) Rix (2010) therefore suggests that it would be more helpful for practitioners to describe the needs of the individual rather than their disability: 'a person supported by signing and visual communication' rather than a person with Down's Syndrome.

Fundamentally, we need to always locate discussions linked to the problematic concept of SEN within wider inclusive understandings of ways to celebrate the individual learning needs and strengths of the child as an individual, rather than as a label of need. Within such an approach, there is an ability to contextualise the development of thinking and practice in relation to pupils with SEN within broader considerations of the effective inclusion of all pupils.

Personal Anecdote and Reflection

Having worked in world of SEN and inclusion for all of my working career, working in schools with high levels of pupils with SEN, both in mainstream and in special school contexts, I have recently started to question the appropriateness of the perpetuation of a term that continually marginalises and excludes pupils, and to ask why, in the 21st Century, where we have supposedly moved so far towards universal democratic rights for all, that we need to continue with such an outdated model of labelling pupils. In the midst of my reflections, I was also reading a book which described through a fictional account, the start of societal questioning of the rightness of segregation between 'whites' and 'blacks' and the commonplace practice of 'coloured maids' within white households in the USA as recently as during the 1960's. The examples of everyday practice that black people, until relatively recently, were subjected to seem shocking and appalling to my more modern perspective. But yet, as I reflected upon them, how closely they equate with the practices that we continue to perpetuate and take for granted within a different vulnerable group today: the segregation of 'coloured' and 'white' toilets, the segregated black and white schools, could be equated to the segregation of 'disabled' toilets and special schools for pupils with SEN and disabilities today.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF SEN

Whilst acknowledging the problematic nature of the concept of SEN within inclusive discussions, there is then a need for leaders in inclusive school settings to critically reflect upon ways that they can embed appropriate systems and processes to support the inclusion of pupils with SEN within their schools. An effective leadership approach that is built upon inclusive principles to develop SEN practices and understandings, may therefore incorporate the following key elements:

- Founded on inclusive principles
- A strategic approach which impacts upon whole school development of thinking and practice
- A distributed leadership model, where knowledge and skills are shared and developed across the staff group as a whole, rather than resting upon one person

Underpinning any approach to leading and managing SEN practices within school settings, needs to be a clear vision and articulated, shared values about what is meant by the term 'SEN', and what are the responsibilities of different staff members towards meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. This also then needs to be contextualised within a broader awareness of and response to SEN as one of many aspects of difference within inclusive approaches that recognise the diverse needs of all pupils, rather than focusing solely on what to do for 'SEN pupils' versus what to do for all other pupils.

As discussed in the previous section, it needs to be acknowledged that colleagues working in the same school context may have very different, and even opposing views on the nature of SEN, and ways that they need to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. This needs to be openly discussed in constructive and supportive ways, in order to enable a consistent whole school, inclusive approach to SEN to evolve and will require leadership approaches that may have to 'challenge existing beliefs and assumptions within a school' (Ainscow et al 2006, 152).

This is significant. Whatever SEN practices are already in place, the development of inclusive practices to meet the needs of all pupils requires interruptions to thinking and practice to occur, in order to continually refine and improve the quality of opportunities and access to experiences, rather than maintaining systems and practices which perpetuate the 'status quo' (Corbett, 2001, 45).

Before considering the actual practical aspects of meeting the needs of pupils with SEN within inclusive school contexts, considerable time and attention is therefore needed to consider the impact of underlying culture. The model developed by Booth & Ainscow (2002, 2011), in the Index for Inclusion is very useful to consider and share with colleagues within school settings, exemplifying as it does the fact that 'creating inclusive cultures' must underpin any work to produce inclusive policies or evolve inclusive practices.

Thus, the leadership of SEN and inclusive practices must be seen, not as a technical activity, but, rather as a 'moral endeavour' (Brighouse, in Terzi, 2008, xi). This will

involve considerable time for reflection and collaborative discussion about the values and attitudes that colleagues have about pupils with SEN, how this impacts upon the development of their practices, and the implications of this for the pupils that they are working with, and how these fit in with a wider localised and national context for provision and practice for SEN.

When asking and answering those challenging questions, tensions will always exist, and will be exposed through critical discussion within school settings. Whilst it may not always be possible to resolve the tensions: particularly those that are apparent within national policy contexts relating to SEN and inclusion; yet it should be possible and useful to articulate some of those challenges and tensions within the school context, and to find inclusive and meaningful ways to meet those challenges within the individual school context. The leadership of SEN also requires more than providing provision for named pupils with SEN. Rather it involves much deeper development of thinking and practice in relation to complex attitudes and values that individuals may hold towards their responsibilities for meeting the needs of all pupils.

There is, therefore a need for a cultural shift in thinking and practice to occur, which moves 'SEN practices' (the writing of targets, the provision of different teaching and learning approaches, for example) away from the margins, and into the mainstream. What we need to consider are strategic ways where the best SEN practices and approaches are seen as more than just the techniques that are taken out to meet the needs of an identified pupil with an identified SEN, and instead start to consider more fully ways that those strategies can be embedded in inclusive ways to meet the diverse needs of other pupils within the school and classroom setting.

Systems such as the implementation of visual timetables, visual, auditory and multi-sensory learning approaches, specific teaching and learning approaches do not therefore just need to be delivered to 'SEN pupils' outside of the classroom. Rather, they can become part of an inclusive system for acknowledging and celebrating the diverse learning approaches of all learners, and incorporated positively into whole class teaching approaches. This reduces the marginalisation of SEN practices and therefore makes them much more accessible to all, with acknowledgement that 'procedures developed originally in special education have been taken up and adapted to the benefit of large numbers of pupils who do not fall within the ambit of special education' (Hegarty, 2007, 535). By doing this in different ways, the leader of SEN is therefore able to subtly demonstrate to colleagues that SEN practices and pupils are not 'alien' or removed from good quality teaching and learning to meet the needs of all pupils, and gently emphasise that the responsibility for meeting even the most complex needs, should remain with the class teacher who spends most time with the pupil: not the SEN leader or Special Educational Needs Coordinator, or with unqualified support staff and adults within the school setting.

To enable the effective development and leadership of SEN practices within the school context, will involve more than the leader 'doing' the SEN practice themselves (a traditional model based on a presumption that pupils with SEN require high level 'expertise', and that 'normal' teachers are not sufficiently trained to be able to

effectively meet their needs), and will instead involve a much wider reconsideration and reconceptualisation of the underlying culture and ethos of the school as a whole, including the values and attitudes that other staff may have towards the inclusion of pupils with SEN.

In some school settings and national cultures this may be a very challenging concept requiring significant cultural shifts in thinking and practice to occur. There is therefore a need to consider the implications of leadership models where one person is seen as the 'SEN expert': what does this do to the attitudes and expectations of other staff in relation to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN? For many this would provide an assumption that SEN requires a particular 'expertise' and that therefore they are 'unqualified' and unable to respond to the needs themselves, thereby effectively deskilling the individual and removing their moral responsibility for meeting the needs of all pupils within the classroom. Alternatively, staff may take the view that, as there is someone in a leadership position with responsibility for SEN, then that person should be undertaking all work in relation to pupils with SEN, again, effectively removing an obligation or responsibility for ensuring that the needs of pupils with SEN are being met on a day to day basis within their classroom setting.

A central focus for the work of the leader must therefore be a consideration of how to effectively enhance and develop the skills, knowledge and understandings that all staff have with regard to the complex relationship between SEN and inclusion. This will include specialised input about specific SEN needs, as well as support to them transfer those strategies and understanding into meeting the wider needs and differences of diverse teaching groups.

SOME KEY PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICE

As the discussions throughout this chapter have identified, due to the complex nature of conceptualisations about SEN internationally and locally, it is not possible within this international reader to provide prescriptions for practice. Instead, this section will focus on the following key principles, enabling the reader to then locate the questions and issues within their own localised context in order to stimulate thinking and reflection about the best ways to move thinking and practice forward:

- Identification of Need
- Consideration of social rather than medical models of understanding and approaching SEN
- Need for critical evaluation of the impact of any support strategies or provisions that we put in place to meet the needs of pupils with complex SEN

Identification of Need

As we have identified in the preceding discussions, the term and concept of 'SEN' is actually not well defined. There is therefore a real need for practitioners and leaders

of SEN within inclusive school settings to revisit whole staff understanding of the term within their own school setting, and the implications of that for the practice that they are developing. In some contexts, rather than being a useful phrase which helps to further understanding of the needs of the pupil, the glib phrase has simply lead to reductive practices and a 'hunt for disability' in order to get resources.

Linked to the understanding of the nature of 'SEN', within inclusive school contexts, there therefore also needs to be a broader understanding of the concept of 'need' across the school. Inclusion is not just about the inclusion of pupils with SEN, rather, it is about the effective and appropriate inclusion of ALL pupils. There therefore needs to be a recognition and acknowledgement of the fact that ALL pupils may have different needs, at different times through their school career, as a result of a wide range of factors (including changes in home circumstances, or community factors, as well as school based factors), and that every child's differing educational needs need to be identified and addressed within an inclusive school context. There is then also a need to reconsider practices embedded within the school setting, reflecting deeply on the quality of whole class teaching approaches and strategies: do they really meet the needs of all pupils, or, on reflection, are they only appropriate to a few- the 'able' pupils; the pupils well supported at home; the 'quiet' pupils? Are the teaching approaches and teaching styles meeting the needs of all pupils within the class, or is it actually the teaching approach itself that is 'breeding' SEN?

Case Study 1

The teacher failed to recognise and acknowledge that 40% of her class came from a socially deprived area of the city, and that this was having an impact upon the development of their speech and language skills. Many of the children did not have access to books within the home environment, and consequently were not developing the range of vocabulary and text awareness that their peers, coming from homes where they regularly shared literature and books with parents, were. Rather than understanding and addressing that gap, the teacher continued to deliver a curriculum that suited the pupils that had regular opportunities to share and discuss books with their parents at home. The gap between the 40% coming from socially deprived backgrounds and the rest of the class grew, until eventually the teacher decided that many of those pupils had 'SEN' and needed to be placed on the school SEN Register.

The Social Model Framing SEN

The leader of SEN within inclusive school settings will need to support teachers to see past medical labels of need and difficulty, into a broader social conceptualisation of need, where it is recognised that the child is not the 'difficulty': rather the child

experiences difficulties and barriers to learning within the context of the learning environment in which they find themselves. In this, it is helpful to consider deeply with colleagues the question of whether the child brings difficulties into the classroom, or whether the child finds those difficulties in the classroom (Hallett & Hallett, 2010). Linked to this must be a fundamental awareness that the child is a child first and foremost, and that the 'label' or description of need is secondary to that.

Case Study 2

The teacher provided excellent provision to a class of pupils with a range of complex needs. This class includes a pupil with obvious difficulties with reading and writing. The teacher has evaluated the nature of those difficulties well, and has understood that a number of other children also experience similar difficulties. She has therefore implemented a range of successful strategies, designed to meet the needs of the individual child, but delivered through whole class systems and teaching and learning approaches, which is helping both the individual child, and others to make outstanding progress in all aspects of literacy.

In due course, the individual child is assessed formally, and a diagnosis of dyslexia is given to the child. At this point, the teacher expresses concern to the leader of SEN in the school that she is not able to appropriately meet the needs of the individual, as she has no understanding of dyslexia. This teacher required support to look past the 'label' recently attached to the child, and to remember that the child has not changed since receiving the 'label'. The needs are exactly the same, and the ways that the teacher was responding inclusively and proactively to those needs remained fully appropriate.

Linked to this issue, therefore, is the need to establish clear understanding within all staff of the broader inclusive concepts of 'removing barriers to learning and participation' (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), to enable teachers to look past the difficulty as embedded within the child, and instead acknowledge and address their responsibility to find ways to enable the pupil to overcome socially constructed barriers to learning, which focus on the child as a learner first, with a label of need second. This deeper conceptualisation of the need to focus on 'removing barriers to learning and participation,' will also help inclusive practitioners to move thinking and practice beyond a narrow conceptualisation of SEN needs, and into a wider understanding of ways to celebrate learning differences and diversity.

Critical Evaluation of the Impact of Support Strategies

There is widespread acknowledgement of the fact that currently use of the term 'SEN' applied to an individual often leads to a lowering of expectations for that pupils (Hart et al, 2007; Lamb 2009; OFSTED 2010; Florian 2010; DfE 2011), with

an ‘intractable cycle formed- students are assigned membership of the group [SEN] because they are judged to possess the attributes of group membership, and they are believed to have the attributes of the group because they are members of it’ (Florian, 2010, 65). There is therefore a need to ensure, throughout any SEN practices, a sharp focus on ensuring high expectations of progress. This needs to be linked to continual monitoring and evaluations of the impact of provisions and strategies to support and meet needs for all pupils.

In this, there is therefore a need to move away from a traditional model of putting intervention and support in place for an individual, and that support or intervention then becoming a ‘lifestyle’ for the child: i.e. continually in place regardless of what impact it is having upon outcomes for that child, to an approach where interventions are only put in place where there is a clear evidence base of success, and where it is monitored and progress is demonstrated for the individual child.

Thus, discussions about meeting the needs of pupils with SEN need to move away from a focus solely on provision and placement, and instead should include a specific and detailed focus on outcomes for the pupil, with systems in place to involve the pupil and parent, as well as school staff, in discussions which evaluate the effectiveness of all support and intervention, and the impact that they are having on the achievement of wider outcomes for the pupil.

CONCLUSION

I believe that there is a real need to ‘act urgently’ (Lamb, 2009, 2) to reconsider and address the many flaws linked to a system of SEN which fails to take account of the individual, and their rights to participate fully in educational experiences with their peers, and to do this in inclusive ways which are centred around meeting the needs of the child, rather than perpetuating embedded and reductive.

In many contexts, moving forward will ‘necessitate fundamental changes to the social and economic conditions and relations of a given society’ (Barton, 2010, 90). This may involve deep cultural change. Within our schools, however, there is a need for leaders that reflect deeply, rather than accept the critical questions and discussions that have been raised within this chapter, and willing to engage in and support a principled, values driven approach to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, in inclusive ways within their school setting. For now, this may involve highly individualised small steps of progress within individual school settings, looking at where you as a school community are now, and how small steps of progress can be taken to improve the outcomes and possibilities for pupils with SEN within your school context, within the confines or limitations of local and national policy.

There is a need to ensure that the child is put at the centre of our thinking, and, returning to the opening discussions of the chapter, this is as important for every child, as it is specifically for the child with SEN. All the discussions and principles for practice discussed throughout the chapter therefore have a wider applicability and purpose, to support leaders and practitioners to critically question and develop

practice around inclusive values and ideals which more fully and meaningfully meet the needs of all pupils within their school setting. As discussed earlier, such developments in thinking and practice may best be achieved through distributed leadership practices which may be innovative and challenging within some national contexts. Yet, change is easier to achieve through the development of a culture and community of practice built upon shared vision and values, rather than the lone actions of one individual. New systems and practices may need to be developed, and these systems need to 'built upon', not the old notions of 'can we?', but upon new notions of 'how can we?' (Sakellariadis, 2010, 25).

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