

A Critical Interrogation of Integration, Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

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Abstract. In this article, I have focused on presenting the key literature which has shaped my personal thinking and values around inclusion. Throughout the article, I draw on the perspectives of a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who I have referred to as Jane. The perspectives are taken from a complete life history account which formed the basis of my doctoral research. To produce the narrative Jane documented her personal reflections over a period. Jane's account illustrates the extent to which inclusion can present a risk for schools and in this case the powerful othering effect that it can have on the reputation of a school.

Keywords: Inclusion; special educational needs; disability; integration

Jane: *Throughout my teaching career I have always been acutely aware of an overwhelming desire to accept and support the very individual and diverse personalities I have had the pleasure of meeting and educating over many years. In the early years of my career I was aware of many teachers who labelled children who were unable to follow the rule book. The term 'naughty' seemed to be splattered around like paint. 'Naughty' was applied to children, as one would perhaps understand, who disrupted classes with their challenging behaviour. It was however also applied to children who were shy and did not respond to questions, or those who struggled to complete tasks. It was the labelling of the latter group which disturbed me the most. I would find myself trying to relate to these children, knowing how they were feeling, knowing that the more they felt pressurised and undermined the more their self confidence and self-esteem would be damaged. My views have not changed and my empathy for such children is as strong today as it was then. Deep in my memory I have always realised that I was more able and ready to relate to these children. Many of them were a mirror image of me. I have, until now, acknowledged, to myself and a few close friends, that certain aspects of my life have influenced both my views and practices. I have recalled isolated incidents, but in a very dismissive manner. In my own thoughts, I have often revisited them. I have never wanted to publicly dwell on my past. The past was gone, the present and the future were my focus. In reality I was afraid of revisiting it, unsure of the feelings I would experience by doing so. Agreeing to share and discuss my life experiences has enabled me to more fully understand and deconstruct my own meanings of inclusion. I have lived and*

worked through the transition from integration to inclusion. The impact of current political agendas is not totally at odds with my practices and beliefs. I do believe that we should do the very best we possibly can for all children and enjoy supporting children to move forward in their learning although I find the current performance culture frustrating. I continue to strive to support the whole child. Until recent years I was able to openly celebrate each and every development and I do so to this day. In the current wilderness of the standards agenda the children and I frequently celebrate alone.

(Jane)

Introduction

In this article, I have focused on presenting the key literature which has shaped my personal thinking and values around inclusion. Throughout the article, I draw on the perspectives of a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who I have referred to as Jane. The perspectives are taken from a complete life history account which formed the basis of my doctoral research. To produce the narrative Jane documented her personal reflections over a period. I have interwoven specific extracts from the narrative throughout this article to illustrate the points raised in the literature.

I start the article by exploring the discourses of integration and inclusion. I then draw upon Foucault's 'box of tools' (Foucault, 1977a) to deconstruct the discourses associated with special educational needs and inclusion. Following this, I offer a critical analysis of the current discourses of inclusion by examining the relationship between inclusion and the marketisation of education.

Integration

Jane: As a classroom teacher for the last 35 years I have enjoyed the rewards and challenges of working with all children. Without doubt, some have been more challenging than others. In the early years of my career I taught several children who had been educated in special schools. My role was to integrate them into a mainstream setting. At this time, it was the child who was expected, with support, to adapt to the policies and systems of the school. I was fortunate that I was working in a school where the Head Teacher realised that we would need to make adaptations to our practices to meet children's diverse needs. There were, as there are today, also children who struggled to access some aspects of their education. There were no individual education plans and teaching assistants and consequently children with special needs may not have been as effectively supported as they are today. However, it was viewed as essential to support the whole child. Differentiation was in evidence although I do not recall using ability grouping. I frequently taught classes larger than 35 children and recall several classes which had more than 40 children. I was charged with teaching these classes with no additional support.

(Jane)

Jane's account makes it possible to view integration as a process of assimilation which placed an onus on the child with special educational needs and/ or disabilities to adapt to the policies, routines and curricula of mainstream schools. The child was largely expected to 'fit in' (Frederickson & Cline, 2009: 71) to a system of education which had not been adapted to meet the needs of the

individual pupil. As policy discourse integration emerged following the recommendations of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) which removed medical categorisations of deficit, instead replacing them with the softer language of learning difficulties and special educational needs (Norwich, 2008). The recommendations of the Warnock Report were addressed in the 1981 Education Act and this legislation was the basis of the current system of special educational needs which exists in England.

The trend towards the integration of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities into mainstream schools arose out of increasing dissatisfaction with segregated provision (Black-Hawkins, Florian & Rouse, 2007). However, Tomlinson (1982) has demonstrated how special educational needs are a product of education system which fails to respond to diversity. Thus, “needs” are problematic because they are socially constructed (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). They are also interpreted in various ways by different people in different contexts. Despite the removal of medical labels, it could be argued that the special educational needs system which developed following the 1981 education Act was largely based on a medical model of disability in the way that it failed to consider the ways in which education can erect barriers to participation and achievement. By retaining a focus on the individual rather than the environmental, social or pedagogical factors that contribute to the identification of needs, the discourse of integration located the problem within the child rather than examining the contribution of schooling to disablement.

Interpretations of inclusion

Jane: ‘Inclusion’.....one short word. It is a word, however, that I struggle to define despite its prominence in my current professional role. Should I be asked to substitute this with an alternative my response would be ‘belonging.’ Immediately other words spring to mind, including ‘acceptance.’ It is profoundly evident that I have no clear understanding of the word ‘inclusion’ and that despite my strong beliefs that I wish to ‘include’ all children in my teaching I am unable to offer an explanation as to the meanings of my practices. I offer no apologies for my poor understanding of this educational term. Through copious discussions with friends and colleagues, as well as my own readings, it has become evident that this one word, in reality, has several meanings. It is a word with several meanings to different individuals who may at the same time be working to enable and support its principles. There is little wonder that, despite working in an ‘inclusive’ environment, I continue to find it a frustrating and challenging experience.

There are aspects of some interpretations of ‘inclusion’ that I embrace wholeheartedly. To include children is to ensure that they are not simply a physical presence. I strive to make adaptations to my practices to ensure that all children can access all aspects of their education. I view the classroom as ‘ours’. It is a space which belongs to all of us, a space in which we can all grow and develop, and a space where we can all enjoy a strong sense of belonging. To simply belong, however, is inadequate. Throughout my own story, it is clear that I ‘belonged’ to a family who in many respects had my best interests at heart. I am, to this day, at odds with many of the methods my parents used, but cannot deny

their ambition for me. This leads me to return to the word 'acceptance.' Revisiting the events of my life was not an easy journey. It was, however, fruitful. I am more able to identify a genuine desire, on the part of my mother, to ensure that I was offered every chance to enjoy success. In doing so, however, she left me longing for acceptance.

Acceptance is of course another term which will have different meanings for different people. It is, I now acknowledge, acceptance that is central to my own interpretation of 'inclusion.' I believe that we are all capable of great things and that equally we all find some aspects of life and learning more challenging. The current agenda relating to inclusion does not, in my opinion, support acceptance. There is a strong emphasis on academic attainment and success is measured against narrow performance indicators. I truly strive to accept the differences between children.

(Jane)

In this section I have not attempted to define inclusion because it is a word which means different things to different people (Clough, 2000) with different vested interests. This is complicated further by the fact that social, political and cultural contexts shape interpretations of inclusion. Inclusion has a multiplicity of meanings (Graham & Slee, 2008) and thus, to pin inclusion down to a single entity would fail to do it justice (Nind, Sheehy & Simmons, 2003). I share Lindsay's perspective that inclusion 'is not a simple, unambiguous concept' (Lindsay, 2003: 6), not least because it cannot be disassociated from values, which are neither shared nor stable.

Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2002) stated that inclusion 'is a bewildering concept which can have a variety of interpretations and applications' (p.158). As such it has become an empty and elusive term (Gabel, 2010) and consequently Cole makes a useful point in arguing that it is better to explore meanings rather than the meaning of inclusion (Cole, 2005). The vested interests of politicians, teachers, parents and people with disabilities will invariably shape their personal perspectives of inclusion. However, the development of socially just pedagogies continually evolve through being grounded in personal experience (Sikes et al. 2007: 358) and thus, Jane's story provides an opportunity to explore the ways in which personal and professional experiences shape inclusive practice.

Inclusion has been reflected metaphorically in the literature as a journey (Ainscow, 2000; Allan, 2000; Nind, 2005; Azzopardi, 2010). Julie Allan's humorous reference to the term 'inconclusive education' (Allan, 2000: 43) serves as a reminder that inclusion is always in process and never complete. In this respect inclusion challenges schools to continually develop their capacities to reach out to all learners (Ainscow, 2000) by developing socially just pedagogies which connect individual learners with their own ways of learning (Corbett, 2001). Inclusion necessitates a deep cultural change within schools (Corbett, 1999; Graham & Harwood, 2011) to make schools more able to respond to difference. It places an onus upon schools to examine the environmental, curricular and pedagogical factors which limit achievement (Erten & Savage, 2012), resulting in radical reform of pedagogy and value systems (Mittler, 2000).

Such an approach represents an ecological perspective (Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson & Gallanaugh, 2004) which challenges educators to examine factors in the school environment which limit achievement rather than focusing on deficits within individual learners.

Azzopardi (2009, 2010) has argued that the term 'inclusive education' is little more than a cliché: 'a politically correct term that is used for speeches and policy-makers to silence all woes' (2009: 21). It is defined in various ways by different groups with different interests, leading to its exploitation (Sikes et al. 2007). For example, Hodkinson & Vickerman (2009) have argued that government definitions of inclusion have continued to emphasise the traditional discourses of special educational needs. In addition, inclusion is interpreted differently within groups (Glazzard, 2011). Jane's sense of frustration is evident above when she refers to the lack of a shared understanding of inclusion within her own school, resulting in various practices. Consequently, there is an increasing interest in the use of people's own narratives in the academic literature to illuminate what inclusion means to those who have a vested interest in it (Goodley et al. 2004; Cole, 2005; Sikes et al. 2007; Azzopardi, 2009) and my own study is also located within this arena.

During the past two decades inclusion has become a politically correct term (Azzopardi, 2010) for politicians, theorists and activists and this has diverted attention away from its realisation in practice. Pather (2007) argues that there is a need to de-sloganise inclusion by focusing on providing quality experiences for all learners and there is some logic in this argument; research which explores tangible aspects of inclusive practice will help to advance inclusion in schools. However, inclusion is political because it demands and continues to require a structural transformation of education to make it more equitable and more responsive to diversity. Until inclusion is disentangled from neoliberal values of governance (Slee 2011) practitioners will be restricted in the extent to which they can develop socially just pedagogies. This restricts inclusion to a process of assimilation, thus resembling the previous discourses of integration in which schools accommodated learners with special educational needs but their systems were largely unchanged.

Like others before me (Slee, 2001a; Slee, 2001b; Slee & Allan, 2001; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Slee, 2011) I share the view that the special educational needs paradigm that has dominated education for the last three decades is exclusionary and serves the function of maintaining existing inequalities. Questions of inclusion concern questions of rights rather than needs (Roaf, 1988). The latter are problematic because the notion of 'need' implies a deficit in relation to a socially constructed norm. My critique of the special educational needs paradigm does not relate to the suitability of mainstream or segregated educational environments for children. Thomas & Vaughan (2004) provide a very comprehensive overview of this debate. In addition, current policy frameworks in England (DFE, 2011) and literature (Baker, 2007) recognise the central role of both mainstream and special educational provision within the inclusion debate and this is a policy development which I support. My critique

is primarily concerned with the way in which policies by previous and current governments (DFES, 2001; DFES, 2004; DFE, 2011) in England have allowed inclusive education to be used as a replacement for special needs education (Black-Hawkins, Florian & Rouse, 2007; Slee, 2011). Consequently, rather than inclusion interrogating and reconstructing the existing structures, policies and practices of schooling and challenging deeply engrained injustices, it has sustained inequalities by creating subtle forms of segregation (Slee, 2011). Through its connection with special needs inclusion has served to protect the status quo in schools (Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee, 2011). As a concept it has continued to focus on notions of assimilation and presence rather than representing a struggle for equality and social justice (Hodkinson, 2012). The continued dominance of the use of traditional psychological approaches for responding to diversity has resulted in categorisation, stigmatisation and deficit views of difference which have not helped the inclusion agenda (Florian, 2009). Inclusive education must be disassociated from special educational needs so that it is able, as a policy discourse, to articulate its distinct values (Slee, 2011) based on social justice, democracy and equity. It necessitates a departure from processes which label, segregate and stigmatise to enable schools to embrace diversity (Graham & Harwood, 2011).

Cole's narratives (Cole, 2005) are helpful in exploring interpretations of inclusion. They explore the collective voices of six women who were both mothers and teachers of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Within the narratives, the mother-teachers emphasised the need for educators to embrace humanitarian values (Armstrong, 2005) by developing a pedagogy which emphasises care, dignity and respect. The emphasis on 'careful teaching' is also prominent in early writing of Jenny Corbett (Corbett, 1992). The experience of becoming parents had a substantially positive impact on the professional identities of these teachers (Cole, 2005) and this theme has been identified in previous research (Sikes, 1997). The mother-teachers embraced the language of 'normality' by viewing difference as normal rather than special. In doing so they rejected the deficit, pathologising language of special educational needs. These insights, based on the personal experiences of the informants, have been useful in shaping my own understandings of inclusion. Thus, inclusion necessitates a humanitarian approach to teaching which emphasises care, respect and dignity. I view inclusion as a process which engenders a sense of acceptance. Jane's reflection illustrates that a sense of belonging does not do justice to inclusion. Inclusion, in my view, refutes pathologising labels which emphasise perceived deficits and demands creative and reflective educators who are willing to experiment with pedagogy (Allan, 2006) and who view diversity as an 'enriching opportunity for learning' (Pizzuto, 2010: 88).

Lloyd's call for a reconceptualisation of achievement and the 'denormalisation of institutions, systems and rules which comprise education and schooling (Lloyd, 2008; 228) has substantially contributed to my understanding of inclusion as a radical transformation of both policy and practice. Such a transformation demands major changes to the education system (Nilholm, 2006) through disrupting the current structures of schooling which result in segregation and

systemic failure. Inclusion raises critical questions about the purposes of education and challenges politicians to reconceptualise current limited notions of achievement. Transformation at a pedagogic level alone is insufficient to facilitate social justice. To develop inclusive schools, the curriculum and assessment processes need to be radically overhauled to enable education to respond to diversity. However, changing schools and school systems is problematic because 'there is not a perfect system awaiting us on the shelf' (Nind, Rix, Sheehy & Simmons, 2003) and various models rather than one model will be required. The notion of inclusion as a radical transformation is a well-established theme within the literature (Mittler, 2000; Farrell, 2001; Nind, 2005), with some scholars emphasising the role of teachers as change agents (O'Hanlon, 2003; Skidmore, 2004; Nind, 2005). Additionally, the emphasis on ensuring maximal participation of all learners (Nutbrown & Clough, 2006) has also been emphasised.

Philosophical debates have emphasised that hopes for full inclusion are fundamentally naive because schools and communities will always need to employ exclusionary strategies to secure their own existence (Wilson, 1999; 2000; Hansen, 2012). The thrust of such critiques is that in practice inclusion always has limits. Hegarty (2001) warned that inclusion would have a case to answer if it diverted attention away from a school's core function of promoting learning towards a focus of promoting values of equity and social justice. Whilst these critiques are conceptually sound they do not sufficiently articulate how the current structures of schooling (curricula, assessment processes, limited notions of achievement) create barriers to participation and achievement which subsequently results in exclusion. Inclusion is crucially about the politics of difference and identity (Slee, 2001b) which interrogates the structures, policies and practices of schooling (Slee, 2011). It demands a process of educational reconstruction and revisioning (Slee, 2001a) rather than a process of assimilation into an unchanged system. Such limited notions of inclusion, which have been uncritically accepted in the philosophical debates, will inevitably result in exclusion and consequently inclusion will always fail as a policy imperative (Slee, 2011). It could be argued that educators should not dismiss inclusion because it takes time to get it right or because they make inevitable mistakes along the way (Cole, 2005). Instead, they might consider using inclusion as a vehicle for experimenting with creative, innovative approaches in a bid to reach out to all learners (Allan, 2006; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2010).

Critiques of special educational needs

In this section I draw on Foucault's conceptual tools (Foucault, 1977a) to develop a critique of the special educational needs empire. I argue that the discourses of special educational needs have hijacked inclusion and this has restricted the development of more socially just pedagogies.

I begin my critique by arguing that the discourses of special educational needs in England are anti-inclusive. The techniques of diagnosis, intervention and surveillance categorise children by their differences and are rooted in a psycho-

medical paradigm which 'conceptualizes difficulties in learning as arising from deficits in the neurological or psychological make-up of the child' (Skidmore, 2004: 2). In adopting the language of special needs by identifying distinct categories of 'need', the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs in England (DfE, 2015) emphasises homogeneity rather than heterogeneity by increasing the focus on outcomes for learners with special needs. Additionally, the Code emphasises early identification of need which results in labelling through the use of categories of need. These categories ascribe to individuals a minority status which presumes a weakness and vulnerability in comparison with the majority of learners who fall outside the imposed categories (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). The concept of 'need' is highly problematic in that it reinforces notions of deficit and disadvantage (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Additionally, within the discourses of special education, 'need' and notions of 'normality' are determined through distances from artificially constructed norms (Graham, 2006). Failure to achieve such norms results in the creation of an othered group made up of learners who do not fit the required subject construction; an able, productive, skilled learner who understands their responsibilities to a neoliberal marketised society (Goodley, 2007). These learners are reconceptualised as the needs of the school (to compete, to maintain standards and order) are transferred to the learner (Thomas & Loxley, 2007), thus inscribing a stigmatised identity. They are by-products of a traditional curriculum (Skrtic, 1991) in which they are viewed as eternally lacking (Goodley, 2007) and with support they are expected to transform themselves to meet the required subject construction. The diagnosis, intervention and remediation processes result in 'the entrapment of the child in a cocoon of professional help' (Thomas & Loxley, *ibid.* 55) which conceals the vested professional interests of 'expert' professionals under the rhetoric of humanitarianism (Tomlinson, 1985). These learners are then singled out for specialist attention and placed under increased surveillance (Allan, 1996), resulting in them becoming disempowered.

The vocabulary of individual intervention, targets and individual education plans advocated in the Code of Practice results in a 'highly individualised approach' (Skidmore, 2004: 15) which locates the deficiencies within the child rather than the deficiencies within the school (Dyson, 2001). Such approaches restrict creative pedagogy (Skidmore, 2004) and, according to Lloyd, are 'all concerned with normalization and ... standardization, of groups and individuals rather than contributing to the denormalization of the institutions ...' (Lloyd, 2008: 228) which is so central to the development of inclusion. Inclusion is a transformative process which refutes 'normative practices' (Graham, 2006: 7) such as diagnoses and the use of 'correct training' (Foucault, 1975a; 1975b 1977a; 1984a). These serve as disciplinary forces which regulate the lives of individuals (Armstrong, 2005). Normative practices are deeply embedded in the discourses of special educational needs and, whilst failing to promote equity, serve to legitimise failure by emphasising 'individual responsibility for individual achievement' (Armstrong, 2005: 147). Such practices, which serve to negate diversity, are justified because they are viewed as benevolent responses to need (Graham, 2006).

It has been argued that special needs educators have relocated their knowledge and experiences within the discourses of inclusion (Slee, 2001b). Consequently, according to Slee this has restricted inclusion and enabled the medical model of disability to triumph (Slee, 2001b). Varying 'disorders' have been introduced into the lexicon of special needs, each with its own symptoms and disease like characteristics, creating spectacle, fear and revulsion (Dunne, 2009). Intervention and remediation serves to negate diversity by creating normative subjects and educators have been positioned as 'police' (Dunne, 2009), charged with hunting down abnormalities and correcting them through early identification processes. In contrast, an inclusive pedagogy rejects both deficit views of difference and fixed notions of intelligence (Florian, 2009) which are heavily embedded within the discourses of special educational needs.

Foucault's conceptual framework

I now turn to Foucault's conceptual tools (Foucault, 1977a; 1991a) to illustrate how these can be applied to interrogate the discourses of special educational needs. I use Foucault's work to argue that the inclusion agenda is currently situated within a powerful othering discourse (Dunne, 2009) of special educational needs.

For Foucault discourses relate to 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49). Discourses are pervading in that they result in particular truths being accepted (Foucault, 1980) and sustained through circulatory power rather than sovereign power (Foucault, 1978a; 1978b). Neoliberal forms of governance are an example of a discourse which places responsibility on the individual to become entrepreneurial (Masschelian, 2006), self-reliant and able to compete in a global economy. This is achieved through a focus on functional skills which derive from a traditional curriculum. Discourses of special educational needs sit within and feed into this master narrative which serves the purpose of creating a flexible, qualified and enterprising workforce. This narrative is immensely problematic for those learners who are not able to, or choose not to, fit the required subject construction (Goodley, 2007).

Foucault's 'box of tools' (Foucault, 1977a) makes it possible to understand the ways in which power is used as a regulatory force to control the lives of individuals. The tool of surveillance is perhaps the most important conceptual tool that Foucault uses in helping us to understand ways in which individuals are regulated, sorted and normalised (Allan, 2008). In *The Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault, 1973) Foucault illustrates the effects of surveillance on the lives of sick people through the medical gaze which constructs 'individuals as both subjects and objects of knowledge and power' (Allan, 1996: 221). In his analysis of madness (Foucault, 1967) Foucault illustrates how the medical gaze focused on the regulation and purification of the body, which gave it a normalising function. In *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977a) Foucault draws on Jeremy Bentham's technique of panopticism which made it possible 'for a single gaze to see everything perfectly' (Foucault, 1977a: 173). This method of hierarchical surveillance was 'absolutely discreet, for it functions permanently and largely in silence' (Foucault, 1977a: 177). Foucault's second conceptual tool of surveillance

was the use of normalising judgements which are used in a range of professions to 'promote standardization and homogeneity' (Allan, 2008: 87). The notion of a norm enables individuals to be categorised in deficient ways and distances from the norm are used to determine the extent of abnormality and extent of need. Foucault's third conceptual tool of surveillance is the examination which effectively enables individuals to be 'described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality' (Foucault, 1977a: 191).

Foucault's techniques of surveillance provide a powerful theoretical lens through which the discourses of special educational needs can be critically interrogated. It makes it possible, for example, to recognise how the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), with its increased focus on outcomes for learners with special educational needs, subjects 'vulnerable' children to increased measures of surveillance compared with other learners. The mechanisms of the individual education plan, individual progress reviews, additional assessments, remediation and 'specialist' support both subject those learners identified as having special educational needs to greater amounts of surveillance than their peers and serve a normalising function. The technique of the formal assessment process, which diagnoses specific conditions, validates the presence of an abnormality in relation to socially constructed norms. The use of terms such as intervention, remediation and support all serve a normalising function which aim to purify and correct. The disciplinary apparatus of special educational needs has an individualising effect which views difference in negative and stigmatising ways rather than as a positive feature of an individual's identity. The focus on correction and minimising 'abnormality' gaps has a pathologising effect which places responsibility on the child to 'correct' their deficits. Such deeply engrained processes reflect a medical model of disability which views impairment as a tragic deficit which needs to be corrected. According to Allan (2008) 'These mechanisms of surveillance create subjects who are known and marked in particular kinds of ways and who are constrained to carry the knowledge and marks' (p.87). The discourses of special educational needs fail to address critical questions about the purposes of schooling, education policy, the nature of the curriculum and the assessment systems which create social injustices. Rather than embracing a social model of disability, the discourses of special educational needs are positioned squarely within a powerful othering framework which is detrimental to inclusion (Slee, 2001b; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Dunne, 2009).

Critiquing inclusion

This application of Foucault's theoretical framework is well documented in the academic literature in relation to learners with special educational needs. However, applying this framework to teachers who work in inclusive schools, rather than to pupils with special needs, makes it possible to analyse the disciplinary effects of inclusion differently. The following account from Jane illustrates the disciplinary effects of 'inclusion' on teachers who work in inclusive schools:

Jane: *The room is empty but full of people. Silence surrounds me yet people speak. Friends are near but seem so far away. Aware of every single heart beat thumping in my chest, my breathing is becoming ever shallower, my head thumps and my palms are clammy. I feel distant from the frightened faces around me. There is so much to say and yet I do not have the strength to verbalise my thoughts. I clearly recognise the physical symptoms of fear and my mind and body swiftly respond to them in preparation for fight or flight. The next hour will be life changing. It will confirm my greatest fears. The events of the last forty-eight hours play repeatedly and vividly through my mind. I re-live every word I have spoken, every decision I have made and every explanation I have offered. I am briefly distracted by a high-pitched ringing in my ears and a deep sigh from a distant corner of the room. I swiftly return to my thoughts. How could we have averted this devastating outcome? How could we have changed the course of events which had unfolded and would now impact on the lives of so many for many months to come? I search deep inside my mind but no answers are forthcoming.*

Forty-eight hours earlier life had been full of optimism which was now crushed and broken like fragments of shattered glass. The buzz of excitement and energy was silenced. Smiles and laughter had quickly turned to pain and confusion etched on the faces of those around me. We sought comfort by staying in close proximity to one another as the predator advanced towards its prey. I had been lost in my thoughts and the realities of life had dawned on me as I looked up to view the unfolding reactions of my companions. Each reacted in their own unique way and I carefully studied each and every response as I sat quietly on the edge of this picture of undeniable disbelief. Young and old we were together, each feeling the other's pain. Some sat deep in thought, others chatted and there were those who calmly offered words of comfort and advice. Every response was intended to offer us hope but we all knew that both hope and time had run out.

The door opened and I knew the time had come to face reality. I made eye contact with no one and left the room with my head held high. I was now devoid of any emotions as I walked resolutely towards our destiny ready to absorb the injustice of the predicament with which we were now confronted. The strength to face the next few minutes of my life came from within as I resolved to deny myself any opportunity to demonstrate regret or denial of my long-held views and deep rooted beliefs.

Another school year has come to a close. A year filled with challenges which we have continued to face with determination. More children, and their accompanying needs, have joined the school including two pupils demonstrating the behaviours of attachment disorder, one young child with epilepsy and considerable developmental delay and a statement of special educational needs. There is a child with Turner's syndrome who also has a statement of special educational needs and an eight-year-old with significant speech difficulties. This is not an exhaustive list but merely gives an indication of some of the significant needs we support in our day to day work. Each of them is fully and successfully included in a mainstream classroom. We have also continued to enjoy the rewards of working with a wonderful mix of children. So why am I so disillusioned, why am I so frustrated, why am I so angry and why am I questioning my strong desire to work with the day to day challenges that I have thrived on for the entirety of my teaching career?

The reality is that my greatest fears have become a reality. OFSTED recently visited prompted by one complaint from a parent. And so the inspector came to call and almost two weeks later I am of the opinion that she ripped the heart out of the school. As a

teacher with much experience of school inspections I have never encountered an inspector who had seemingly made her decision before she had even set foot in the school. Our fate, it seems, was sealed. All cohorts but one had made at least good progress whilst one cohort had made above expected progress. Good progress was entirely disregarded. All attempts to demonstrate the good progress the school has made, in so many respects, were ignored. The focus of this inspection became the shortcomings of the school. We felt that there was so much to celebrate and know that much work still needs to be done. As a school we are not in denial and we are fortunate in having a staff that is totally committed to school improvement. Each and every one of them has worked tirelessly to bring about that change. They have worked with determination to enhance their practices and the improvement has been visible and has had clear and positive impact. This impact has been confirmed by those who have worked with us and have shared and worked alongside us to overcome the challenges. They too were celebrating with us. It seemed that the tide was turning and that the data confirmed this upward trend.

Based on the one complaint the inspectors had received the focus of the inspection was the behaviour in school. In all previous inspections this had been identified as good. Because of the needs of some of our children we would not deny that the behaviour of some children can be very challenging from time to time. It is for this reason that systems are frequently evaluated and the need for staff training is identified. Systems are well considered to ensure that the education of our children is not disrupted by the occasional responses of some troubled individuals. De-escalation strategies are effectively used by all staff. Triggers for individuals have been identified. Individuals are able to take 'quiet time' when they recognise that they are becoming distressed and many now independently and appropriately access this opportunity, recognising their own needs. The leadership team always carry walkie-talkies and can immediately respond to calls for additional support to remove particularly distressed individuals from classrooms. This is usually achieved without disruption when the identified child is invited to leave the classroom to have quiet time and then discuss the reasons behind their distress. This strategy has proved to be very effective and they are usually able to return to their class in a calm manner, ready to continue with their learning. All such incidents are of course recorded and parents are invited to meet with senior managers to discuss these events. The school log shows that nineteen such events have taken place in the last school year. The log clearly identifies four children. These children have very specific needs. Two are displaying behaviours clearly linked to attachment disorder, one has a statement of special educational needs for behaviour, emotional and social development and one is receiving support, with his family, from the school for behaviour, social and emotional needs. Systems ensure that their behaviours are dealt with swiftly. In the two days that the school was inspected there was no evidence of poor behaviours. The behaviour log was however the evidence used against us. Nineteen incidents were deemed a concern. There was no opportunity to discuss the needs of the children involved or the ways in which we had supported them to successfully access their education with their peers for the most part of each school week. The children have been placed in our school because the local authority special school is full. The inspector ignored our responses as we fought in vain to explain how we had developed systems to ensure that the learning needs of ALL children had been met. All attempts to show the improvements and successes of the school were completely disregarded. She had the bit between her teeth and she relentlessly focused on her perceived weaknesses of the school resulting in small holes quickly becoming craters. To her there was a simple solution. The four children in

the behaviour log should have been excluded. Three of the children have previously been excluded from other schools. Their parents have frequently expressed their gratitude for the work we do. Unfortunately, they never took the time to convey their views to the inspector.

The school is situated in an area of social deprivation. The culture of many of the families it serves can be a challenge. Teachers are perceived, by many, to be figures of authority and authority has to be challenged. There are, however, many families who acknowledge and value the work we do. These are the families who never considered that their voices should be heard by the inspector. They are the families who remained silent. The voices heard were those who have relentlessly challenged our systems. Those who refuse to work with us to support their children but have always been quick to condemn us and seemingly challenge every initiative we introduce from healthy eating to the completion of homework. They are undeniably a very small minority of the families we serve but they were the voices that the inspector heard as these same parents circled like vultures on their prey. The school was swiftly deemed as inadequate. The entire staff, the governing body and the local authority have been left in a state of disbelief. Only one person who has worked closely with the school has expressed a degree of understanding of the judgement made. There is no time to be lost and the work to quickly move forward has already begun. There is no opportunity to contest the decision that the inspector made and as a school we must now pool all our energies into moving the school out of special measures. The next twelve months, at least, will be filled with challenge and the staff will face it with dedication and resilience. I have spent my entire career truly believing in and developing inclusive practices. My views and practices are deep rooted and on a very personal level I must now question them. Do I respond by going against my strong beliefs which will result in ticking boxes to alleviate the current pressure or do I accept that I am simply out of step with current measures of success in education? That is the dilemma I must now resolve. Fighting the system is futile whilst believing in it is impossible.

(Jane)

Reflection

The account demonstrates that for Jane's school, the costs of supporting an agenda for inclusion were significant and devastating for Jane and her colleagues. It illustrates the extent to which inclusion can present a risk for schools and in this case the powerful othering effect that it can have on the reputation of a school. The account provides insight into the way that teachers working in schools which demonstrate a similar commitment to inclusion can become objects of hierarchical surveillance when norms are applied to evaluate school effectiveness. In relation to social justice the school arguably fulfilled its role in supporting learners with diverse needs but undeniably it paid the ultimate price for doing so. In the absence of a radical transformation of the current education system, which rewards schools which demonstrate high academic attainment, schools which continue to support learners with diverse needs will continue to be marginalised and disempowered through various forms of surveillance. Additionally, teachers working in these schools will continue to become objects of intense scrutiny unless broader notions of school effectiveness can be applied when evaluating schools. Sakellariadis (2016) argues that children who attend separate special schools end up living their

adult lives on the margins of society. However, mainstream schools will continue to be reluctant to admit learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities if they ultimately have to pay a price for doing so.

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