Rethinking inclusive education

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Rethinking inclusive education: removing the barriers

- Conceptual barriers
- System barriers
  - Standards and other global pressures
  - An expanded and expensive 'SEN industry'
  - Mental disorder
- Outcome barriers:
  - Outcomes for young people and their families
- Rethinking inclusion by:
  - Governments: Council of Europe
  - Schools: Sweden
  - Parents: Kazakhstan
  - Students: UK
- Prospects and possibilities

Conceptual barriers

- Inclusion: increasing participation of all children *and* removing barriers (which may be structural, environmental or attitudinal) to participation

- But uncertainty about what inclusion means in practice

- Teachers' confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion

- Missing voices (of children and families)

Experiencing inclusion

"Inclusion is about more than being in the same building; it is about being with others, sharing experiences, building lasting friendships, being recognised for making a valued contribution and being missed when you are not there. Inclusion is not an issue of geography. Yes, we need buildings to be made accessible, but change can happen only if people have accessible minds. We need to realise that it is a fundamental right of all children to be educated together. We all need to realise that today's children are tomorrow's future. We need to work together in partnership to secure that future"

System barriers

- An education system that insists that 'everyone do better than everyone else' (McDermott 1993, 274)
- Choice, competition and individual responsibility
- 'Calculative practices' of national testing
- The tyranny of transparency' (Strathern, 2000)
- Emphasis on proving rather than improving, forcing the fabrication of success (Ball, 2000).
- 'What works'
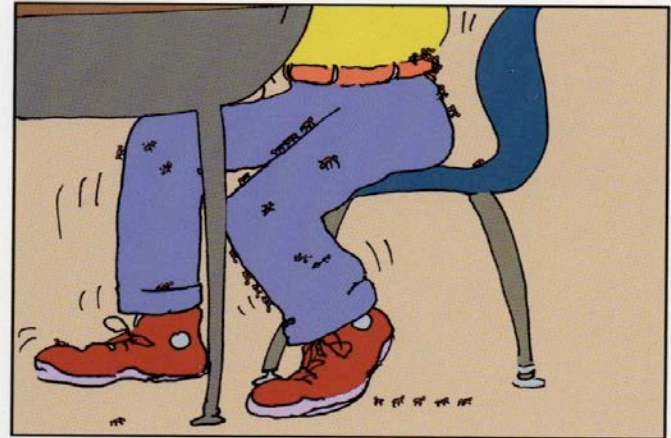
AFTER A HASTY SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT FOR BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS WERE EMBARRASSED TO LEARN THAT MARTY REALLY DID HAVE ANTS IN HIS PANTS.

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An expanded and expensive SEN industry

- 'Irresistible' (Tomlinson, 2012: 267)
- the continued need for resourcing on the basis of a diagnosis
- an increasing number and range of parents seeking such a diagnosis for their child
- teachers, under pressure to raise standards, seeking to remove troublesome pupils from their classrooms
- an expanding number of professionals and practitioners needing to increase their client base.

Mental disorder

- The rates of children whose behaviour is recognised, understood and treated as a medicalised condition, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), rather than simply as poor behaviour, are continuing to increase

- Estimates of the worldwide prevalence of ADHD are 5.29%

- There are heightened levels of diagnosis associated with 'race', social disadvantage and gender.

In Harwood, V & Allan, J (2014) *Psychopathology at school: Theorizing mental disorders in education*. London: Routledge.

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Outcome barriers

- The 'big glossies', outlining pupils' pathologies limit teachers' capacity to determine outcomes

- Inclusion presented as 'theory junk sculpture, a cacophony of incompatible explanations' (Thomas, 2007)

- Inclusion outcomes concerned (merely) with physical presence in mainstream schools

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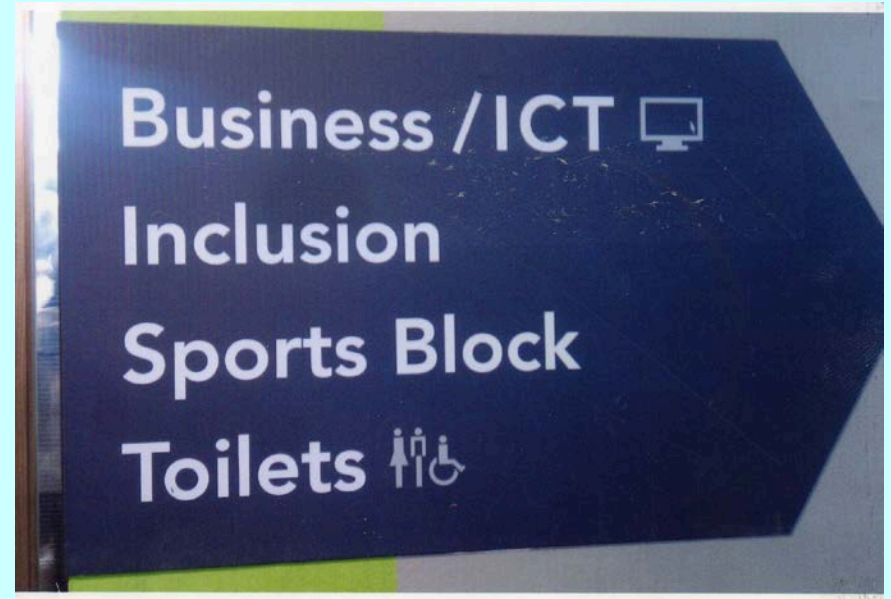
Rethinking inclusive education by governments: Dialogues about difference

- Within Council of Europe:
  - a project, *Policies and practices for socio-cultural diversity*
  - two conferences for Ministers of Education
  - several 'high level' forums focusing on diversity and inclusion for a sustainable democratic society

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Reframing policy questions

- The moment of decision is a 'moment of madness' (Derrida, 1992)
- Forgetfulness of the Others
- Aporias: double contradictory imperatives, eg World class and inclusivity; raising achievement and inclusion
- 'It's no use Socrates, I just don't know'
- Undecidability

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Reframing policy questions as aporias

- How, on the one hand, might student teachers learn to develop as autonomous professionals *and*, on the other hand, learn to depend on others for support and collaboration?

- How might new teachers work to maximise the achievement of students, with an eye on performance profiles *and* at the same time ensure that all students improve and that no student is excluded?

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Outcomes: The Communiqué

RECOGNISING that, in times of global economic crisis, European societies are facing many challenges such as increasing inequality and social exclusion, which threaten the fundamental principles of socially sustainable societies including equal opportunities and social justice…. CONSIDERING that all teachers and other education professionals are one of the essential pillars of the process of building sustainable democratic societies and need to develop the necessary transversal competences; these are interrelated knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling teachers to model democratic and participatory processes based on respect for human rights, diversity and human dignity. (Council of Europe, 2010).

Outcomes: the ministers' dialogues

- Calls for shifts eg from children's needs to children's rights; from children becoming to children being

- A willingness to experiment with difference: 'Try again. Fail Again. Fail Better' (Beckett, 1992, *Westward Ho*)

- Undertakings to promote inter-cultural dialogue in Ministers' own Member States

- Ministers using the language of aporias: "How can we raise achievement *and* promote inclusiveness?" "How can we promote mother tongue languages whilst *also* ensuring minority ethnic children are able to participate fully in their non-native language?"

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Rethinking inclusive education by schools: Raising achievement through inclusion in Essunga, Sweden

- From bottom to top of exam league tables in 3 years – through inclusion

- Special classes removed; teaching resource redistributed

- Teachers supported in developing inclusive practice

- Teachers' absolute confidence that the students will succeed

- Pushing and driving students

- An ethos of seeking help

- The motto: 'together we can be a great school' 'ringing in the ear'

- Teachers who 'seem to think it's fun to work'

Students' experiences of raising achievement through inclusion

- "I've had pretty good discipline in planning and such. The class knows which ones are good so then you had to help. Sometimes if I was finished, it was 'can you not help me a bit?' … I always enjoyed it and it was very fun to do because … you can"

- "inclusion, a victory against segregation"

- "The experience I have of people with disabilities is that the worst that can happen is you are treated as a restricted person. One should have the same opportunities and values and the conditions should be the same and one should have the same platform to stand on"

- "I think you get an insight into the different difficulties for some and the extra help that some need and you know how to handle situations in the future"

Rethinking inclusive education by parents in Kazakhstan

☐ Kazakhstan ratified UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons in 2015

☐ 'Future without Barriers'

☐ The state experts of the Psychological, Medical, Educational Commission (PMEC)

☐ Continued influence of 'defectology'

☐ PMEC placement rationales unclear

☐ 'Home' placements for children not considered 'able' to go to school

Kazakhstan parents

☐ Found it difficult to challenge diagnoses and placement decisions

☐ Strong resistance among parents of mainstream children to inclusion

☐ But activism and mobilisation of parents to start new schools, establish NGOs

☐ *Ashek Alem*

– Professionalism of the leading mothers

– Fathers' support for the activism

– Focus on the system *and* on individual needs

– Support from specialists within the State system

☐ Public campaigns to change attitudes

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Rethinking inclusive education by students:
Children's rights in school

- One school implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- 'Special Needs Observation Group (SNOG)' focused on inclusion.

- Identified barriers to inclusion

- For one student, Alistair, taking responsibility for others stopped his own deviant behaviour

- Students' initial concerns with the inclusion of disabled children; focus shifted to asylum seekers, then to children with weight problems.

Children's rights in school

- Alistair and his new self:

A: "I used to be, like, really really bad. I used to fight everybody, but now I've calmed down because I've got a responsibility to look after them.

J: Can you say more about that?

A: Well, when I started to know them I was, like, I need to show them I want to be good, cos I used to get into fights and stupid things like that but when I started to get to know them and got into the SNOG group I started my behaviour; I wanted to start again and be good.

J: Is that right?

A: Yeah, cos I didn't want everybody to know me as Alistair the bad boy. I want to be good now. So that's what I was trying to do when I went into the SNOG group.

J: Wow. So, before you used to get into lots of fights?

A yeah. Now I get into them not that much... but sometimes I'm amazing and no-one thinks that I used to fight and that, but I just kick it off again. I just want to be good but I cannae sometimes. I think I've really improved my behaviour. I used to be really bad but now I'm not that bad. I'm quite good now"

Alistair

- "I think everyone that's got a disability feels better when you treat them the same…I think that's how they feel – they just like to get on with their life… Cos they don't like being felt sorry for – just because they have disabilities doesn't mean they should be treated differently. That's what the group's all about – to make sure people don't treat each other differently because they look different. So that's what we've been doing" (Alistair, Member of Special Needs Observation Group)

Inclusion?

The old Big Brother was preoccupied with inclusion – integrating, getting people into line and keeping them there. The new Big Brother's concern is exclusion – spotting the people who 'do not fit' into the place they are in, banishing them from the place and deporting them 'where they belong', or better still never allowing them to come anywhere near in the first place. (Bauman, 2004: 132)

Prospects and possibilities

- Addressing competing policy demands
- Learning from children and families about the experiences of inclusion and exclusion
- Research on inclusion and diversity
- Mobilising the efforts and interests of key stakeholders, especially students and parents
- Teacher education and CPD that helps teachers to understand and engage with inclusion and diversity

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Rethinking inclusion: A credo for support

Throughout history
People with physical and mental disabilities
Have been abandoned at birth
Banished from society
Used as court jesters
Drowned and burned during the inquisition
Gassed in Nazi Germany
And still continue to be segregated, institutionalized
Tortured in the name of behaviour management
Abused, raped, euthanized and murdered
Now, for the first time, people with disabilities are taking
their rightful place
As fully contributing citizens.
The danger is that we will respond with remediation
And benevolence rather than equity and respect.
And so we offer you
A Credo for Support
Do Not see my disability as the problem
Recognize that my disability is an attribute
Do Not see my disability as a deficit
It is you who see me as deviant and helpless.
Do Not try to fix me
Because I am not broken.

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Support me. I can make my contribution to
The community on my own.
Do Not see me as your client.
I am your fellow citizen.
See me as your neighbour.
Remember, none of us can be self-sufficient.
Do Not try to modify my behaviour.
Be still & listen.
What you define as inappropriate
May be my attempt to communicate with you
In the only way I can.
Do Not try to change me.
You have no right.
Help me learn what I want to know.
Do Not hide your uncertainty behind
Professional distance
Be a person who listens
And does not take
My struggles away from me
By trying to make it all better.
Do Not use theories and strategies on me.
Be with me.

And when we struggle with each other,
Let that give rise to self-reflection.
Do Not try to control me.
I have a right to my power as a person.
What you call non-compliance or manipulation
May actually be the only way I can
Exert some control over my life
Do Not teach me to be obedient, submissive and polite.
I need to feel entitled to say NO
If I am to protect myself.
Do Not be charitable towards me
The last thing the world needs
Is another Jerry Lewis.
Be my ally against those
Who exploit me for their own gratification.
Do Not try to be my friend.
I deserve more than that.
Get to know me.
We may become friends.
Do Not help me.
Even if it does make you feel good.
Ask me if I need your help.
Let me show you how you can best assist me.

Do Not admire me.
A desire to live a full life
Does not warrant adoration.
Respect me, for respect presumes equity.
Do Not tell, correct, and lead.
Listen, Support and Follow.
Do Not work on me.
Work with me.

Kunc and van der Klift (1997)

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