Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs

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The National Council for Special Education was established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN Act 2004) with effect from the 1st October 2005. The Council was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs with particular emphasis on children.

Foreword

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was formally established in 2005 to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs, with particular emphasis on children. The NCSE has a statutory role to carry out research in special education to provide an evidence base to support its work.

In 2008, the NCSE sought advice from its Consultative Forum on what constitutes an inclusive education as defined within the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). The Consultative Forum is a statutory committee established under EPSEN (2004) for the purpose of assisting and advising the Council on matters relating to its functions.

A literature review was commissioned to inform this work. This publication sets out the findings from the literature review and incorporates the views of the Forum. The report outlines key concepts relating to the principles of inclusive education and descriptors of inclusive education in practice. A definition of inclusive education as proposed by the Forum is also included. The NCSE believes that this publication will be of great value to people working in the area of special education.

The Consultative Forum subsequently proposed that the NCSE would draw from this literature review to develop an inclusive education framework and self-evaluation tool for schools, which they could use on a voluntary basis, to assess and develop inclusive practices. The proposal was also in keeping with the NCSE's strategic objectives. An advisory group representative of key education and other stakeholders was established to develop the Framework in consultation with the NCSE. It is expected that this very practical resource for schools will be available in 2011.

Pat Curtin,
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Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2008, the NCSE commenced a debate on what constitutes inclusive education with its Consultative Forum in response to one of the actions contained within its Statement of Strategy 2008- 2011. The Consultative Forum is a statutory committee established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004), for the purpose of assisting and advising the Council on matters relating to its functions. The Forum was specifically asked for its views on the definition and principles of inclusive education for children with special educational needs (SEN) as set out in the EPSEN Act.

The Forum met on a number of occasions to consider the matter and a literature review on the principles and practices relating to inclusive education for children with SEN was commissioned to support the Forum's work and set it in a wider international context.

Specifically, the review sought to produce a detailed summary of existing literature on inclusion, current definitions of inclusion and a collation of the main principles and practices involved in inclusive education.

The research context

The growing impetus of inclusive education necessitates a clear definition of what inclusion is and how it is manifested in schools. The inclusive debate, philosophical and practical, must be moved forward in ways that enable schools and education systems to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their approaches to inclusion. How this is done on a daily basis presents ongoing challenges for individual teachers, pupils, parents, principals, schools and the system as a whole. This debate must be moved forward to consider the characteristics of classroom practice that could address the needs of all, including those identified as having SEN.

The Consultative Forum was of the view that special schools and special classes have a role to play in the education of some children with SEN at particular times on the premises that the placement decision is well justified and regularly reviewed. The Forum also noted the importance   linkages with mainstream settings to enhance inclusion. Hence the Forum debate and construction of this report, adopted a holistic model wherein inclusion is viewed as a dynamic system that encompasses mainstream schools, special classes, special schools and the wider community. The end product therefore groups the practices of inclusion under thematic headings rather than by the setting within which those practices takes place. This approach offers schools the distinct advantage of providing a framework of inclusive practice that can be applied equally across different settings, viewing each as a component within an overall system.

The research process

The general approach to completing the review involved two main strands. The first strand involved conducting a literature review, gathering relevant information from national and international sources on the background to inclusion, the principles that underpin inclusive education, and the various definitions of inclusion. The second strand incorporated an analysis of the information gathered during strand one and the construction of a framework of inclusion based on themes developed from the literature and from the written input from the Consultative Forum. The framework enables schools to consider the practices associated with successful inclusive education in relation to their own context.

The context of this report

The Consultative Forum presented this report to the Council of the NCSE in 2009. The Council agreed to publish the report on its website and noted the definition of inclusive education as proposed by the Forum in this report. The Council also agreed to the establishment of an interagency advisory group to develop an Inclusive Framework and self evaluation tool for schools to use on a voluntary basis to assess their levels of inclusiveness and this report part informs the development of such a Framework.

Part 1: Inclusive Education in Principle

1   Introduction

Inclusive education has increasingly become a focus of debate in discussions about the development of educational policy and practice around the world (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). The education of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities is now an established key policy objective in many countries for (Lindsay, 2007). The legislative and policy trends of the past 30 years or so have seen a clear shift away from the acceptance of the orthodoxy of segregated education for children with special educational needs. The US paved the way with the introduction of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which was subsequently amended as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990 and updated again in 1997, to promote 'whole-school' approaches to inclusion (Evans and Lunt, 2002). All EU countries now have legislation in place designed to promote or require inclusion. Some commentators (e.g. Pijl et al., 1997) have described inclusive education as a 'global agenda'. However, the definition and meaning are still the subject of much heated debate, and defining best practice is no simple task (Slee, 2001a). The inclusive education movement has been endorsed internationally by UNESCO's Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and reflects the United Nation's global strategy of *Education for All* (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). Inclusive education is now seen as central to human rights and equal opportunities and a priority policy objective of liberal democracies. Inclusion challenges all those policies and practices that serve to exclude some children from their right to education. The underpinning ideal is that all children have the right to be educated together regardless of any special need or disability. The inclusion agenda is also fuelling discussions around the roles of various specialists within the field of SEN, the purpose of those specialists, and special educational facilities that currently exist within the system (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). It should not be assumed, however, that there is full acceptance of the wisdom of inclusion. There is considerable debate about whether it is achievable, how it could be achieved. Debate also exists regarding the extent to which this involves the deconstruction of the field of special educational needs and construction of a regular system that will meet the needs of all students (Norwich, 2002).

The principle of an inclusive education system in which tolerance, diversity and equity is striven for may be uncontested; however, the way in which we achieve this is much more challenging. Inclusion is an elusive concept (Ainscow, 1999; Ballard, 1999, Slee 2000). Furthermore, in 1998, Florian suggested that while there were many definitions of inclusion put forward in multiple contexts, no single definition had been universally accepted. Ten years on from this assertion, a single definition is still elusive, which may reflect the complex nature of inclusion locally, nationally, and internationally. While the ideological concepts of inclusion are important, the needs of children and young adults in the education system and how these are met in high quality and effective settings must be paramount. There are multiple perspectives in the field of inclusion and

many complex challenges and tensions involved. The complexities and contradictions, however, make oversimplification an inherent danger in the process of reviewing and interpreting the literature (Sebba and Sachdev, 1997). In addition, Slee's review of the literature notes that authors place their own lens on what they describe or justify as practices of inclusion thereby underlining 'the dilemmas of generating a vocabulary for and theory of inclusive educational practice' (Slee, 2001a, p.114). Slee also notes,

> [T]here is no such thing as innocent reading. Words are received and put through our own interpretative sieve as we construct meanings from the page. This process is shaped by our theoretical or ideological disposition, experience and, of course, our attendant limitations. Consequently there is a need to think carefully about the language that we use' (2001a, citing Althusser and Balibar, 1997, p.114).

Slee (2000) argued that the absence of a stipulative language of inclusive education led to inclusive schooling becoming the default vocabulary for assimilation.

1.1 Including All

Originally, the inclusive education movement was focused primarily on people with disabilities and learning difficulties. This assumption can be seen across the literature and across a number of legislative documents (Ainscow et al., 2006). More recently the concept of inclusion expanded to embrace those who are at risk of marginalisation or exclusion for whatever reason. It can be thought of as an approach that seeks to address 'barriers to learning and participation', and provide 'resources to support learning and participation' (Ainscow et al., 2006). This support is seen as all activities, including those considered to be extra or co-curricular which increase the capacity of schools to respond to diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Some of these reasons are associated with ability, gender, race, ethnicity, language, care status, socioeconomic status, disability, sexuality, or religion (Gerschel, 2003). One major reason for this broader approach is that many of these factors interact or act in combination and can result ultimately in marginalisation or exclusion. Focusing on a single factor, such as disability in isolation, has the potential to lead to faulty assumptions (Topping and Maloney, 2005). In this context, policies on inclusion should not be restricted only to the education of pupils identified as having special educational needs (Booth and Ainscow, 1998). This view is reflected in Ofsted's advice to schools in the UK, in which attention is focused on a wide range of vulnerable or at-risk groups. This guidance states that educational inclusion is 'more than a concern with one group of pupils such as those who have been or are likely to be excluded from school... It is about equal opportunities for all children and young people whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment or background' (2001, p.1).

The Additional Support for Learning Act, enacted in Scotland in 2004 (Scottish Executive, 2004), also adopted this wider view of inclusion and replaces the narrower notion of special educational needs with the concept of 'additional support for the learning'. The perspective is that any or all pupils may require some form of additional support, for a variety of reasons at some point in their school career. Some authors, however, are cautious of this approach and have expressed concern that this broader concept of

inclusion may lead to the needs and requirements of pupils with special educational needs, and those of other specific groups, being overlooked (see Farrell, 2004). It is seen as important that the accumulated expertise developed in the field of special education does not get lost or dispersed in this all-encompassing approach (Norwich, 2002). The counter-argument is that children and young people are not defined only by their special educational needs; other factors such as social disadvantage, family background, gender or ethnic group are critical to understanding needs and providing for the whole child (Farrell, 2003). In support of a broader interpretation, Slee says, '[t]hat which is represented as the SEN agenda must articulate across all forms of educational exclusion to look at the requirements for inclusive schools of the future' (2001a, p.118). He suggests that, '[t]he discussion of inclusive schooling must therefore reconnect itself to the educational policy environment writ large and to an understanding of the specificity of schools and their communities' (2001a, p. 118). He also states that, 'inclusive education is not about special needs, it is about all students' (2001a, p.116).

2 History and Background to Inclusion

The concept of inclusion is far from new and has its origins in the field of special education and disability. During the 19th century, pioneers of special education argued for and helped develop provision for children and young people who were excluded from education (Reynolds and Ainscow, 1994). Much later, governments assumed responsibility for such provision. The twentieth century saw the emergence and development of the field of special education and special schools become very much the norm for pupils with disabilities. The segregated education of children according to their difficulties was seen as essential because they were deemed to be incapable of benefiting from ordinary methods of instruction (Thomas, Walker and Webb, 1998). Historically, segregated special education was supported by the medical model of disability which views the barriers to learning as being within the child. It was also bolstered by advances in psychometrics. Both of these models facilitated categorisation and separate educational provision according to the pupil's disability. This segregated approach largely went unchallenged for many years. As the field of special education expanded, it became the received and unquestioned wisdom that separate provision was the appropriate and most effective option for meeting the needs of a minority of children while safeguarding the efficient education of the majority (Pijl and Meijer, 1994).

It was only with the rise of the world-wide civil rights movement in the 1960s that the system of parallel provision began to be questioned. As people with disabilities challenged the stigmatising and limiting nature of segregated education, and gave voice to their anger and dissatisfaction, issues of equality of access and educational opportunity gained impetus and integration became centre stage. Political pressure from disability and parental advocacy groups began to change society's values and would ultimately bring legislative changes to reform education. Educators were increasingly exploring ways of supporting previously segregated groups so that they could find a place in mainstream schools. At the same time, the efficacy and outcomes of segregated education came under scrutiny. Specifically, evidence about the lack of success of segregated provision began to accumulate with such consistency that it could

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no longer be ignored (Thomas et al., 1998). Researchers also began to highlight the fact that the special school system selected children disproportionately from racial minorities and socially disadvantaged groups (see Dunn, 1968; Mercer, 1970; Tomlinson, 1981). By the end of the twentieth century there was a growing consensus, resulting from moral imperatives and empirical evidence, that inclusion was 'an appropriate philosophy and a relevant framework for restructuring education' (Thomas et al., 1998, p.4).

The current emphasis on inclusive education can be seen as another step along this historical road. It is, however, a radical step, in that it aims to transform the mainstream in ways that will increase its capacity for responding to all learners (Ainscow, 1999). The shift towards inclusion is not simply a technical or organisational change but also a movement with a clear philosophy which is rooted in the ideology of human rights:

> This view implies that progress is more likely if we recognise that difficulties experienced by pupils result from the ways in which schools are currently organised and from rigid teaching methods. It has been argued that schools need to be reformed and pedagogy needs to be improved in ways that will lead them to respond positively to pupil diversity—seeing individual differences not as a problem to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning' (UNESCO, 2005, p. 9).

2.1 The Irish Context

Like many other countries, Ireland's system of education has continually evolved over the years, and from the early 1950s a separate, segregated system of schooling for pupils classified as 'handicapped' was established. Pupils were excluded from regular school settings and sent away to special schools or institutions, which were justified by the pooling of resources and on-site access to therapy and specialised services. This parallel special school system was supported by the Report of Enquiry on Mental Handicap (Government of Ireland, 1965), which recommended that special education for mildly handicapped pupils should be provided mainly in special schools both day and residential.

International trends gradually began to influence change in Ireland, and throughout the 1980s the merits of integration versus segregation in education were strongly debated. Both schools and parents began to look to the government and the Department of Education for support in bringing about integration and ultimately inclusion. But although the Government supported integration, they also recognised the need to retain a certain amount of segregation in separate special schools. The Special Education Review Committee Report (SERC) favoured 'as much integration as is appropriate and feasible, and as little segregation as necessary' (DES, 1993, p.22). The SERC report also advocated a continuum of provision for a continuum of needs, with special schools seen as a necessity for some children.

The Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) built upon this trend towards inclusion by seeking to put into effect the constitutional right of all children to an education. Under this act schools are obliged to identify and provide for the educational needs of

all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs. Later, the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) (DES, 2004) built upon this legislation. It focused on individual education planning, educating children in inclusive settings, and the provision of a range of services, including assessments and educational support. The EPSEN Act presents a coherent policy and legislative framework for the education of children with special educational needs. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) established under the Act provides planning, assessment, service delivery, and research functions. The NCSE also allocates additional teaching and other resources available to support the special educational needs of children with disabilities. Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs) in the NCSE deal with applications for additional teaching and Special Needs Assistant support for children with special educational needs from all schools.

There is also a growing realisation that the types of children requiring additional supports goes beyond those traditionally thought of as having special educational needs. It includes Travellers, those for whom English is a second language and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. In order to facilitate and encourage the integration of this increasingly diverse population the DES (Department of Education and Science) began to improve support structures in schools for children with additional learning needs. This included the deployment of resource teachers to support all children attending schools on a fully integrated basis and special needs assistants to support class teachers. The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) was also established in 1998 and aimed to assess the needs of students and assist in the production of an individual education plan.

Within the Irish context there are unique challenges in relation to the inclusion of students with special educational needs. This is because the school system is focused on the preparation of students for state exams. In 2007 the DES published its *Post Primary Guidelines for Inclusion* (DES, 2007), which advocate a whole-school approach to inclusion and provide practical guidance on roles, responsibilities and collaboration for inclusion as well as best practice strategies at the level of the classroom for individual students. This whole-school approach to inclusive education is a significant departure from the previous model, which saw those with special educational needs educated in a segregated environment. It represents a positive step towards meeting the individual needs of every child.

2.2   Rationale

The most compelling rationale for inclusive education is based on fundamental human rights. The human rights movement resulted ultimately in the imperative to value and treat everyone equally and according to need. Education is a fundamental human right, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Children with or without disabilities have the same rights to educational opportunities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Segregated education is viewed as potentially violating the students' rights to appropriate inclusive education in their own local area. It may also limit their capacity to benefit from educational opportunities in the future.

International human rights legislation and agreements include the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994), the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000). All of these documents now firmly enshrine the right of all students to an inclusive education.

The Salamanca Statement and its accompanying Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) is arguably the single most important international document in the field of special education. It is situated firmly in a rights-based perspective on education. Although the Statement uses the term 'special needs', it asserts from the outset its commitment to:

> Reaffirming the right to education of every individual, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and renewing the pledge made by the world community at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All to ensure that right for all, regardless of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994, p.vii).

In the section *Guidelines for Action at the National Level*, the statement acknowledges that:

> Most of the required changes do not relate exclusively to children with special educational needs. They are part of a wider reform of education needed to improve its quality and relevance and promote higher levels of learning achievement by all learners' (UNESCO, 1994, p.21).

This statement also urged governments to:

- give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties

- adopt, as a matter of policy, the principle of inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994).

In the statement, the claim is made that, 'regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving an education for all' (UNESCO, 1994, p.ix). It goes on to suggest that regular schools provide an effective education for the majority of children and improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the entire education system. There is, however, no indication of the most effective approach for those children who are not part of the 'majority'.

Vayrynen, in discussing the Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action, notes that 'it provides the clearest and most unequivocal call for inclusive education' (2000, para. 3). Six years after the initial Statement, however, Vayrynen identified a number of major challenges to the development of inclusive education systems. Some of these are as follows:

- Despite adopted policies on inclusive education, all countries struggle with the management and implementation of an education system that truly caters for diversity.

- Funding mechanisms seem to be the key predictor to the set-up for the provision targeted to address the diversity of learning needs.

- Curricula should be flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of learning styles and pace.

- As inclusive education systems require new skills and knowledge from teachers, teacher education should be revisited and designed to support inclusion.

- The importance of community and parental involvement in education is recognised, although a lot needs to be done in order to make their participation real.

- Structures or procedures to facilitate multi-sectoral collaboration need to be developed.

- Attitudes are the greatest barrier, or the greatest asset, to the development of inclusion in education.

- Education for All means 'ALL, not all, BUT …' (Vayrynen, 2000, para. 4).

In the US, the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) found substantive problems with the segregation of students with disabilities. It also stressed the importance of educating all students within regular education programmes. One key finding was stated as follows:

> This Commission is deeply concerned that many children with severe disabilities, including those children with autism or emotional disturbance, are relegated to segregated educational settings simply because of their disability. Despite decades of successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools . . . there are children with disabilities who are still segregated simply because their disability creates difficulties in providing integrated educational experience' (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, p.42).

2.2.1 Council of Europe, Political Declaration (2003) and Action Plan (2006)

In May 2003, the Council of Europe further endorsed the move towards inclusion by recommending that efforts should be made to give children with disabilities the opportunity to attend a mainstream school if it is in their best interests. In the Council of Europe's Disability Action Plan (2006), one of the main objectives is, "to ensure that disabled people have the opportunity to seek a place in mainstream education by encouraging relevant authorities to develop educational provision to meet the needs of their disabled populations" (p.16). The plan also recommended that effective, alternative support measures, that are consistent with the goal of inclusion, be put in place for cases where such provision in the mainstream cannot be met.

2.2.2 United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasises the role of government in providing an inclusive education for all learners, at all levels of the education system. The Convention also places the responsibility for education with the government so that:

- people with disabilities are not excluded from the mainstream of education as a result of their disability

- people with disabilities can access education on the same basis as their peers in their own community

- provision of reasonable accommodation support to facilitate this access

- support is available within the mainstream to facilitate effective teaching and learning

- effective individualised support is available to maximise social, emotional and academic progress that is consistent with the goals of inclusion (UNICRPD, 2006, Art. 24).

Although, in the context of inclusion, children's rights are seen as paramount, Lindsay reminds us that:

> Inclusion is the policy framework. What is at issue is the interpretation and implementation of inclusion in practice. We need to ensure that there is a dual approach focusing on both the rights of children and the effectiveness of their education. There is a need to develop beyond concerns about inputs and settings to a focus on experiences and outcomes and to attempt to identify causal relationships' (Lindsay, 2003, p. 10).

The issue of cost effectiveness is a further rationale for an inclusive approach to education. A World Bank study identified a growing body of research indicating that inclusive education is not only cost-efficient but also cost-effective (Peters, 2003). Dyson and Forlin (1999) found that many countries had come to realise that the multiple systems of administration, organisational structures and services created by special schools might be a financially unrealistic option for retention over the long term. The cost of education is a critical issue for all school systems and needs to be considered when making decisions about various levels of provision. Inclusive education is not about placing students in mainstream classes to save money, it is about optimising learning environments by providing opportunities for all learners to be successful. It is also about providing a range of resources such as teaching materials, equipment, additional personnel and differentiated approaches to teaching. Often this provision can be made within the regular school system with minimal adjustment. UNESCO indicated that in countries where resources are scarce, some cost-effective measures have been identified. These include:

- utilising a trainer-of-trainer model for professional development

- linking university students in pre-service training institutions with schools

- converting special needs schools into resource centres to provide expertise and support to clusters of mainstream schools

- building capacity of parents and linking with community resources

- utilising students themselves in peer programmes (UNESCO, 2005).

It may be useful to consider these suggestions within systems as we move towards an inclusive system. The World Bank study also highlighted the issue of increased achievement and performance for all learners, not just those with additional and special needs. Over time, this increase in performance and achievement allows all students, including those with disabilities or special needs, to become productive and successful citizens, potentially reducing the cost to services in the future.

One of the key arguments in favour of inclusion is that any exclusionary practices are morally unacceptable. It is argued that exclusion in any form may have damaging effects on individuals and groups within society. In cases where exclusion is purported as being, 'for their own good', it is noted that it can still result in the lessening of the importance of some students in social terms. The individual or group can become overlooked and come to be treated less favourably by society. As noted earlier, the literature suggests that everybody benefits from inclusion. Advocates suggest that there are many children and young people who do not 'fit in' or who perceive themselves as 'not fitting in', and that an inclusive school is one where everyone is welcome and everyone 'fits in'. Inclusion, therefore, remains a controversial concept in education because it relates to educational and social values, as well as to our sense of individual worth.

2.3 Legislation

In Ireland, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) provides for the education of pupils with special needs alongside their peers in an inclusive environment, wherever possible. In the UK, inclusion is underpinned by the 1996 Education Act and by the more recent Special Needs and Disability Act (2001), which strengthened the rights of pupils with statutory statements of special educational need to be educated in mainstream schools. Parallel legislation in Northern Ireland such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO, 2005) provides similar impetus for inclusion and applies anti-discrimination legislation to schools for the first time. Lindsay (2007) asserts that policy has been driven by a concern for children's rights; specifically, the concern that segregated education is a form of discrimination and, "children's rights are compromised by special education, isolated from typically developing peers, mainstream curricula and educational practices" (2007, p.2).

3 Defining Inclusion

Despite the apparent convergence of international policy and legislation around the inclusion agenda, the definition and meaning of inclusive education is still the subject of much heated debate and defining best practice is no simple task (Slee, 2001a). The value of aiming for the development of an inclusive education system in which tolerance, diversity and equity are striven for is uncontested; the means by which this is to be achieved is much more controversial. Dissatisfaction with progress towards inclusion drove demands for more radical changes in many countries (Slee, 1996). In developed countries, however, it is easy to forget that an estimated 115-130 million children across the globe do not attend school at all. Just as alarming are the countless others within

the school system who are being excluded from quality education or who are dropping out of school early (UNESCO, 2005). Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on the educational rights of those groups of learners who may be vulnerable or at risk of exclusion or underachievement.

As noted earlier, inclusion appears to be a grand and elusive concept. The fact that a single accepted definition has yet to gain currency reflects its complex and contested nature (Florian, 1998). Inclusive education looks at both the rights of students, and how education systems can be transformed to respond to diverse groups of learners. It emphasises the need for opportunities for equal participation for any students with disabilities or special needs in the education system, preferably in a mainstream environment. Despite many developments, Ainscow et al. (2006) contend that the development of inclusive practices in schools is not well understood.

The concept of inclusion replaced the earlier term 'integration', which was used in the 1980s to refer to the placement of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. As Farrell and Ainscow (2002) point out, the problem with defining integration solely in terms of placement is that it tells us little about the quality of the education received in that context. The integration movement was based on an assimilation model. Its emphasis was on providing supports to individual students to enable them to 'fit in' to the mainstream programme without any changes being made to that programme. In contrast to integration, inclusion is about the pupil's right to participate fully in school life and the school's duty to welcome and accept them (British Psychological Society, 2002,). The British Psychological Society's definition of inclusive education is centred on the following concepts:

- rejecting segregation or exclusion of learners for whatever reason, whether it be ability, gender, language, care status, family income, disability, sexuality, colour, religion or ethnic origin

- maximising the participation of all learners in the community schools of their choice

- making learning more meaningful and relevant for all, particularly those learners most vulnerable to exclusionary pressure

- rethinking and restructuring policies, curricula, culture and practices in schools and learning environments so that diverse learning needs can be met, whatever the origin or nature of those needs (British Psychological Society, 2002, p.2).

The term 'inclusion' shifts the focus from the child to the school. Unlike integration, which does not specify what should be done, inclusion is used to describe the extent to which a child with special educational needs is involved as a full member of the school community with full access to and participation in all aspects of education. 'Inclusion' better conveys the right to belong to the mainstream and a joint endeavour to end discrimination and to work towards equal opportunities for all (CSIE, 2002).

Within the current literature, definitions of inclusion vary in their focus. Some emphasise rights, others emphasise values and community while others focus on school capacity to cater for difference.

In 2001, the Department for Education and Skills in the UK stated that:

> [Inclusion is] about engendering a sense of community and belonging and encouraging mainstream and special schools and others to come together to support each other and pupils with special educational needs'(DfES, 2001a, p.3).

Some recent definitions of inclusion have emphasised the issue of full participation and the overcoming of a history of exclusion by identifying and eliminating barriers to learning and addressing exclusionary pressures. *Index for Inclusion*, for example, defines inclusion as:

> The processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.3).

The Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education presents a further view of inclusive education as:

> All children and young people – with and without disabilities or difficulties – learning together in ordinary pre-school provision, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support. Inclusion means enabling all students to participate fully in the life and work of mainstream settings, whatever their needs. There are many different ways of achieving this and an inclusive timetable might look different for each student' (CSIE, 2002, p.2).

In his keynote address at the Inclusive and Supportive Education Congress (ISEC) Conference in August 2005, Mel Ainscow, one of the co-authors of *Index for Inclusion* stated that, 'inclusion is a process and not a state' (Ainscow, 2005). This emphasis, therefore, is on the dynamic and evolving nature of inclusive educational practices. It also reframes inclusion as an issue of school reform and school development rather than a process of fitting children into existing structures. We see the same reference to process in Sebba and Sachdev's description of inclusive education:

> [Inclusive education is] a process involving changes in the way schools are organised, in the curriculum and in teaching strategies, to accommodate the range of needs and abilities among pupils. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (Sebba and Sachdev, 1997, p.2).

UNESCO states,

> Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. … [As such,] it involves a range of changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the

appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children' (UNESCO, 2005, p.13).

All of these explanations present a considerable challenge to individuals and systems alike. A study on developing inclusion in schools defined inclusion as 'an approach to education embodying particular values [that was therefore] concerned with all learners and with overcoming barriers to all forms of marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement' (Ainscow et al, 2006, p.5). They summed up the situation by saying,

> Inclusive practice requires significant changes to be made to the content, delivery and organisation of mainstream programmes and is a whole school endeavour which aims to accommodate the learning needs of all students. The discourse on inclusion has moved beyond simply focusing on the response to individuals to explore how settings, policies, cultures and structures can recognise and value diversity' (Ainscow et al, 2006, p.2).

Florian provides a useful summary of a range of definitions of inclusive education and their various sources. This information is outlined in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Definitions of inclusive education

Definition	Source
Being with one another, how we deal with adversity, how we deal with difference	Forest and Pearpoint, 1992
A set of principles which ensures that the student with a disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the school community in every respect	Uditsky, 1993
A move towards extending the scope of 'ordinary' schools so they can include a greater diversity of children	Clark et al, 1995
Schools that deliver a curriculum to students through organisational arrangements that are different from those used in schools that exclude some students from their regular classrooms	Ballard, 1995
Schools that are diverse problem-solving organisations with a common mission that emphasises learning for all students	Rouse and Florian, 1996
Full membership of an age-appropriate class in your local school doing the same lessons as the other pupils and it mattering if you are not there. Plus you have friends who spend time with you outside of school	Hall, 1996
The process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricula organisation and provision	Sebba, 1996
Schools that are accepting of all children	Thomas, 1997

(Florian, 2005, p.31.)

Florian also presents Inclusion International's (1996) definition as the only one which transcends the notion of normalisation as it underlines participation rather than normalcy. According to this definition,

> Inclusion refers to the opportunity for persons with a disability to participate fully in all of the educational, employment, consumer, recreational, community, and domestic activities that typify everyday society'(Florian, 2005, p.32).

Florian goes on to say that, 'opportunity to participate implies active involvement and choice as opposed to the passive receipt of a pattern or condition that has been made available' (2005, p.32).

Many definitions of inclusion have been advanced and presented here, as inclusion has been defined in a variety of ways. In many publications, an explicit definition is omitted and the reader is left "to infer the meanings it is being given for themselves" (Ainscow et al., 2006, p.14). The variations in definition and interpretation suggest that the meaning of inclusion may be contextual and that it will take different forms depending on the situation (Florian, 2005). This means that the demands for inclusive education will be different according to perspective of the individual or group concerned. It also means that inclusion will not look the same in every school even when it is argued on the basis of human rights. Ainscow et al (2006) suggest that in order to be able to assess the extent to which inclusion is happening in our schools, some decisions around how the term should be used must be made. They developed a typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion as follows. These are outlined in table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2 Six ways of thinking about inclusion

1. *Inclusion as a concern with students with a disability and others categorised as 'having special educational needs'* They question the usefulness of this approach as categorisation can act as a barrier to the development of a broader view of inclusion. They do acknowledge, however, that the allocation of resources is related to this categorical approach.
2. *Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion* The connection here to 'bad behaviour' is noted as being problematic.
3. *Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion* This reflects the trend of inclusion being seen more broadly in terms of overcoming discrimination against vulnerable groups.
4. *Inclusion as developing the school for all* This is about a mutually sustaining relationship between schools and communities that recognises and values diversity.
5. *Inclusion as 'Education for All'* This is connected to the UNESCO (2000) declaration on 'Education for All'.
6. *Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society* The previous five ways of thinking about inclusion indicate meanings given to inclusion by different people in different contexts. This is a broad articulation underpinned by values.

(Ainscow et al, 2006.)

Ainscow et al. (2006) conclude that different groups in different contexts think of inclusion differently and, again, that there is no single, consensual definition. There are, however, some common features that have been identified in schools where inclusion is reported to be thriving. Giangreco (1997, cited in Florian, 2005, p.32) identified these features as follows:

- collaborative teamwork
- a shared framework
- family involvement
- general educator ownership
- clear role relationships among professionals

- effective use of support staff
- meaningful Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- procedures for evaluating effectiveness
  (Giangreco, 1997, cited in Florian, 2005, p.32).

3.1 Inclusion or Full Inclusion?

As noted above, a single acceptable definition of inclusion has not been fully articulated. Some groups, especially in the US, differentiate between inclusion and full inclusion. Advocates of full inclusion support the notion that the presence of all students with disabilities in regular classes will force an end to the type of traditional instructional practices they oppose. Sapon-Shevin (2000-1, p.38) claims, '[w]hile placement options such as special classes or schools exist, educators will not have to address the restructuring of the system to meet the needs of all children. Where alternate placements are maintained, students who challenge the existing system or who do not 'fit in' are simply removed from the mainstream, placed elsewhere, and the system does not have to change' (2000-1, p.38). She suggests that the belief that some students cannot be included is based on the false assumption of a lock-step curriculum. A lock-step curriculum is one in which all students complete the same lessons at the same time. According to Sapon-Shevin, the world is an inclusive community; therefore, it is very important for children to grow within communities that represent the kind of world in which they will live when they finish school.

Furthermore, Rogers claims,

> The schools that most readily adopt the concept of inclusion are generally those that already embrace instructional practices which are designed to provide challenging learning environments to children with very diverse learning characteristics. Such practices include heterogeneous grouping, peer tutoring, multi-age classes, middle school structures, "no-cut" athletic policies, cooperative learning, and the development of school media centers which stimulate students' electronic access to extensive databases for their own research' (Rogers, 1993, p.4).

Phi Delta Kappa's Center for Evaluation, Development, and Research (1993, Research Bulletin, 11), provides the following definitions, in the attempt to clarify the difference between inclusion and full inclusion:

> *Inclusion* is a term which expresses a commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom attended by their' typical peers. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). Proponents of inclusion generally favour newer forms of education service delivery.

Full inclusion means that all students, regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in a regular classroom/programme full time. All services must be taken to the child in that setting.

There are also those who support inclusion and believe that the child should always begin in the mainstream environment and be removed only when appropriate services cannot be provided in the regular classroom. This suggests something of a continuum of inclusion which does not sit comfortably with those who support *full* inclusion. Bowe (2005) argues that inclusion, but not necessarily full inclusion, is a reasonable approach for most students with special needs. He cautions, however, that for some students, for example those with severe autism spectrum disorders or many who are deaf or have multiple disabilities, even regular inclusion may not offer an appropriate education. Stainback and Stainback (1995), by contrast, propose that placement in general classrooms in the US is a civil right. These advocates believe that schools should be restructured so that full inclusion can be provided for all students with special needs. It is noted that in many countries the distinction between inclusion and full inclusion seldom features in discussions.

It is apparent that there are advocates on both sides of the inclusive approach. According to Kauffman (1989), inclusion is driven by an unrealistic expectation that money will be saved. He argues that trying to force *all* students into the inclusion mould is just as coercive and discriminatory as trying to force *all* students into the mould of special education. At the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that *all* students belong in the regular classroom, and that *good* teachers can meet the needs of all students, regardless of what their needs may be. Gains (2008), reiterates his view presented in 2000, that while supporting the concept of inclusion in principle, he does not share the simplistic view that it is a 'one-off, cure-all solution'. He originally presented the notion of 'responsible inclusion' which advocated a flexible approach with a greater range of alternatives for students, and nothing that has happened in the intervening years appears to have altered his view. He also suggests that there is an increasing discontentment in the UK regarding the government's push for inclusion. He contends that the full inclusion scenario is politically driven and accompanied by 'expansive and over-blown rhetoric but short on rigorous thought, debate, or evidence' (2008, p.20). Gains also contends that, at least in the UK, '[f]ull, comprehensive inclusion is simply not feasible, either now or, I would argue, ever' (2008, p.21). He claims that we are all united in wanting the widest possible choice for our pupils with special needs but that the 'one size fits all' model has been tried and has failed.

Bunch, on the other hand, argues that we should not accept that difference in learning ability should mean segregation of so many young people. He states that, '[i]t simply is preferable and better to educate all students together. All the teachers teaching inclusively today prove that inclusion is possible and practical' (1999, p.1). For him, the word inclusion means that, 'all children have the right to go to the same school attended by their brothers, sisters, and neighbourhood friends [and furthermore] ... [p]lacement in a programme should depend on the needs of individual children for a natural environment, and not on some form of quasi-medical diagnosis or psychological measurement' (1999, p.4).

He proposes the following approach to inclusion :

- we learn to talk by talking
- we learn to read by reading
- we learn to write by writing
- we learn to include by including
  (Bunch, 1999, p.9).

3.2 Controversies, Dilemmas and Debates

For advocates of *full* inclusion, the values of social justice and equity are foremost (Booth, 1996). The human rights perspective, driven partially by ideological considerations, challenges much of the current thinking in the special needs field, while at the same time offers a critique of the practices of mainstream education (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). Advocates ask not only why children with special needs or disabilities cannot be included in the mainstream, but also why so many schools do not appear to be teaching many children successfully (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). To focus solely on individual difficulties or special needs is to miss the point – the continuing emphasis on individual deficits distracts attention from structural and attitudinal barriers within schools and society at large (Avramidis, 2005). This approach, however, cannot avoid dilemmas and contradictions. While the Salamanca Statement advocated inclusion in mainstream education for the majority of children, it did admit the possibility that the proposed system of schools for all might not be effective for a minority of pupils. As Lindsay (2003) points out, there are implicit tensions inherent in the Statement, namely, tensions between inclusion for the majority of children and the needs of a minority and the implications of these tensions for shaping provision.

3.2.1 Rights and conflicts

There are also potential conflicts of rights involved in the pursuit of inclusion. For example, the relationship between parental choice and children's rights may present difficulty. There may well be situations where the parents' and the child's wishes are not always compatible. For example, parents may prefer a mainstream class; students for whom interaction with peers who understand their issues is paramount may prefer segregated settings. The students may not wish to be the only ones in the school who have a particular condition or difficulty. Conflicts may arise as we attempt to balance these rights. Farrell (2000) emphasises the very real nature of these difficulties that arise from a model of inclusion based solely on human rights.

These tensions in education policy have led to considerable debate, and there are strongly held views on both sides (Evans and Lunt, 2002). Some commentators have been critical of the 'full' or 'purist' model of inclusion, advocating instead a more pragmatic approach and what has been described as a more 'responsible' or 'cautious' form of inclusion (Hornby,1999; Wilson, 2000). Proponents of this viewpoint argue that individual pupils have an overriding entitlement to appropriate education and that there is a small minority of children whom policy makers in most countries agree may be very difficult to include in mainstream schools (Evans and Lunt, 2002; Farrell, 2000).

Here there is a tension between the values of inclusion and the values of individuality. Norwich (2002) argues that in dealing with exceptional or significant differences, we need to find a way of balancing multiple values, such as the stigma or labelling versus access to provision, or participation in a common curriculum versus learning programmes relevant to individual needs. The positive acknowledgement of these dilemmas is a step forward; resolving these dilemmas and balancing multiple values require an acceptance of some degree of 'ideological impurity' (Norwich, 2002).

3.2.2   Equity versus excellence

There are other contradictions and tensions in current educational policy which place limits on progress towards inclusion. Alongside the drive for inclusion in many countries, there has been an increasing emphasis on academic excellence, school competitiveness, school choice and academic attainment, which is underpinned by a marketplace philosophy of education (Evans and Lunt, 2002). This trend has been described as the subjugation of the equity agenda to the imperative of competitive performance (Rose, 2001). Judging school success on the basis of academic results and pupil achievement alone may run counter to notions of inclusion and can discourage teaching practices that allow for student diversity (Ainscow et al., 2006; Howes et al., 2005). Many schools have become concerned that their academic performance and reputation might be damaged if they were to become 'too' inclusive (Dyson and Millward, 2000). In some educational jurisdictions, this perspective persists despite research findings that show only a very small statistically negative relationship between inclusivity and attainment which is largely explained by the fact that many of the most inclusive schools are in areas of social and economic disadvantage (Dyson et al., 2004).

Where post-primary provision is based on a system of academic selection, it may also be viewed as far from inclusive (Abbott, 2006). This selection can result in teachers concentrating on a narrow curriculum and a small group of academically able pupils and a sense that less consistent attention (Gallagher and Smith, 2000) is paid to the needs of other children. Human variations and differences occur naturally and must be viewed as a valuable part of our society. This should be reflected and celebrated in our schools. An inclusive school must put flexibility and variety at its core. This should be evident in the structure of the school, the content of the curriculum, the attitudes and beliefs of staff, parents, and pupils, and the goal should be, 'to offer every individual a relevant education and optimal opportunities for development' (UNESCO, 2005, p.16).

3.2.3   Inclusion, labels and categories

Historically, a range of labels has been applied to individuals who have disabilities or additional needs. The language used has, however, changed over time, mirroring changes in attitudes to difference and disability. The terminology and language employed in various jurisdictions plays a key part in representing and shaping attitudes, policies and provision. Hastings et al (1993) point out that there are labelling cycles; terms once seen as progressive come to be interpreted as discriminatory or derogatory and are replaced by new labels. Some recommend the rejection of 'labels' (e.g. Soder,

1992) but this approach has been criticised on the basis that it amounts to a denial of all differences (Norwich, 2002).

Jones describes the dilemma in these terms:

> On the one hand, we are encouraged to work towards 'inclusion'; on the other, the language of SEN, rooted in the medical model of disability, legitimises the idea that some children are 'normal' while others are 'special'. As a consequence, groups and individual children are assigned specific labels, often leading to special or segregated provision' (Jones, 2004, p.11).

While the language of special educational needs appears to run counter to the notion of inclusion, the reality is that systems for securing resources and extra provision are still largely tied to labels and categories of need. Practitioners need to acknowledge these tensions and to recognise that special or additional learning needs can arise from a complex interaction of many factors, both internal and external and may not require a specific label in order to be recognised (Jones, 2004). However, Ainscow et al. (2006, p.17) take the view that, 'categorisation processes, and the practices and language associated with them, act as barriers to the development of a broader view of inclusion". As Ballard states,

> If children are to be genuinely included in the mainstream of education, this cannot involve special education thought and practice. Categorising and naming children as 'special' identifies them as different from others and different in ways that are not valued in present mainstream schools and society' (Ballard, 2003, p.8).

3.2.4 Special schools, units and classes

Advocates of inclusion believe that students should not be removed routinely from mainstream classrooms to receive assistance because doing so highlights their disabilities, disrupts their education and violates their rights (Putnam, 1998). In some jurisdictions, research has not been able to demonstrate that removal to a special class or school delivers any significant benefits for students (Baker et al, 1994). Students in special units attached to mainstream schools or those who are withdrawn for individual support may not be viewed as being truly included. This can isolate students and can perpetuate ongoing forms of segregation (Jupp, 1992).

Ainscow et al (2006) claim that the 'rights' perspective invalidates any argument that some children's needs are best served in any kind of special setting. Norwich (2002) pointed out that segregation to special schools involves a relatively small number of students (1.3 per cent in England) and yet it exerts a disproportionate influence within the education system. When, as is the case in some schools in England, some 40 per cent of the mainstream school population is reported to have some form of special or additional need, Ainscow et al (2006) suggest the weight of the discussion should rest within the mainstream and its capacity to address the needs of these students. Although the retention of separate special school provision does not sit easily with some people in their efforts to promote inclusion, the phasing out of this parallel provision is unlikely

in the immediate future (Norwich, 2002; Lindsay, 2003). While it is not the intent here to argue for or against special schools, units or classes, their future role and the role of the teachers within these contexts must be part of any discussion on inclusion. It is understood that a study on the role of special schools is underway currently through the NCSE. The results of this should be considered as the Forum moves forward with its deliberations on inclusion.

A recent study of teachers from special schools in Northern Ireland found that the move towards inclusive schools has not led to a reduction in the number of special schools (DENI, 2006). This is in spite of increased numbers of students with special and additional needs being present in mainstream classes. It may be due to an increase in the identification of students with special needs in the mainstream and suggests that there has been little movement from special to mainstream. There was very strong support for the view that the special schools have an important role to play in the education of some groups and should, therefore, be maintained. Strong opinion was expressed that the needs of students with more severe learning difficulties could not be met in a mainstream school. Most of the respondents felt that special schools should be located alongside mainstream schools and that the word 'special' should be dropped from their title.

The report states,

> Many who work in special schools expressed reservations regarding the suitability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils who experience more severe learning and behavioural difficulties and who require higher degrees of adult support. Mainstream schools will require support to ensure that pupils have appropriate access to the statutory curriculum and that they make suitable progress' (DENI, 2006, p. 10).

The report also suggests that co-ordination of special education provision across both mainstream and special school sectors will require common procedures and criteria for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of provision, and review of progress. It is interesting to note that in 1989, the New Zealand Education Act introduced a significant move to protect "the rights of students with disabilities to enrol in a school of their choice" (Kearney and Kane, 2006, p.206). A parental challenge involving their right to choose a separate setting for their child, rather than the mainstream, resulted in a High Court judgement in favour of the parents. The decision to disestablish special classes and separate schools was also deemed to be unlawful (Varnham, 2002).

4 Evidence for Successful Inclusion

International policies supporting inclusion have been driven mainly by moral and human rights imperatives, but it is important to gather an evidence base for the effectiveness of inclusive education. Lindsay (2007) makes the point that it is important to separate the issues of rights and values from the issue of the relative effectiveness of different educational approaches. Both are important but the issue of efficacy rests on empirical evidence whereas values are not open to evaluation. This view is contested by adherents to the rights position (e.g. Booth, 1996; Gallagher, 2001) who maintain that

research evidence is not critical and may even be irrelevant because the central issue is one of rights rather than evidence. Nevertheless, the move to inclusion needs to be monitored, especially since evidence concerning the benefits of inclusion is not nearly as clear-cut as earlier research promised (Thomas et al, 1998).

Indeed, researching inclusive practice is fraught with problems due to the lack of an operational definition of inclusion and methodological difficulties concerning non-comparability of samples receiving different types of education and in different types of inclusive contexts. Lack of consistency across studies makes comparisons difficult and has led some to conclude that the research concerning inclusion has limited validity (OECD, 1994). Despite these difficulties, there have been a number of reviews which have examined the cumulative evidence from studies evaluating inclusion.

Baker et al (1995) reported a small-to-moderate positive benefit of inclusive education on social and academic outcomes of students with special needs. Similarly, Lipsky and Gartner (1996), in a review of 20 studies, found academic and social benefits associated with inclusion. In the US, a longitudinal study which tracked the progress of 8,000 young people showed that students with physical disabilities who received a mainstream education were 43 per cent more likely to be employed after leaving school than those who had been in segregated schooling (Woronov, 2000). The research evidence, however, is not unequivocal; a review of eight model programmes found evidence of variable effectiveness and concluded that outcomes of inclusive programmes were relatively unimpressive given the significant investment of resources (Manset and Sammel, 1997). Other reviews during the 1990s failed to produce clear evidence for the superiority of inclusive education (e.g. Hegarty, 1993; Sebba and Sachev, 1997). Lindsay concluded that the evidence for the effectiveness of inclusion, by the end of the twentieth century, 'might best be described as equivocal, although equally, there was little evidence for the superiority of special education (2007, p.7).

Positive effects of inclusion are reported in several studies. A US study of students with learning difficulties comparing a 'pull out' model of support with inclusion, found that the inclusion group did better on several academic measures (Rea et al., 2002). This successful model involved close planning and collaboration between teachers. In Norway, Myklebust (2002) compared two groups of second-level students with general learning problems over a three-year period. Overall, those taught in ordinary classrooms made better progress than those taught in small groups; at the end of the three years, 40 per cent of the latter were academically on schedule with their peers. The opposite effect was found for dropout rates. Lindsay (2007) suggests that there may be a complex effect where special class support was beneficial in protecting against school dropout in the first year, but was less effective for academic progress.

Other studies have found that for students with and without disabilities, inclusive classes are associated with higher levels of academic achievement (Baker, Wang and Walberg, 1994; Moore, Gilbreath and Maiuri, 1998; Peterson and Hittie, 2002). Orfield and Gordon (2001) note that for students currently in our schools to become effective leaders in an intercultural society, their education must provide opportunities for engaging with students with diverse abilities and characteristics. Diversity represented in inclusive

classrooms provides a stimulus and challenge to deep thinking that occurs less in segregated classes (McLaughlin and Rouse, 2000).

Some research studies have had mixed results. Karsten et al. (2001) compared at-risk children in special or regular classrooms and found no differences according to placement on either academic or psychosocial development. Another Dutch study found that students with behavioural problems in mainstream settings were more likely to be socially excluded than peers without special needs (Monchy et al., 2004). Fredrickson and Cline (2002), reporting across a number of studies, found that there was no evidence that segregated education fosters social or academic progress over mainstream school education. They also found that some studies show advantages to inclusive placements if accompanied by an appropriate individualised programme.

The research evidence for the effectiveness of inclusion has been described as only marginally positive; according to Lindsay (2007), it falls short of a clear endorsement. Others take the view that negative or equivocal findings simply reflect current limitations in practice within schools which must be addressed, rather than a challenge to the premise of universal inclusion (e.g. Booth, 1996). Similarly, Farrell (2000) suggests that some of the negative or inconclusive findings have more to do with the quality of the teaching in the mainstream setting rather than the inclusive nature of the placement. He states that, on the whole, the research suggests that pupils with special educational needs benefit socially from inclusion though perhaps at the expense of academic skills. Hegarty (1993) also reviewed the academic and social benefits of integration and found no clear-cut advantage for including pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education.

Given that the drive for more inclusive education is based on values and principles, Thomas et al. (1998) call for research to focus not on whether inclusion works but rather on ways of making it work. Research findings suggest that inclusion may take different forms in different contexts but despite these differences there is substantial agreement in the international literature regarding the key practices which support the implementation of inclusion (Florian, 1998; Lindsay, 2003). Among the factors identified as central to inclusion internationally is the need for a commitment to a real and substantial long-term change and restructuring process (Ysseldyke et al., 2000). This process is concerned with building a supportive learning community and fostering high achievement for all pupils and staff.

A US report which studied over 1,000 school districts identified the following common factors in schools where inclusion was flourishing:

- visionary educational leadership
- collaboration between everyone concerned
- refocused use of assessment
- support for staff and students
- appropriate funding levels
- parental involvement
- curriculum adaptations and instructional practices (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997).

These factors closely reflect the findings of other studies (e.g. Giangreco, 1997; Rouse and Florian, 1996) which connect inclusive education to the development of effective schools and the school improvement agenda, and focus on illuminating key practices (Florian, 1998). The extensive work carried out to help schools to move towards inclusive education, however, does not appear to have provided a more comprehensive process to address school improvement, and the teaching practices that address the needs of all learners. Too often, the result is that overall school improvement and inclusive education are seen as parallel and not inter-connected processes (Lipsky and Gartner, 1996).

From the literature reviewed, it would appear that successful development of inclusive schools involves:

- understanding and acknowledging inclusion as a continuing and evolving process

- creating learning environments that respond to the needs of all learners and have the greatest impact on their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development

- undertaking a broad, relevant, appropriate and stimulating curriculum that can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners

- strengthening and sustaining the participation of pupils, teachers, parents and community members in the work of the school

- providing educational settings that focus on identifying and reducing barriers to learning and participation

- restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools to respond to the diversity of pupils within the locality

- identifying and providing the necessary support for teachers and other staff as well as pupils

- engaging in appropriate training and professional development for all staff

- ensuring the availability of fully transparent and accessible information on inclusive policies and practices within the school for pupils, parents, support staff and other persons who are involved in the education of the pupil.

The development of inclusive school practices, like all best educational practices, must be a dynamic and evolving process. They must incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Lessons from the research literature highlight issues and practices which are central to creating more inclusive schools and which allow us to ground our practice in evidence.

5 Principles of Inclusive Education

At the core of inclusion is the principle that students with special or additional learning needs or disability belong in mainstream education. The fundamental principle of an inclusive school is that all children should learn together, regardless of any difficulties or differences. To be an inclusive school, therefore, means that the school accommodates the needs of all students and welcomes diversity as a way to enrich learning for everyone. To exclude a student because of a particular disabling condition is to diminish not only the student but also the enriched learning that can take place within the school community. The underpinning principle of inclusive education is that all children and young people, with and without disabilities or other special needs, are learning effectively together in ordinary mainstream schools, with appropriate networks of support. This principle means that we enable all students to participate fully in the life and work of mainstream settings, whatever their needs. There are many different ways of achieving this and inclusion may take different forms for individual students. According to Ainscow et al 'an exploration of inclusion requires us to make explicit the particular values [and] their meanings and implications that we wish to see enacted through education' (2006, p.2).

The Department of Education and Science (2007) has identified a range of factors which enhance the effective teaching of students in an inclusive setting. These are presented in table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Measures to enhance effective teaching of students in an inclusive setting

- a variety of teaching strategies and approaches
- clear learning objectives outlined at the beginning of the lesson, reference made to them during the lesson, and a review with the students of what has been learned occurs at the end of the lesson
- formative assessment strategies for identifying the students' progress that are used to help inform teaching approaches
- the content of lessons is matched to the needs of the students and to their levels of ability
- multi-sensory approaches to learning and teaching
- materials, including concrete materials, are appropriate to the needs, ages, interests, and aptitudes of the students
- deviations from lesson plans when unexpected learning opportunities arise do not result in the loss of the original objectives of the lesson
- appropriate time is allowed for practice, reinforcement, and application of new knowledge and skills in practical situations
- students are reinforced and affirmed for knowledge and skills learned
- opportunities are in place throughout the curriculum to enable students to develop language and communication skills (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing)
- opportunities are taken throughout the curriculum to develop personal and social skills
- students are encouraged to explore links with other areas of the curriculum
- homework is designed to consolidate and extend, to promote independent learning, to monitor individual students' and class progress, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning

(Department of Education and Science, 2007, p.105.)

The four key elements of inclusion presented by UNESCO provide a useful summary of the principles that support inclusive practice. These elements are:

* *Inclusion is a process*. It has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference. Differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst children and adults.

* *Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers*. It involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. It is about using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

* *Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students.* 'Presence' is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend; 'participation' relates to the quality of their experiences and must incorporate the views of learners; and 'achievement' is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not just test and exam results.

* *Inclusion invokes a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement*. This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those 'at risk' are carefully monitored, and that steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in the education system (UNESCO, 2005, p.15).

5.1 Inclusion in Practice

Lindsay (2003) acknowledges the limitations of a medical model that focuses on limitations to learning and participation as resting solely within the child, and comments that the rise of the social model was a necessary reaction to the worst aspects of previous practice. Adherence to the social model, however, runs the risk of ignoring the contribution of within-child factors and the possibility of interaction with environmental factors by construing only external social factors as disabling the individual (Lindsay, 2003; Low, 2001).

If inclusion is to be successful, a more balanced perspective is necessary– a middle way which recognises that learning difficulties or additional support needs arise through the complex interaction of a multitude of factors associated not only with children themselves but also with the immediate and wider learning environment. The interactive model proposed by Wedell (1978) and discussed by Lindsay (2003) recognises the complex interplay of influences which shape children's needs and competencies. This approach conceptualises students' functioning and their needs as "an interaction between their inherent characteristics and the supports, and barriers, of the environment" (Lindsay, 2003, p.5). Time is added as a third influencing factor because the balance of these factors changes over time, as does the interaction between them. This model also stresses compensatory interactions; difficulties in one area may be compensated for by strengths in another domain and have to be seen in the context of the child's overall development (Wedell and Lindsay, 1980). The interactive analysis of learning needs provided by this model offers a more complete and holistic approach to understanding difficulties and to the provision of appropriate supports; it retains a

child-centred focus but at the same time takes wider contextual factors into consideration. It may also offer much to the success of inclusive education.

Booth and Ainscow have set out in considerable detail what inclusion might mean for schools in *Index for Inclusion*. (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). This guidance document can be used as a resource that is designed to support individual schools in identifying barriers to learning and participation, and help them to develop the resources to support the full participation and quality education for all their students. There is no one way of implementing inclusion in a particular school – a detailed process of exploration and actions is required for each setting. The *Index* can be used by schools when they are at a point of considering what inclusion might mean for the development of the school, or where they want to bring coherence to their development plans. The *Index* is structured to draw attention to the development of cultures, policies and, practices and to enable schools identify areas that would benefit from further attention.

Putting inclusion into practice is challenging. The *Index* (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p3) identifies a range of necessary measures, which are presented in table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Putting inclusion into practice

- valuing all students and staff equally
- increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools
- restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality
- reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as having 'special educational needs'
- learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students, to make changes for the greater benefit of all students
- viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome
- acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality
- improving schools for staff as well as for students
- emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement
- fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities
- recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society

(Adapted from *Index for Inclusion,* (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p. 3.)

Throughout the *Index*, the emphasis is on inclusion not as an event but as an ongoing and developmental process towards which schools should strive. Booth et al state,

> An inclusive school might be said to be one that includes and values equally all students from its surrounding communities or neighbourhood or catchment area, and develops an approach to teaching and learning that minimises groupings on the basis of attainment and disability (1998, p.194).

They also suggest that we need to take a broad view of inclusion, one that is concerned with minimising all barriers to learning and participation whoever experiences them and wherever they are located within the cultures, policies and practices of a school.

5.2 Factors Supporting Inclusion

According to Ainscow et al. (2006), there appears to be a recurrent theme in the literature on inclusion that suggests that schools that have made a commitment to inclusion are characterised by particular kinds of 'culture', usually related to a set of inclusive values and frequently in response to principals who take a stand on these values, and who engage the staff to work together to accept and value difference. There is also the case that these inclusive values cannot be imposed externally but can only be 'created around the shared commitments of those who are centrally involved' (2006, p.163).

Cheminais (2003) puts forward the idea that it may be useful to think of inclusion as a school improvement issue rather than something that is to be added on to existing structures and pedagogies. Using a school improvement framework means that inclusion can be seen as a process of putting values into action. In implementing these educational changes, schools will need to address the dichotomy between measuring educational outcomes in terms of narrowly focused examination and test results, and including in mainstream schools pupils whose achievements are not recognised in national school performance tables or reports.

Legislation relating to inclusion has been a major feature of educational policy in recent years. The way in which legislation is enacted can be regarded as a 'top down' process. Fullan (1991) makes the point that school reform efforts which are imposed or led from the 'top' and are passed 'down' to teachers in the classroom often fail. This is because those who have to implement the reforms have not been sufficiently involved in the decision making process and those who create the policies are unaware of the contexts in which teachers work on a daily basis. Effective leadership from the top should be accompanied by bottom-up support, and a partnership approach, in order to ensure the successful implementation of necessary reforms or changes. This means that the teachers and other staff who have to implement the changes must not only support the reforms themselves but also be supported as they strive to make the changes. They need to be able and allowed to form their own positions and perspectives on the change (UNESCO, 2005). They must also view the changes as a significant improvement on their existing practice. As Thomas et al (1998) assert, the move to inclusion rests upon partnership at all levels; legislation at the national level may provide the framework, and the resources and financial backup may come at the regional level but it is critical that the ideas and initiatives for change come from and are supported by those who do the work in the schools. Inclusion is a process that requires changes at both school and systems levels (UNESCO, 2005).

6 Some Keys to Success

Inclusion should increase and not decrease children's learning opportunities. The quality of the setting and its appropriateness for individual students may be just as important as its segregated or inclusive nature. This process should involve parents, all school-based personnel, support staff and the students themselves. It needs to focus not only on current barriers to inclusion but also on issues such as attitudes, ethos and curricula. All

changes should be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Students may have the right to be included but they also have the right to a quality education and access to all aspects of school life.

The changes that take place as a school moves towards becoming more inclusive also involve overcoming some potential obstacles. These include existing attitudes and values, lack of understanding, lack of necessary skills, limited resources, and inappropriate organisation. Overcoming these requires clarity of purpose, realistic goals, motivation, support, resources and evaluation (UNESCO, 2005). As Fullan (1991) contends good change processes are characterised by trust, relevance, and the desire to get better results. He suggests that accountability and improvement become interwoven in the process but require a high level of sophistication. Some aspect of change can be measured. These include direct benefits to children, wider impact on policies, practices, ideas and beliefs, enhanced pupil participation, reduced discrimination, strengthened partnerships and collaboration, strengthening of the education system, technology and pedagogy to include all learners (UNESCO, 2005).

6.1 Leadership

As identified earlier, visionary leadership is essential. The head teacher's attitude and approach to inclusion is key. The policies on admission and exclusion, for example, will reflect the ethos within the school. The school and staff together must make a commitment that all students are welcome in the school regardless of need. Teachers and other staff will work to have inclusive classes, and to break down the barriers to learning and participation that may exist. For this to occur and become part of the culture of the school, all staff must be committed to this as a value for children, be able to articulate the reasons for their belief, be willing to defend this practice against detractors, and be willing to struggle, learn, and seek answers when specific approaches do not appear to be working for some students. Schools that are committed to high levels of learning for all students, have specialists and support staff who are committed to developing effective, collaborative and inter-disciplinary support systems for teachers, students and their families. These schools tend to use specialised school and community resources effectively to support and strengthen what happens in the classroom. They develop support teams to assist with academic, social, and medical needs (Evans, Lunt, Wedell and Dyson, 1999; Idol, 1997; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin and Williams, 2000).

6.2 Teachers

Central to successful inclusion are mainstream teachers who take ownership of inclusion and who believe in their own competence to educate students with special educational needs (Thomas et al, 1998). This may present a challenge since the underlying assumption has been that students identified as having special needs belong in a different place, as well as a different pedagogical category, and thus could not be taught successfully by ordinary teachers (Avramidis et al., 2000).

Teachers' practices are central to effective inclusion and a number of studies have explored this theme. Elements of practice identified as supporting effective inclusion of students with special educational needs include scaffolding, modelling, contingency management and other effective instructional methods such as feedback (Flem et al, 2004). Collaboration and teamwork are also essential aspects of inclusive practice, according to recent research (Lindsay, 2007). Critical to the success of teamwork is time for planning and reflecting together (Hunt et al., 2003).

The role of the specialist educator needs to be re-examined and redefined if inclusion is to be successful. Support through withdrawal from the mainstream is no longer seen as the default response to pupils with special or additional needs. Apart from providing individualised instruction, potential roles include adapting curriculum, co-teaching, supporting the mainstream class teacher through teamwork, training support staff such as classroom assistants, and selecting and adapting materials (Giangreco, 1997). Also important is the development of a positive ethos, with a shared commitment to the values of inclusion (Fischer et al, 2002; Kugelmass, 2001). In general the international research evidence 'suggests that the success of inclusion stands or falls on the availability of in-class support' (Farrell, 2000, p.159).

If schools are to be successful, a professional community of support among teachers will be needed. In an effective school, everybody works as a team. Specialists currently in special schools or units may be considered as essential participants in this team approach, especially as the role of the special schools evolves.

6.3 Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

An important factor in determining the success of inclusion is the attitude of the teacher. According to O'Brien (2000), the real key resource for successful inclusion lies inside the teacher's head. Some mainstream teachers have considerable reservations about the feasibility of inclusion in reality. These reservations tend to be related to the types and severity of students' difficulties, the teachers' own beliefs about the students and about their own ability to deal with them, and the insufficient capacity of mainstream schools to address the difficulties experienced by the students involved (Croll and Moses, 2000). As noted earlier, in the study on the Future Role of Special Schools (DENI, 2006), most of the special school teachers surveyed believed that some students could not be included successfully in the mainstream.

Teachers are more positively disposed towards the inclusion of pupils with physical or sensory disabilities and less so for pupils with emotional and behavioural problems (Farrell, 2000; Lindsay, 2007). There is mixed evidence on the effect of experience of contact with children with special educational needs. Many teachers, when faced with the prospect of including a child with disabilities in their class, become less positive and experience anxiety and stress. This, however, can be moderated by access to training, resources and additional supports (Lindsay, 2007). Research suggests that when inclusion is carefully managed and planned, mainstream teachers gradually move from an attitude of scepticism to wanting to collaborate as part of a team (Wood, 1998).

Lindsay (2007) highlights findings crucial to positive attitudes towards inclusion; these include resources, both physical and human, and support from the head teacher.

6.4 Teacher Training

Teachers must be both competent and confident in their teaching ability. Brownell and Pajares emphasise that teachers' beliefs are 'important determinants and predictors of teaching practices' (1999, p.154). In a review of the literature on inclusion, Avramidis and Norwich cite a number of studies providing evidence that 'the school's ethos and the teachers' beliefs have a considerable impact on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion which, in turn, are translated into practice' (2002, p.140). Teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, is essential to develop the skills necessary to teach successfully in inclusive settings.

Mittler states:

> Ensuring that newly qualified teachers have a basic understanding of inclusive teaching is the best investment that can be made (Mittler, 2000, p.137).

6.5 Teachers' Needs

Many teachers' concerns centre on issues such as appropriate curriculum, in-class support, ongoing training, their ability to teach diverse groups of children, planning time, how high to set expectations and how to assess the students. Putnam (1998) acknowledges that it is not always easy to teach children of very different abilities in the same class. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) concluded from teachers' feedback that the factors outlined in table 5.3 are essential for successful inclusion:

Table 6.1 Factors necessary for successful inclusion

time for planning	one hour per day
training	teachers need systematic and intensive training and access to ongoing education
personnel resources	extra staff to assist in the classroom
material resources	adequate curriculum resources and equipment to cater for those with disabilities
class size	class size should be fewer than 20 when students with SEN are included
consideration of the severity of the disability	teachers are more willing to include children with mild disabilities than students with more severe disabilities because this is less disruptive to their overall goal of teaching the whole class

(Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996, p. 61)

6.6 Teaching Assistants

Many teachers have not had any training in working with other adults in their classroom and this can become quite challenging, especially in cases where the assistant has been with the student for many years and knows the student's capabilities extremely well. This may be intimidating for some teachers and could result in the teacher deferring to

the assistant when dealing with the student. The assistant's knowledge and skill must be acknowledged and utilised fully but the teacher has ultimate responsibility for the student and the programme being implemented.

Lack of training and role clarity for teaching assistants have both been highlighted as issues (Lindsay, 2007). Farrell (2000) claims that good teamwork is contingent upon the training and expertise of teaching assistants. This teamwork is essential to successful inclusion. Ofsted (2002) reported better quality teaching in classes with teaching assistants.

6.7 Involving Families

Parents' views on inclusion vary greatly (Farrell, 1997). The increasing number of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools suggests that for many parents, inclusion is the preferred option. The factors that influence parents' choices of provision is relatively under-researched but according to Giangreco, central to inclusive practice is the acceptance that the family is part of the collaborative team. He puts forward the following assumptions that are considered crucial to working effectively with families in the interests of inclusion:

- families know certain aspects of their children better than anyone else
- families have the greatest vested interest in seeing their children learn
- the family is likely to be continuously involved with the child's education programme throughout his or her entire school career
- families have the ability to positively influence the quality of educational services provided in their community
- families must live with the outcomes of decisions made by educational teams all day, every day (Giangreco, 1997 p.196).

6.8 The Voice of the Child

Pupils are key stakeholders in education and the promotion of the voices of those with special educational needs has been recognised as crucial to the development of a more inclusive education system (Rose and Shevlin, 2005). Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to be consulted and heard on all matters affecting them and to have that view taken into account and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (UN, 1989). The Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b) also stresses the rights of pupils to be involved in making decisions and exercising choices. Schools have been relatively slow to set up the systems and structures which might facilitate pupils contributing their perspectives on education (Davie and Galloway, 1996). It is increasingly recognised, however, that students with special educational needs should contribute to and participate in decisions about educational provision and individual education plans (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000).

Pupils' insights and perspectives have the potential to provide crucial directions for school improvement and information to enhance learning, teaching and relationships (Gross, 2002). Flutter and Rudduck (2004) highlight the "transformational potential"

of consulting pupils; they see the testimony of learners as providing essential firsthand evidence for improving teaching and learning. Consulting children and including them in school decision making also increases educational engagement and reduces the risk of exclusion (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). The experiences of students with disabilities indicates that their opinions are rarely sought. When they are consulted, the process is often tokenistic and their views are largely ignored (Noble, 2003 cited in Rose and Shevlin, 2005).

Norwich and Kelly (2004) talked to pupils with moderate learning difficulties in both mainstream and special schools and found that a significant proportion in the mainstream preferred learning support in withdrawal settings. While most in both settings preferred their current school, a minority in special schools expressed the wish to be in a mainstream setting. A high incidence of bullying emerged as a theme, with students in special schools experiencing higher levels of bullying than those in mainstream schools.

Accumulating evidence suggests that both primary and secondary students and girls in particular, have positive attitudes towards peers with learning difficulties (Farrell, 2000). These attitudes tend to be even more positive if their school includes children with significant learning difficulties. Farrell concludes that research evidence overall shows that mainstream pupils accept children with special educational needs without difficulty and that bullying is rare.

6.9 Curriculum

Accessible and flexible curricula can be a key to creating schools that meet the needs of all students. An inclusive approach seeks to discourage teaching that is based on a criterion of averages. This means that some students will inevitably fall behind while others will find work too easy. Curriculum must take into consideration the different abilities and needs of all students. It must be capable of being adapted to meet diverse needs. Strategies such as flexible time frames for work completion, differentiation of tasks, flexibility for teachers, time for additional support and emphasis on vocational as well as academic goals can be useful (UNESCO, 2005). Together with flexible curricula, flexible teaching-learning methodology is necessary.

We also need to examine our interpretation of what is meant by an accessible curriculum. Access to the curriculum is so much more than simply including a student in a mainstream classroom, and involves subtler issues such as how students with special educational needs interact with their peers, or how the classroom is structured. Universal design is the term given to the attempt to improve accessibility to the curriculum, with advocates designing a curriculum from the bottom up that is accessible to all students, regardless of ability. When universal design is applied to learning, curricular materials are flexible enough to suit all learners, and the activities provided are accessible to students across a diverse range of abilities. But universal design for learning is not just about accessibility for students with disabilities. It is about access for all, and considers the potential needs of all students when designing and delivering instruction.

7 The Inclusive School

The Salamanca Framework for Action contains a description of an inclusive school:

> The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school. (Salamanca Framework for Action, 1994).

To make inclusive schools a reality, it is important that all those involved understand it requires a fundamental change to both the education system and the schools within it. Some of these changes will be on a large scale, for example, making school buildings accessible to all. Other changes will take place at an individual level where, for example, teachers make changes in their everyday practices.

There are many and varied views regarding the complex concept of inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002), and this has resulted in a range of different approaches and perspectives on how inclusion should be implemented in schools. In an education system that has a long tradition of segregation, the move towards inclusion presents as a major change, and in order to bring about such change, schools must be supported in their efforts. Our current legislation (DES, 2004) gives children with special needs the right to attend mainstream schools with appropriate supports. This represents what Fullan (1991) would describe as 'top down pressure', which is aimed at bringing about change within the school system itself. To be successful, however, those charged with implementing these changes need 'bottom up' support at the school level. Significant changes to the school system require good planning, thoughtful implementation, and a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the changes that are taking place. As Fullan asserts, 'one of the basic reasons that planning fails is that the planners or decision-makers of change are unaware of the situations that potential implementers are facing' (1991, p.96). In this case, the potential implementers are the schools and all those who work within them. Fullan also argues that some of the problems encountered in attempting to bring about educational change indeed may not be solvable. He suggests that while recognising the limitations of planning, it is important to locate situations where the planned change is working and, 'to find examples where a setting has been deliberately transformed from a previous state to a new one that represents clear improvement' (1991, p.100). In essence, we need to 'know about the causes and dynamics of how change occurs' (1991, p.100).

7.1 Assumptions about Change

In understanding the implications of inclusion, it is important to recognise the assumptions we make about change, and Fullan (1991) has identified a number of 'do's' and 'don'ts' regarding these assumptions that are worth considering. They are as follows:

1. Do not assume that your version of what the change should be is the one that should or could be implemented.

2. Assume that any significant innovation, if it is to result in change, requires individual implementers to work out their own meaning.

3. Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change.

4. Assume that people need pressure to change (even in directions that they desire), but it will be effective only under conditions that allow them to react, to form their own position, to interact with other implementers, to obtain technical assistance etc. Relearning is at the heart of change.

5. Assume that effective change takes time. It is a process of 'development in use'. Persistence is a critical aspect of change.

6. Do not assume that the reason for lack of implementation is outright rejection of the values embodied in the change or hard core resistance to all change. There are a number of possible reasons such as …value rejection, inadequate resources and insufficient time.

7. Do not expect all or even most people in groups to change. Progress occurs when we take small steps that increase the number of people affected. Be encouraged by what has been accomplished.

8. Assume that you will need a plan that is based on the above assumptions and that addresses the factors known to affect implementation.

9. Assume that no amount of knowledge will ever make it totally clear what action should be taken. Action decisions are a combination of factors.

10. Assume that changing the culture of institutions is the real agenda, not implementing single innovations (Fullan, 1991, p.105-107).

It is important to remember that any change, such as inclusion, is not altogether predictable, and its success largely depends on monitoring that change and adjusting our approach to keep it on track. It is imperative therefore that we have some means of assessing the impact of the various factors involved in successful inclusion, and be able to involve all stakeholders in both implementing inclusion and in monitoring the progress of that initiative.

According to Fullan,

> The answer is not found by seeking ready-made guidelines, but by struggling to understand and modify events and processes that are intrinsically complicated, difficult to pin down, and ever changing (1991, pp.107-108).

7.2 School Self-assessment

There are a number of ways available to assess the inclusiveness of a school, and a particularly useful tool is that of self-assessment, whereby an individual school undertakes to assess its own level of inclusion. All members of the school community can be involved in this process, which seeks to answer the key question of, 'how are we doing?'. This question encourages every member of the school to become part of the process of inclusion, so that they can think about setting appropriate goals, and examine what needs to be done in the future (i.e. planning). It also enables schools to reflect on what they have achieved thus far. Self-assessment for formal and informal purposes is both possible and desirable and is most appropriate for monitoring a school's inclusive initiatives. Self-assessment is essential for the school that wants to make some kind of judgment about its performance relative to inclusion, and also because self-assessment emphasises the process, rather than the product.

Schools that decide to pursue self-assessment should involve all staff and associated personnel so that they can set collective goals as a school unit. The school takes an evidence-based approach to assessing its inclusiveness by 'looking for what is there', and in so doing, staff members identify good practices that are inclusive in nature and also areas in which they could improve. The staff develop a report that represents a collective perspective and, as a group, can construct questions to use in future reflection and action. Some basic principles of self-assessment are outlined below.

7.2.1 Principles of school self-assessment

- Self-assessment supports schools in developing a culture of inquiry and reflection focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

- It occurs within the context of a school's teaching and learning goals, not according to an external checklist.

- Self-assessment supports schools in developing a culture of inquiry and reflection focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

- Self-assessment fosters an evidence-based approach that identifies and describes the ways in which a school is meeting its goals and encourages schools to build on the areas in which they are already strong.

- Self-assessment raises questions to help schools improve teaching and learning; it does not give schools a 'recipe' for reform.

- Self-assessment depends on the commitment and knowledge of educators to make informed judgments about the school (Adapted from School Self-Assessment Project, 2002, p.3).

In developing inclusive schools, the key outcome of good self-assessment is that it enables each school to set individual goals which are specific to the context and to the current status. It allows schools to describe what these goals might look like in the classrooms and in the school in general. It also enables schools to develop a collective perspective on how well the school is fulfilling its goals of becoming more inclusive. All staff can review their own, and the school's, practices through the lens offered by these

goals. Everyone within the school participates in the development of the inclusion plan and subsequently there will be real ownership among teachers and other staff of the goals and strategies outlined in the plan. It becomes the school's own tool for ongoing improvement. As Levin notes,

> Inclusion should not be viewed as an add-on to a conventional school. It must be viewed as intrinsic to the mission, philosophy, values, practices and activities of the school. Full inclusion must be embedded deeply in the very foundation of the school, in its missions, its belief system, and its daily activities, rather than an appendage that is added on to a conventional school' (Levin, 1997, p.390).

7.2.2 Tools for self-assessment

One of the tools available for school self-assessment in the area of inclusion is *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). The *Index* offers schools,

> a supportive process of self-review and development, which draws on the views of staff, governors, students and parents/carers, as well as other members of the surrounding communities. It involves a detailed examination of how barriers to learning and participation can be reduced for any student (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.1).

As noted above, inclusion should not be viewed as an 'add-on' in a school and the index too is not intended to be an additional initiative within the school. It is intended to provide, 'a way of improving schools according to inclusive values' (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.1). Schools that have used the index as part of their self-assessment have found, "the materials helped them to identify issues for development that might otherwise have been overlooked and to put them into practice" (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.1).

The *Index* assumes that the process of examining inclusion is led from within the school and that the work involved in using the *Index* integrates effectively with any existing school development plans. Any use of the *Index* is regarded as 'legitimate' when it encourages and promotes reflection about inclusion and 'leads to greater participation of students in the cultures, curricula and communities of their school' (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.2).

8 Summary

As highlighted throughout this report, there are many interpretations and definitions of inclusion to consider. York-Barr et al. (1996) remind us, '[i]nclusive schooling is potentially both a process and an outcome for achieving social justice and equity in our society' (1996, p.92). Planning for inclusion must be proactive not reactive, and must involve examining and reviewing carefully, the existing provision so that structures for successful inclusion and systematic improvements to current provision can be made. According to UNESCO (2005), '[i]ncorporating inclusion as a guiding principle typically requires change in education systems, and this change process is frequently faced with

several challenges. It involves important shifts and changes at the systems as well as the societal level' (2005, p.20).

According to Evans and Lunt (2002), the constraints of current systems of provision and the contradictions inherent in most educational policy make full inclusion problematic. The drive for inclusion takes place in a system which, to date, is largely unchanged (Rix et al, 2003). Skrtic (1991) has described schools as 'machine bureaucracies' focused on delivering curricula and achieving preset standard targets through rigid teaching methods; this limits their ability to adapt to meet the needs of students with difficulties. Slee (2001a) argues that it is not enough to accept current systems of school organisation as the starting point for discussions about inclusive practices; accepting the existing composition of schooling reduces inclusion to a process of political 'absorption' or assimilation. Slee further contends that 'new educational forms are required for inclusive education' (2001a, p.118) because schooling has always produced exclusion in one form or another. He calls us 'to extend our thinking about inclusion and exclusion beyond the theoretical straitjacket of SEN' (2001a, p.121), and to consider all forms of educational exclusion in looking at the requirements of inclusive schools in the future. Achieving more inclusive schools is going to take a huge shift in culture, organisation and expectations of education systems and schools are unlikely to change overnight. The reality is that there is no single agreed vision of what inclusion looks like, what schools should become and how they should accomplish this reconstruction is open to debate (Rix et al., 2001). Peters (2003) indicates that inclusive education may be implemented at different levels, embrace different goals, and provide different services.

Moving towards inclusion can be a slow process and many factors need to come together for successful systemic change (Topping and Moloney, 2005). Inclusive education has the potential to benefit all students, their families and the whole school community. There are accumulating lessons from research and practice which provide us with the means to begin to provide quality inclusive education for diverse learners, including those with significant disabilities.

Parents and pupils themselves have important contributions to make to shape the implementation of inclusion (Lindsay, 2007). Despite the fact that barriers to participation are still pervasive, progress is being made and inclusive education is gaining momentum in schools and classrooms throughout the world. Inclusive systems of education are possible if schools are committed to becoming more inclusive. To create the right context for inclusion involves the development of enabling policies, local support systems and appropriate forms of curriculum and assessment. Policies create the context; however, schools make it happen. Looking at education through an inclusive lens implies, 'a shift from seeing the child as a problem to seeing the education system as the problem' (UNESCO, 2005).

Ainscow et al provide these characteristics of inclusion that were of importance to them and which may be useful in informing the discussion:

- Inclusion is concerned with all children and young people in schools.

- Inclusion is focused on presence, participation, and achievement.

- Inclusion and exclusion are linked together such that inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion.

- Inclusion is seen as a never ending process (Ainscow et al, 2006, p.25).

Thus, an inclusive school is one on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state. The implementation of more inclusive systems of education is possible if schools themselves are committed to becoming more inclusive (UNESCO, 2005).

9 A Definition of Inclusive Education in the Irish Education System

One of the objectives of the NCSE Consultative Forum was to suggest a definition of inclusive education that would reflect the Irish context. In light of the review of the current literature presented here, it was confirmed that there is no one agreed definition. The review highlighted a number of international definitions which were considered in the formulation of the definition below. It was agreed that the definition would be a combination of the UNESCO (2005) definition and the description included within the DES (2007) Post-Primary Guidelines for Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs. The definition proposed below must be viewed in the context of the statutory remit of the Council as set out in the EPSEN Act.

Inclusion is defined as a process of:

- addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and

- removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.

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Part 2: Inclusive Education in Practice

1 Reviewing Inclusive Practices

Although a wealth of literature on inclusive education exists, there is a noticeable absence of information and guidance on how the theories and principles underlying inclusion translate into effective teaching practices. This is partly due to the wide range of viewpoints and definitions of inclusive education, as it is our conception of inclusion which shapes the form inclusive practice will take. In its most basic form, inclusive education means including all students within the education system. However, in practice inclusive education involves so much more, from ensuring all students can access the curriculum by differentiation and targeted teaching strategies, to training and supporting teachers to meet the challenge of inclusion and creating a whole-school inclusive culture.

This section describes a range of whole-school practices of inclusive education that emerged from the current literature and feedback from the Consultative Forum, which can be grouped together under ten thematic headings to produce an overall framework for considering inclusive practices in a school.

1.1 The Task

The goal in conducting this research was twofold. Firstly, it was to identify and outline the principles and practices that underpin inclusive education in mainstream schools and special classes, including special schools and the practices between such settings. Secondly, it aimed to produce a framework that could be used to assist schools in structuring their provision of an inclusive educational environment.

In response to this task, the research team constructed a framework of inclusion consisting of ten thematic areas, within which the practices of inclusive education could be grouped for ease of comprehension and evaluation. This framework pulls together the main characteristics and practices of inclusive education such that the framework can then be used as a practical guide for schools as they move towards becoming more inclusive.

It should be noted that in constructing this framework the research team adopted a holistic model of inclusive education wherein inclusion is viewed as a dynamic system that encompasses mainstream schools, special classes, special schools and the wider community. The end product therefore groups the practices of inclusion under thematic headings rather than by the setting within which those practices takes place. This approach offers schools the distinct advantage of providing a framework of inclusive practice which can be applied equally across different settings, viewing each as a component within an overall system.

1.2 Inclusion in Practice

As noted in earlier sections, there is much debate as to how inclusive education should be defined, and in particular which practices can be called inclusive. In light of these diverse opinions and approaches to inclusion, the research team was particularly keen to recognise, and incorporate into this report, the views and suggestions of the NCSE Consultative Forum. Therefore, the starting point of this research was the collation of the suggestions and feedback on inclusive education provided by the Forum members during their meetings. In a sense the research team regard the Consultative Forum as knowledgeable partners in this research, playing the role of a focus group and generating initial ideas which would guide the rest of this research.

Having collated the feedback from the Consultative Forum the next step was to conduct a content analysis of this qualitative data to identify the practices of inclusion as suggested by the Forum members. The result of this analysis was a list of approximately fifty items, covering a wide range of ideas on the practical application of inclusive education. This list was then further analysed using a matrix strategy adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994), which involved identifying the prevailing themes within the list of inclusive practices and then grouping each individual practice under the appropriate theme. In essence, this is an effective way to group related items together and to determine the scope of inclusive practice. The net result of this process was a framework of ten areas of inclusive education, each corresponding to the ten themes identified in the list, and containing examples of inclusive practice. The ten overarching themes of inclusion generated are shown in the table below, along with examples of inclusive practice assigned to each thematic area.

Table 1: The ten themes associated with inclusion

Themes	Examples of inclusive practice
1. Provision of information	• providing information leaflets to parents and schools outlining what inclusive education means • publishing admission policies on the school's website • ensuring the school's policy on inclusion is disseminated to parents and the wider community
2. Physical features	• constructing a school whose physical layout facilitates inclusion
3. Inclusive school policies	• developing inclusive policies and plans in consultation with all stakeholders, including parents • developing an access and admission policy that is open to all students without discrimination
4. The IEP	• involving parents in the development of IEPs • managing the IEP supports so that the child does not feel separate or different • ensuring the students are achieving their desired goals
5. Student interactions	• ensuring there are mixed abilities in every class • ensuring that students with SEN are included in school social events
6. Staffing and personnel	• ensuring that support staff are fully integrated into the cohort of school staff • ensuring that teachers are equipped to respond to diverse needs among children with a variety of SEN • ensuring that teaching occurs in a team format
7. External links	• ensuring that external services are liaised with very closely
8. Assessment of achievement	• ensuring that the achievements of all students are recognised • involving children in their own assessment, allowing them achieve against personal goals
9. Curriculum	• ensuring there is a mixed ability teaching approach • ensuring that all students are able to access the curriculum • ensuring there is differentiation of the curriculum
10. Teaching strategies	• using a variety of teaching styles to cater for different student abilities

To determine the validity of these themes, the research team next referred to the international literature on best practice in inclusive education, and in particular to the existing inventories of practices associated with inclusive education. Taking this approach meant that the NCSE Consultative Forum would have ownership of the core ideas in the report yet still benefit from international perspectives on inclusion. To this end the research team sourced and examined over 25 different inventories of inclusive education, from the UK, Australia, Canada, and the US, which examined inclusion across a number of different themes and settings.

As before, a content analysis was conducted on each of these inventories and a list of practices generated, representing the scope of inclusive practices worldwide. We found that although most, if not all, of these practices could easily be grouped under the ten

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themes identified above, the theme of 'Provision of information' was more strongly represented in the feedback from the NCSE Consultative Forum. It may be that this issue was of particular interest to the NCSE, or particularly relevant to the Irish context. Likewise, the international inventories of inclusion surveyed in this research emphasise inclusive practices which may be grouped under an additional theme of 'Teaching Strategies', one which did not feature in the feedback from the NCSE Consultative Forum. It was therefore necessary to broaden the scope of the themes of inclusion in light of the new perspectives on inclusive practices the data offered. The end product was a framework of ten overarching themes associated with inclusion, each representing a set of inclusive practices and which is capable of accommodating different perspectives on inclusion.

The differences in inclusive practice across the various international inventories can be understood as arising from differences in the priorities and concerns of individual groups rather than a fundamental difference in inclusive practices between the different countries. These differences in priorities highlight for us the fact that although we all may support and focus our efforts on bringing about inclusion, the practical everyday realities encountered by individual groups will be different, even within the same school. For example, a school principal may view inclusion from a different perspective, and have different concerns regarding inclusion, than a teacher. The principal may, for example, adopt a wider approach incorporating a whole-school perspective and the interaction between the school and the wider community.

1.3 Limitations of this Approach

The project team is aware of a number of limitations inherent in constructing a framework of inclusive practice using qualitative analysis in this manner.

Firstly, by initially generating the ten themes associated with inclusion from a single source (i.e. the NCSE Consultative Forum) there is a danger that the end result will reflect the agenda of that source, rather than a fair and balanced overview of the issue. The research team has attempted to overcome this limitation by conducting a critical analysis of the themes of inclusion emerging from existing inventories of inclusive education, each representing a different perspective on inclusion. Broadly speaking, the team found that the inclusive practices identified in the existing inventories fit well with the ten themes of inclusion framework generated from the NCSE Consultative Forum member's feedback. We can, therefore, have confidence that the framework can contain even those inclusive practices generated from different perspectives.

In fact, generating the ten themes of inclusion by analysing the feedback from the NCSE Consultative Forum provided a good starting point, as the Forum members are already working in the field of inclusive education within the Irish context. In this way the NCSE Consultative Forum members can be regarded as knowledgeable collaborators in the project, enabling the team to quickly construct a credible draft framework of inclusive practice. By creating the initial framework through codifying the feedback and suggestions of the NCSE Consultative Forum we were able to create a template onto which we could overlay the perspectives of others and modify in light of new information. This allowed for the introduction of new elements and practices of inclusion, creating a

flexible and adaptable system. The validity of this framework was further strengthened by assessing the validity of the themes in light of existing inventories of inclusion.

A second limitation of this approach is the apparently arbitrary way in which the practices of inclusion were grouped under the ten themes. It must be borne in mind, however, that within each theme there may be dozens, if not hundreds of criteria and practices that demonstrate inclusive education. For the purpose of clarity we have limited the number of criteria listed to those which can be supported in the international literature as being best practice in a particular area. We have tried to remain true to the key issues raised by the NCSE Forum yet in the final analysis will inevitably have to create what may be viewed as an arbitrary list.

The themes we constructed are therefore not intended to represent a definitive set of categories onto which all inclusive practices can be mapped. In many cases it is difficult to map practice onto any of the ten themes, however, it would be an overwhelming task to map every inclusive practice given the differences across international boundaries, and the differing definitions of inclusion in each of these jurisdictions. Nor do these overarching themes represent a lowest common denominator in different areas of inclusion. Rather, they represent the framework within which best practice and the suggestions of the NCSE Forum can be codified, allowing use of a practical tool to assess and implement those practices. These are hypothetical categories which can be added to over time or adjusted as future categories are judged to be more, or less, relevant.

Another limitation of the current approach is that by dividing inclusion across a number of different themes, we risk seeing each in isolation, rather than as part of a dynamic system that encompasses mainstream schools, special classes, special schools and the wider community. There is also no clear relationship between them and how they might interact or support each other, or indeed if each theme carries equal weight. What is clear however is that each serves a function within the overall system, and all are essential to making that system an inclusive one. Therefore, by ensuring each theme of inclusion is functioning at an optimal level, the system itself will function at an optimal level.

1.4 Final Word

Although the ten themes of inclusion are reflected in the literature it will only be when this framework of inclusion is tested across a number of different contexts that we can say it has any validity, and that it will prove a useful tool in determining the level of inclusiveness within a school. We must never lose sight of the fact that these themes are only guidelines aiming to support the efforts of individuals in the field attempting to bring about an inclusive environment. In fact, what may be important to a particular school may not be well supported in the literature, and indeed may be unique to that school. It is therefore essential to recognise the needs of each school and to build flexibility into any framework of inclusion.

2 Exploring the Main Themes of Inclusion

In this section we examine each of the themes in more detail. For each, we outline a number of practices of inclusive education as a representative sample along with empirical evidence, where available, to support the efficacy of each approach. Space limitations allow us to include only a small selection of inclusive practices. We have also provided a list of additional inclusive practices for completion.

For consistency we have configured each theme in a similar format using icons for ease of navigation. Each section is structured as follows:

Overview and rationale: examines some of the theory and rationale behind each thematic area of inclusion

What this looks like in practice: This section looks at a selection of practical applications of inclusion under each theme

Additional practices: lists further inclusive practices

References: lists the references for each theme.

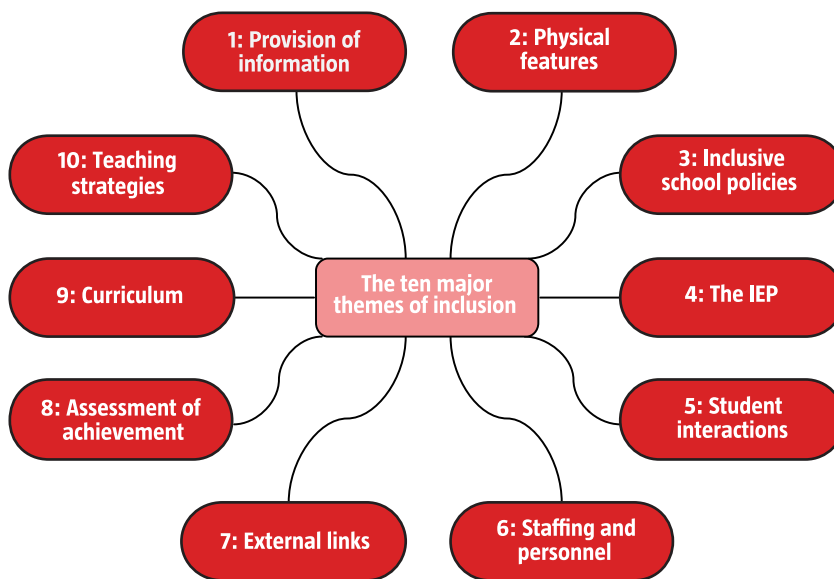The figure below shows how the main themes of inclusion are grouped:

Figure 1: The ten major themes associated with inclusive education

3 Theme 1: Provision of Information

📑 Overview and rationale

Open and regular communication is crucial to effective collaboration between the school, parents, and the wider community and can help foster a shared sense of purpose among all those involved (Russell, 2005). Keeping parents and other stakeholders informed can also help avoid any misunderstandings, particularly when there is a mismatch between the values and aims of the family and that of the school (Norris and Close, 2003). Information enables people to make appropriate choices and to develop coping strategies for overcoming problems, and is therefore an important tool in working positively with parents and the wider community. Methods of distributing information to parents and others can take many forms, including printed material, newspaper and television advertisements, face to face meetings, and the internet.

In this section we look at the provision of information to parents, stakeholders, and the wider community regarding the services, resources, and practices that support inclusion within the whole-school environment.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➤ Parents and other stakeholders are supplied with the school policy documents

It is recommended that parents receive, or have open access to, the school policy documents on inclusion. This will help inform them as to the school's ethos in relation to inclusion, the scope of the special education provision and support services, and the school's admission and exclusion policies. This information will help assure parents that appropriate and adequate facilities are available for their child and that they will not lose out as a result of being included in mainstream classrooms. School policies should ideally be developed in consultation with parents and other stakeholders. This should be phrased in a way that is easy to understand for all those concerned. This is particularly important in schools whose pupil population includes those for whom English is a second language. School policy documents can be distributed in written form or published on the school's website for ease of access, and may include reference to relevant legislation and guidelines on inclusion.

➤ The information provision is delivered in terms that parents and others can understand

Just as the school aims to cater for the diverse learning needs of children, so too it needs to take account of parents and other's diverse backgrounds and cultures in order to be sensitive to possible barriers to communication and ensure full participation by parents (nasen, 2000). It is therefore important that all information provided be written in meaningful and relatively jargon-free language, as a lack of confidence in speaking English may deter some parents from involvement. If the parents' first language is not English, attempts should be made to use interpreters/translators to assist in communication (DfES, 2001). Many studies have highlighted particularly poor levels of communication with parents from ethnic minorities (Frederickson and Cline, 2002)

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and it may be necessary to translate material where necessary. Recognising the cultural background of families helps to reinforce their sense of belonging and sends a message of inclusiveness.

➤ Parent's individual concerns are addressed through face to face meetings

Engaging with parents through face to face meetings can foster a deeper sense of connection and involvement with the school, and help address individual concerns. This approach can place high demands on time and staff resources but provides a valuable opportunity for parents to talk through relevant issues and may serve to clarify their thinking as well as providing a necessary emotional release. It is also important to follow through on any items that need further attention and to consult with specialist staff where necessary (Rose and Howley, 2007).

➤ Parents are supplied with information regarding their child's condition, its treatment, and the special education services provided at the school

 A study of parents' experiences of partnerships with schools found that access to adequate and accurate information was problematic (Pinkus, 2005). Parents, and frequently professionals too, were unclear about what services were available, the eligibility criteria, and how to liaise with the many different service providers they encountered. Parents tend to want information about the nature of their child's additional needs, services available, educational progress and emotional and behavioural issues. Details and information on parent support groups are also appreciated by parents and this type of contact can help reduce isolation and provide a social outlet. Parents may also seek advice around how to respond to and encourage the child through play or other activities at home. It may be useful therefore to provide information regarding the child's condition and what services and supports are available outside the school, as parents often find voluntary organisations useful for information on inclusion and its implications (Quinn, 2001).

➤ The school has developed parent partnership services

The development of parent partnership services within the school gives parents a dedicated resource that they can turn to for help, support, and information. In the UK for example, Local Education Authorities are required to develop parent partnership services and are encouraged to work together with voluntary organisations in doing so. The aim of these services is to ensure that parents of children who have additional needs 'have access to information, advice and guidance in relation to the special educational needs of their children so they can make appropriate, informed decisions' (DfES, 2001, 2.19).

⚑ Additional practices

- Information leaflets are available for parents and schools which provide information on inclusion.

- Information provided is framed both in terms of the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) and the wider context of inclusion, i.e. the inclusion of all students, not just those with physical disabilities.

- Images of people with disabilities and diverse needs are included on outreach materials and publications.

- Publications and information materials are available in a variety of formats and versions, e.g. Braille, audio, large-print, and non-English languages.

- Teachers have access to information regarding the various conditions of students with special needs, e.g. autism, ADD, Down syndrome.

- Web based information sources are accessible to non screen reading users, i.e. blind or low vision users.

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4 Theme 2: Physical Features

📑 Overview and rationale

In order to provide a truly inclusive school the physical environment needs to be safe and accessible to all students, including those with physical and sensory disabilities. The school also needs to be structured in such a way as to minimise the effects of individual learning differences on achievement. Many of the issues relating to the design and layout of the physical environment can only be addressed at the planning stage for school buildings and are more of a concern for educational authorities, builders and designers. However, the following section describes some accommodations that can be made to ensure the physical environment is optimised for inclusion, allowing all learners gain maximum benefit from their educational experience.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➤ The school environment is safe and accessible for all students

Providing safe physical access to the school building, classrooms and facilities is essential to ensure all students can physically gain access to the educational environment and be included in all appropriate activities alongside their peers. This is especially relevant for students with physical disabilities and adequate access must be provided as required, including the provision of ramps and lifts, and adapted toilets. Attention should also be given to ensure that all doorways are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and that there is adequate space for wheelchairs to be manoeuvred in classrooms. Those students with physical disabilities may also benefit from features such as adapted chairs, or tables that are at the correct height for a wheelchair.

Class size and overcrowding can also pose barriers to creating a safe and inclusive environment that supports learning. Studies have shown that students in overcrowded schools score significantly lower in both maths and reading comprehension than similar students in less crowded conditions (Rivera-Batiz and Marti,1995). It is therefore essential to determine the optimal number of students for a given room size. This should take into account those who may require additional equipment to assist them in their learning or who make use of wheelchairs and the space for adequate access that may entail.

➤ Adequate and appropriate lighting is provided

On a general level the amount of lighting within the classroom should be considered, ensuring that all areas are well lit. It is recommended also that the use of natural light should be maximised and available daylight supplemented by electric lighting (Mitchell, 2008). The amount of available light in a classroom is important as it enables students to see the information presented on the blackboard clearly and to attend to desk-based tasks. It is also worth noting that some students may prefer dimmer lights or brighter lights for learning. Some children with disorders such as ADHD, autism and those with photosensitive epilepsy may be disoriented by the flicker emitted by bright fluorescent

lights (Epilepsy Action, 2007). Allowing a student to wear a baseball cap to provide shade is an example of a simple accommodation that can make all the difference.

➤ Adequate and appropriate acoustic levels are provided

A large amount of learning takes place through listening and speaking and it is critical that students can hear and understand their teacher's instructions and directions. The World Health Organisation has recognised the need to provide optimal acoustical environments for students and have issued standards for the ideal levels of noise that should be present in a learning environment (WHO, 1999). Noisy equipment, for example, can be problematic and there should be an awareness of the effects of heating and ventilation systems as some students have difficulty tolerating even the gentle hum of classroom activity and are hypersensitive to noise. Others find that the use of background music helps to filter out distractions. Accommodating individual needs with headphones, ear muffs, etc. can prove useful too.

Many learners can also benefit from the installation of a sound-field system within the classroom. This is a wireless voice amplification system with a microphone for the teacher and a network of speakers placed around the classroom. This system enables all students and not just those with hearing impairments, to hear the teacher clearly, and reduces the need for the teacher to raise their voice or experience hoarseness when talking for long periods (Bennetts and Flynn, 2002). The use of soft furnishings, sound absorbing materials such as carpets, and the use of insulation materials in walls and ceilings in the classroom can also help to absorb background noise and improve overall acoustics.

➤ The school environment is structured and predictable

Providing a structured and predictable environment can prove useful for those students who experience difficulties with organisation, especially those with learning difficulties and developmental disabilities. Some students, in particular those with autism or Asperger syndrome, can be dependent on external environmental cues for structuring and organising their learning. Having regular routines for class work and designated places for classroom materials can help alleviate any anxiety they may feel around this issue. Practical strategies to accommodate the needs of these students can include the provision of visual cues such as picture prompts, colour codes, and written lists, or number prompts to help organisation. Class schedules and timetables can be provided in both pictorial and written form, with the class rules clearly displayed.

➤ Classroom seating arrangements support inclusion

The seating arrangements in classrooms can be structured to enable not only greater physical access for all students, and access to the point of learning, but also as a means of controlling unwanted behaviour for those with behavioural difficulties. For example, furniture and equipment can be arranged in such a way as to reduce unwanted movement around the classroom and minimise opportunities for students to disrupt other students at their workspaces (CEC, 1997). Students with visual or hearing impairments can be seated close to the blackboard or teacher, or next to a

window to avail of the extra natural light. Likewise, students who may need more frequent monitoring or have difficulties staying on task should also be considered for preferential seating (i.e. near the teacher, or between well-focused students, away from distractions). For children who cannot stay still, staying seated for hours on end or sometimes even five minutes can be torture. Children who tend to move around a lot can be given two seats in the classroom, so that they have somewhere 'legal' to go when they need to move around.

Using moveable dividers to create a quiet workspace in the classroom may benefit some students, allowing them to work independently for a time without distraction (Lang, 1996). A quiet study desk with screens around it can be used as a reward for completing tasks or can provide a needed break for children who are acting out or need to wind down. It should be noted that this area should never be used as a 'time-out' spot or as a punishment, but rather to facilitate students who work well independently or who seem overwhelmed by the activity within the class.

➢ **Differentiated learning centres are available in the classroom**

Creating differentiated learning centres within the classroom allows students to take some time to focus on a particular task or theme in greater detail. At primary level, the classroom can have designated spaces for certain activities; these can include a reading corner, music and listening centre, arts and crafts area and a writing corner. This helps to provide for the different learning styles of students and helps organise targeted learning activities. At secondary level, learning centres are usually designated places where all students can go during free or elective periods. These centres can contain a variety of equipment such as computers and a variety of materials and resources to encourage creativity and learning. Some schools staff these learning centres with both a general teacher and a special educator and students are encouraged to decide for themselves when they should avail of the learning centre's facilities. As the centre is available to all students, this presents an innovative way of providing non-stigmatising support to students who may have trouble with certain types of task, such as reading.

Additional practices

- Temperature, humidity and ventilation within the room are controllable.

- Display materials in the classroom are selected to provide realistic and positive images of different cultural, racial and ability groups.

- Signs, notices and displays throughout the school are multilingual and reflect diversity.

- All pupils are positioned so as to be able to see the board, teacher and displays.

- A fenced outdoor area is provided for playtime with a variety of safe and accessible equipment.

- Equipment used for teaching outside the classroom is accessible, e.g. that used in a home economics room, the gym, or laboratories.

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5 Theme 3: Inclusive School Policies

Overview and rationale

All schools in Ireland are required to have policies on responding to special educational needs (SEN). To be relevant and effective, these policies must be developed within the school, involve the whole school community, and be drafted in consultation with all key stakeholders, including parents. All policy statements should be clear and transparent and built upon a clearly articulated vision of inclusion. They should be kept under review and regularly evaluated.

This section outlines some of the statements that might appear on the policy documentation of an inclusive school and are linked to the key areas of inclusive practice within the school.

What this looks like in practice

➢ The school's policy on inclusion contains a definition of inclusion

As stated above the necessary starting point in drafting an inclusive school policy is to articulate a statement of inclusion. This statement, or definition, can be provided by the NCSE, for consistency across the educational system, or indeed developed within individual schools to reflect a particular ethos or unique circumstances. The statement of inclusion reflects the set of beliefs and rights which will underpin and guide a school's inclusive practice for special educational needs. As a necessity, this statement must be followed by a commitment to implement those inclusive practices. Providing a statement of inclusion signals the schools commitment to inclusion and addresses the key issues of inclusion, equality and accessibility (Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

➢ The school's policy on inclusion contains a statement on information provision

As discussed above in the section on information provision above, communication is crucial to effective collaboration. The school's policy on inclusion should set out its plan for the provision and dissemination of information to parents, stakeholders and the wider community.

➢ The school's policy on inclusion contains a statement on needs assessment and individual education planning

If schools are to be truly inclusive then it is critical that they plan to meet the needs of all students through effective early identification, assessment, and individual educational planning (Westwood, 2007). Assessment informs teaching and learning and allows the school to modify and adapt instruction in order to develop an inclusive curriculum. It also plays a key role in identifying learning needs, monitoring the efficacy of interventions and measuring progress. As with any policy statement it must be owned by all the staff to ensure that there is a real understanding and commitment to its implementation. It is also important that the policy is frequently reviewed in the light of experience, modified practice, and national curriculum and statutory changes.

At a practical level, the policy may contain the following items:

- details of the nature of the school's early identification and screening procedures and how the child's needs are determined

- protocols for assessing individual needs and monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of interventions

- information on the development and review of IEPs

- outline of the role of parents in the assessment process

- outline of the specific responsibilities of staff members and other professionals in co-ordinating assessment and SEN provision

- how the student is involved in decision-making and planning

- how pupils with special educational needs are engaged in the activities of the school together with their typical peers

- arrangements for providing access by pupils with special educational needs to the mainstream curriculum

- ethical considerations, which include issues such as parental consent, confidentiality and record keeping

- arrangements for dealing with complaints from parents regarding special educational provision within the school (Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

Assessment needs to be seen as a collaborative and ongoing process, which involves the student, parents and teachers. Transparency, accountability and equity are key principles which should underlie any assessment policy.

➢ **The school's policy on inclusion contains information about the school's framework for special education provision**

Basic information about the school's special education provision is required to inform parents and others on the scope of the school's inclusion policy and how that is enacted in practice. This can include the following:

- the school's objectives in relation to inclusion and the arrangements that have been made to facilitate meeting those objectives

- the type and nature of supports and provision available within the school, including staffing and special units or classes

- admission policies and arrangements for pupils with special educational needs

- facilities for pupils with special educational needs, including facilities for students who have a disability (Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

➢ **The school's policy on inclusion contains information on the school's staffing and staff support**

Closely linked with the policy statement on special education provision is a statement on the role of staff in implementing that process and the relevant supports available to them. Teachers are now expected to teach a much wider range of students and are likely to

require ongoing professional development aimed at developing the necessary skills for the successful inclusion of all students. Policy statements relating to staffing can include:

- the name of the person responsible for coordinating day-to-day services for children with special educational needs and the roles of other staff members within that process
- arrangements for in-service training relating to special educational needs, for both teachers and classroom assistants
- arrangements for staff support around instructional issues and specific pupils
- the nature of staff training and continuing professional development
- availability of external agencies and professionals to support staff in their work (Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

➢ **The school's policy on inclusion contains a statement on parental involvement and partnership**

The importance of parental partnership cannot be understated in making inclusive education a reality and the role of parents within that process needs to be clearly outlined. This statement should address the methods used to communicate with parents, confidentiality and parental participation in assessment, planning, decision-making, and educational reviews (Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

➢ **The school's policy on inclusion contains information about the school's links with external organisations and support services**

At the level of the classroom, and in the wider school setting, it is important to anticipate and plan for problems that may arise when students with very significant learning needs are included in mainstream classrooms. Support networks need to be identified for students with special educational needs and also for their teachers. This statement can include information regarding:

- the school's links and partnerships with other agencies beyond the school
- links with support and therapy services or relevant health or voluntary agencies
- links with the Department of Education or local education authorities
- links with other schools, and arrangements and protocols for the transition of students with any special needs between schools or between school and the next stage of life or education (Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

➢ **The school's policy on inclusion contains a statement on the review and audit of inclusive provision**

Planning for inclusion needs to be proactive rather than reactive and will involve reviewing and auditing existing provision so that structures are put in place and systematic improvements made. Gross (2002) stresses the value of reviewing practice; firstly, the process helps to define any problems the school is having in providing for those with special educational needs, so that areas for action and planning can be identified. Secondly, it allows the school to identify what is working well, so these too can be articulated in the school policy.

Gross suggests that the development and review of a whole-school policy on inclusion comprises five essential stages:

1. looking at practice – where we are now

2. developing a vision – where we would like to be

3. comparing vision and practice

4. drafting the policy

5. evaluating the policy (Gross, 2002).

This review and audit process, if it is to be meaningful and inclusive, should involve all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, paraprofessionals and the students themselves. Self-review tools such as *Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) can be helpful to this process. The development of a checklist for self-assessment will go some way to achieving this goal, allowing not only the DES to assess the inclusiveness of schools, but also giving schools the capability of assessing their own SEN provision. Using such a checklist as a tool for self-review is also useful for benchmarking inclusive practice and demonstrating progression in provision over time.

⚑ Additional practices

- There is an explicit written policy on inclusion.

- Admission to the school is open to all pupils without discrimination and is not dependent on any form of testing, except where necessary to identify the needs of a student so they can be provided for.

- The school's policy on inclusion is developed in collaboration with parents and key stakeholders.

- The school's policy on inclusion contains information on how achievements will be acknowledged.

- The school's policy on inclusion contains clear criteria for the transfer of students between mainstream classes and special classes, between mainstream and special schools, and between primary and post primary settings where relevant.

- There is community representation on the school board or governing body, and this body reflects the diversity within the community.

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6 Theme 4: The Individualised Education Plan (IEP)

📑 Overview and rationale

The Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan describing the special education program and services required by a particular student and is based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). It is a mechanism which ensures careful planning and accountability and provides a documented plan for the education of a particular pupil. In the Republic of Ireland the practice of developing IEPs and the relevant supporting legislation are relatively recent. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) places a strong emphasis on 'education plans' and, while the provisions of this Act are not yet fully implemented, they will have the effect of making the preparation of individual education plans mandatory for students who have been clearly assessed as having defined special educational needs (Griffin and Shevlin, 2007).

To create an effective IEP, parents, teachers and the student must come together to look closely at the learner's unique needs, and design an educational programme to help the student succeed. This involves setting appropriate goals, and monitoring and evaluating progress on a regular basis. The ultimate aim is to set realistic targets so the child can achieve to the best of their ability and function as independently as possible.

In this section we will examine some of the inclusive practices relating to the planning and management of the IEP.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➢ Parents are actively included in developing the IEP

Ideally, planning the student's IEP is best achieved through collaboration, and should involve the combined efforts of the student, the parents, the school, and other professionals. However, one of the most frequent complaints voiced by parents is that they were not involved in this process, and they often feel that their contribution is not regarded as of equal importance to that of the professionals (Pinkus, 2005). Maximising the opportunity for parental involvement in the IEP process should therefore be a key objective, and it is important to make the experience as supportive and positive as possible (NCSE, 2006).

In practice this will entail including parents actively in the IEP meeting and checking with them afterwards on how they felt it went. It is also important to provide parents with a written summary of the date of the meeting, names of those in attendance, what was discussed and the various intended outcomes. Finally parents should be required to sign the IEP as this formalises the agreement between them and the school (NCSE, 2006).

➢ Students are actively involved in developing the IEP

It is now widely accepted that it is best practice to involve children and young people in the development of their learning targets and IEPs (Griffin and Shevlin, 2007). They should also be involved actively, at a level appropriate to their maturity and

understanding in the monitoring and review of their own progress (DENI, 1998; DfES, 2001; NCSE, 2006). This contribution can be expanded as the students mature. There are well-documented benefits to consulting with pupils, including their perspectives, and encouraging them to take ownership of learning objectives (Hayes, 2004; Jelly et al, 2000). Pupils are more likely to respond positively to interventions when they understand the rationale and are given direct access to the process of decision-making (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Active student involvement also improves self-esteem, increases motivation and cooperation (Jelly et al, 2000) and can often provide important, unexpected and illuminating information (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Glenny, 1996).

Consultation with very young children or those with communication difficulties may require a range of strategies, including the use of art, play, audio and video as well as verbal communication, to elicit the child's views. All reasonable efforts should be taken to ensure that the views of the youngster are sought and included. Some children and young people with special educational needs may benefit from an advocate or wish to express their views through a parent, social worker or another adult or peer and this should be accommodated. Students should also be given a copy of their IEP that is accessible and expressed in child-friendly language and they should sign the IEP as an agreed plan.

➤ The IEP is regularly reviewed and the student's progress monitored

While IEPs and pupil progress should be constantly monitored over time. Under the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) the effectiveness and relevance of the targets and supports set out in the IEP should be evaluated not less than once a year. In practice younger children and those with more complex or significant needs will usually require more frequent reviews (e.g. once a term). The frequency of monitoring and IEP review meetings should always be guided by the individual needs of each pupil, and parents and pupils should be full participants in the review process. When targets are not achieved, teachers need to consider the full range of possible contributing factors, including factors in the wider learning context that may act as barriers to learning.

When reviewing an IEP the following items should be considered:

- the pupil's progress
- views of the parents and pupil
- effectiveness of the programme or interventions
- any access issues impeding the child's progress
- any future actions to be taken, including new targets and strategies or a need for additional information
- transition planning issues where appropriate (McCausland, 2005).

A review of progress, needs and provision results in the drafting of a new IEP setting out fresh strategies for supporting the pupil's learning and specifying new targets for the next period. On the other hand, there may come a point where the pupil no longer

requires additional help – clear success and exit criteria should be established at the outset so that everyone is clear on what constitutes 'adequate progress'.

➢ Adequate planning for transitions

Transition planning is an essential part of the IEP process and is one of the explicit functions of the IEP team (DENI, 1998; DfES, 2001; NCSE, 2006). Planning for transitions involves not only 'passing the baton' and ensuring a continuity of provision for the student, but also comprises taking account of the life goals and ambitions of each individual student. In addition, the secondary school must implement procedures designed to plan appropriate career paths for students with disabilities. The need for flexibility within courses is essential, in order to allow for modification and adaptation. This will require collaboration from all the educational partners and should include procedures for applying for and obtaining permission for appropriate accommodations in both school-level and external public examinations.

Accommodations and adaptations are also available at the post-secondary level and the potential for progress through the education system must be taken into consideration. A comprehensive record of the types of accommodations required by students at the secondary level may have a significant impact on their future at post-secondary institutions. We are seeing increasing numbers of students with a variety of special and additional needs in post-secondary education. The implementation of disability discrimination legislation in the UK and the Republic of Ireland requires that colleges and universities anticipate that students with disabilities will be attending and must make appropriate accommodations for them.

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7 Theme 5: Student Interactions

Overview and rationale

Among the key benefits of including all students in our education system, well supported by research, is the way in which it enhances and expands the education experience for all those involved. Typically, developing students benefit from their involvement and relationships with students with disabilities by learning about, understanding and becoming more accepting of diversity (Staub and Peck, 1995). For those with disabilities, social competence and communication skills improve (Guralnick et al., 1995), while gains in intellectual and language development and academic achievement are observed (Baker, Wang and Walberg, 1994/1995; Lipsky and Gartner, 1996; Rea et al., 2002). Positive behavioural support and opportunities for appropriate social interaction for all students, both planned and incidental, need to be provided at every opportunity (Ysseldyke, Algozzine and Thurlow, 2000).

In this section we explore some of the practices which can encourage and enhance student interactions throughout the school day.

What this looks like in practice

➤ Students with special educational needs are taught social skills to help them integrate with their peers

Targeted interventions which aim to teach and build upon the existing social skills of students with additional or special educational needs can play an important role in promoting the inclusion of all students. Poor social skills can be due to the nature of a specific disability, such as autism, or be a secondary effect of isolation and lack of appropriate experiences and role models. Poor social competence can get many children into trouble and can lead to exclusion, bullying and rejection.

Clearly, social competence is a critical skill and much work can be done in the classroom around the themes of friendship, acceptance and the valuing of difference and diversity among individuals. This not only impacts positively on the young person but also encourages more supportive and inclusive behaviour from everyone involved. For those with significant social skills deficits, emotional support and specific skills training are essential and there are a number of specific interventions available to help students in developing their social skills. A selection of these programmes are briefly outlined below

- *Social stories.* Gray and Garnand first developed social stories in 1993. This programme was originally intended to teach children with autism the rules of a game but this technique is now used much more widely. The child is encouraged to read and re-read a story involving a particular social interaction until they are able to generalise that skill to an actual social situation. Each social story is individually tailored to the child and reflects some difficulty or problem area the child has encountered. If a child does not have the reading skills, the story can be taped (audio or video) and the child can play it over and over again. The effectiveness of this technique has not been demonstrated with younger children (Norris and

Dattilo, 1999) and is recommended for use with mildly delayed and higher-functioning children.

- *Social skills groups.* Many professionals, including teachers, social workers, speech and language therapists, psychologists and occupational therapists, run social skills groups. The advantage of a group is that there is a chance to observe and work on behaviour with peers as it occurs in the group as well as discuss broader issues. The range and variety of topics covered in these groups vary depending on the children's level of functioning and the specific focus of the group. Some of these groups focus on replaying actual events, while others use videotape to analyse other people and their behaviour.

  These groups can focus on verbal and non-verbal communication skills. So for example, physical proximity or personal space can be discussed and practiced, as can other skills such as eye contact, congruence between verbal and non-verbal behaviour, body language, tone of voice and actual content of speech. Problem solving, anger management and anti-bullying techniques are particularly relevant to children with disabilities in the mainstream school setting.

- *Circle of friends.* Circle of friends is a programme designed for any child who is having difficulty making friends. A social map is prepared for the child with the child's help. This is done by drawing circles around a central circle that represents the child. In the next ring around the child's circle are people who are closest to the child: parents and siblings. In the next circle are advocates such as doctors, counsellors, teachers, neighbours, etc. In the final circle is the child's best friend. This is then done for all the children in the class and two volunteers draw their circles on the board. Then the map is drawn for the child with disabilities and children are asked to volunteer to be in the child's circle. There are certain behaviours then expected of the volunteers – greet the child, walk to class with them, be friendly or helpful. There are weekly meetings to monitor progress to discuss good things that happened and any problems that developed.

⚐ Additional practices

- The decision to move a student to a special class is given due consideration and is justified, and the student is moved back to the mainstream class as soon as possible.

- Planning and timetabling is structured so that those attending special classes for certain subjects can join their regular class for non-academic subjects.

- There is a variety of extracurricular activities such that all students can be included.

- Equal treatment is given to important festivals and special days of all cultures in the school.

- Beginning learners in English are seated beside peers who speak their first language for the first few weeks, where possible.

- Students are grouped heterogeneously for most activities.

- Resources and supports are available such that all students are able to participate in field trips and school social events.

- Suitable 'welcome friends' are identified and introduced to students who are new or appear to have difficulties making friends.

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8 Theme 6: Staffing and Personnel

📑 Overview and rationale

Teachers, special needs assistants and support staff are central to the success of inclusion. It is therefore important that all staff and personnel working in an inclusive environment possess the skills and knowledge to deal with the challenge of inclusion. It is equally important that staff work together effectively as a coherent team, to ensure the all students are effectively included in the educational environment.

This section outlines the role of different staff within an inclusive system and practical strategies for training and teamwork.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➢ The school actively promotes a whole-school culture of inclusion

One of the most important factors in determining the success of inclusion is the culture of inclusion within the whole-school environment. Having the support of the school principal is essential to making this happen, as they occupy the critical leadership role within the school. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are also crucial to the success of inclusion (Fischer, Roach and Frey, 2002), as they are dealing with the challenges of inclusion in the classroom on a daily basis. It is important therefore to actively promote and develop a positive ethos among teachers and other staff members, and encourage a shared commitment to the values of inclusion (Kugelmass, 2001).

Teachers' beliefs and expectations can have a powerful influence on pupil learning. Studies by Ellins and Porter (2005) and Wilkins and Nietfield (2004) have shown that teachers' attitudes can affect learning outcomes for individual pupils with special educational needs. But it is not just the attitudes of individuals that contribute to forming a school culture; the characteristics of the school itself as an organisation are also relevant (Lindsay and Muijis, 2006). For this reason, it is equally important to promote inclusion at the whole-school level.

A number of approaches are recommended to enhance the culture of inclusion within schools, and are listed below:

- Provide a forum through which staff concerns regarding inclusion can be addressed. Although inclusion may be a policy within the school, for that to be implemented in practice, any resistance needs to be addressed in an appropriate manner (Mayrowetz and Weinstein, 1999).

- Promote the vision of inclusion among staff and other stakeholders in the child's education. This can involve defining the goals and philosophy of inclusion and distributing this in the form of staff bulletins, staff training, school publications, and at parent or staff meetings.

- Provide the resources to facilitate inclusion. Appropriate resources need to be in place to enable inclusion in the classroom, such as adequate staffing levels,

specialist support for staff, and equipment for the classroom to facilitate those students with additional needs.

- Staff training and continuous professional development. Having a positive attitude towards inclusion is only one aspect of teachers being successful in an inclusive environment. Teachers and other staff also need to have the knowledge, skills and competencies to create successful learning experiences for all students.

➤ **Class teachers are supported in implementing inclusion**

The class or subject teacher has the primary responsibility for the progress of all students in their class, including those with special educational needs. They are expected to implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all students and address the needs of those with learning differences. Subject teachers in second-level schools are faced with additional problems of multiple classes, brief class periods and the pressure of exams. In this context, teachers can feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of adapting instruction to accommodate a wide range of learners (Giangreco et al, 1995). It is important, therefore, to create a collaborative environment within the school so that teachers can draw from the experiences of others and get the support they need to differentiate effectively and accommodate learners successfully.

Among the types of support and collaboration that mainstream or subject teachers find helpful are the following:

- Participation in the IEP process. Being involved from the start and knowing the detail of a student's individual needs and strengths helps the teacher to understand the learning implications of the student's problems.

- Paraprofessional help in the classroom can assist teachers in meeting the needs of each child. Teaching assistants need adequate training and preparation for their role and clear responsibilities and reporting relationships as well as support.

- Smaller class sizes allow teachers to cope with extra demands.

- Planning time to meet with the special needs assistant to discuss the needs of individual students.

➤ **Support staff are an integral part of the inclusion process**

The role of support staff within the classroom has been identified as critical to the success of inclusion (Farrell, 2000). When teachers and support staff are able to work effectively together, it has been found that the problems associated with the severity of the pupil's learning difficulty can be diminished (Florian, 1998). The benefits of involving support staff in the classroom are reflected in an OFSTED report (2002), which found that the quality of teaching was better in classes with support staff than in those without them. Research by Blatchford et al. (2004) also suggests that the presence of in-class support staff has an indirect effect on teaching by increasing pupil engagement and freeing up the teacher to focus more effectively on instruction. Additionally, the provision of support staff is seen as facilitating inclusion by bringing additional skills to the classroom, enabling joint planning and reducing pupil teacher ratios (OECD, 2005).

However, where support staff are working on a one to one basis with pupils, this approach may be viewed as running counter to the philosophy and intent of inclusive education as it differentiates them from their peers. Lorenz (1998) notes that when an assistant is 'velcroed' to the child, there is a real danger that the child will be prevented from forming relationships with his or her peers and may develop an unhelpful dependency on the support worker. They are also at risk of becoming passive and developing a learned helplessness. But while support staff may initially spend the majority of the allotted time working directly with the pupil, there should be a gradual move toward them providing more support to the teacher by assisting with modifications to curriculum content, developing alternative resources and setting up student support networks in the class (Westwood, 1997). In-class support models have a number of advantages, including the transfer of skills to the classroom teacher, increased collaborative planning and greater opportunities for pupils to keep pace with classroom work (Griffin and Shevlin, 2007).

Lack of training for support staff has often been highlighted as an issue, particularly when they are working with students with high levels of additional needs. Farrell (2000) makes the point that the training and expertise of support staff determines their ability to implement methods appropriate to children's needs and to work as part of a team. It is therefore important to provide a structured programme of continuing professional development for support staff working in schools. The training of support staff has been found to produce measurable social benefits for students with severe disabilities, including an increase in their level of interaction with peers (Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren, 2005). The use of support staff in classrooms is now a well-established practice and clearly has the potential to facilitate inclusion but more research is necessary to assess the nature and impact of its role.

Although the role of support staff is defined in the Learning Support Guidelines (DES, 2000) and the Post Primary Guidelines for the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs (DES, 2007), in practice, however, their role may not always be as clearly delineated. It is important, therefore to ascertain the appropriate title and the roles and responsibilities associated with the support staff provision, as a key component in any successful school is a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities.

➢ **Staff collaborate with specialists where necessary**

Collaborating with specialists on various issues allows for the provision of advice and guidance to the classroom teacher on interventions and programmes to be followed by those with additional educational needs. Underlying the movement in education towards collaborative consultation is the premise that there is more to be gained by the classroom teacher working closely with other professionals to solve problems, than by relying on ready-made prescriptions for intervention from outside experts (Westwood, 1997). The consultant in this process may be the special needs assistant, the school's special educational needs coordinator, psychologists, speech and language therapists or other professionals. Teachers often need more than advice and ideas; sometimes they need practical facilitative assistance and this should be part of the role of the consultant as well (Rose and Howley, 2007).

➢ **Additional support and training is available for staff**

The key to the development of inclusive classroom practices and effective instruction lies in teachers' understandings of differences. It largely depends on their skills in mediating the curriculum for individual pupils (Fletcher-Campbell, 2000; Riddell et al., 2006). However, research indicates that many teachers do not feel well prepared for inclusive classes and lack confidence in their own ability to teach children with special needs in inclusive settings (Dwyfor, Davies and Garner, 1997; Garner, 1996; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2002; Winter, 2006). This skills gap can often be addressed through structured programs of training and continuous professional development. In addition, Mittler (2000) suggests that ensuring newly qualified teachers have a basic understanding of inclusive teaching is the best investment that can be made. International and European studies have also identified adequate teacher training (in initial teacher training and through in-service) as an essential prerequisite for inclusion (EADSNE, 2003; OECD, 2005).

Many teachers who support the philosophy of inclusion also identify critical problems with its implementation (Winzer, 1999). According to Minke et al (1996), the most frequently cited reason for resistance is the lack of skills necessary to teach pupils with special educational needs. Researchers have also found that inclusion is inadequately addressed and often neglected in teacher training (Barton, 2003; Booth et al., 2003; Garner, 2001; Jones, 2002; Thomas and Loxley, 2001). Appropriate teacher training can also help alleviate teacher's apprehensions regarding inclusion, and any initial reservations can be moderated by access to training, resources and additional supports (Lindsay, 2007). In their review of the literature on inclusion, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) note that resistance to inclusion was less when practitioners had acquired special education qualifications in pre-service or in-service programmes. They further contend that 'without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of children with special educational needs, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be difficult' (p.139).

Some of the benefits of investing in teacher education for special needs students can be summarised below:

• Support from other teachers is an essential resource to enable teachers to problem-solve new instructional challenges (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Some inclusive schools have a learning support team, which links all school services to meet the needs of children with special needs.

• Collaboration with other teachers and school administration promotes effective and inclusive teaching practices (Lindsay, 2007).

• Additional training and support for teachers to develop their skills supports a sense of competence, positively impacts on teachers' inclusive practices and reduces resistance to inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

⚑ **Additional practices**

- Support staff are fully integrated within the school's cohort of staff.

- Teachers collaborate and work as teams in order to build on each other's strengths and broaden the scope of activities in the classroom.

- All staff development programs include anti-racism as a fundamental principle.

- All staff including newly qualified teachers and newly appointed teachers are informed about students with additional needs in their classes.

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9 Theme 7: External Links

📑 Overview and rationale

The provision of adequate funding, resources, and support services is fundamental to the successful implementation of inclusion and will require the establishment of links with agencies, health services and supports outside the school. This will not only involve active collaboration with government agencies and public services, but also partnership with professionals and parents. In this section we explore some of the collaborative partnerships and networks that can help support teachers and schools.

This theme covers all collaboration the school may have with external agencies, including health services, psychologists and the local community.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➢ The school actively collaborates with parents

This emphasis on partnership and collaboration with parents derives from two principles: the rights of parents to be involved and have their wishes respected in terms of their child's education, and the benefits which arise from continuity between their home and care or educational environments (Porter, 2002). But despite the rhetoric of partnership, the reality is that parents of pupils with special educational needs often report that their relationships with school personnel and other professionals are characterised by stress, frustration and alienation. Similarly, teachers frequently report difficulties in working collaboratively with parents (Turnbull and Turnbull, 2001).

Yet despite these apparent difficulties there is much research in support of parental partnerships, that clearly shows the benefits that can result from this collaboration. Research studies demonstrate that parental involvement enhances pupil performance and achievement and also promotes non-academic outcomes, like school attendance, self-esteem and good behaviour (nasen, 2000, Rich, 1987, Swap, 1993). Legislative and policy initiatives firmly endorse the value and importance of collaboration between parents and professionals, and recognise effective collaboration as best practice for all schools and all children (e.g. DfES, 2004). Similar emphasis is placed on the crucial contribution of parents to their children's education and parent-school relationships in the Scottish and Northern Irish codes of practice (Scottish Executive, 2005; DENI, 1998) and in the Learning Support Guidelines and Post-primary Guidelines for Inclusion in the Republic of Ireland (DES, 2000; DES, 2007). Some of the benefits of this approach are outlined below.

- Parents have the insider perspective and are the experts where their own child is concerned. They have unique strengths, knowledge and experience to contribute to the shared view of a child's needs and the best ways of supporting them.

- Parents can gain extra supports and guidance they may require to understand and cope with their child's atypical needs.

- Parental involvement promotes mutual respect and understanding between home, school, and the wider community.

- Parents' involvement in their child's education contributes to children's positive attitudes to learning and to themselves as learners (Adapted from Porter, 2002).

Key to the involvement of parents is an open and accessible communication channel between the school and home. It must be remembered however that parents may not feel at ease when communicating with professionals within a school, especially where there exists language or cultural barriers. Parental expectations and barriers to participation should be taken into account here, and encouragement given to facilitate their involvement, including perhaps a translator or child care services to allow them to attend meetings. Determining parents' concerns in advance of meetings and structuring the agenda to address these concerns can help facilitate the involvement of parents (Porter, 2002). Strategies such as taping the meeting and sending home draft minutes will allow parents to review the decisions made and a follow-up meeting can facilitate clarification and allow discussion of any issues raised. Regular updates and meetings with parents will help facilitate effective monitoring of progress and provision of additional support. In addition, providing parents with information on their child's condition, relevant support groups (where appropriate), and the nature and purpose of the intervention being provided to their child may help parental understanding and encourage their involvement in the child's education.

The nature of parental involvement can take many forms and Kelley-Laine (1998) distinguishes between two levels of parental involvement: 'collective involvement' and 'individual involvement'. Both are recognised as critical to effective partnerships and to meeting the needs of children and their families. 'Collective involvement' refers to the engagement of parents in specific activities such as fundraising, policy-making and curriculum development, through parent associations and school boards and can occur at any level of the education system from local to national level. 'Individual involvement' has a more direct impact on instruction and relates to the psychosocial support of parents and family-school communication. Particularly crucial are the interpersonal dynamics which foster and encourage mutual support between families and schools, establishing family-school rights and responsibilities, and communicating with a broad cross-section of families.

➢ **The school successfully collaborates with external agencies**

An important element in the success of any programme of inclusion is the provision of adequate supports and services to ensure that all students can participate equally in school activities and that staff are supported in their work. There may be occasions where the school does not possess the expertise or resources required to facilitate full inclusion, or where the school's existing provision could benefit from additional inputs. It is therefore important that the school cultivates and maintains links with external agencies. This would enable it to offer a wider range of services and would enhance their capability to support inclusion. The following list provides an overview of some of the external agencies and services with which may be useful for the school to collaborate:

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) – This service is funded by the DES and works in partnership with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs and finding ways to meet these needs.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE) – The NCSE was established to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs. Among its many functions, it provides information and advice to educational institutions on best practice. In addition, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) process applications from schools for additional equipment, resources and staffing.

Special Education Support Service (SESS) – This service aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning with particular reference to the education of students with special needs. The SESS achieves this aim by co-ordinating, developing and delivering a range of professional development initiatives and support structures.

Teacher education services – Establishing direct links between schools and teacher education services allows teachers the opportunity to build on their existing skills and knowledge and acquire additional expertise to enable them meet the challenge of inclusion. Existing teachers can avail of courses in continuing professional development, thus expanding their skills base. Courses can be developed for trainee teachers to include inclusive practices.

Voluntary organisations – Voluntary organisations such as Down syndrome Ireland, Irish Autism Action, and the Irish Deaf Society have much to offer schools in terms of providing expert information and advice on the education of those with special educational needs. Links with voluntary organisations can also help strengthen links between the school and the wider community and help create a wider awareness and acceptance of diversity.

Health services – Additional support from health services may be required for students who have more profound special needs requirements, or for those with physical disabilities who require additional equipment or health-related supports.

⚐ Additional practices

- A parent committee on special education has been established within the school.
- The school has active partnerships with other schools via the following:
  - dual enrolment: interactions and links between schools can be mutually beneficial
  - special schools can be integrated and linked to mainstream schools
  - reverse integration programme
  - circle of friends links with students in other schools.
- Volunteer helpers are encouraged to work at the school. This helps build links with employers, and training and employment bodies.

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10 Theme 8: Assessment of Achievement

📑 Overview and rationale

Educational systems which over-emphasise academic achievement, competition and league tables pose a serious dilemma for inclusion and it is recognised that this issue requires attention so that vulnerable pupils are not disadvantaged or left behind (EADSNE, 2003). Young people with special educational needs may have issues around motivation and self-esteem, and a formal recognition of their achievements and progress can help improve their confidence and self image, encouraging them to engage in class activities. However, what constitutes progress will vary depending on the child. For students with significant learning difficulties or disabilities, it is important to recognise that progress can be achieved in many different ways apart from increases in academic knowledge or skills (Westwood, 2007). This theme covers the achievements of pupils within the school, from class assessments to state examinations.

In this section we examine some of the issues surrounding the assessment of achievement and how assessment procedures can be adapted to account for those with special educational needs.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➢ Classroom assessments support inclusion

Informal assessments

Informal assessments provide opportunities for recognition of student achievement. They are both useful and practical as they typically involve the ordinary activities and materials used on a daily basis in the classroom (Westwood, 2007). Successful completion of classroom and homework assignments, a student's participation in class activities and attendance all carry the potential to reinforce positive behaviour and to encourage participation. Informal assessments have the advantage that they involve goals which are achievable by all students and do not differentiate between those with additional needs and their typical peers. Rewards can be given for success in such tasks, and these might include certificates of achievement, treats, or the opportunity to engage in a favourite activity.

Portfolio assessment

In recent years, maintaining portfolios of student work has become a popular way for teachers to track student progress and collect evidence of learning. This approach involves collecting multiple samples of the student's work over a period of time (Lerner, 2003), and might include fully completed work, or work which reflects their best effort in a key skill or subject area. Relevant material may also be contributed by teachers, parents and other professionals (e.g. speech therapists). The purpose of this approach is to display concrete examples of the student's progress over time and can be a great confidence booster, allowing students a record of progress which they can share with others. It may also be useful for older students to be given responsibility for organising

their own portfolios. In this context, the contents can be used for self-evaluation (Lerner, 2003).

Self-assessment and peer-assessment

Self-assessment gives students the opportunity to be involved in their own assessment and can act as a major motivator, with students identifying and setting their own learning goals. The use of self-assessment can promote self-directed learning and improve motivation in all students. However, it is particularly relevant for students with disabilities or learning difficulties because it fosters independent learning and builds confidence. A variation on this theme is to involve students in assessing their peers, providing feedback and highlighting achievements (Venn, 2000). This approach needs to be carefully guided and structured but can be fun and morale boosting. Group work can also be peer-assessed and offers opportunities for positive peer interactions and co-operative learning.

➢ **Accommodations and test modifications are available for students with special educational needs in school examinations.**

Students should be given an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a way that does not disadvantage them because of their disability or other special educational needs. Formal tests provide a measure of progress for the students themselves and are valued in our educational culture, so inclusion through test modification should be our preferred option, as opposed to exemption from testing. For many students, traditional test-taking formats are likely to form a major barrier to accurate assessment of their learning. However, a number of accommodations and modifications can be put in place to address this issue and a selection of these from the current literature is outlined below:

- Some students may benefit from demonstrating their learning through oral examination or practical tests.

- Special needs students may require additional time to complete tests or a quiet space away from other students.

- On a similar theme, keeping tests brief allows students with attention related difficulties the opportunity to switch to another activity or leave when the test is completed.

- Those with physical or learning disabilities may require assistive technology, a scribe or other accommodation for completing tests.

- Self-paced tests often work well with students who have disabilities or learning difficulties, as they will be less stressed and more productive under these conditions.

- If students have extreme difficulties with formal and/or written tests then alternatives may be considered, such as portfolio assessment, project work, or continuous assessment.

The accommodations and test modifications appropriate to the student's needs should be documented and formally agreed; this assists in the continuity of response to the student's needs, between subjects and between schools.

➢ **Reasonable accommodations for students with special educational needs are available in public examinations**

Public examinations, such as the Leaving Certificate are key points in students' lives and form the gateway to further opportunities. They are used to make important decisions about students' future education which, in turn, seriously affects their life chances. It is recognised that students with physical disabilities or learning difficulties face a particular challenge communicating their knowledge and doing justice to their ability under the limited scope and narrow conditions of state examinations. Although there is provision for other kinds of assessment (e.g. oral and practical competencies), these examinations rely heavily on performance on written papers which are administered under controlled conditions in a limited time frame at the end of a long period of study. Some candidates experience difficulty, or may even find it impossible, to communicate what they know in this situation.

Some of the potential special arrangements for public examinations are outlined below:

- Candidates with communication and interaction difficulties may need to use a word processor or, in particular circumstances, have the assistance of a scribe to write for them. They may also need extra time to demonstrate written and oral communication skills.

- Candidates with cognitive difficulties may require extra time for timed examinations and assessments. In appropriate cases, they may also need reading or writing assistance.

- Candidates with sensory and physical needs might require extra time, word processors, and/or a scribe. They may require papers which are modified for hearing impairment or visual impairment. They may also require a practical assistant, subject to restrictions relating to the assessment criteria.

- Candidates with behavioural, emotional and social needs might require supervised rest periods, separate invigilation or alternative accommodation arrangements (Adapted from JCQ, 2006, p.2).

➢ **Students are involved in identifying their own learning targets**

The involvement of students as active partners in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment is fundamental to inclusion. This approach has the potential to promote successful learning and can also enhance student-teacher relationships (DES, 2007). Facilitating choices/decision-making and involving students in monitoring their own learning has also been found to increase attention, engagement and motivation (Norwich and Lewis, 2001). It also has the benefit of increasing students' independence in learning and encourages them to attribute results to their own effort. This is particularly important for youngsters who have experienced barriers to learning and who may be at risk of becoming passive or disengaged learners (Lerner, 2003).

Students can also be involved in choosing different learning tasks, setting their IEP targets, and monitoring their own behaviour and learning progress. Pupil involvement in defining targets and tracking their own progress is relevant at all levels, with all pupils. The following four-step process can be used by teachers and students in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment:

1. Together, the teacher and student establish clear and appropriate goals and targets for teaching and learning.

2. Students are shown how to evaluate and monitor their own progress.

3. Students begin to evaluate their own progress and to record the results; the evaluation criteria and methods for recording results are discussed with the teacher.

4. Students complete their own records of progress and discuss these periodically with the teacher (DES, 2007, p.115).

⚑ Additional practices

- The school awards programme recognises a wide range of talents and contributions, including those that are especially valued by different cultural groups.

- Assessment of academic achievement is conducted through the student's first language.

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11 Theme 9: Curriculum

📑 Overview and rationale

Current educational theory and practice strongly favours providing all students, regardless of ability, with appropriate access to mainstream curricula. At its most basic level this involves matching the task to the learner. Traditionally, curricula for students with special educational needs tend to concentrate on a narrow range of skills; while the development of these skills is essential, the provision of a broader range of opportunities is now recognised as a more effective model (DfES, 2001; NCCA, 1999). This can be achieved through the use of modified curricula, instructional strategies and modifications to assessment. It is underpinned by inclusive practice and supported by the use of computers and assistive technology for students with special educational needs. In this section we provide an overview of modifications to the curriculum that support inclusion and adaptations that will allow students of varying abilities to access that curriculum.

Curriculum planning and timetabling is essential if the child is to achieve their educational goals without feeling excluded from the school. This theme covers both access to the curriculum and how that curriculum is being taught in the classroom.

👍 What this looks like in practice

➤ Appropriate curricular content is selected for students with special educational needs

Making curricular decisions is a complex process and requires striking a necessary balance between mainstream curricula, developmental curricula and additional curricular areas. It also means balancing priorities according to the strengths, needs and circumstances of the particular student and the nature of the disability. For example, for students with intellectual disabilities, attention will focus on self-help and daily living skills. Students with hearing impairments will need priority to be given to the areas of vocabulary development and oral-aural communication. Students with emotional and behavioural problems will need a curriculum which includes self-management skills and building self-esteem.

In selecting curriculum content for students with special educational needs, Brennan (1985) suggests applying what he calls the "4R test" (Westwood, 1997) whereby curriculum content can be assessed in the following terms:

- *Is it real?* Does it fit with the student's experiences?

- *Is it relevant?* Will it be of value for the student to know this?

- *Is it realistic?* Given this student's age, ability and attainments, is it achievable at this time?

- *Is it rational?* Can the purpose of this learning be made clear to the student?

➢ **The curriculum is differentiated for students with special educational needs**

Differentiation is a broad term which refers to the various strategies educators use to tailor teaching environments and practices to enable students with diverse learning needs to participate in the mainstream curriculum. They are by their very nature inclusive. Adaptive teaching, creative and relevant curricular approaches, the use of multimedia and computers in learning, frequent novel stimuli and multi-sensory learning modalities are some of the ways in which we can make material more accessible and engaging for students with special educational needs.

Some of the practices of differentiation are outlined below:

- *Providing age-appropriate curriculum objectives and materials:* Regardless of a student's level of performance, the objectives and materials should be appropriately similar to those provided to same-age peers. For example, older students with dyslexia should be given age- and interest-appropriate books, not basal readers.

- *Designing functional curricula:* Teachers can adapt standard curriculum objectives so that they are functionally relevant to the likely demands of real-life settings where the student will be expected to function independently. So, for example, a 12-year-old who performs at a six-year-old level in maths may practice basic computations by keeping the score in a game.

- *Providing relevant curricula:* Select high-interest and relevant materials to reinforce the basic curriculum and to increase motivation. Select materials with which the student can identify positively; ensure that mainstream materials positively portray people with disabilities and learning differences. Lack of curricular relevance has been shown to contribute to poor performance, school dropout and disruptive behaviour.

- *Integrating services:* It is important for teachers to collaborate with other professionals involved in supporting the student with disabilities or other special educational needs to coordinate curriculum objectives.

- *Providing alternative response modes:* It is important to facilitate a range of alternative response modes for students in order that they can demonstrate their learning. Examples include pointing to answers, using sign language or using speech to text software to write an essay.

- *Allowing for different completion and response rates:* Students may vary in their work rate and also in the time that it takes them to respond to questions orally. Give extra time or accept what has been done within the time frame.

- *Allowing for different workloads:* Students can work on the same goals as the other students but the requirements for individual students may differ. One student may be expected to learn 20 spellings while another is expected to complete 10.

- *Core plus extension:* This involves planning lessons in such a way that core activities and materials are supplemented by readily available extension resources. This approach allows teachers to respond effectively to diverse needs at the same time; extra examples and more opportunities to practice may be provided to children who

need it, while advanced materials can be provided to gifted students
(Adapted from Westwood, 1997).

➢ **Appropriate technology is available to deliver the curriculum**

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have a great deal to offer in promoting inclusion in the delivery of the curriculum to those with special educational needs or specific learning difficulties. They allow teachers to individualise instruction in an engaging, motivating and unobtrusive manner. Computers also function as an extra pair of hands in the classroom, providing instruction and feedback and allowing students to work collaboratively in pairs or groups, thus effectively reducing class size and freeing the teacher up for other tasks.

ICTs offer ways of circumventing motor, communication, and learning difficulties, as well as providing applications specifically designed to teach particular skills, such as language comprehension or numeracy. A recent study in the UK examined the impact of computer use on learners with ADHD working on science tasks. The results showed a significant improvement in the accuracy of responses and on-task behaviours (Shaw and Lewis, 2005). ICTs also enable increased access to the curriculum and help students to consolidate and reinforce what has already been learned in the classroom. Even everyday technologies such as email can be used to send home homework which is otherwise incompletely or inaccurately copied from the blackboard. Other technologies, such as interactive whiteboards have been used successfully in delivering curricula, allowing the lesson notes to be saved by the student for later reference, reinforcement and revision.

The following section outlines some of the benefits of using ICTs to deliver the curriculum to students with special educational needs and their role in supporting inclusion:

- *Individual attention:* Students respond well to the variety, structure, immediate reinforcement and the multi-sensory experiences offered by computer applications. Computers can be used to tailor instruction individually, and information rich multimedia programmes can enhance learning in specific subject areas, such as History or Geography.

- *Spell checker:* Using word processors in the writing process increases motivation because the child can see their work in a very readable and satisfactory manner; the spell checker reduces frustration and increases productivity, and is especially useful for those with dyslexia.

- *Text-to-speech:* Extremely useful for those with visual impairments or dyslexia, text-to-speech packages allow the student to hear what is written. Text to speech programmes can be used in conjunction with Optical Character Recognition software to "read in" text via a scanner and have it read back to the child. This is especially useful where the curriculum texts are not available in electronic format. Less high tech solutions can also be useful, such as Dictaphones and tape recorders, and the use of audio books and curriculum texts.

- *Training specific skills:* Instructional computer software packages which are designed to develop specific skills such as literacy or numeracy are available for all age groups.

Many of these applications are also good at assessing the child's progress, both for the purposes of moving the child on through the programme at an appropriate pace, and providing valuable feedback to the teacher.

- *Planning tools:* There is a growing number of 'Mind-Mapping' packages available. These are generally based on techniques which have been suggested by people like Tony Buzan (Buzan and Buzan, 1993) but which have been made much easier by the arrival of suitable technology. This software can have a wealth of uses both in planning a piece of writing and retaining information in an organised form.

➢ Assistive technology is available to enable students with special educational needs to access the curriculum

Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to improve the functioning of individuals with disabilities. Besides the central issue of providing access to the curriculum, assistive technology also enhances student independence (an essential component in inclusion), and allows the student with special needs to actively participate in education. Students with a wide range of learning difficulties or disabilities can benefit from assistive technology. For example, a child with a hearing impairment may need a hearing aid to participate in class; a child with a visual impairment may benefit from a device that enlarges printed words; and a student with a learning difficulty may need a calculator to help with maths problems. In addition, children who lack a reliable, understandable way of communicating may be helped through augmentative communication approaches, including language boards and devices with speech synthesizers. Assistive technology may also be used to help students access and operate computers. Alternative keyboards and mice as well as other alternative methods of input such as pointing devices, switches, and touch-screens allow children with disabilities to operate computers.

Some of the benefits of inclusive technology are summarised below:

- Students have greater control over their own learning experience.

- Students can participate in and contribute more fully in classroom activities and complete assignments independently.

- Students can interact to a greater extent with their typical peers, improving social skills and enhancing acceptance.

Using assistive technology as a tool for curriculum access is a relatively recent and rapidly evolving approach to education. The continuous advancements in technology will only help to expand its application in the inclusive classroom.

⚐ Additional practices

- The curriculum for non-academic subjects is delivered to all students together.

- Where students require differentiated instruction or teaching in a special class for certain subjects, curriculum planning and timetabling is structured such that the student does not feel excluded from the rest of the school.

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- There is a process for evaluating textbooks and resources materials which ensures a diversity of viewpoints and representations.

- Students have been trained in, and are familiar with, the operation of the assistive technology they require.

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12 Theme 10: Teaching Strategies

Overview and rationale

Inclusive education challenges educators to develop a wide repertoire of teaching strategies. Within the classroom, certain teaching strategies have been identified as helpful to the inclusion of students with special educational needs. Examples include co-operative teaching, co-operative learning, individualised planning, collaborative problem-solving, heterogeneous grouping and differentiation. For these teaching methods to be successful, they need to be embedded in the overall context of effective teaching based on assessment and evaluation, high expectations, direct instruction and feedback (EADSNE, 2003).

Where pupils have complex needs, it is recognised that they may benefit from particular approaches to teaching and learning, such as Braille or sign language in the case of children with visual or hearing impairments. Similarly, distinctive teaching approaches are used with children with autism. In a comprehensive review of teaching strategies for pupils with special educational needs, Davis and Florian (2004) concluded that the research evidence shows that a combination of teaching strategies and approaches produces more powerful effects than a single-strategy solution. This section outlines some of the approaches to teaching that enhance and support inclusion.

What this looks like in practice

Instruction is differentiated for students with special educational needs

If inclusion is to work, the ways in which instruction is delivered in the regular classroom need to be flexible enough to meet the diverse requirements of all students. Although individual students will require varying degrees of accommodation, all students can benefit from the strategies used in differentiation. Outlined below are some of the approaches used in differentiation, derived from research on effective instruction:

- *Support:* Provide small group or individual instruction as necessary. Where possible, learning support or resource teaching should be delivered within the mainstream classroom.

- *Instructions*: Provide the instructions for completing a task orally as well as in writing and encourage the student to repeat the directions. Clear and simple instructions are often best, made one at a time. Instructions should be repeated and clarified and checks should be made to ensure that they are understood.

- *Prompting and cueing*: Provide prompts and cues to assist memory and learning and to signal transitions; also plan a system to gradually fade them out or reduce them over time.

- *Demonstration and modelling:* Modelling the correct procedure, thinking problem-solving strategies out loud and providing additional demonstrations to individuals or small groups are all useful strategies.

- *Learning styles:* Gardner (1999) has identified eight learning styles: visual/spatial, auditory/linguistic, musical, mathematical, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. Knowledge of these can raise your awareness of students' different strengths, suggest alternate ways for them to demonstrate their knowledge and generally facilitate teaching to accommodate diverse learners (Algozzine et al, 1997).

➢ **Scaffolded instruction**

The concept of scaffolding (Bruner, 1975) derives from the work of Vygotsky, who proposed that with an adult's assistance, children could accomplish tasks they ordinarily could not perform independently. Vygotsky argued that teaching should not only consider the child's existing skills, but should also focus on those skills which are in the process of development and are most amenable to skilled teaching (Elliot, 2000). In this approach the teacher provides a graduated degree of support and as the child gains mastery of the skill or concept, the scaffold is gradually removed. Examples of scaffolding include teacher modelling of problem-solving and step-by-step sequencing of procedures. It is also a useful technique for encouraging more independent learning in students whose learning difficulties may have lead to prompt dependence. Scaffolding instruction is not difficult to implement in a mainstream classroom, however, it does demand one-to-one work and so additional staff support in the classroom may be necessary.

➢ **Cooperative group learning**

Cooperative learning techniques are among the best-documented approaches for promoting successful inclusion in classrooms with a diverse group of learners (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Cooperative learning involves students working together in small-group learning activities with the aim of maximising their own and each other's learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1991). This approach can take various forms; students may join together in informal, temporary cooperative learning groups for part of a class period, or they may be involved in more formal cooperative learning groups working on a specific project over an extended number of sessions. A third possibility is that of cooperative base groups, where students work in long-term groups for a term or longer, with the aim of supporting, encouraging and assisting each member of the group to make progress (DES, 2007).

The benefits of cooperative learning include the promotion of academic achievement, improved behaviour and school attendance, and increased engagement with school and learning (DES, 2007). A number of studies have also shown that using cooperative learning with students who have learning difficulties or disabilities increases their academic achievement and social acceptability (McMaster and Fuchs, 2002; Slavin, 1995). The general findings of research on students with moderate and severe disabilities in cooperative learning groups have been overwhelmingly positive (Putnam, 1998). Additionally, cooperative learning techniques can foster a climate of friendship, caring and equality in the classroom setting (DES, 2007). While cooperative learning increases interaction, it is important to note that merely placing students with

disabilities into groups with their peers does not guarantee that they will interact in socially appropriate and instructionally beneficial ways (McMaster and Fuchs, 2002).

➢ Peer tutoring

Peer tutoring is a practice that can allow classroom teachers to cater for diverse needs within an inclusive context and there is a wide range of studies supporting its effectiveness (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring are instructional methods in which students help each other to learn, and in turn learn by teaching. One child acts as the tutor while the other is the learner or tutee. Peer tutoring involves children of the same age helping their peers while cross-age tutoring involves students from older classes helping younger children. This approach has well documented academic and social benefits for both the tutor and the learner (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1998). It has also been shown to improve self-esteem and social interactions (Bagley and Mallick, 1996). Another benefit is that it frees up the teacher, giving them time to provide more direct support to individual pupils. Peer tutoring is also relatively easy to implement.

Peer tutoring takes time and care to set up properly but pays huge dividends. Plans must be made about matching student pairs, finding the right sort of materials and training tutors and tutees. Peer tutors need clear directions and a specific task to undertake. Ideal peer tutoring tasks include reviewing previously learned skills, practising and building fluency and direct instruction in new skills and concepts. A well-organised peer tutoring system can facilitate access and participation in a variety of ways; for example, it can be used to deliver individual support and facilitate curriculum access for new students learning English as an additional language (Curtis, 1992). Frederickson and Cline (2002) suggest that this may be a particularly helpful approach when peer tutors are drawn from those who speak the same first language. Studies have also shown that this approach is particularly helpful for pupils with disabilities when they adopt the role of tutor (Vaughn, Gersten and Chard, 2000; Wilson, 2003). It also offers a valuable means of involving pupils with special educational needs in natural social networks both within and beyond the class (Riddell et al., 2006). The evidence from research into peer tutoring is that it is effective, it offers teachers a useful tool in addressing individual needs and what's more, students like it.

➢ Direct instruction

Most students with learning difficulties and developmental delays do not learn incidentally but require direct, explicit and intensive instruction. This approach leaves little to chance; the curriculum and the tasks to be learned are carefully analysed and then each skill is taught in sequence. Teachers state and explain clearly what is being taught and how it is to be done. The difficulty level of tasks is carefully set to ensure some chance of success and the teacher provides immediate feedback, correction and encouragement. Pupils with learning difficulties do best when in more tightly structured programmes, as direct and explicit instruction increases attention and academic engagement, raises the attainments of all students and significantly reduces the prevalence of learning failure (Westwood, 2007). This systematic direct approach also

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provides opportunities to record success, which in turn motivates pupils and helps to keep them on task.

➢ Co-teaching

Co-teaching is a form of regularly scheduled collaboration between the mainstream class or subject teacher and the special education teacher. This approach has been shown to be successful with a range of students who require additional support in mainstream classrooms (see Luckner, 1999; Rice and Zigmond, 1999; Trent, 1998; Welch, 2000). The models of co-teaching briefly outlined below, include a variety of methods of cooperative working which can provide a rich learning environment for students with diverse needs.

- *One teaches and one assists or supports:* This is probably the most common co-teaching strategy. Both the teachers are present in the classroom, but one teacher, usually the general educator (or subject teacher at second level), leads the instructional activity. The teacher in the support role observes, checks students' understanding, supports the work of individual students or manages behaviour.

- *Station teaching:* This is the practice of two teachers dividing the content to be taught to the class between them. Each teacher delivers a portion of the lesson to a section of the class group and then students rotate between the two teachers. Students gain the experience of two teaching styles and points of view.

- *Alternative teaching:* This is where the class is divided into two groups, one small and one large. One teacher takes the large group for instruction while the other teacher works intensely with the small group. While this method has the advantage of providing small-group instruction to those students who need it, this strategy risks creating a situation in which students are 'pulled out' to the back of the class and thereby publicly identified as needing extra help.

- *Learning centres to support all learners:* An alternative to the resource-room model, this model involves both subject teachers and special educators working together to provide support to all students. The setting is a learning centre, a designated place in the school where students can come during free periods to research and learn in a creative and supportive environment. The learning centre is stocked with resources, equipment and materials, including computers and reference books (Adapted from Friend and Cook, 2000).

➢ The school employs a variety of teaching styles

As indicated earlier, there do not appear to be distinct pedagogies which are effective for all children with learning difficulties. Evidence shows that it is important to use multiple instructional strategies and to adapt them to the student's individual needs; this leads to improved results and improves transfer and generalisation of learning. A combination of strategies produces more powerful effects than a single-strategy solution (Speece and Keogh, 1996). Although students may prefer to work in one particular way, learning becomes more effective when they can adapt to different models of instruction. Similarly, teachers may feel most comfortable with one approach to teaching, but this

is unlikely to address the learning needs of all the pupils in the class (Rose and Howley, 2007). The teacher's awareness of different teaching styles and the extent to which particular teaching styles create or hinder opportunities for learning is also an important factor in inclusive learning (Hemmingsson et al., 1999). There is a wide variation in the educational needs of children and a growing understanding of the need to move away from the belief that one model of learning informs and justifies one model of teaching (Davis and Florian, 2004, p.31).

⚑ Additional practices

- There is an individualised approach to academic work.

- Multi-sensory teaching approaches and a choice of assignments are available for those with different learning styles (e.g. visual, verbal, kinaesthetic).

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