

Inclusion for all?

Julie Allan, University of Stirling

Introduction

The increasing prominence given to inclusion in policy and legislation has not translated into a widespread adoption of inclusive practices in Scottish schools. Furthermore, there is a conceptual confusion surrounding what inclusion is, what it is supposed to do and for whom. This confusion has arisen partly from the somewhat naïve practice by policymakers of introducing new terminology in an effort to change the hearts and minds of teachers and partly from a failure to find out from children and young people, and their parents, what inclusion might mean to them in practice. Teachers unions have reported their members' frustration at impossibly high expectations, while disabled commentator Tom Shakespeare (2005) suggests that there is also a measure of 'hysteria,' 'moral panic' and an 'alarming backlash against the principle of inclusion'. Even Mary Warnock, the so-called *architect of inclusion*, is now questioning whether inclusion is appropriate. This chapter examines some of the conceptual confusion that surrounds inclusion and considers the challenges faced by teachers in attempting inclusive practices within current policy and legislative frameworks. The experiences of inclusion and exclusion of children and young people are reported and the extent to which they might inform future directions for inclusion policy and practice is taken up in the final part of the chapter.

From integration to inclusion

The 1978 Warnock report saw the birth of the term *special educational needs*, presented as a more positive way of viewing children than the former categories of handicaps. In the same year, the report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Scotland dumped the term 'remedial', again wishing to avoid any negative connotations. Both these documents, enshrined in the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act, as amended, gave rise *integration*, a practice of increasing the proximity of children with special needs – in locational, functional or social terms – to their mainstream peers.

By the early 1990's, serious reservations were being expressed about the value of integration as a concept and about its operation in practice. Commentators argued that integration was not concerned with the quality of children's experiences in mainstream schools, but involved what Slee (2001) calls a calculus of equity, measuring the extent of a student's disability, with a view to calculating the resource loading to accompany that student into school. Slee describes the crude mathematical formula which is used: Equity [E] is achieved when you add Additional Resources [AR] to the Disabled Student [D], thus $E = AR + D$. The replacement term, *inclusion*, endorsed by the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education and adopted in 1994 by 92 countries and 25 international organisations, was intended as a radical alternative to integration. Inclusion required schools and teachers, not only to increase the participation of children with special needs in mainstream, but also to remove the exclusionary barriers from within schools and classrooms. The radical aspect of inclusion, as a principle, is the requirement on schools to change their culture and practices to ensure children with special educational needs can participate.

Disabled activists such as Mike Oliver and Vic Finkelstein have, for several years, been calling for a fundamental shift of attention away from the disabled individual and onto the barriers which exclude or limit participation. They developed what they called a social model of disability to assist in the practice of identifying – and removing – structural, environmental and attitudinal barriers. These barriers may be environmental, structural or attitudinal. Environmental barriers arise from features of the physical location or layout of the school which prevent access or make this difficult. Structural barriers are caused by the way an institution functions and in a school this may be, for example, forms of assessment or an emphasis on writing which may exclude individuals with particular difficulties. According to disabled people, it is attitudinal barriers which are the most significant and these may include negative behaviour such as bullying or expressions of pity or of admiration. The influence of the social model of disability can be seen in the shift from integration to inclusion, but in principle only, as it has yet to be seen in operation. Inclusion was not intended to be directed at a discrete population identified as having special educational needs, but at all children. Nevertheless, we continue to see the artefact of the ‘included child’, who is distinguishable and apart from the mainstream. The shift from integration to inclusion, thus, appears to have been a process in name only in which there has been, in Adorno’s words the ‘essential illusion of change’ (Adorno, 1974, *Minima moralia*. London: NLB, p. 135), but a continuation of the practices of singling out individuals who are different and offering them education that is different. The social model has not been an easy thing for professionals to get their heads around, and many have retained their deficit orientation and preferred to concern themselves with the problems which children present in the classroom rather than examining the extent to which their own practices exclude. Mike Oliver, in a recent interview for the forthcoming book, *Doing inclusive education research* (Allan and Slee, Rotterdam: Sense), lamented the fact that the social model had remained a source of debate and not a mechanism for change.

Recently and somewhat alarmingly, Warnock has recently denounced inclusion as a huge ‘mistake’ and is urging a return to segregated provision. In a pamphlet published by the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (Warnock, 2005), she argues that the move towards inclusion was ill-advised. She claims that there is a ‘body of evidence’ (p. 35) which suggests that the experience of disabled children in mainstream school is generally ‘traumatic’ (p. 43), although she does not specify what this evidence is. Warnock contends that exclusion is inevitable even a child’s experience begins well in the primary school:

Young children can be very accommodating to the idiosyncracies of others, and teachers tend on the whole to stay with their class, and thus get to know their pupils and be known by them. The environment is simply less daunting than that of the secondary school. In secondary schools, however, the problems become acute. Adolescents form and need strong friendships, from which a Down’s Syndrome girl, for example, who may have been an amiable enough companion when she was younger, will now be excluded; her contemporaries having grown out of her reach. The obsessive eccentricities of the Asperger’s boy will no

longer be tolerated and he will be bullied and teased, or at best simply neglected (p. 35).

Melanie Phillips (9 June, 2005), in her *Daily Mail* piece, *The pitiless universe of Planet Warnock*, remarks 'Now she tells us!' but points out that this is not the first U-turn by this influential individual and cites her previous changes of mind in relation to euthanasia and human cloning. Phillips argues that inclusion has 'caused chaos and misery for countless thousands of children and their teachers and had made many schools all but ungovernable' and expresses alarm that 'a person who has played such a seminal role in literally changing the culture of this country should turn out to be such a flake.'

At the same time as Warnock has been attempting to orchestrate a dramatic U-turn on inclusion, teachers unions have expressed concerns about its viability under current conditions within schools. The President of the Educational Institute of Scotland described inclusion as 'a time bomb waiting to explode unless properly resourced', while the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers in the UK suggested that it was 'a form of child abuse.' Dismissing inclusion as 'a costly disaster' (Shakespeare, 2005), both the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers and the National Union of Teachers (Shakespeare, 2005; Macbeath et al, 2006) have indicated their unhappiness about the cost of inclusion for other pupils in the school, particularly where there is disruptive or violent behaviour from disabled pupils. This concern was echoed by a teacher, writing anonymously, who argued that the price of inclusion was too high:

Teachers just cannot spread themselves equally amongst their pupils ... Classrooms were never about learning, they are about social interaction and building confidence and about pupils becoming 'whole' people. No-one would wish to exclude any child from being part of this experience but at what cost to others when the problems are such that the learning environment is destroyed and everyone pays a price? (Primary teacher, General Teaching Council Scotland, 2004, p. 13).

Teachers' concerns about their capacity to include are understandable, given the constraints under which they are expected to function, with what they see as limited resources and high expectations, but without any clear steer from policy and legislation on how successful inclusion might be achieved.

Amid the conceptual confusion that exists around the meaning of inclusion, a strong and rigid special education paradigm, driven by a deficit or medical model, continues to dominate policies and, inevitably, classroom practice. One effect of this extremely powerful special education paradigm is the silencing of the pupils and their parents, making them mere recipients of provision. Another effect can be seen in the material resources for teachers, in the form of packages of advice and support, produced commercially and by the government, which claim to offer remedies to the 'problem' of inclusion. Handbooks, containing promises such as '60 research-based teaching strategies that help special learners succeed' (McNary, 2005, *What successful teachers do in inclusive classrooms*. London: Sage) or *Commonsense methods for children with*

special educational needs (Westwood, 2002, London: Falmer/Routledge) construct inclusion as a technical matter and assail teachers with advice about *effective* inclusion. This amounts to lists of conditions required for inclusion, recommendations about strong leadership or platitudes, for example that 'Inclusive schools will certainly be aiming for the highest possible levels of performance across the school' (HMIE, 2004, *How good is our school: Quality management in education. Inclusion and equality, Part 2: Evaluating education for pupils with additional support needs in mainstream schools*, <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosasnms.pdf>). Most problematic is the medicalised orientation to children and their deficits, tantalising encouraging new teachers to look out for children who fit a particular diagnosis. These materials reduce inclusion to a technical matter and whilst they might offer the reassuring prospect of a practical way forward for teachers, they are likely to entrench teachers' sense of failure and cause concern when children inevitably do not match the neat diagnostic categories supplied. The absence of any discussion of values in these resources for teachers is also disconcerting and furthermore, these guides offer no insights into how they and their institutions might undertake the significant cultural and political changes in thinking and practice in order to become inclusive.

Inclusion in Post-Devolution Scotland

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament offered a chance to challenge some of the existing structures and practices of education and Bryce and Humes (1999) urged Scottish politicians to 'interrogate senior officials and hold the Executive to account in ways that have not been possible before' (<http://www.strath.gla.ac.uk/synergy/policy/index.html>) One of the first Inquiries of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee focused on special educational needs, and the Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) seized the opportunity enthusiastically to undertake a radical rethink. Specifically, the Inquiry set out to examine the diversity of provision across Scotland; its effectiveness; transition arrangements; and the quality of provision and support for families of children with special needs. The Inquiry began in May 2000 and the report was published in February 2001 (Scottish Parliament 2001a). As Adviser to the Inquiry, I was able to 'guide' some of the MSPs questions and help them to make sense of the complex picture their Inquiry uncovered. As I have written elsewhere (Allan, 2003), the MSPs were impressive in their grasp of the issues and their willingness to see the bigger picture. This was reflected in their recommendations, which were endorsed during the debate on the report in Parliament; these emphasised the values which were central to inclusive practice:

- *Parents and children's views guide practice*: 'Parents and children are the key to the solution of special educational needs – not the vested interests of one profession or another, or one party-political interest or another' (Gillon, Labour, Scottish Parliament, 2001b, Col 822).
- *The approach to meeting needs is pragmatic and child centred*: 'We are not asking for a philosophical or high-level commitment to the involvement of parents: we want a response to the blood, sweat and tears – too often and too many – of parents who

are battling with the system (Stephen, Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, *ibid*, Col 772).

- *Inequalities created by conflicting policies, eg inspection and target setting, are addressed:* ‘It is important that the framework of inspection is revised to take due account of the differences in working practices’ (Peattie, Labour, *ibid*, Col 786); ‘Targets need to reflect the nature of the school population. They should not be a deterrent to the development of inclusive practices’ (*ibid*, Col 787).
- *Professionals’ need for support is recognised:* Teacher training should ensure understanding . . . ‘Teachers need time to share and prepare, to network and exchange information and to develop appropriate methods and materials for lessons’ (Peattie, *ibid*, Col 787).

The MSPs made a number of recommendations which were significant, but two are especially important. The first was to provide a new definition of inclusion as:

Maximising the participation of all children in mainstream schools and removing environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers to their participation (*ibid*, p.2).

This definition, taken from Barton (1997), distinguished inclusion clearly from integration, the latter concerned with mere proximity to the mainstream, and highlighted the need for institutions to change their culture, structures and practices.

The second important recommendation was to call for the system of recording youngsters with severe and complex needs to be reviewed. This seemed to be a significant achievement at the time and, indeed, the Scottish Executive responded swiftly and, following a series of consultations, drafted The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill. This went onto the statute in 2005, replacing the existing system of recording with a new approach. The new legislation, however, recreates exclusion on a number of counts, as key figures who have given evidence in Parliament have pointed out.

The first problematic area concerns the language used in the definitions in the legislation, the confusion and the potential exclusions that these create. When I first came across the new term to replace special educational needs, additional support needs, I was confused and, anxious about the prospect of sounding thus during a planned conversation with an education journalist, looked for clarification of the term within the Consultation on the draft bill (Scottish Executive, 2003). There was little comfort to be had:

A child or young person has additional support needs for the purposes of this Act where, for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person (p. 1).

The tautology achieved in this definition is astounding, a point which I was able to make when invited to give evidence on the Draft Bill in Parliament, along with other contributors to this section of the edited volume, Sheila Riddell and Gilbert Mackay.

Another source of confusion and potential exclusion related to Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs), the statutory document which, like its predecessor the Record of Needs, set out the education authorities' obligations and would be subject to regular monitoring and review. It appeared that only children who required support from an external agency would be entitled to a CSP. These documents would be in addition to Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) and Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and children could potentially be multiply coded with CSPs, PLPs and IEPs. Donna Martin, of Parents Awareness Forum Fife, described the angst which the uncertainty over who will and will not receive particular plans, and the support that went with it, had caused parents:

I agree that we need change, but I am very concerned about which children will get a co-ordinated support plan, which children will get a personal learning plan and where our children will fit into the system (Scottish Parliament, 2003a, Col. 443).

George Reilly, a representative of Dyslexia Scotland highlighted the space for slippage within the language of the legislation:

I do not know how a sentence that uses words such as 'practicable' and 'reasonable' would be rephrased, but I can easily foresee local authorities using such a measure to make even less provision for dyslexic children than they do at present. In the vernacular, that could be a means of copping out (2003b, Col. 391).

Concerns were also raised in Parliament about the impact that the legislation would have on teachers and on their capacity to provide support. Speaking on behalf of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Councillor the Rev Ewan Aitken voiced some fears:

We are concerned about the demands that the bill will place on teachers and other school staff, especially in the context of the national teachers agreement. Who exactly will manage each of the plans? (Scottish Parliament, 2003c, Col. 254).

These concerns were echoed by George Haggarty of the Headteachers Association of Scotland, who feared that schools could be blamed for failing to make provision:

We hope that the bill will not lead to a system that is more demanding of the school sector - we are thinking of the focus that could be put on the apparent failure of schools to deliver additional support needs (Scottish Parliament, 2003d, Col. 301).

The legislation was also criticised for making inadequate provision to secure children's rights. Their rights are acknowledged, but not guaranteed, within the legislation and Katy Macfarlane of the Scottish Child Law Centre argued that unless these rights were statutory, then adults would continue to have primacy over children:

Unless children's rights are enshrined in the legislation, children will simply not have them because, let us face it, it is much easier to take decisions about children - especially children with additional support needs - without their input. It is much easier, more efficient and much less time consuming. That is what is happening now (Scottish Parliament, 2003a, Col. 428).

George McBride of the Educational Institute of Scotland pointed to a subjugation of children's voices over those of their parents:

There are requirements for children's voices to be heard at some stages, but that is very much after the parent has exercised his or her rights (Scottish Parliament, 2003c, Col. 282).

As the Bill went through its subsequent parliamentary stages, the Scottish Executive responded to some of the criticisms made and to the advice given and introduced some amendments. These included the introduction of a duty on Education Authorities to provide additional support to certain children under the age of three and added protection in the short term for those with a Record of Needs. Whilst these were important accommodations, there remained reservations that the legislation would not adequately serve children and young people and their families.

The National Priorities, A Curriculum for Excellence - and inclusion?

Inclusion and equality, as a distinctive National Priority, is given an elevated status which is to be welcomed. This is set out as being:

to promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and lesser used languages.

Encompassing several dimensions of 'difference' within this one priority may be questionable, but the main concern here is how SEED understands inclusion and equity is to be demonstrated and with the kind of evidence it has used for this purpose. The Scottish Executive's Performance report of 2003 provided evidence on the attainment of looked after children, in the form of attainment gaps between the poorest performing 20%. It also lists the number of children receiving free school meals and these both appear to be important aspects of inclusion and equity. What is less clear, however, is how the other evidence used by SEED might indicate how much inclusion and equity was being achieved. The number of schools having adopted the New Community Schools approach (now known as Integrated Community Schools) and the number of children with special educational needs in mainstream classes, special units and a combination of the two is also presented as evidence of inclusion and equity. Whilst these figures are of interest, they may simply reflect local authority policies. They certainly tell us little about the experiences of the children in these different settings. The findings from the PISA study, which relate to pupils feeling that their teachers valued their homework, wanted them to work hard and that they 'belonged at school' are also used as evidence even though they offer little on which to base judgements about inclusion and equity. The

schools' own estimates of how well they had promoted 'equality and fairness' and had met the needs of young people with special educational needs are mostly either very good or good. These estimates are based on *How Good is Our School?* quality indicators relating to learning support, implementation of SEN and disability legislation and the placement of pupils with SEN and disabilities, and involve a comprehensive set of questions for schools, but with little opportunity for children and their parents to contribute to the evidence. One indicator relates to children and parents feeling that they can express their views, but the process of collecting evidence is teacher and school oriented and what is obtained will inevitably be limited and partial.

Although inclusion is not explicitly mentioned within *A Curriculum for Excellence*, it is made clear that the aspiration of developing 'capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society' is in respect of 'all children'. The Curriculum Review Group is explicit about their concern for children who have been under-achieving, although they do not go as far as recommending that failure and exclusion be addressed.

There is, it would seem, a genuine commitment to promoting inclusion and equality within Scottish schools and an attempt to find ways of demonstrating that this has been achieved in practice. The difficulty in finding appropriate evidence stems from the failure to consult adequately with children and young people and their families, to find out what inclusion and equity might mean to them and to work with them to find ways of evaluating it. In the next section of this chapter, the possibilities of learning from children and young people and their families are explored.

Children and young people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion

Coffield (2002), writing in the report, *A new strategy for learning and skills: beyond IOI initiatives*, suggests that young people function well in the role of citizens and bullshit detectors. They also have a highly sophisticated ability to identify barriers to inclusion and equity and the means of removing them.

The MSPs involved in the Inquiry into special educational needs were profoundly influenced by children and young people and concluded that there was much to learn from those with direct experience of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed the evidence provided by two witnesses highlighted the complexity of inclusion for the MSPs and the impossibility of arriving at an easy solution. One individual, who had moved to a school for the Deaf, told the Committee of how he had 'escaped' from his mainstream school and was now confident and happy. Another individual, however, used the same term to describe leaving a special school. The testimonies from parents also made an impact on the MSPs, who were moved by the pain and anguish that many of them had suffered trying to secure adequate provision for their children and their experience of being not listened to by professionals who claimed to know best. The MSPs' recommendations drew heavily on the perspectives of the disabled children and adults and parents of disabled children and emphasised the need to ensure that they are given opportunities to influence future policy and practice.

Research with children and young people in *Actively seeking inclusion* (Allan, 1999) suggested that inclusion was not some static, once and for all, event concerned with placement and resources, as it is constructed in policy and legislation. Rather, both pupils with special needs and their mainstream peers regarded both inclusion and exclusion as much more unstable processes, occurring in 'moments' and often switching them between being included and excluded. The research also revealed a clash of discourses between, on the one hand, the children's desires (for example to be seated beside their friends, or treated 'normally') and, on the other, the teachers' articulation of what they saw as the children's needs (for support). Tensions from these competing discourses of desires and needs often arose within the classroom but usually led to the silencing of the students' desires by the more voluble professionally based needs discourse.

The accounts of inclusion offered in this research by mainstream pupils suggested that they played a key role as 'inclusion gatekeepers' (p31), supporting the process through pastoral and pedagogic strategies, and by allowing certain pupils to break some of the informal rules about pupil interaction. The mainstream pupils appeared to want to support inclusion because of the benefits to individual pupils with special needs:

They do seem quite immature when they're just in the unit . . . I knew Graham when he was just in the unit, but ever since he's come into our class, he really has matured quite quickly. Because he used to just muck around, make quite a fool of himself. . . He used to hit the girls and tell them to shut up, but he's changed quite a bit now (p. 37).

They also noted benefits for themselves, in terms of increased understanding of difference and difficulty:

I think it helps us too to have more respect for them, because I used to think people from the special unit didn't actually have to do anything there, so I didn't have much respect (ibid.).

It's good experience for in later life, if there's someone in your job, if there's someone like Brian with Down's Syndrome comes and works with you, it's good experience because you kind of know what to expect (ibid.).

There were occasions where the mainstream pupils deliberately excluded individuals from games, activities or conversations and justified this on the grounds that the person concerned was unaware that this was going on or did not mind. The pupils who experienced this took a rather different view. On the whole, however, the mainstream pupils were highly supportive of inclusion and their responsiveness to the desires and interests of their peers provides strong grounds for optimism.

The Standards in Scotland Schools etc Act 2000, in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, requires schools to develop mechanisms to consult children on matters affecting them within the school. It places a duty on

schools to develop pupil participation and active citizenship in the school setting and as part of the schools' development planning process. This legislation is to be welcomed, but it will by no means guarantee that schools will become inclusive spaces in which children's voices are listened to and heeded. In one school where the Headteacher has embraced the children's rights agenda and engaged them extensively in decision-making, the effects have been powerful, enabling children to make an impact on how the school functions and on themselves. The children in this school were clear that at the heart of inclusion and equity were basic rights:

It doesn't matter what hair colour you have, what eye colour you have, what origin you have, what colour your skin is. It doesn't matter if a bit of your body doesn't work – you have the right to come to this school (Allan et al, 2006, *Promising rights: introducing children's rights in school*. Edinburgh; Save the Children).

Looking forward to inclusion?

Oliver and Barnes (1998) offer a vision of what an inclusive world might look like:

It will be a very different world from the one in which we now live. It will be a world that is truly democratic, characterised by genuine and meaningful equality of opportunity, with far greater equity in terms of wealth and income, with enhanced choice and freedom and with a proper regard for environmental and social continuity (*Disabled people and social policy: From exclusion to inclusion*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, p. 102).

This vision contrasts with the world of the school in which the pressures and constraints have made it difficult for teachers difficulties to work inclusively and indeed has produced exclusion for the teachers themselves. Ballard (2001, *Including ourselves: teaching, trust, identity and community* in J Allan, ed, *Inclusion, participation and democracy: what is the purpose?* Dordrecht: Kluwer) suggests that inclusion starts with ourselves and it may be that before inclusion can move anywhere near Oliver and Barnes' vision, attention needs to be given to the conditions under which teachers currently work. *Inclusion for all*, then, means those charged with delivering it as well as the recipients.

It is crucial that the voices of those who have the most direct experience of inclusion are allowed to influence any future developments of policy and practice. These include disabled children and adults, minority ethnic groups, voluntary organisations representing marginalised groups and individuals and parents. They amount to an enormous resource which, as yet, remains untapped, but which is likely to provide some much needed insights into what successful inclusion entails. If they are not allowed to play a central role in informing policy and practice and in evaluating outcomes, it is likely that there will continue to be a focus on matters of physical presence and a reliance on inappropriate evidence simply because it is more easily obtained. As well as being a missed opportunity it will perpetuate unnecessary exclusion.

References

- Allan, J (2003) Daring to think otherwise? Educational policymaking in the new Scottish Parliament. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 18 (3), 289-301
- Barton, L. (1997). Inclusive education: romantic, subversive or realistic? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1(3), 231-242.
- Slee, R. (2001a). Inclusion in practice: does practice make perfect? *Educational Review*, 53(2), 113-123.
- Scottish Parliament (2001a) Official report of special needs Inquiry, website: http://www.scottish.Parliament.uk/official_report/session-01/sor0517-02.htm
- Scottish Parliament (2001b) Official report of debate on motion S1M-1931: special educational needs, website: http://www.scottish.Parliament.uk/official_report/session-01/sor0517-02.htm
- Warnock, M. (2005). *Special educational needs: a new look*. Impact No 11. London: The Philosophy Society of Great Britain.