Irish Learning Support Association

Learning Irish Support Association

I.L.S.A.

LEARN

LEARN

The Association is concerned with the education of children with learning difficulties. Its aims include promoting co-operation between those concerned with Learning Support and enhancing the quality of service given by Learning Support Teachers through the provision of resources, lectures and seminars.

Besides the journal LEARN, a newsletter is published for members.

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The views expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect those of ILSA.

Editorial

MÁIRÍN BARRY

We work in interesting times. Change is a constant that impinges upon our schools, the directives from on high and on the practices that pertain to Learning Support and Special Education. As always, the *Irish Learning Support Association* is greatly involved, endeavouring to identify the most pressing needs of teachers and working to support our students, in whatever setting we meet them. Annual Conference this year, entitled **Responding to the Challenge of Inclusion**, accords with the themes and issues discussed in **Learn 2007.** Our emphasis on reflection and practical approaches is at one with our commitment to raising awareness of current research and best practice within Ireland and internationally.

The evolving educational context challenges us to reflect on and to define exactly what we mean by the term '*inclusion'*. We look at the notion of a continuum of provision and the changing face of our schools. We examine the risk of location of students acquiring precedence over the process of participation. Action research is more effectively informing practice in context. And, in the midst of development, we strive to maintain tried and trusted practices that have served us well and ensure that certain essentials, common to all good teaching, are enduring responsibilities at the core of our work. Cooper, working with students experiencing difficulties at school reported the comment '*A good teacher "inspirates" you to learn'* (Cooper, 1996). Additionally, Palmer (1990) states, *'Good teaching is an act of generosity.'* In endeavouring to provide an appropriate education for all students across the whole spectrum of ability, we daily dig deep, and constantly monitor and review what we do, and how best to do it.

> *Reflective teachers willingly embrace their decision-making responsibilities, and they regularly reflect on problems they confront, and maybe they make mistakes, but they never stop trying. They are sincere and thoughtful professionals who constantly learn from their reflective experiences. They understand that receptiveness to further learning is the key to continued professional development and validity.*
>
> (Henderson, 1992, p. 2)

Valuable publications to guide and advise our practice, saw the arrival into our schools of the National Council for Special Education (2006) *Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process* and the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate (2007) *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines*. These excellent publications have a great deal to offer in terms of direction and practical strategies in working to support all our students towards fulfilling their potential. These are significant publications. They are most welcome as handbooks and will greatly assist all teachers. They

are patently the result of extensive work by experienced, deeply committed, insightful and grounded educators. However, the need for professional development for all educational staff in our schools is as pressing as ever.

The publication also of the Implementation Report of the National Council for Special Education (2006), which laid down a realistic and comprehensive programme for the phased implementation of the EPSEN Act (2004), should have had a major impact on our system of education. However, many of the key dates and deadlines have passed, marked only by continued inaction in many relevant areas.

Teachers alone cannot do all that needs to be done. Isolated changes in individual teaching and learning environments cannot carry inclusive education. These changes cannot simply be tagged on to on-going school practices. Schools must be empowered to make the substantial, informed changes that stakeholders in the school community feel are necessary to facilitate and support inclusive education.

> *The success of a school in providing inclusive education for students with special educational needs depends to a significant extent on the whole-school organisational arrangements in place and on the effectiveness of various strategies for teaching and learning that teachers implement in their classrooms.*
>
> (DES Inspectorate, 2007, p.103)

All teaching staff, school leadership and school management require the opportunity to up-skill and gain a fuller understanding of the rationale and educational practice involved. The whole-school approach advocated by the guidelines (DES Inspectorate, 2007) must extend to providing the learning opportunities necessary to facilitate this and thus effectively bring about systemic change and successful implementation of inclusive practices at all levels of the school organisation.

> *The report identifies the areas in which investment is required and estimates the level of investment needed across a range of areas but with particular emphasis on teacher training and support for schools... The goal of enabling children with special educational needs to participate in, and benefit from, inclusive education and in achieving meaningful outcomes from education in terms of progression to employment, further and continuing education, fulfilled lives and independent living is an extremely challenging one which will require the combined efforts of all concerned if it is to be delivered as a new deal for children with special educational needs.*
>
> (Curtin, 2006)

Máirín Barry
Editor of *Learn*
June 2007

Making sense of "inclusion": What is it and where does it come from?

Bill Sadler

Based on a lifetime quest, this paper is a philosophic monologue and personal exploration of the concept of inclusion asking some difficult questions and leading to some unexpected answers.

Introduction

At the 2001 ILSA conference, "Count Me In", (quoted in Learn, 2002) Keynote speaker, Luke Monahan, stated quite simply that, *"Inclusion is about getting relationships right."*

The authors of the influential Beattie Report in Scotland in 1999 (Beattie, 1999) talked of a *"vision of inclusiveness .... that all young people should be able to have their needs and aspirations recognised, understood and met within a supportive environment."*

In 2000, Dr Brian Boyd wrote, in an article entitled, "The Genius in All of Us." (Boyd, 2000)
"Inclusion is a belief system, not an organisational response to challenging youngsters and their families"

Meanwhile a committee of the Scottish Parliament (2001) described inclusive education as,
 "maximising the participation of all children in mainstream schools and removing environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers to their participation."

An article in the Times Educational Supplement Scotland (Buie, 2005)) quotes Karen Sutherland, then 18 and Leith Academy's first disabled pupil as saying, inclusion meant,
"feeling accepted and being able to participate not just in a physical sense but also to the point where my disability is not an issue with my friends."

An unpublished article of 2004 (Sadler 2004) suggests that, *Inclusion is perhaps, simply, no more than a process of preventing exclusion.*

So what then is this thing called inclusion - this seemingly simple, basic ideal which pervades so much of our life and work?

Searching Questions

What are inclusive schools? What is inclusive education? What is the place of exclusion? What are the relationships between social inclusion, social cohesion and social justice? What does one have to do in order to claim to be inclusive? Who are the stakeholders in this ideal? Who are the gatekeepers?

Who, one should ask, is this inclusion for? Is it for those who are at the margins of our schools or society? Those with disabilities or difficulties? Is it for those who are currently excluded? Those from minority or different cultures: the poor, the homeless, the alienated, the incarcerated, even?

And what is everyone to be included in? Where does this inclusion take place? What is its locus? Is it enough to ensure a physical presence or if the touchstone is participation, what level is required? What about those who, by virtue of their behaviour, their abilities or their attitudes cannot take part, or those who don't want to join in or take part?

Is inclusion then a process? Is it some kind of a physical or a cultural state? Is it a mechanism to achieve a goal or is it the goal itself and if so what is that goal? Is it a state of mind - an element of an organisation's ethos?

Clearly it is not "one size fits all". Inclusion does not mean everyone doing the same thing. And of course, if you can't identify it, you can't measure it - assuming you want to anyway. The old farmers' adage comes to mind, "You can't make a pig heavier by weighing it."

Historical Background and Current Practice

"Inclusive schooling" and "social inclusion" are relatively new terms, within the timescale that is recorded history, and don't seem to have appeared in Scottish educational circles much before the mid 1990s. Nevertheless the trend is not new. It has through time been marked by such significant movements as that witnessed in France in the late Eighteenth Century with pressure for "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité". It is represented by such as the abolition of slavery, the fight for religious tolerance and universal primary education, the suffragette movement, the "Rights of the Child" and equal opportunities legislation.

Moves to provide education for all as a right go back in Scotland for nearly 450 years. In 1560 John Knox and his colleagues produced the "First Book of Discipline" in which the chapter on education set out a scheme for a national system of Education. Five to eight year olds were to be taught to read. Education was seen as a right of all, with bursaries for the poor. It was to be universal and compulsory. It was aimed at the moral culture of the children and the highest good of the community. Whilst the scheme came to naught, rejected by Parliament, the "First Book of Discipline" served as an ideal and a standard towards which to strive.

The ideal of "a school in every parish" moved closer with the Act for Settling of Schools of 1696 and universal education with the Education Act of 1872.

Wealth and religious belief have often sought exclusive education. Although, for long, many remained illiterate and despite any shortcomings, Scottish Education was seen to be in advance of that of other European countries. Indeed the Clan system of the Scottish Highlands, with its protective family culture, provided a foundation for an inclusive and egalitarian society.

One of the first formal moves towards greater inclusion within one system came in 1760 when Thomas Blackwood established a school for the deaf in Edinburgh, acknowledging a desire to include a wider group within an education system from which they had previously been excluded. Progressively further groups were brought within the system and progressively discrimination on a wide variety of grounds has become outlawed.

> *"It [inclusive education] is a diverse concept extending beyond education to include all, regardless of ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, class and linguistic background." (Hamill, 2002)*

"To achieve excellence, we must ensure that those children at risk of missing out do not" (HMIE, 2002) It is a universal trend, reflecting international charters on children's rights. Now the new teacher training course in Aberdeen in 2006/7 is based firmly both on the principle and practice of inclusion. Its goals include, the "*introduction of the initiative into the curriculum by putting greater emphasis on inclusion and inclusive practice via good learning and teaching strategies*" stating, *"We want to change the core content of courses and the values and attitudes of our students."* (Sadler, 2006)

From the historical perspective, it is clear that there is recognition, at least, that education and society itself should be fully inclusive even if this term is not fully defined. Has practice reflected this? A review of Scottish Local Authority policies was undertaken by SSLA in 2004. Replies included statements such as,

> *"children and young persons of school age are entitled to participate fully in a learning community which promotes equality of opportunity and seeks to protect against all forms of individual and institutional discrimination" (East Dunbartonshire Council)*

> *"inclusion is about valuing equally all aspects of diversity among learners and their families within the school and its communities" (The Highland Council)*

> *"inclusion is a way of thinking" (Stirling Council)*

Much of the local authority literature, however, is about how inclusion should be brought about. It is primarily functional and concerned with making provision in mainstream schools and classes for everyone. And whilst this may be commendable, in the eyes of some at least, it does not take us any closer to

the essence of what inclusion is - as opposed to integration, which is something different. Herein lies a major controversy and a significant difficulty. Perhaps we can have full social inclusion without physical inclusion?

Many documents concentrate on children labelled as SEN (having special educational needs or who "need or may need some form of additional support"). Self-evidently, however, inclusion is about everyone. It is about those who are excluded or at the margins but also those already secure in "mainstream". It is about those who deliberately, it seems, opt out as well as those for whom there are significant barriers to "joining in". It is also about the self-selecting elites and those who are considered mainstream but who need to embrace and share different cultures, backgrounds, aspirations and expectations What effect does it have on family and business, the community, commercial and leisure centres as well as the dedicated "professionals"?

Towards an understanding

Inclusion, then, seems to be the accommodation and acceptance of the diverse strengths and weaknesses, aspirations and experiences of everyone. It means recognising individual achievements and levels of need, and empowering each to use their abilities for the benefit of the community as well as themselves. It is also about how this universal acceptance and communion is created - rather than about making people fit what already exists - or is thought to exist. It is not about putting round pegs in square holes. Nor of course is it about maintenance of segregation because the holes, or the pegs are the wrong size. Most of all it is about people, the members of any community and the degree to which they feel part of that community, or want to be part of that community. It is about the feelings towards others and the levels of support which are available. It is as much emotional as physical or structural.

Within the process of untangling the enigma that is inclusion, this idea of "community" seems paramount. Each community whether it is a school, a village, a social group or a family, or even a country, has its members; those who exist both physically and socially within its boundaries, who are included within it. We each belong to many different communities. At times, we have each felt left out, excluded from one group or another. This gives us perhaps the basis for an understanding of inclusion - the extent to which a community respects and involves all its members, the extent to which the members take part (and are able and allowed to take part), and the extent to which members value and support and encourage one another. It also includes the relationships which that community has with those "on the outside" who are eligible, and who wish, to join. Inclusion, therefore is not a process; for communities already exist and already have a membership. Their actual inclusion is the starting point. The "process" involves making this inclusion more compatible with current ideals. It is after all the prevention of exclusion.

At its simplest then, *inclusion is the extent to which the members of a community relate positively to one another.* It is about the relationships, the values, the support and the ethos of that community. It cannot be measured in numbers. It cannot be controlled effectively by legislation. But it can be fostered and supported. Firstly, it involves individual members of the group, their attitudes and approaches to the community and their interest in participation. Secondly, it involves all members and their attitudes and support for one another. And, thirdly, it involves the community as a whole and the prevailing ethos.

An Illustrative Case Study

This extract is taken from a report of a Sign Language Project in Grange Academy, Kilmarnock (SSLA, 2006) .... perhaps in the spirit of Thomas Blackwood of the Eighteenth Century.

> *"In Grange Academy senior pupils run a project that gives pupils (deaf and hearing) and community partners an opportunity to gain a recognised national qualification in British Sign Language. This enhances inclusion since hearing impaired pupils can interact freely with their peer group and will be able to participate more fully in the classroom and extra-curricular activities.......*
>
> *Community partners have included radiographers, policemen, firemen, shop assistants, college students, speech and language therapists, paramedics, school doctor etc. This means more people in the community are enabled to talk to deaf children and adults, ...*
>
> *The classes are offered to all pupils in the school from 1st to 6th year. They learn alongside members of the community... Also, 4 senior pupils are currently teaching basic sign language skills for 6 weeks to primary 1 children who have a hearing impaired pupil in their class."*

Positive Strategies to enhance inclusion

Within this framework, experience has shown that there are several positive strategies which can encourage and support school communities in their quest for more effective inclusion.

A Sense of People and Place

It is perhaps too obvious to state that inclusion is about people. (Although somehow the strategies and systems and checklists dreamed up to create inclusive schools do sometimes seem to omit this elemental truth.) With the understanding that the idea of community is central to inclusion, identification of the membership, both existing and proposed, and agreement of this has to be a first step. Membership (and a sense of membership) can be enhanced by building clear and well defined links with other communities. This may be competitive or it could be co-operative. Similarly a clear definition of the community's environment and links with the wider environment should be most useful.

A Sense of Belonging

It seems another basic and fairly obvious truth is that the fact of being a member of the community should be communicated to the members. It then goes without saying that that membership should be acknowledged and celebrated. Opportunities to reinforce a sense of ownership should be encouraged and fostered. Democratic structures and the chance for some form of participation are important as is effective and meaningful consultation and opportunities for taking responsibility in different ways.

A Sense of Sharing

An important aspect of effective inclusion has to be the sharing not only of activities but values and visions. Developing such principles and attitudes is complex and difficult. However, a well constructed thinking skills programme, extensive use of Co-operative Learning strategies and whole class work balanced with appropriate differentiation may be strong ingredients in achieving this.

A Sense of Understanding

Any community will include individuals with a wide range of abilities, attitudes and aspirations. This diversity must be celebrated – but more, individual differences must be seen as normal and universal. For example, developmental difficulties such as dyslexic, autistic, dyspraxic, attention deficit difficulties are shared by all of us, the difference is one of the degree to which the particular behaviours exist. Labelling can be divisive if it labels the person rather than the behaviour; better descriptive than definitive. The model of disability employed is most inclusive if it is "functional" rather than "social" or "medical". That is, once again, it is the behaviour which is described -what the individual can do and can't do, has difficulty with, enjoys, needs and wants. Similarly an understanding and application of Multiple Intelligence Theory is useful. To support inclusion, effective accessibility strategies, in the widest sense of the word, are needed. Similarly effective and co-operative support structures are needed which hold the individual at the centre and map out the various partnerships and support networks.

Conclusions
What then is Inclusion?

Using quotes from pupils, teachers and parents who were asked this question (SSLA, 2006),

 "Inclusion is ....

> *helping people to be a part of things*
>
> *when I've joined in so well you don't notice me*
>
> *being involved in the how and what my child is learning*
>
> *when everyone is of equal value and no-one is left out*
>
> *learning and growing together and not feeling different*
>
> *believing I can make a difference*
>
> *to understand that other people matter*
>
> *being accepted for me!*

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Note: ILSA - Irish Learning Support Association
             SSLA - Scottish Support for Learning Association

The author would welcome further discussion on the ideas contained in this paper.

BILL SADLER

Bill Sadler is a former support for learning specialist and was for many years president of the Scottish Support for Learning Association. He was a member of the Scottish Executive's "Special Educational Needs Advisory Forum" and invited by the Prime Minister to a Downing Street reception to celebrate, "the work of those in teaching who provide outstanding teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs." Currently Bill runs a small independent "for more than profit" enterprise promoting co-operative solutions for enterprise, culture and education.

A Continuum of Provision

Therese Day

Introduction

Focusing on the theme "Continuum of Provision", the Irish Learning Support Association held its annual Spring Seminar in Cork in March 2007. This article is a summary of the keynote address presented by Therese Day at that seminar. Her presentation charted the recent changes and developments in the provision of special education in mainstream primary schools in Ireland.

What is a continuum of provision?

There seems to be a lack of consensus over what constitutes a continuum of provision. On the one hand it seems obvious that a continuum of provision includes a range of services which caters for the full diversity of need and support required by all pupils. However, even a cursory examination of the diversity of need reveals the complexities involved in offering the corresponding range of required provision. Making the aspiration of a continuum of provision a reality is not an easy task. The fourth of the seven principles underpinning the report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC), (Department of Education, 1993, p. 208) states that "a continuum of services should be provided for children with special educational needs ranging from the full-time education in ordinary classes, with additional support as may be necessary, to full-time education in special schools". Since 1993 there has been unprecedented growth in the numbers of children with special educational needs (SEN) attending mainstream primary schools. Yet, if a continuum is to exist it must surely include special schools and special classes. Regrettably, it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss where, how and if on the continuum, special schools and classes lie. The Department of Education and Science (DES), under the auspices of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), recently commissioned research into the future role of special schools and special classes in Ireland (Special Education Department, St. Patrick's College, 2007). As the majority of ILSA members are learning support / resource teachers working exclusively in mainstream schools, this paper is confined to the educational provision for pupils with learning difficulties and special needs in mainstream schools.

There is an implicit understanding in any discussion of a continuum that a range of need calls for a range of provision. I believe such a range of educational provision is expected and demanded by Irish society in 2007, a point well made by Barry in her editorial of the last edition of this journal (Barry, 2006). The Irish education system has undergone significant change in the past ten years. No group has felt this change more keenly than those involved in special education. Yet the presumption of inclusion, driven not just by recent legislation

and policy directives, but by a moral imperative from society to value and embrace diversity, demands that the phrase "those involved in special education" be challenged. Teachers and schools can no longer regard themselves as being involved in either mainstream or special education. Schools are called upon to implement and deliver a continuum of educational provision that meets the needs of all pupils. The challenges inherent in its implementation should not deter us from the commitment to the provision of such a continuum.

In trying to come to grips with the notion of a continuum I was reminded of the continuum of time and space from the science fiction television series *Star Trek, The Next Generation*. In this series, Q, the leader of strange immortal beings who have God-like powers, attempts to explain the time-space continuum to Captain Picard, the leader of the humans. Q suggests that the continuum can be represented by a long road which has neither beginning nor end. In order to make the concept more tangible for humans, Q adds to his picture, a young child and an old man who represent both the passing of time as well as the concept of continuity. This road is an apt metaphor for teachers who have travelled so far and for the journey that remains, in the pursuit of a continuum of provision.

Change

Undoubtedly the publication of the SERC report in 1993 and the subsequent implementation of most of its recommendations throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, has led to many welcome advances and changes in the provision of additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and SEN. However, the most rapid changes have occurred much more recently. The dual allocation system of provision of resources for pupils with learning difficulties and SEN was implemented in 2005 (DES, 2005). Large numbers of primary school teachers have changed from being mainstream class teachers, to remedial teachers, to learning support teachers to learning support / resource teachers in the space of a short number of years.

With the exception of those who were deaf or blind, the educational provision for the majority of pupils with SEN in Ireland evolved from being virtually non-existent, until the 1950s when a dual, parallel system of separate special and mainstream education was created (McGee, 2004). The movement towards the integration of pupils with SEN into mainstream schools throughout the 1980s and 1990s retained much of the medical, assimilation model inherent in the earlier dual system. The current evolution towards the provision of an appropriate education for all pupils in mainstream schools reflects the thrust from society towards a rights-based model of social inclusion. These changes and developments have not occurred in a vacuum. Rather, they can be traced to a number of contexts ranging from an ideological human-rights perspective to the most commonsense practicalities faced by schools as they attempt to provide a continuum of service for an ever-expanding continuum of need. A brief discussion of some of these contexts now follows.

Contexts for change

Inclusion

One of the most powerful contexts for change both nationally and internationally has been the movement towards including people with SEN not just in education but in all aspects of society. Ireland is now part of that worldwide trend which charges education with much of the responsibility for social inclusion. This is seen in the declarations such as those of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and the Salamanca Statement from the world conference on special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994), which argue that inclusive schools build inclusive societies. Phrases such as the "least restrictive environment", "free appropriate public education" and the "regular education initiative" from the US legislation may not be part of our daily vocabulary, but they are concepts firmly embedded in our thinking and policy decisions.

Legislation

Our first Education Act (Ireland, 1998) reiterates the right to education already enshrined in the Constitution, but adds the phrase, "including a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs" (section, 7.1, a). This right has been strengthened considerably by the enactment of much equality legislation at the beginning of this century. The Equal Status Act (Ireland, 2000) for example, lists disability as one of nine grounds upon which one may not be discriminated against. However, the most influential legislation to date for children with SEN is the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN), (Ireland, 2004). This act confers statutory rights on all children to be educated in "an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs" unless it is inconsistent with "the best interest of the child… or the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated" (section, 2, a, b). Most importantly from the perspective of trying to make the aspiration of inclusion a reality, the act establishes two statutory bodies who are charged with its implementation – the National Council for Special Education and the Special Education Appeals Board. Furthermore, by outlining the functions of both these bodies, this act has moved significantly towards ensuring that the right to an inclusive education for all children is upheld.

Policy and models of provision

An examination of the development of policy since the publication of the SERC report in 1993 mirrors the legislative and societal push towards inclusive education. Although the SERC report argued in 1993 for "as much integration as is appropriate and feasible with as little segregation as is necessary" (p. 22), the most significant advancement towards the implementation of an inclusive education policy occurred in 1998, with what has become known as the "automatic entitlement" press release. The Minister for Education's announcement of "automatic supports" for children with SEN "irrespective of

their location or disability" (DES, 1998) led to a shift in policy and provision, whereby large numbers of additional teaching and care staff were appointed to mainstream schools to cater for children with SEN, who might otherwise have attended special schools. There are currently over 5,000 teachers in primary schools working directly with children with SEN compared to less than 1, 500 in 1998. In comparison with 1998, when there were 300 special needs assistants (SNA) supporting pupils at primary and post-primary level, there are now more than 8,200 in schools today (McManus, 2006). (Figures exclude approximately one thousand teachers in special schools, a considerable number of teachers providing support in learning English as an additional language and resource teachers for Travellers).

While the significant increase in teacher and SNA numbers was generally viewed as a positive development of policy and provision, some concerns were expressed about the management and implementation of such a strategy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some schools were worried about the models of delivery and the co-ordination of support services for children with SEN. In particular, some teachers questioned the appropriateness and efficacy of withdrawing children for resource teaching on a one-to-one basis for additional support. Others voiced concerns about such issues as the over-dependency of some children on their SNAs or the lack of opportunities for children to access additional learning support within the context of their own peer group, in their own classrooms. These concerns, along with others, were well summarised in *Circular 24/03* (DES, 2003) which announced the intention of the DES to conduct a census of pupils and resources for SEN in all primary schools in 2003. The results of this census, along with new directions in policy demanded by the EPSEN Act, led to new models of provision and support for children with SEN.

Circular 02/05 outlined guidelines for the implementation of a new, dual allocation system of educational support for children with both high and low incidence SEN[1] in primary schools (DES, 2005). Many of the changes outlined in this circular, such as a staged approach to identification and assessment and the concept of special education teams, had already been proposed in earlier circulars (DES, 2003; 2004). Indeed some schools, in response to their own local needs and strengths, had already incorporated more flexible ways of deploying their teachers and SNAs prior to 2005. But for those schools that were just becoming accustomed to a model of withdrawing children for resource teaching based on an individual allocation of hours per child, these new changes posed significant challenges. Change can be difficult; when a lot of change is called for over a short space of time, these difficulties are compounded. However, by maintaining a commitment to respond to children's individual needs, teachers will ensure that a continuum of need is matched by a

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Supports for teachers and schools

1 See DES, 2005 for a full explanation of such concepts as high and low incidence SEN, general allocation system, dual allocation model and staged approach.

continuum of provision.

Schools and teachers should not be surprised if they feel daunted by such rapid change and the enormity of the task they face. In a time when many teachers and schools may feel justifiably overwhelmed by the demands and pressures for an effective inclusive education system, it is worth auditing some of the resources we currently have and remembering just how far we have come in such a short space of time. The following is a brief, selective example of some of these supports. Word-length limitations preclude any description of the supports listed below. Instead, websites, all of which have links to other useful sites for teachers and schools, are provided for readers' information.

- *The Learning Support Guidelines* (DES, 2000) accompanied by a nation-wide in-service programme provided by the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) (www.pcsp.ie).
- *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines* (DES, 2007) (www.education.ie)
- *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities*, (NCCA, 2007). National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (www.ncca.ie).
- Expansion and development in the programmes of continuing professional development offered by the DES through the Colleges of Education and Universities (www.education.ie).
- Special Education Support Service (SESS) (www.sess.ie).
- School Development Planning Support and Initiative service (www.sdps.ie).
- National Psychological Service (NEPS) (www.neps.ie)
- National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) (www.newb.ie)

Practicalities
Change as a result of research, policy and legislation can be slow and is often resisted, particularly if such change is not viewed by teachers as being useful for their pupils. Instead, it is often the reality of everyday life in schools that acts as a catalyst for change. The increase in the number of children with SEN attending mainstream schools has forced schools to adapt and provide appropriate education for all their pupils. The implementation of the new permanent allocation of teaching staff for children with high incidence learning difficulties and SEN has led schools to rethink the deployment of their teaching staff and their models of delivering support for such children. As mentioned earlier, remedial teachers evolved into learning support/resource teachers. Similarly, class teachers have adapted from being the sole adult responsible for all the children in their classroom, to coping with a constant flow of children being withdrawn from their classroom by a range of different support teachers, to accommodating additional support teachers and SNAs within their own

classrooms. Such practicalities and demands cannot be ignored and most schools have been innovative and commonsense in their response to them. A number of issues which I believe need to be addressed, as we take on the challenges facing us in the future, are suggested below.

Contexts for change in the future?

Whole-school

Traditionally it was special schools and special classes that were charged with the education of children with SEN. More recently, that responsibility has been shared by mainstream schools, mainly by learning support / resource teachers. However, the continuum of provision remains incomplete until all teachers in all schools view the education of children with SEN as much part of their remit as the education of any child who is enrolled in their school. The notion of whole-school responsibility for all children is not new and many schools are well advanced in their thinking and delivery of an appropriate education for all. These schools seek out and use the talents and continuum of expertise which resides within their staff.

Collaboration

When faced with the complexities posed by children who learn in many different ways, teachers recognise, or are forced to acknowledge the value of collaboration and co-operation – for no one person or group can lay claim to all the answers. Such collaboration is not easy, particularly when most teachers' education and experience has taught them to operate independently within their own classrooms as autonomous beings. As Friend and Cook (2003) point out, genuine collaboration exists only when the contributions of all are valued, when goals are clear, when decision-making is shared and when there is a sense of mutual respect. There are many opportunities for schools who want to foster such collaboration. The collaborative possibilities inherent in the process of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) present just one example. The growing trend within continuing professional development to facilitate schools' own ability to identify and meet their particular needs is yet another.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

It is the specific needs of each school that must dictate the models of delivery required by a continuum of provision. Within the confines of the mainstream school, this continuum will include a variety of in-class support, the more traditional approach of withdrawing children on an individual and small group basis, as well as models that have yet to be discovered and explored. Teachers, as well as children, require a continuum of provision to meet their specific needs. It is important that they access the support and services available to them, such as those listed above. By doing so, they will become more aware of the CPD and support they need and will therefore be in a better position to demand what is currently unavailable to them.

Parents as partners

Schools on their own cannot offer a full continuum of provision. Parents and families are essential contributors to any continuum that seeks to meet the range of needs present in schools today. There is no doubt that parents, particularly those of children with SEN, are experts in knowing the strengths and needs of their own children. Rather than feeling professionally threatened, teachers who have listened to these parents, sought their suggestions and tried to work as partners, have learned much. The educational experience teachers and parents can provide together is almost always more effective and appropriate than would otherwise have been possible without such co-operation (Hornby, 2002; Pinkus, 2005).

The craft of good teaching

Teachers' titles have changed; their job descriptions and pupil caseloads have shifted. In a time when society in general has become more demanding and old certainties no longer hold sway, it is important to hold onto and celebrate the best of what we have built up. It has often been argued, and long been recognised by those of us within the teaching profession, that what children with SEN need most, is good teaching (Swanson, 2000; Salend, 2001;Westwood, 2003). Teachers' craft-knowledge, irrespective of the pupils or curriculum they teach, has long been recognised. By craft-knowledge is meant teachers' professional knowledge, which is guided by their experience and reflection, and which is perfected by their everyday work with children in classrooms (Turner-Bisset, 1999; Day, 2005). This craft of expert teachers, is not only essential for children with SEN, but has much to offer in times of change. A continuum of educational provision must be underpinned by high quality teaching. As long as the craft of good teaching is recognised and valued, teachers will provide high quality education for children with SEN. Most mainstream primary schools have welcomed the changes introduced since 1993. Indeed, no progress could have been made without the teachers in these schools for there is plenty of research evidence to show that it is the teacher who is the vital instrument in any educational change (Fullan, 1993; Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996).

Conclusion

Focusing on the theme of change, this paper attempted to trace some of the most recent developments in the educational provision for children with SEN in mainstream primary schools in Ireland. There is no doubt that teachers and schools face a number of serious challenges as they try to provide for the diversity of pupils' needs within an inclusive environment. However, I believe they are well equipped for the task and have already demonstrated their commitment to respond to the challenge. A continuum of provision is the only genuine answer to a continuum of need. It is perhaps worth remembering the *Startrek* metaphor, used earlier, as we strive to provide such a continuum. Far from being straightforward or linear, Q's road often circles back on itself. Let us

retain and incorporate the best of what we have, as we head out "to boldly go where no one has gone before" (Startrek).

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Reinterpreting Inclusion: Putting Participation at the Heart of the Agenda

Richard Rose

Identifying issues

Reading the plethora of literature which has been published during the on-going debate about the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in recent years might lead one to suppose that a clearer picture of future school provision should by now have emerged. Countries throughout Europe and beyond have issued inclusion policies, and there have been international agreements, such as that signed in Salamanca (UNESCO 1994) which would suggest that a clear direction for the development of more inclusive education systems might be nearing achievement. Yet there remains considerable confusion about the future direction of education provision and the ways in which this might provide more equitable schooling for pupils who have previously been and in many instances continue to be marginalised. Whilst many reviews of those conditions which may promote inclusive educational practices have been available for some time (Thomas, Walker and Webb 1998, Vitello and Mithaug 1998, Tilstone and Rose 2003), the application of these practices appears to fall well short of the espoused philosophy. This, I would suggest has very little to do with the reluctance of teachers to rise to the undoubted challenges presented by some pupils with special educational needs, though undoubtedly such reluctance does exist. Slow progress is far more inhibited by a lack of clarity about the nature of inclusion and the imposition of imprecise expectations upon teachers and learners. The causes of the imbroglio, which has seemingly repressed reform in this area, have been defined more by the complexity of the issues surrounding the term inclusion than by a lack of will on the part of policy makers or practitioners. Indeed, if fault is to be found in respect of the ways in which this area has been addressed in recent years, I would suggest that it is more readily attributable to those individuals who have adopted a partisan stance either in favour of, or against increased inclusion whilst failing to communicate its purposes to those charged with its implementation.

An adequate definition of inclusive education has proven elusive. Florian (1998, 2005), through a detailed review of literature has devoted considerable energy to an attempt to clarify the term. She is critical of those definitions, which have focused upon ideas of normalcy and suggests that an adequate understanding of inclusion should rather emphasise participation. Much of the literature on inclusion has built upon earlier ideas of integration with its concentration upon

locating pupils with special educational needs in 'mainstream' schools. Florian challenges this pre-occupation, recognising that simply placing a pupil in a classroom does not guarantee that he or she will become an accepted and successful member of a learning community. The predication that inclusion should be viewed as a process of participation may hold the key to both a greater understanding of its nature and the means by which it could be achieved. Participation certainly suggests positive engagement with educational processes, whereas the emphasis, which has often been placed upon inclusion as simply a locational issue, is somewhat passive in outlook. The primary function of schools is to support pupils in becoming effective learners. This inevitably demands that all pupils should be encouraged and enabled to gain access to that which is to be taught and should have their personal learning needs and abilities acknowledged and addressed. The location of a pupil in a mainstream setting must be contingent upon the ability of that school to address his or her learning needs. Where this cannot be achieved, efforts must be made to assist the school and its staff in making all necessary adjustments towards gaining the requisite skills to make this possible.

An issue in both defining and developing inclusion relates to the positions and status of those who have the power to either influence or determine policy. In England, Local Authorities have issued copious documents, which advocate moves towards greater inclusion, but it is not uncommon for stakeholders and providers of education to remain confused with regards to their intentions or philosophy. Successful inclusion often appears to be measured in terms of the number of pupils moved out of special provision and into mainstream schools. In some instances Local Authorities have heralded the closure of special schools as an indication of their attaining an inclusive status. However, this measure of inclusivity alone has limited value if it remains dependent solely upon the location of pupils in mainstream schools and takes no account of their performance and level of participation within these schools. Local Authority policy makers, in responding to national government demands are placed in the unenviable position of having to be seen to make changes, but often do so on the basis of a limited analysis of how they will assess the efficacy of these actions. Additional pressures from lobby groups and activists add to the difficulties which policy makers face when making rational decisions. In some instances political expediency takes priority over educational reasoning.

An aspiration to have all pupils educated together in mainstream schools within the communities in which they live is of course laudable and should be a goal towards which all within education services should strive. This does, however need to be founded upon a clearer understanding of those factors which enable a pupil to either thrive or flounder within the mainstream school. At present, as well as those policies, which advocate placement in mainstream schools without due consideration of individual learner needs, we have equally invidious procedures which result in other pupils being excluded. A continuing dominance of psycho-medical models, which apply deficit labels to pupils

resulting in their being denied places in some schools appears to have become the norm in many areas. Whilst those pupils labelled as having 'learning difficulties', 'sensory impairments' or 'physical disabilities' are seen as prime candidates for inclusion, others who may have acquired descriptors such as 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' or 'profound and multiple learning difficulties' are considered as less suitable. The implication here being that some learners can be categorised within groups that are easier to manage in a mainstream classroom than others. Decisions about who attends mainstream school are often made solely upon the allocation of a label without adequate recourse to a detailed assessment of pupil needs or the ability of a school to meet these. The notion of inclusion for some is surely an oxymoron. Education systems cannot claim to be inclusive until the focus of definition shifts to one which considers how successfully a pupil is participating in learning and abandons the kind of blanket decision making which is based upon categorisation of individuals. A criticism of the term 'special education needs' has been that it perceives the difficulties as being within the pupil, whereas inclusion sees the learner as being a respected and equal member of the school community. This appears to be a desirable state, which remains yet to be achieved.

Proposing solutions

The tenor of this paper thus far appears somewhat negative and it is therefore necessary to turn attention to what has been achieved and what might be further accomplished in the future. The work of Ainscow and his colleagues has attempted to shift an emphasis away from a deficit perspective of 'within-pupil' factors to an examination of how schools might change to become more accommodating to a diversity of learner needs (Ainscow 1991,1999, 2007 Ainscow and Kaplan 2005). Approaches to school self-appraisal, whereby current provisions and practices are measured against criteria based upon what is known about the conditions for inclusion have become common in English schools. The use of instruments such as the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2002) and Inclusion Quality Mark (Coles and Hancock 2002) has become a feature of many schools who are committed to the idea of improving their provision in order to accept pupils of a diversity of needs. These instruments build upon an analysis of school provision which supports inclusive practice conducted in the UK (Sebba and Sachdev 1997, Thomas et al 1998) and elsewhere (Porter 1995, Giangreco 1997, Jenkinson 1998). They enable schools to assess the factors associated with school environment, ethos and attitudes and those practices, which may either promote or inhibit inclusion. Such instruments can undoubtedly make a contribution to school improvement and certainly assist schools in developing a focus upon how they may better address the needs of a more diverse population of pupils and improve their resources and staff skills with this objective in mind. However, a concentrated use of these instruments alone will have minimal impact. They do, however pre-suppose that school staff, having conducted an audit of provision, are willing to

make the necessary changes to accept within their schools a wider population of pupils whom many will perceive as challenging. This requires that entire school communities, including parents and outside agencies who work with the school have a clear commitment to change and to meeting the needs of a more diverse school population. Where this can be achieved the Index for Inclusion and other similar procedures can have a positive impact. However, the simplistic use of this technocratic approach to developing inclusive schools in situations where a commitment to inclusion is based solely upon an audit of the current situation and an articulation of intentions is destined to fail. Actions need to be centred upon classrooms in order to effect change which enables pupils to gain greater access to the curriculum and to engage with the variety of learning tasks which are common in mainstream classrooms. It must also be acknowledged that schools are in many respects fragile institutions subject to both negative or positive change on the basis of key staff entering or leaving the school, changes in pupil population or an inability to fully address new legislative demands. Those conditions required to encourage schools to become more successful in addressing the needs of a diverse group of learners have indeed been well established and discussed in the literature. The work of Ainscow and his colleagues has afforded an understanding about how we may move forward towards a more equitable education system. What is currently lacking is a cohesive plan with regards to how this might be achieved.

Whilst Ainscow and others have focused upon models of whole school improvement as a means of promoting inclusion, others have been investigating those specific teaching practices which may assist pupils in accessing learning. In recent years an increased appraisal of teaching approaches which have proven successful when used for pupils with special educational needs, and a recognition that in some instances these have benefits for a wider range of learners has led to some innovative practices in classrooms. Teachers in mainstream classrooms have become more adept at using those teaching approaches, which have previously found favour with specialist teachers for their efficacy in providing access for pupils with specific difficulties. The use of augmentative forms of communication through the introduction of symbol or pictorial timetables commonly used with pupils with complex learning needs, or the implementation of the principles of structured teaching (Schopler, Mesibov and Hearsey (1995) or Social Stories (Gray 1994), which have benefits for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders has become a feature of many mainstream classrooms. Similarly the use of multi-sensory teaching approaches which have been a feature of the education of pupils with dyslexia, or the use of assistive technology have enabled greater access for a range of pupils who have previously failed to access learning. These teaching methods, which were traditionally regarded as being within the armoury of specialist teachers, having been introduced into mainstream classrooms have, in some instances, been found to have benefits for a wider range of learners (Mesibov and Howley (2003), Howley and Kime 2003, Howley and Arnold (2005). In addition to considering the creation of inclusive learning environments, teachers are interrogating their

own teaching styles in order to ascertain how these influence a more diverse range of learners within their classrooms. This investigation into teaching and learning styles has progressed beyond the narrow, and at times tokenistic discussion of differentiation, which for too long dominated some of the more limited approaches to teacher professional development. Teachers, as the only professionals who can truly create inclusive classrooms are now more concerned to identify methods, which whilst initially aimed at individual pupils, can be shown to bring positive results for many. Teaching is a demanding profession, and in situations where teachers are expected to make significant changes to their practice, which they perceive as being for the benefits of individuals or small numbers of pupils, some will choose not to implement change. However, if teachers can identify the ways in which the introduction of new approaches makes the management of whole classes easier, they are much more likely to adopt these practices.

Research into the possible existence of a special form of pedagogy which meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties has so far proven inconclusive (Lewis and Norwich 2001a, 2001b, Davis and Florian 2004). The evidence from recent research suggests that a wide range of well established teaching approaches, which may have their origins in behavioural, ecosystemic or social constructivist theories may all have a contribution to make to the development of effective learning environments. Innovative teachers will not be satisfied with the implementation of teaching strategies which are clearly failing to meet the needs of even small numbers of their pupils. Such teachers will continue to examine their own practices and will introduce and adapt specialist approaches to suit their own teaching styles and the classrooms in which they operate.

Moving forwards

Much is now known about the challenges of providing a more equitable and inclusive teaching environment. Discussions of teacher attitudes, school ethos and management models have dominated the debate. More recent consideration of the processes of teaching have begun to provide examples of how teachers may develop their skills, to enable pupils who have previously been denied curriculum access to become fully participating members of their classrooms. Inclusion will be achieved only when there is a consensus about the agenda, which needs to be addressed in order to move forward. Such an agenda will require a more rational partnership between all of those parties, which have a vested interest in seeing inclusion become a reality. Researchers need to turn their attention towards a sharper focus not only upon those teaching methods, which enable pupils with special educational needs to learn, but also upon how these can be effectively managed by teachers in busy classrooms. This requires that they enter into a close alliance with teachers in order to discuss the realities of classroom management and to gain their confidence to develop partnerships for the development, investigation and modification of classroom teaching practices. Policy makers need to become a third element of this partnership. They can play a major role by listening to the concerns of teachers about the

challenges which they face and taking note of the findings of research built upon teacher and researcher partnerships, which identify those teaching approaches which might be most efficacious for inclusion. Such a partnership would then enable them to build policy on the basis of evidence rather than as a process of political expediency or shallow philosophy.

The achievement of greater inclusion must remain as a central objective of educational policy, research and practice for the foreseeable future. However, if progress is to be made it is necessary to ensure that all concerned parties are working collaboratively towards a common purpose. Philosophical and humanistic debates about inclusion will undoubtedly continue. Yet, for most teachers a commitment to inclusion has become the norm and they are now in need of support of a more concrete nature. Effective schools are learning communities in which teachers, pupils, parents and other professionals make a commitment to shared experience through which all members can learn. If the momentum towards a more inclusive education system is to be maintained this will require a closer alignment of endeavours and a less dissipated approach to change than we have experienced over the past twenty years.

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Co-teaching: Why and How?

Fiona King

Moving forward

The Department of Education and Science (DES) in Ireland advocates an inclusive model of education. While 'mainstreaming' and 'integration' have been around for many years advocating the rights of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to attend mainstream schools, the inclusion model advocates the need for pupils to be educated in the mainstream class. The inclusion paradigm takes a different viewpoint also in that it lays responsibility with the school to make instructional changes to accommodate all pupils (Thomson et al., 2003). This demands curricular inclusion, which requires systemic change (Ferguson 1995; Thomson et al., 2003). Systemic change involves changing the system i.e. curriculum and teaching methods, to suit the child's needs instead of trying to change the child to fit into the system.

According to the Learning Support Guidelines (LSG's) (2000) and Circular SP ED 02/05 (DES, 2005) the role of the support teacher includes assisting class teachers to plan and ultimately deliver a quality special education provision. The LSG's (2000) advocate placing a high priority on enhancing classroom-based learning through alternative groupings and providing strategies for learning. Furthermore the LSG's recommend 'shared teaching approaches' in the pupil's classroom. However, this move from an exclusive reliance on withdrawal teaching will take time. Fullan (1991) states it takes two to three years for teachers to become fully competent in using new instructional methods.

Intrinsic in all of this is the need for collaboration among teachers (Arraf, 1996). One method of teacher collaboration is **'peer coaching'.** Peer coaching was produced to foster teachers' development and the cultivation of new instructional practices in the classroom. It has been shown to be very effective for demonstrating methods of differentiation, especially for new teachers - they get on-site training with immediate feedback. Peer coaching enables teachers to observe one another and exchange support, ideas, feedback and assistance in an equal and non-threatening way. Teachers can model strategies for each other and be available to offer support at a later stage should it be required. Teacher collaboration will benefit pupils and teachers alike. It will provide professional development and may prevent 'burn-out' of teachers.

Furthermore peer coaching will shorten the length of time it takes to develop and use new practices and it will enable teachers to develop and tailor innovations to fit their own personal teaching styles. The ultimate goal for every teacher is to develop, refine and maintain strategies that address pupils' diverse learning needs and capabilities. This process is known as **'differentiation'**. Hart

(1992) described "differentiation" as the process teachers use in adapting instruction to achieve a better match between the demands of the task and the children's' existing knowledge and skills. Differentiation is the key to successful curricular inclusion. Differentiation of support is achieved through using alternative teaching methods, resources and groupings to meet an individual's needs. These changes take time and form part of an on-going process (Fullan, 1992).

This paper will take a look at how to move towards a more inclusive model of teaching through in-class support. However, the author would like to acknowledge the benefits of withdrawal and the fact that there will always be a place for withdrawal in working with pupils with SEN.

There are many models of in-class support, which can be provided for pupils with SEN. Typical instructional groupings include: Peer Tutoring; Co-operative / Collaborative Teaching; and Parallel Teaching. The term 'cooperative teaching' was shortened to 'co-teaching' which is considered an umbrella term for all collaborative models of teaching and learning. It is characterised by the following:

(a)   Class teacher and special service teacher working together

(b)   Teaching by two teachers in the same classroom at the same time

(c)   Co-planning and collaboration between teachers

(d)   Instruction delivered to a heterogeneous group of pupils
        with and without disabilities

(Murawski & Swanson, 2001).

No one model of support is said to be the ultimate. In fact from experience it is better to use a variety of models. Which model one uses depends on the focus of instruction i.e. if the focus of instruction is reading accuracy and fluency, then peer tutoring might be used. If mathematical skills are the focus of instruction, then parallel teaching (or station teaching) may be better. It also depends on the abilities of
the pupils in the class.

Responses to in-class support
The key to the success of inclusion is effective teacher training in models of in-class support so as to meet the needs of the students in an inclusive environment. I carried out research in my own school setting in 2004 using peer tutoring for reading accuracy and fluency and co-operative teaching for working on plural rules for spelling. Let me give you a support teachers' response to the in-class support used in the research:

> *"I certainly would sustain the use of in-class support. I would hate to see us regressing back to traditional teaching. I really enjoyed the classroom. I think the kids benefited hugely too. I definitely think there is still room for one to one teaching for some things though".*

From working as a resource teacher in-class, I have found that in-class support, where teaching methods are adapted through active learning and the use of concrete materials, provides teaching and learning at an intensive level. Both teachers can work to their strengths and the teachers can learn from each other. There is a buzz from seeing all pupils access the curriculum, the relationships between teachers develop and the whole school gets a sense of inclusiveness that generates a great sense of community spirit.

The responsibility for pupils with SEN is shared between the class teacher and support teacher. In this way, the support teacher is not just seen as a teacher to help pupils with SEN – teachers experienced in SEN can peer coach class teachers in methodologies that will enhance learning for all. All pupils in the class can therefore benefit from in-class support.

> *"I am able to provide some support for all of the students in the class. Mind you, I never lose sight of why I'm in here… to assist the students with identified special needs, but there are benefits for other students as well".*
>
> A support teachers' response to in-class support
> (Vaughn et al., 1997)

> *"I think I'm a much better teacher now, and I definitely have a much better understanding of what goes on in the general education classroom and what kinds of expectations I need to have for my students"* …
>
> A support teachers' response to in-class support
> (Vaughn et al., 1997)

Challenges to in-class support
While in-class support is widely advocated in literature and in this paper, it would be naïve not to mention the challenges for teachers and pupils alike in transferring from an exclusive reliance on withdrawal teaching to developing an inclusive, whole school approach to SEN.

*Space*While a large classroom would be desirable for team-teaching it is not necessary. Most classrooms could accommodate one more adult in the room!

Noise
Awareness of our voices as teachers is essential for team-teaching. Teachers need to speak at a normal pitch when working with a group as opposed to a louder voice when working with the class as a whole.

Teacher Personalities / Attitudes

Teacher personalities can play a large role in the success or failure of in-class support. Flexibility is key to the success of team-teaching. Teachers need to plan well in advance and be flexible in their thinking and approaches. Flexibility may be needed when trying to organise timetables for in-class support. Attitudes to in-class support can be fostered and it is advisable to start small with a well-planned programme to ensure success.

Parent involvement

It is good practice to inform parents in advance of team-teaching practices within your school. This can be done at the infant information evening for incoming pupils each year.

Training

Class teachers and support teachers need guidelines, preparation and training in various models of in-class support prior to implementation of same. Planning and organization are key to the success of any programme.

Needs of pupils

The needs of pupils are paramount in any decision making about models of support. Pupils needs must be catered for and therefore no one model is the ultimate. While peer tutoring might be suitable for one term of instruction, a pupil may need to be withdrawn for support the next term. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

Content i.e. focus of instruction

The focus of instruction is equally as important as the model of instruction. The content to be taught must suit the model of support and vice versa.

Teaching styles

One advantage of in-class support is that pupils are exposed to the different teaching styles of teachers. One teacher's strength may suit the 'inchworms' (logical sequential learners) in our classrooms while another teacher's strength may suit the 'grasshoppers' (global learners). Teachers learn from each other and adopt strategies from each other.

Roles and responsibilities of each teacher

Agreement on teacher roles and responsibilities must be reached prior to commencing in-class support. Areas such as content planning, discipline, homework, permission to leave the classroom etc all need to be agreed upon.

Availability of time for planning and collaboration with class teacher

Without planning and collaboration, in-class support will not be successful. Time for formal and informal meetings must be arranged. Ideally meetings occur on a weekly basis. Creative planning within schools may facilitate these

meetings e.g. if an infant teacher is willing to give an hour a week to cover meetings between a support teacher and two different class teachers. In some schools a non-teaching principal may be willing give an hour a week to facilitate teacher collaboration.

While all of the above may be challenges to in-class support many teachers will rise to these challenges and the benefits of in-class support will outweigh the challenges in a short time.

Getting Started

Over the past couple of years much time and paper has been used on discussing the merits of in-class support and indeed the various models of in-class support. It is time to look at **how and where to begin with in-class support.**

In-class support in my own situation came as a knee jerk reaction to a situation in a school in which I taught. The class teacher came to me in the month of June with serious concerns regarding how best to teach a class of twenty children in a multi-class situation, seven of whom attend resource and four who attend learning support. The class teacher reported three other children as having learning difficulties and in need of assessment. This meant fourteen children out of twenty were presenting with some form of learning difficulty. In discussing this situation, it was decided that we would implement some form of in-class support.

At the same time, staff members were undergoing an evaluation of the school organisation including the provision for special educational needs in the school. The teachers identified two main areas for development:

- Teacher collaboration
- Classroom planning / Differentiation

They also identified success criteria for differentiation /classroom planning as follows:

- Pupil participation in all aspects of the curriculum
- The application of group learning / peer learning
- Structured times for collaboration between class and support teachers, to plan for individual differentiation
- The inclusion of curriculum-based targets into the IEP
- The facilitation of different learning styles through the use of multi-sensory teaching techniques

Following this, at a school development-planning day, curriculum areas to be addressed, namely reading fluency, reading comprehension and maths, were agreed upon. I looked at the children's IEPs to see the extent to which their literacy, mathematical and emotional (self-esteem) needs could be met through in-class support. Having researched different models of teaching / learning I

proposed to implement peer tutoring for reading fluency and co-operative teaching for maths.

Step by Step

- Start by looking at the number of pupils in need of support teaching in relation to the number of support teachers available in your school
- Decide the level of support each pupil needs
- Decide whether these needs could be met through in-class support or withdrawal, or perhaps a combination of both
- Decisions then need to be taken on how to split the caseloads most effectively i.e. by class, subject, needs etc.

This is also in keeping with Circular SP ED 02/05 which endorses a step-by-step approach to planning for the deployment of resources. Let's take a look at some possible scenarios within schools:

Scenario 1

A three-teacher school with one full time resource teacher and a part-time teacher to cover general allocation. In this case there are enough resources in place to provide in-class support in each classroom and facilitate withdrawal time also. (See sample timetables for the resource and learning support teacher at the end of this article.)

Scenario 2

A four-teacher school with the same resources would still be able to provide similar in-class provision. In scenario 1, an hour of maths in-class support was provided in each of the classes. In a four-teacher school, thirty minutes could be provided in each room. A similar arrangement could apply to literacy.

Scenario 3

A seven-teacher school with two support teachers (including general allocation and resource): One teacher may take the senior end of the school for all children with SEN and one could take the junior end of the school. Another possibility is for one teacher to specialise in literacy and the other in maths. The difficulty with the latter is that one teacher may have more experience (e.g. in behaviour modification programmes) and they may be needed in the junior and senior end of the school. In my experience flexibility is the key.

The roles of resource and general allocation may be interchangeable within a school, so this gives flexibility to allocate teachers with appropriate experience to the required areas. The ongoing monitoring of the provision for pupils with SEN is essential to the effective delivery of a support service. Formative assessment is an essential component of any intervention. One teacher should take responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of SEN. This is a big

undertaking and could be made a 'B-Post' for the teacher who is coordinating it.

Start small

When undertaking to provide in-class support for the first time, the challenges mentioned earlier need to be considered and discussed. In addition, I would advise that you start small, with one focus of instruction (maybe reading fluency). Having chosen this focus of instruction, look at the various models of instruction (peer tutoring / co-operative learning groups etc.) and decide collaboratively which model would suit best. Now the planning of content, roles and responsibilities can be discussed and agreed. N.B. The needs of the pupils must be addressed through the model and content chosen. In some few cases, pupils may need to be withdrawn for support also.

Timetables

Devising a timetable that suits both the class teachers and the support teachers can prove very challenging. There is no single best method, as each situation is different and timetables can change from term to term. Rotating timetables is advisable for withdrawal to ensure that pupils are not missing the same subjects each day. In addition, try offering in-class support for a given topic on a term-by-term basis, and review timetabling issues at the end of each term.

Example: 30 minutes, four days per week.

Term 1: In-class support for creative writing

Term 2: In-class support for reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension

Term 3: In-class support for summarising history and geography texts, using mind-maps

If the support allocation does not allow for this much time in one class, then the support teacher could do a few weeks in each class to peer coach the class teacher in the strategies used. For example, a support teacher with experience in peer tutoring for reading comprehension could peer coach a class teacher in the method for a few weeks. In this way, each teacher (and class) gets the benefit from the expertise. This is advocated at second level also, where a teacher with specific expertise would peer-coach a class teacher. The support teacher would model the strategies and allow the class teacher to practise these strategies in his or her own time. The support teacher is available at any subsequent stage to help with difficulties that may arise and to give immediate feedback when asked. When the class teacher feels comfortable with the approach, the support teacher can move on to another class.

As an alternative, two classes could be taken together for a period of time e.g. peer tutoring for reading fluency could be done. In this way there are three teachers available to circulate among the pupils i.e. two class teachers and a support teacher.

If in-class support is not possible in a particular situation, then the support teacher could take the pupils who need strategies for reading accuracy and fluency from various classes and work with them as a group in the support room. This is an efficient use of the resource teachers' time and it fosters social relations among the pupils. An alternative idea in secondary school would be involving transition year students in peer tutoring of pupils in need of help. This would need to be highly structured and planned in advance.

School books and workbooks

It must be realised that in-class support is not an' extra' task for the class teacher to accomplish – it is an alternative way of working with the whole class, to benefit all the pupils. In my experience, the textbooks can be a burden if teachers are under pressure to complete them. The difficulty for many pupils is that while the books and workbooks touch on many topics, they do not provide sufficient opportunities for repetition, which facilitates overlearning and automaticity (e.g. grammar rules, spelling rules, comprehension strategies etc.).

An alternative to the workbooks if, for example, reading comprehension and creative writing are to be the focus of instruction for the following academic year, would be to focus on the strategies to be taught and pull from various sources. In this way the class teacher is not under pressure to complete workbooks and in-class support for reading is not something that the teacher has to find time for in his/ her busy timetable.

In-class support for Early Intervention

The benefits of early intervention are highlighted in all books and circulars. Support teachers have an important role to play in the early intervention process. In-class support is ideally suited to providing early intervention.

Ideas for early intervention in the infant rooms

From September to November in junior infants, support teachers could provide in-class support in the mornings during free-play time, to help the pupils develop their social skills, concentration skills and co-operative learning skills. November to December could be used for a phonological awareness programme. This could be done with the whole class together at first and then in two separate groups.

In a multi-class situation the classes could be divided into two groups. Each teacher could have responsibility for one group or the teachers could rotate the groups. Support around oral language can be devised for in-class support also. Reading a story from a 'big book' can be done with the whole class and then the class can be divided into groups, to work on differentiated activities based on the big book.

'Station teaching' could be used for literacy, where pupils spend ten minutes at three different 'stations', each with a different activity e.g. phonic games, pre-

writing activities, reading activities and so on. Phonic programmes can be implemented by the class teacher and / or support teacher(s) e.g. Alpha to Omega, Jolly Phonics. The class could be divided into groups where each teacher works at the appropriate level of the programme with their group.

Early intervention is particularly relevant to mathematics, as maths is a cumulative subject where the pupils need to understand each step in order to progress to the next. Support teachers can provide in-class support for maths from junior infants to second class and this helps to prevent the incidence of mathematical difficulties arising.

Summary
Formative assessment is essential when providing in-class support to ensure that pupils are learning according to their targets. Some pupils may need additional support programmes to be carried out in a withdrawal situation. The emphasis always has to be on targeting pupils who need help, not on teaching methods or groupings.

It is my experience that pupils with learning disabilities are best served by a range of placement options and a range of provisions to cater for their individual needs.

Teacher expertise is an essential component for effective teaching, which in turn provides individualised teaching, small groups, contextualised skills teaching, and more interactive lessons. Teacher expertise is improved through the use of in-class support and peer coaching. The role of the support teacher then moves from one of providing supplementary teaching for pupils with SEN to one that allows for continued supplementary teaching, while also helping teachers to improve the quality of classroom instruction. Support teachers must have a solid understanding and knowledge of the curriculum, which can be obtained through in-class support. However, support teachers need to learn how to plan their time to meet the needs of the pupils and to help them to develop their strategies for learning in all aspects of the curriculum.

Scenario 1: Three-Teacher School Resource Teacher's Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Session 1	In-class: Maths in 4th – 6th classes	In-class: Maths in 4th 6th classes	In-class: Maths in 4th 6th classes	In-class: Maths in 4th 6th classes	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
Session 2	In-class: Spelling & Handwriting in 4th - 6th classes	In-class: Spelling & Handwriting in 4th - 6th classes	In-class: Spelling & Handwriting in 4th - 6th classes	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
Session 3	**Break Time**	**Break Time**	**Break Time**	**Break Time**	**Break Time**
Session 4	In-class: Peer tutoring for reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension in 4th - 6th classes.	In-class: Peer tutoring for reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension in 4th - 6th classes.	In-class: Peer tutoring for reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension in 4th - 6th classes.	In-class: Peer tutoring for reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension in 4th - 6th classes.	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
Session 5	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
	Lunch Time	**Lunch Time**	**Lunch Time**	**Lunch Time**	**Lunch Time**
Session 6	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Plenary
Session 7	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Plenary

Scenario 1: Three-Teacher School Learning Support Teacher's Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Session 1	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
Session 2	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
Session 3	**Break Time**	**Break Time**	**Break Time**	**Break Time**	**Break Time**
Session 4	Early Intervention in literacy in infants room	Early Intervention in literacy in infants room	Early Intervention in literacy in infants room	Early Intervention in literacy in infants room	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
Session 5	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	In-class: Maths in 1st - 3rd classes.	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups
	Lunch Time	**Lunch Time**	**Lunch Time**	**Lunch Time**	**Lunch Time**
Session 6	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Plenary
Session 7	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Withdrawal time for individuals/ small groups	Plenary

The content of this paper was taken and adapted from King, 2006. *Special Education in Irish Classrooms: A Practical Guide*. Dublin: PrimaryABC.

For detailed explanations on models of support (e.g. co-operative teaching groups for maths, peer tutoring for reading fluency, co-operative learning groups for history etc) see the above book.

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The Trails and Triumphs of the Assistive Technology package TextHelp® on Dyslexic students at Third Level

John Phayer

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to describe how Dyslexic students at Third Level use the Assistive Technology application TextHelp in their studies. An experiment was designed and administered by the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of this Text to Speech program as well as producing evidence on student's opinions regarding the training and the need for further improvement. The investigator has a number of reasons for undertaking this project and are outlined as follows. The researcher wanted to create an awareness of:

- How Dyslexic students use the different features and components of a Text to Speech program for their studies

- How this Text to Speech application is used in conjunction with other non Assistive Technology software such as a Word Processor

- How other facilities of this Text to Speech application can be further enhanced and enriched for the benefits of Dyslexic students in their studies

The methodology utilised in this project was a Case Study and the data collection methods were Questionnaires, Interviews and Observations. In order that the researcher could perform a thorough examination of this computer application used by Dyslexic students, it was necessary to have other areas investigated beforehand which included:

- the nature and range of difficulties encountered by Dyslexic students

- the availability of different supports and services provided by third level institutions for these students

- the experiences of Dyslexics with computer technology in general

- the different types of Assistive Technology software which are available to these students

Research Question

The main research question which the researcher is aiming to address is "Can the Assistive Technology software package TextHelp, be employed / utilised to overcome the difficulties experienced by third level students with Dyslexia?" Within this main question, a number of sub questions arose such as:

- How best can TextHelp be used to help dyslexic students with their studies?
- What level of training and support is needed?
- What are the weaknesses and strengths of TextHelp?
- How can Assistive Technology support services in general be improved?

Specific Learning Disability, Learning Difficulty and Dyslexia
A number of explanations and definitions have arisen to explain the term Specific Learning Difficulty. These Learning Difficulties come in a variety of severities and have many explanations to describe the condition. The UK organization AbilityNet (2006) point out that these Learning Difficulties can be congenital or acquired by accident or even through illness. It is also pointed out that other learning difficulties may not result from a lack of potential but could be from sensory / physical disabilities. AbilityNet (2002) also make the point even though people have called this complication 'Dyslexia', 'Learning Difficulty' or even 'Specific Learning Disability', it is an ill understood problem and people regard it as *'a mismatch between their intelligence and verbal skills including the ability to write, read and handle numbers'.* Therefore, no one single specific definition can be used to explain the term Learning Disability or Specific Learning Disability. The words 'Learning Difficulty', 'Learning Disability' and 'Dyslexia' are often used interchangeably and as a result clarification remains an area of controversy. In the UK educational system the term "Specific Learning Difficulty" is used, whereas in U.S.A., its called "Specific Learning Disability", but in the psychomedical practice, the word "Dyslexia" has remAnnd the favoured title. (Tod, 2000: 1)

Put simply, a Specific Learning Difficulty is an umbrella term that covers areas of Learning Difficulties such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia. Burgstahler (2002: 1) explains that Specific Learning Disabilities can cover a broad spectrum of learning difficulties such as:

(1) Dysgraphia – A difficulty with the physical task of forming letters and words using pen and paper to produce legible handwriting

(2) Dyscalculia – A difficulty understanding and using maths concepts and symbols

(3) Dysphasia (Speech and language delay and/or deficit)

(4) Dyslexia – A difficulty with mixing up letters within words and words within sentences while reading. There may also be a difficulty spelling words correctly while writing, as well as problems with direction and navigation.

One definition outlined by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities organisation (N.J.C.L.D.) (1997: 29, cited in Lerner, 2000: 11) explain Learning Disabilities as an:

'heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities.'

Table 1: The Categories of Specific Learning Disability

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Specific Learning Disability    │
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          ┌──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
   ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐
   │  Dyslexia  │ │ Dysphasia  │ │ Dyscalculia│ │ Dysgraphia │
   └────────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘
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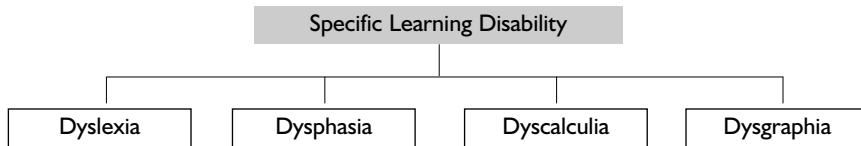
This organisation explains that Learning Disabilities occur due to factors within the individual rather than external causes e.g. the environment or an educational system. The disorders are inherent to the person which are the result of a dysfunction with the Central Nervous System (i.e. a biological source to the problem) and may occur across a life time. It must be constantly remembered that there are different varieties and types of Learning Disabilities which span across a continuum i.e. from mild to moderate to severe, are of different categories and persist into adulthood. This is summarised quite aptly by Evans (1999: 3) who states:

> *'A Learning Disability is a developmental disorder that persists into adulthood, sometimes in a subtle or modified form'.*

Exley (2003: 213) further expands this definition and makes reference to an author called Chasty (cited in Chinn and Ashcroft, 1999) who provides a more detailed definition of Specific Learning Disability as problems being associated with:

> *'organising or learning difficulties which restrict the student's competence in information processing, in fine motor skills and working memory, so causing limitations in some or all of the skills of speech, reading, spelling, writing, essay writing, numeracy and behaviour'.*

But Gerber and Reiff(1994, National Institute for Literacy, 1995 cited in Klemes, Epstein, Grinberg and Illovitch, 2006:1) on the other hand define Learning Disabilities as a *'group of disorders that affect the ability to acquire or use listening, speaking, concentrating, reading, writing, reasoning or math skills'*. According to the National Adult Literacy Association (N.A.L.A., 2004: 7), *'people experiencing Specific Learning Difficulties can have a co-morbidity of problems'* and is an important issue to be kept in mind when discussing Specific Learning Disabilities. This can be defined as '*two Specific Learning Disabilities which are presented at the same time'* e.g. a person with Dyslexia can exhibit signs and symptoms of Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia.

Dyslexia

There is no widespread agreement on a common definition for the word Dyslexia nor is there agreement on its exact causes amongst researchers, academics, professionals and psychologists. Some of these people want to have it relabelled as 'Specific Learning Disability' or 'Learning Difficulty' or even 'Intellectual Disability' but Critchley (1981, cited in Pothos and Kirk, 2004: 61) attempts to outline a simple definition of Dyslexia as being:

> *'a difficulty…in the use of words, how they are identified, what they signify, how they are handled in combination, how they are pronounced and how they are spelt'*

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (N.I.A.C.E, 2004: 5) point out that Dyslexia affects information processing (receiving, holding and structuring information) and the speed of dealing with instructions. It therefore has an impact on skills such as reading, writing, using symbols and carrying out calculations and other instructions. People with Dyslexia have their own individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses. As no two people are exactly the same, the impact of Dyslexia on each individual is different. As outlined by Ott (1997: 2), one must constantly keep in mind that *'Dyslexia occurs throughout the world in all environments and does not respect class boundaries'*. This difficulty can cause a great deal of frustration, anxiety, tension and worry, when a bright child is unable to read despite receiving and being taught the necessary skills by a variety of methods (Ott, 1997: 2).

At the same time, the Orton Dyslexia Society (1994: 5, cited in Exley, 2003: 213) provide their definition of Dyslexia as being

> *'…manifested by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems of reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling'.*

This explanation does not fully cover all difficulties experienced by Dyslexic individuals. The Report of the Task Force on Dyslexia (2001: 28) further explains that it also includes difficulties with

> *'… inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present.'*

Dyslexia and Specialist Assistive Technology Software

Many students with Learning Disabilities like Dyslexia know what they want to write, but have problems with the workings of translating their thoughts onto paper (Wissick, 2005: 1). The thoughts of some Dyslexics work so quickly, that their writing seems to jump from one topic to the next. Here, specialist Assistive Technology software may be the solution to some of their problems. This specialist computer software is just one aspect of technology which is categorised

under the heading of Assistive Technology. Although Hecker and Engstrom (1999: 1) explain that the term Assistive Technology is used *'to refer to accommodations or provisions for individuals with both physical disabilities and cognitive differences'*. The legal definition of Assistive Technology which is outlined by (Lerner, Lowenthal and Egan, 1998, and Messerer 1997, cited in Lerner (2000: 55) claim Assistive Technology:

> *'refers to technological devices that enable users with disabilities to move, play, communicate, write, speak and participate in many activities that would be unavailable to them without the computer'*.

Table 2: Types of Assistive Technology Software

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                  │  Assistive Technology Software  │
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┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│Voice         │ │Viual Mapping │ │Word          │ │Text to speech│
│Recognition   │ │Software      │ │Prediction    │ │Software      │
│Software      │ │              │ │Software      │ │              │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
                                                    ┌──────────────┐
                                                    │  TextHelp    │
                                                    └──────────────┘
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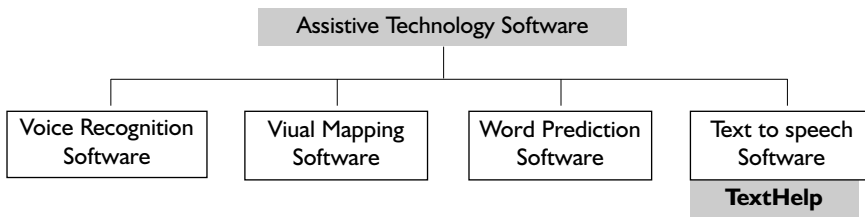
There are four types of specialist Assistive Technology software used in the field of Assistive Technology and Dyslexia which are Voice Recognition Software, Visual Mapping Software, Word Prediction Software and Text to Speech Software – TextHelp.

(a) Voice Recognition Software allows a user to dictate into a microphone & which allows information to appear on the computer screen.

(b) Visual Mapping Software is comprised of MindMaps and Concept Maps. The user types an idea into a box which is the central theme and is followed by a sequence of other ideas in boxes around the computer screen.

(c) Word Prediction Software is software which predicts the words which the user is typing on a computer screen.

(d) Text to Speech Software is specialised computer software which is used to assist in both reading and writing and uses a multi sensory approach that combines highlighted text with speech output (Heller, 2005: 1). Wissick (2005: 4) explains that Text to Speech software is used to convert words on a computer screen into audible speech and can usually be configured to speak letters, words or sentences as they are typed.

What is TextHelp?

TextHelp is a Text to Speech program mainly used by Dyslexic students to assist in listening and reading comprehension. This application is used in conjunction with a word processor and uses multi sensory features, such as, the highlighting and dictating of text. The TextHelp toolbar is positioned at the top of a computer screen and offers a variety of features that can be used as the student types a document. The features of the application can help the Dyslexic student in the reading and writing process and are outlined as follows:

(a) Spell Check: This allows a user to spell-check a document or a piece of selected text.

(b) Word Prediction: This facility 'predicts' a list of words to be used in a text by the student.

(c) Dictionary: This allows a user to search for the meaning of a selected word in the Dictionary.

(d) Show Homophones: This presents a list of homophonic words which the user has typed in a document and appears as blue on the screen.

(e) Sounds Like button: This facility searches for similar sounding homophonic words in a passage.

(f) Hide Homophones: This feature hides the highlighted homophonic words on the screen.

(g) Calculator: This allows a person to use the standard / scientific calculator facility.

(h) Rewind/Play/Pause/Forward/Rewind/Stop: These buttons allow a person to play the previous / following sentences in a document.

(i) Scan button: This allows an individual to scan a document using the scanner facility

(j) Fact Folder: This feature allows a person to store selected text in a Fact Folder.

(k) Fact Finder: This facility allows the user to search for information on the internet.

(l) Speech Input: This allows a person to dictate information onto a computer screen for further editing at a later stage.

Project Development

The project adopted a Case Study methodology and drew upon Questionnaires, Observations and Interviews as a means of obtaining and gathering the information. This technique proved to be the most viable, reliable and well validated method of collecting data for a number of reasons:

- The researcher was limited to those Dyslexic students who attended a particular college who were actually diagnosed as being Dyslexic and had been offered Assistive Technology support services in the following areas: Computer Hardware, Software, Assistive Technology Training and On-going Support.

- Sample selection: The sample was limited to the number of Dyslexic students using the Assistive Technology support provided by the college which was less than 20.

In order to perform an in-depth study of TextHelp in terms of its use and impact on a Dyslexic student, the researcher decided to use questionnaires to target 'technical and dichotomous' answers followed by interviews and observations to gain a 'fly on the wall' insight of the opinions and views that students have about TextHelp. The investigator tried to develop the project by *'methods of inquiry, an outcome and a resultant record of the inquiry'* (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 138), a term defined as Ethnographic Research. The researcher tried to create the most realistic and practical environment possible in order to observe and record the students' actions, opinions and points of view or as LeCompte and Preissle (1993, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 138) define it to create: *'as vivid a reconstruction as possible of the culture or groups being studied'*. An Activity Timetable outlining the steps involved in generating and obtaining the data was used. (See Table 3)

Activity 1 and 2:
The 'Exploratory Questionnaire' was designed as a pilot study to 'test the water' in order to get a general idea of the positive and negative experiences that Dyslexic students have with technology and their studies in general. This document was submitted to a number of students and analysed which provided the foundation for the 'Pre Training Questionnaire'.

Activity 3 and 4:
The 'Pre Training Questionnaire' looked at a range of issues such as the Assistive Technology services used by Dyslexic students as well as exploring the range of difficulties which these pupils encounter at Third Level. This document briefly examined the range of Assistive Technology software and hardware used by the pupils as well as an analysis of popular I.T. packages e.g. Microsoft Word. The document concluded with an exploration of students' opinions on the benefits and barriers of Information Technology in general. These documents were analysed for possible emerging themes and topics whereby the investigator could classify each item of data to every heading.

Table 3: Activity Timetable

Activity Number	Nature of Activity
1	'Exploratory Questionnaire' piloted
2	Revised 'Exploratory Questionnaire' collected and analysed
3	'Pre Training Questionnaire' piloted
4	Revised 'Pre Training Questionnaire' distributed and collected
5	TextHelp training course commences
6	Observation takes place 'during' and 'after' Assistive Technology training programme. Will take 2 forms:
	Live and Reflective
7	Ongoing interviews with students
8	'Post Training Questionnaire' piloted
9	Revised 'Post Training Questionnaire' distributed and collected
10	Follow up interviews with students
11	Interviews with other A.T. tutors / Learning Support Service Co-ordinators

Activity 5, 6, 7:
This related to the implementation of a TextHelp training course in a particular Third Level Institution. It lasted a couple of weeks which involved teaching and demonstrating the software to students and showing them how each function operated. The researcher performed many observations by writing down any comments, queries, remarks, or difficulties about the software as well as asking each student a number of informal questions about the software itself and the Assistive Technology lessons. On going interviews were administered and results generated as a consequence of completing this process.

Activity 8 and 9:
A 'Post Training Questionnaire' was designed and developed which looked more deeply at the different functions and features of TextHelp and evaluated the application in terms of its positive and negative use.

Activity 10 and 11:
As soon as the students had completed a number of lessons, the researcher who acted as the interviewer arranged meetings with the students to clarify any outstanding matters, issues or any queries about Assistive Technology lessons or

even with the TextHelp program itself. A follow-up lesson could be arranged later on in the year to correct / address any problems which the student may have with the program.

A final questionnaire was designed and administered to the Assistive Technology tutors and Learning Support Co-ordinators to obtain information about the roles of:

- the Assistive Technology service
- the Learning Support Co-ordinators and other services within the Assistive Technology service sector.

Following on from this, the researcher carried out a number of interviews with the Learning Support Co-ordinators to clarify any outstanding questions or issues.

After all the data had been gathered, the researcher had to constantly keep in mind the danger of placing too much emphasis and weight on the responses from the questionnaires. Therefore, the data from the questionnaires was cross referenced with information from both the interviews and observations. To facilitate this, all the data from questionnaires, interviews and observations was coded and carefully sorted under different headings e.g. positive and negative technical features, learner control, on screen help facilities, training and support etc., This coding took two forms and can be defined as open and focused coding.

Open and Focused Coding

Green, Nylander, Harbin and Edwards (2003: 1) point out that Open and Focused Coding are mutually exclusive and therefore operate in an interchangeable manner. Open coding is geared towards the researcher remaining as open as possible in the attempt to 'uncover' what is in the data. From the researcher's point of view, this involved thinking about possible emerging themes, topics, issues, addressing students comments or if a student makes a statement about the application. All these issues amalgamated together and lead to the development of Focus Coding. This applies to the researcher who identifies permanent themes and look for associated data fitting under categories of interest e.g. positive and negative technical features, training and support, benefits of the application for the individual student, how the Dyslexic students use TextHelp as well as discussing the need to use this application with other software.

All these headings changed as the data was evaluated. New headings emerged while other headings amalgamated and on the odd occasion certain other headings disappeared. An important feature used extensively by the researcher in the gathering and collecting of this data was Triangulation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000: 112) define this term as *'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour'*. Questionnaires do

not have much power in terms of findings and data when one is dealing with a small number of subjects for a research project. Therefore, the methods of observations and interviews were also used in conjunction with the technique of questionnaires.

Key Findings

As already outlined, this project was aimed at Third level Dyslexic students to investigate the effectiveness of the Text to Speech application TextHelp. The researcher designed one questionnaire specifically targeting a number of themes and questions about the application. The questions focused upon a number of issues such as how often the students used the program in addition to obtaining their opinions about the software in terms of it being a benefit / barrier to their area of study. Issues focusing on the layout of the buttons and icons of the application were examined in conjunction with the students satisfaction about the level of training were investigated.

One particular question was designed in a 'box / table' style which performed an in-depth study of the technical features of TextHelp like the **"Spell Check button, Phonetics facility, Word Prediction, Speech Options, Scan facility and Speech Input facility" etc.** The students were asked to base their answers in terms of **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful, Moderately Useful, Vaguely Useful, Not at all Useful or Never Used".** These answers provided a 'double arrow' feedback. Firstly, it offers the reader a list of possible problems / solutions that Dyslexic students experience with a Text to Speech application which require further addressing. Secondly it also provides the reader with an insight of how the problems experienced with a Text to Speech application work in parallel to everyday difficulties experienced by Dyslexic students. For example, a person who has problems with spelling and grammar may also encounter the same problems when typing and therefore has to depend on the spelling and grammar facilities in TextHelp. At the moment, 9 Dyslexic students have participated in this project and the following results provide an overview of their perspectives and beliefs about TextHelp. They are categorised into positive / negative commentary as well as positive / negative technical features and are presented as follows:

When the students were asked to indicate **"how often they used TextHelp outside of the Assistive Technology course",** $\frac{1}{9}$ Dyslexic students indicated **"they never used it",** $\frac{3}{9}$ indicated **"Occasionally",** $\frac{4}{9}$ indicated **"Often"** and $\frac{1}{9}$ indicated **"Constantly".**

When the students were asked to indicate their views about the **"general layout of TextHelp"** in terms of its **"icons and buttons, menu options and sequence of commands",** $\frac{8}{9}$ Dyslexic students indicated they **"Strongly Agreed or Agreed"** that the **"icons and buttons were well laid out",** $\frac{7}{9}$ indicated they **"Strongly Agreed or Agreed"**, that **"the icons and buttons are easy to understand".** For example Conor (10/05/2006) makes the recommendation

to "Brighten up" the icons and other facilities to make it less labour intensive. He also recommends a support package to take you through the program step by step"

$\frac{7}{9}$ students indicated they **"Strongly Agreed or Agreed"** that the **"menu options are easy to follow"** and finally $\frac{5}{9}$ Dyslexic students indicated they **"Strongly Agreed to Agreed"** that the **"sequence of commands for each button follow a logical pattern".** No personal commentary was provided about these features.

For example, Tony (Interview, 22/03/2006) states that "he likes the Icons and Sound within TextHelp. He also likes the Word Prediction facility – saves time and hassle from going through the dictionaries in TextHelp". Conor (Interview, 10/05/2006) says "the software has made it easier on my eyes so that I don't have to keep looking at the screen – only had to listen". Sinead (Interview, 24/05/2006) says "she likes the layout of the buttons and menu options". At the same time, Paul (Interview, 15/11/2006) indicates "that he finds the icons are very good visually for the tasks they do, but when you click on the drop down arrow, it offers more facilities and options than what you think".

When the students were asked to indicate whether **"they enjoyed using TextHelp",** $\frac{8}{9}$ Dyslexic students indicated they **"Strongly Agreed or Agreed"** to really enjoying using the application with $\frac{7}{9}$ students claiming **"they gained great benefit from using the application.** For example, Conor (Interview, 10/05/2006) states "his main interest in TextHelp is the ability to read out text to me so I could follow it as well as finding it to be a very useful tool for essays and spotting mistakes in it". He also says "he liked the idea of loading items from memory key to computer e.g. loading a Physics file and being able to hear it through TextHelp". Paul (Interview, 17/05/06) claims "if he did not have software, he would not be able to write in simple language". He has more confidence since using the software and it means a "Better way of expressing yourself" He only used the Word Prediction: Major impact in his life to write essays and projects. He found the dictionary quite good and says "I wouldn't like to be without TextHelp". Sinead (Interview, 24/05/06) says "she likes TextHelp. If she hired out a book from the library, she would have to scan it and use TextHelp to read it back. It makes her life easier and feels she would be lost without it. She will definitely continue using it. She feels "it's efficient" and believes her disability is not "restricting" her as much, since she started using TextHelp.

Following on from that, the students were asked to indicate **"whether they intended to keep TextHelp on their own computer".** $\frac{9}{9}$ Dyslexic students said they **"Strongly Agreed or Agreed"** and $\frac{9}{9}$ also indicated **"they would continue using TextHelp".** Even though no specific commentary has been given about these features a number of students' comments can easily support these statements. For example, Paul (Questionnaire, 23/05/2006) states "if he did not have the software, he would not be able to write in simple language".

"It gives me more confidence with written documents". He also says "I wouldn't like to be without TextHelp". John (Questionnaire, 22/11/2006) says "it makes life easier when reading documents".

When the students were asked to indicate their satisfaction with **"the quality of training",** ⅗ Dyslexic students stated they **"Agreed / Strongly agreed"** with this statement. For example, Sinead (Interview, 24/05/2006) states "she liked the training programme. She also liked the one to one tuition". Conor (Interview, 10/05/2006) felt "he was well trained in the use of the software and hardware". He found the A.T. training "A1 – Has helped me considerably with my studies". He also "found the notes very explanatory and helpful throughout the training and says "Pity I didn't have it since starting college". Possibly one of the most important comments was made by Robert (Interview, 24/05/2006) who says "he loved the one to one tuition format". He says "If there is more than one person talking, I don't have the same attention span/interest". He says "The bigger the group the less interest Ill have in the topic". He loves the building systems/plans to use the information which I'm teaching to help him. "Once I get the information, I can work on my own and this allows me to build on my own model of work (Robert, Interview, 24/05/2006)

When the students were asked **"whether they were satisfied with the length of the training course",** ⅗ Dyslexic students indicated they **"Strongly Agreed or Agreed"** with this statement. A number of students' comments can validate this statement. For example, Ann (Interview, 25/10/2006) says "she found the notes quite helpful" and also indicates (Ann, Interview, 08/11/2006) she liked the Assistive Technology lessons. She liked the detailed notes because they had pictures to support the information. As she says "you can see what you are doing". Owen (Interview, 22/11/2006) states "he found the notes and pictures 'spot-on' because he has pictures to explain the text". He states "he found the lessons quite straightforward and easy to understand". Alan (Interview, 17/05/2006) "finds the software very frustrating, but since the training, he feels a little more confident". He felt "the Assistive Technology training was definitely a big help and was "extremely happy" with the Assistive Technology training course".

The only "double barrelled" positive / negative comment became apparent when the students were asked to indicate **"if they continue to use TextHelp, they will need on going support".** From the findings, ⅗ Dyslexic students indicated they **"Disagreed / Strongly Disagreed"** with this statement. For example, Robert (Interview, 15/03/2006) says "he is willing to take down notes of other lessons and study them by himself". Eddie (Interview, 15/03/2006) states "he is willing to take notes from other lessons and study them by himself".

The final part of the project concludes with a summary of the most popular and frustrating technical features of TextHelp. When the students were asked to indicate the usefulness of the **"Spell Check button",** ⅗ Dyslexic students found
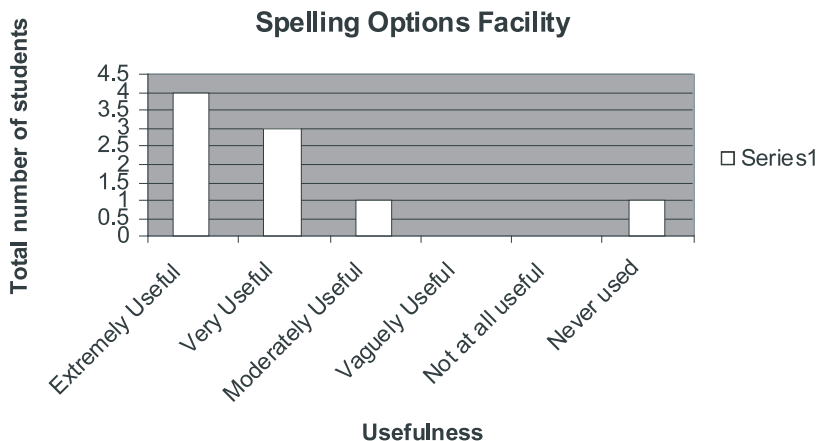
it to be **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** For example, Deirdre (Questionnaire, 10/05/2006) claims the most helpful facility within TextHelp which helps her to overcome her difficulties is the: Spell Check and Voice Reading of it. She says "I often will write and notice no problem with the text, even after rereading it myself. The voice reading of it was extremely beneficial".

Other helpful facilities include: Deirdre makes the comment that the "Predictive Text is very helpful, because I often would be unsure of spelling". Paddy (Interview, 11/10/2006) states he just likes the "Spell Checker" buttons. The subsequent graph presents an outline of the usefulness of the following technical feature:

Spell Check button
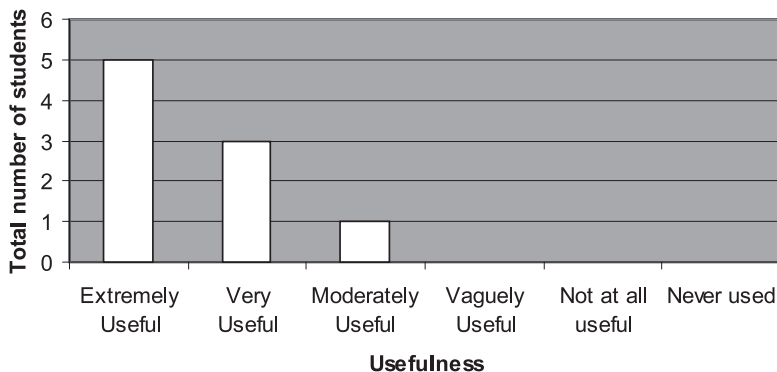

When the Dyslexic pupils were asked to indicate the usefulness of the **"Spelling Options facility",** % students found this to be **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** No personal commentary was provided by any student about this facility. The subsequent graph presents an outline of the usefulness of the following technical feature:

Spelling Options Facility

When the students were asked to indicate the usefulness of the **"Word Prediction facility"**, $\frac{8}{9}$ students found this facility to be **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** For example, Paul (Interview, 17/05/2006) states "it has had a major impact in my life to write essays and projects". Tony (Interview, 22/03/2006) "likes the Word Prediction facility – saves time and hassle from going through the dictionaries in TextHelp". Ann (Interview, 08/11/2006) also stated "she liked the Word Prediction facility". The subsequent graph presents an outline of the usefulness of the following technical feature:

Word Prediction Facility
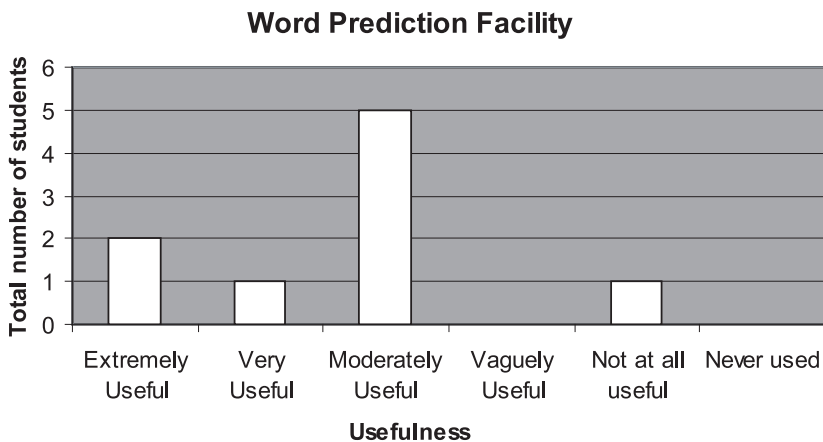
The next technical feature examined was the **"Dictionary Definitions facility".** From the findings in the questionnaire, $\frac{8}{9}$ students found this facility to be **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** No personal commentary was provided about this feature. The next technical feature examined was the **"Word Wizard function".** From the findings outlined below, $\frac{7}{9}$ students found this feature to be **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** Ann (Questionnaire, 08/11/2006) states they are "handy for finding out different words and meanings". Stephen (Interview, 18/10/2006) says he "is quite impressed with the Word Wizard facility" and says "that TextHelp looks quite simple". Paul (Interview, 15/11/2006) states he only used the Word Wizard and Word Prediction facility. He states "that he finds it better for essay writing to have a number of words rather than using the same word".

When the students were asked to indicate the usefulness of the **"Play, Pause, Forward and Rewind"** buttons, $\frac{8}{9}$ students indicated **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** For example, Timmy (Interview, 22/03/2006) says "he likes the TextHelp software. He also likes the Play button as well as the layout of all the buttons". Owen (Questionnaire,

22/11/2006) states "that the most helpful facility within TextHelp which helps me to overcome my difficulties is the Pronunciation, Play, Pause, Forward, Rewind buttons". He says "he is a slow reader and therefore it is easier to listen to the text, rather than having to read on the screen". Paul (Interview, 15/11/2006) states "he likes the Play, Pause, Forward or Rewind buttons". The subsequent graph presents an outline of the usefulness of the following technical feature:

Play, Pause, Forward and Rewind buttons
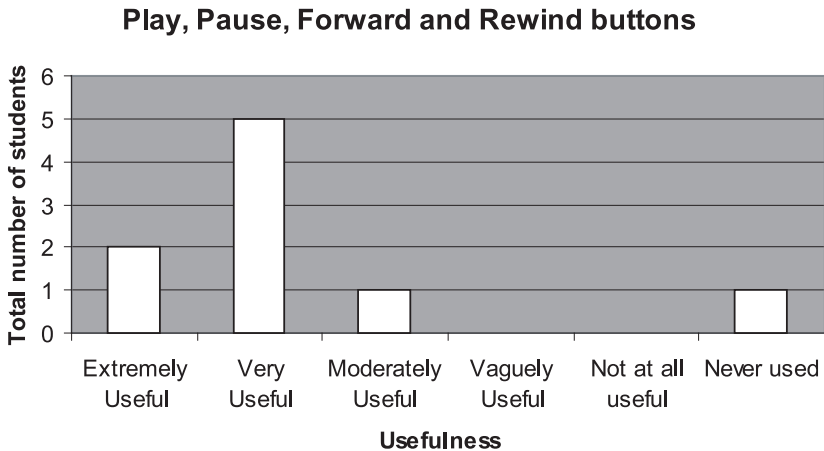
When the students were asked to indicate the usefulness of the **"Speech Input facility",** % students indicated **"Extremely Useful, Very Useful or Moderately Useful".** For example, Robert (Questionnaire, 24/05/2006) claims "the most helpful facility within TextHelp which helps him to overcome his difficulties is the Speech facility. He says "When I am speaking, it is quicker to use. If I type, I loose my train of thought. For my problem, typing involves typing and thinking working parallel". Paul (Questionnaire, 15/11/2006) states "other helpful facilities which help me with my difficulties include the Speech Maker". John (Questionnaire, 22/11/2006) states "the Speech input facility is another thing that helps me to overcome my difficulties.

An interesting difficulty arising from using the TextHelp program was the entire **"Speech facility".** For example Sinead (Interview 08/03/2006) says "the software has a crazy voice. Therefore the voice speaks very fast in the software". Sinead (Interview, 24/05/06) also says "she would like to improve the voice facility". Conor (Interview, 10/05/2006) states the speech was very "Stop/Go", "High/Low" pitch. Speech aspect needs time to develop fully to full potential. Felt that with one paragraph, if he wrote out an essay and used the speech facility to dictate it, this would actually stop at a particular paragraph. The speech facility might re-read the same text again. Therefore the speech facility needs further improvement". Robert (Interview, 24/05/2006) says "the computer voice doesn't read naturally". Paul (Questionnaire,

15/11/2006) claims the most frustrating aspect of TextHelp is the Speech facility. He says he "was missing drivers from the laptop and it did not function correctly".

Other negative features which emerged from the TextHelp results was the **"Word Prediction facility".** From the findings in the Questionnaires and Interviews, $\frac{2}{9}$ students indicated some degree of difficulty with it. Paul (Questionnaire, 23/05/2006) claims "the most frustrating aspect of TextHelp is the Word Prediction Window. He says when you are typing and the word prediction window is in your way and you move it, it can take on a life of its own and when you turn it off, you have to restart TextHelp completely in order to get it going again". John (Interview, 15/11/2006) indicates "that he could type quicker without using the Word Prediction and Word Wizard facility. He claims the Word Prediction facility is only ok for spelling".

The last negative technical feature that emerged when using TextHelp was the **"Spell Check".** Alan (Interview, 17/05/2006) claims the "Spell check just doesn't work for me" – doesn't pick up what I'm saying" in the V.R.S." The student believes the "Spell Check is suitable for those that are not Dyslexic". Robert (Interview, 15/03/2006) also claims "you need to get use to the Spell Check".

Conclusion

From the findings outlined above it becomes apparent that a number of positive / negative views emerge about Assistive Technology Training as well as positive and negative technical features of TextHelp. Depending on the degree of the student's difficulty and level of competency with Information technology, the majority of Dyslexic students only require 3 - 4 Assistive Technology lessons. The Assistive Technology handouts designed about TextHelp should include as many picture / snapshots as possible for easier understanding and readability. Dyslexic students only use 10 specific technical features, outlined as follows: **"Spell Check button, Spelling Options facility, Automatic Corrections facility, Word Prediction facility, Dictionary definitions facility, Word Wizard function, Alternative text facility provided for each button, Play/Pause/Forward/Rewind buttons, Voiceover facility and the Speech Input button".**

The negative technical features which require further improvement are the **"Fact Folder, Scanner, Speech Playback facility and Teaching new vocabulary to the Prediction system".** These difficulties are based on the complexity of their operation. Future improvements could be made in terms of providing more icons / picture recognition e.g. Conor (Questionnaire, 16/02/2006) who says "there is too much text, with not enough picture recognition". The following table summarises the interest, usefulness and general opinion about TextHelp and is presented as follows:

Excellent	3 / 9
Very Good	4 / 9
Good	2 / 9
Fair	0 / 9
Poor	0 / 9

In conclusion, from the findings presented in the questionnaires, observations and interviews, $\frac{9}{9}$ Dyslexic students found TextHelp to be either **"Excellent, Very Good, or Good"** which indicates a high usage of this application. Overall, TextHelp was found by these students to be a useful program but at the same time it does not solve all the problems for Dyslexic pupils at Third level. On the contrary, if the Dyslexic students were without this application they would be lost in this I.T. dominated world. It must be constantly kept in mind that additional improvements can be made to address further difficulties for the Dyslexic pupil and as Paul (Interview, 15/11/2006) makes the comment *"it is a piece of software designed by programmers for programmers"*.

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JOHN PHAYER

John Phayer carried out this post-grad research as a Masters student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and he is researching the different types of Assistive Technology software which Dyslexic students use at Third Level. His primary focus of study is researching the Text to Speech application called TextHelp. He is performing an in-depth study of the program's different features as well as examining students' opinions about the software.

Emotional Literacy in Primary School – An Holistic Approach

Margaret Egan

Introduction

> There are many problems facing society and education is being
> called upon to help solve them
>
> (Matthews, 2006: 11)

Children are living in a society experiencing great change. In the past emotional development occurred incidentally and naturally within trusting relationships and nurturing environments. Such contexts have been scarred by recent high profile cases in national and international media (Matthew, 2006: Visser, 2005). There is growing evidence that aggression in children is on the increase (Webster-Stratton, 1999; Killick, 2006). Researchers suggest that the inclusion of students with behavioural difficulties in regular classes in mainstream schools present the biggest current challenge to teachers and will continue to do so into the future (DfEE, 1997;Long & Fogell, 1999; Visser, 2005; INTO, 2002 & 2004; O'Regan, 2002, 2005; Reif 2005; ILSA, 2005; Westwood, 2003 & 2007;).

With current policy focusing on inclusion (Fuch & Fuch 1994; UNESCO, 1994; Government of Ireland, Education Act, 1998; Ainscow, 1999; Government of Ireland, Education (Welfare) Act, 2000; Lane & Wehby 2002; Lane, 2004; Visser 2005; Westwood 2003, 2007; Government of Ireland, Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004) teachers are asked to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse school population. Furthermore, there is increased emphasis on providing proactive support rather than reactive strategies (DES, 1990; O'Brien, 1998: Martin, 1997, 2006; Mittler, 2000; Netzel & Eber, 2003; INTO, 2004; Mosley & Sonnet, 2005; Poulou, 2005). Therefore, schools and their communities have become important contexts for addressing many and diverse student needs.

Approaches that focus on prevention are fundamental within an overall approach to behaviour according to national and international research (Viser, 2005; INTO, 2004). One proactive approach to working with all children, in particular those experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), is based on the concept of Emotional Intelligence (Solovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Ashforth, 2001; Matthews, *et al.*, 2002). Emotional Intelligence can be defined as:

*a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own
and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this
information to guide one's thinking and actions*

(Solovey & Mayer, 1990: 189).

These authors conclude that although emotional intelligence is a fairly new
phenomenon in the education field, there is great potential for its use in
promoting children's success and is essential in directing children's emotional
education.

Research on Emotional Intelligence dates back to Thorndike (1920) and the
famous Hawthorne Studies in the late 1920s. Ginnott (1972; 2003), a pioneer
in the area of effective communication between children and adults emphasised
the value of parents and teachers attending to the *feelings* of children, helping
them to learn, to grow and to change. However, the popularisation of this
notion began with Howard Gardner (1983, 1989, 1993) and his development
of the Theory of Multiple Intelligence, which includes *interpersonal* and
intrapersonal intelligences, linking directly into the emotions of self and others.
Gardner states that no intelligence is more important than these for success and
well-being. He stresses the importance of training children in the personal
intelligences in school.

The concept of Emotional Intelligence, introduced by Salovey & Mayer in the
early 1990s was made popular by Daniel Goleman (1995) with the publication
of his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. His
framework for educators presents a similar set of skills to those of Salovey and
Mayer (1990) (See Table 1 for summary). These skills are divided into two
subgroups: Personal Competences and Social Competences:

Teaching children the skills necessary to become emotionally intelligent is
referred to in the field of education as Emotional Literacy.
Goleman (1996) believes that

*'since emotional skills can only be learned through the interaction with other
children and adults, it is incumbent upon schools to teach emotional skills
(Emotional Literacy) to promote Emotional Intelligence'*

Emotional Literacy Defined

The term 'Emotional Literacy' is very recent and is used to describe the
development of emotional intelligence. Being emotionally literate suggests
having acquired the necessary skills to be emotionally intelligent. Some aspects
of emotional literacy relate to literacy, as it is normally understood in reading,
decoding the letters and words on a page and using a variety of strategies in
order to read them and comprehend them:

In much the same way, the first task of the emotionally literate person is to be able to decode signs and symbols – psychological signs within ourselves and also the facial expressions, other non-verbal aspects of communication and the general ethos of interpersonal situations

(Southampton Psychological Service, 2003: 3).

Table 1: Goleman's framework of Emotional Intelligence (Egan, 2005)

A Framework of Emotional Intelligence

Personal Competence: These competencies determine how we manage ourselves	
1. •SELF-AWARENESS – *Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions.*	
Emotional Awareness:	Recognising one's emotions and their effects
Accurate Self-Assessment:	Knowing one's strengths and limits
Self Confidence:	A Strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities
2. •Self-regulation – *Managing one's internal state, impulses and resources*	
Self-Control:	Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check
Trustworthiness:	Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity
Conscientiousness:	Taking responsibility for personal performance
Adaptability:	Flexibility in handling change
Innovation:	Being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches and new information
3. •Motivation – *Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals.*	
Achievement drive:	Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence
Commitment:	Aligning with the goals of the group or organization
Initiative:	Readiness to act on opportunities
Optimism:	Persistence in pursuing goals obstacles and setbacks.
Social competence: These competencies determine how we handle relationships	
4. Empathy – Awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns	
Understanding and Sensing others'	Feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns
Developing / Sensing others'	Development needs and bolstering their abilities
Service orientation:	Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs
Leveraging Diversity:	Cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people
Political Awareness:	Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships
5. Social Skills – *Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others*	
Influence:	Wielding effective tactics for persuasion
Communication:	Listening openly and sending convincing messages
Conflict management:	Negotiating and resolving disagreement
Leadership:	Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups
Change Catalyst:	Initiating or managing change
Building Bonds:	Nurturing instrumental relationships
Collaboration and co-operation:	Working with others towards shared goals
Team capabilities:	Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals

Goleman (1995: 287) asks 'shouldn't we be teaching these most essential skills for life to every child?' He highlights the fact that 'despite high interest in Emotional Literacy among some educators, these courses are as yet rare; most teachers, principals, and parents simply do not know they exist' (Goleman 1995: 287).

A decade later there is increasing international evidence of interest in developing children's emotional literacy. By 1997, at least twenty two programmes had been tested in the US, with some programmes emphasising emotional literacy throughout the school's entire curriculum (Elias, et al., 1997 Stone McCowen, *et. al* 1998). The Rhode Island State Government created a plan calling for an integration of emotional learning in its social, health and education programmes (Rhode Island Emotional Competency Partnership, 1998). The concept has recently been absorbed into government education policy in Britain under the label of social, emotional and behavioural skills (Department for Education and Skills, DfES, 2005). A recent programme from the DFES states that:

> 'Social, emotional and behavioural skills underlie almost every aspect of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people. They are fundamental to school improvement'.
>
> (Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning, DfES, 2005)

In 1998, Southampton Education Authority assigned emotional literacy the same level of importance as 'ordinary literacy'. Southampton was the first city in the world to adopt a citywide strategy to promote emotional literacy in and beyond education, specifically identifying it among the top three priorities in its Strategic Development Plan (Southampton City Council, 2003). Several pioneering initiative are currently taking place all over Britain under the initiative of the DfES and influenced by Goleman's work. In Ireland there is increasing recognition of the value emotional literacy. A recent Bí Folláin Newsletter announced that:

> 'Emotional literacy is not aimed at under-performing, disruptive students and/or disaffected students. It has been shown to be a useful tool in that it makes the inclusion of every child easier
>
> (Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College & Health Service Executive, Mid West Region & 2006)

Emotional Literacy Applied
Westwood (2007) highlights three conditions which he considers essential to learn social and emotional skills: Opportunity, Continuity and Support. The rest of this article focuses on such provision. It presents an application of the concept of Emotional Literacy in the form of a school-wide emotional literacy programme developed and evaluated as part of an action research project by the author (Egan, 2005).

The process was carried out in a Boys' Primary School in Co. Clare, which was designated disadvantaged under the government incentive 'Giving Children an Even Break' (DES, 2001). The school population consisted of one hundred boys, seven teachers, two resource teachers and five mainstream teachers, including the principal. There were three SNAs and a caretaker.

The focus of this article is not to present the specific findings of the study (Egan, 2005) undertaken within this individual research context, but rather, to outline the implementation model for Emotional Literacy. The steps presented may be used as a model for further schools wishing to adopt and develop emotional literacy within their own educational environments. The implementation process is now described.

Planning

The programme was introduced as a proactive approach to behaviour management. The concept of Emotional Literacy was used as a vehicle to encourage prosocial behaviour and to enhance a positive, nurturing school culture and climate within an increasingly diverse school population. Emotional literacy levels, established by pre-intervention standardised checklists (Southampton City Council, 2003) for the school's student population highlighted needs. The SPHE curriculum (NCCA, 1999) was prioritised in the school to teach emotional literacy.

The planning process took place over a three-month period prior to intervention. An implementation team was established. It consisted of two mainstream teachers (teaching Infants and Middle classes), two resource teachers (one of whom is the researcher), a parent from the Parents Association and the school principal. The team met formally every week from September 2004 – June 2005 to plan, review and monitor progress. Initially resources were identified and accumulated.

Resources

For each emotion to be studied a list of pedagogical resources was adopted. For example, when *Angry* was the focus emotion resources from the "Feelings" module in the Walk Tall Programme (DES, 1999) and extracts from the 'Emotional Literacy Curriculum' (Rae, 1998) were adapted by the planning team to meet the needs of the unique school context, e.g. template for the Stoplight Strategy

The planning team adopted the advice from the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) Guidelines (2001/02) which emphasise that SPHE lessons can be covered in a cross-curricular way or through discrete time. The recommended approach insists upon a strategy that is clearly linked to content objectives and that the children are actively engaged.

The Basic Steps

The emotional literacy programme focused on the exploration of one emotion, per week e.g. *Happy, Sad, Loved, Angry, and Surprised*. The lessons were designed to meet the following objectives:

Objectives

- To develop the emotional vocabulary of the students to enable them to label feelings

- To improve the child's self-awareness and ability to express feelings appropriately

- To develop children's ability to recognise the feelings of others

- To further increase empathy for others

- To increase awareness of the impact of personal feelings and behaviours on others

- To develop self-control strategies

- To encourage children to problem solve within a group and at a personal level

- To empower children to devise action plans to deal with negative feelings at an interpersonal and intrapersonal level

- To devise and implement school rules based on these action plans

- The following steps outline the implementation process over one week.

Monday

An emotion of the week was agreed upon by all staff members e.g. *Happy, Sad, Loved, Angry*. Each alternative week a negative feeling was explored e.g. *Angry*. Resources were decided upon chosen from the full range of sources identified in the planning phase.

Preparatory lessons are undertaken with all students with SEN in the school. This pre teaching, at small group level, took place in the resource room with the two resource teachers. Students with disabilities and learning problems frequently do best in tightly structured programmes where direct teaching methods and guided practice are employed.

The students were pre taught the language around the emotion, e.g. *Angry*. They were asked to recognise the feeling from their own facial expression using a mirror. They were coached to recognise the feeling in others within the group. This involved significant role play on the part of the students and the teacher. Children were invited to relate a time when they personally experienced being *Angry*. Occasionally, it was necessary for the teacher to guide the story telling process through effective use of verbal prompts and appropriate questioning.

The child was thanked for sharing his personal experience. The children were then provided with discrete time to represent this scenario through a mode of choice, e.g, art, use of ICT, poster, respecting individual learning styles. Each student with SEN kept a '*Feelings Diary*' based on these sessions. This diary was shared between home and school based on the student's decision to share.

Tuesday

All teachers, students, the SNA and caretaker assembled in the general purpose hall and students were organised into 18 circle teams. Each team consisted of one member from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Initially, it was critical that teachers modelled the specific skills required in circle meetings to ensure effective participation.

From direct experience the staff was aware that some children experienced greater difficulty than others with activities such as circle time and co-operative learning. This was essential as such critical observations reinforced the value of the Monday preparatory lessons for children with SEN. They had gained vital prior knowledge to ensure effective participation at group level during the Tuesday sessions. .

The teachers assumed the role of facilitators during the hour long Tuesday Assemblies. The role of facilitator rotated among the seven teachers in the school over the twenty weeks of the study. It was critical that the programme was viewed by all participants as the responsibility of the whole school, all members held ownership.

The purpose of the meeting was emphasised initially. Each team formed a circle so all members maintain eye contact. A team leader was democratically chosen, a scribe was elected and a spokesperson nominated to report back to the whole assembly on an agreed experience which resulted in the emotion of the week. The emotion was introduced by the facilitator and it was clearly defined using resources from Rae's Emotional Literacy Curriculum (1997). A story, which focused upon this defined emotion, was read to the whole assembly. Effective delivery of the story was critical as the student body needed to engage in active listening, reflection and use of imagination to develop ideas and devise effective solutions subsequently.

Each group was then given ten minutes to discuss events in their own lives that aroused this feeling. The group leader thanked each member for their contribution. Events were recorded by the *scribe* on a graphically designed poster under the following headings:

- When do I feel angry?

- How does it feel?

- Is it a comfortable or uncomfortable feeling?

- What does it make me feel like doing?

- Do I need to help myself when I feel like this?

- What kind of help?

- Who else can help me?

- Illustrate an angry face (A space is provided) (Adapted from Rae, 1998).

The *spokesperson* from each group reported to the assembly on the agreed scenario of the group. The individual who volunteered this specific contribution to his group remained anonymous. This anonymity respected the confidentiality and democracy of each group. Staff acknowledged positively the contribution of each group.

For positive emotions, this completed the work of the Tuesday session. All reporting templates were collected from each group. These contributions were further analysed by the planning team as part of the review process.

Negative Emotions – Tuesday Part II

Each alternative week a negative emotion was explored e.g. *Angry*. After the reporting session of the experiences that aroused an *Angry* response, students were directly taught to use the Stoplight Strategy (Goleman, 1995) to deal with this emotion. A six step Stoplight Strategy poster was used as a visual support to explicitly teach this aspect of the lesson. The stepped process was clearly explained by the facilitating teacher. Subsequently, a similar poster size template was distributed to all eighteen student groups. The poster (Rae, 1998) presented the following sequence of action:

Red Light	1.	Stop, Calm down, and think before you act
Yellow Light	2.	Say the problem
	3.	What is the feeling?
	4.	Think and list some solutions
	5.	Think ahead of the consequences
Green Light	6.	Go ahead and try the best plan.

When reporting back to the full assembly, a similar reporting process as described in part one was undertaken for a second time. On this occasion the reporter recalled, the *problem*, the *feeling*, and the most effective *Best Plan*, which had been democratically nominated.

These *Best Plans* were subsequently synthesised into a R*ule of the Week*. Four weekly rules were further synthesised into a R*ule of the Month*. Ultimately, these *'Best Plans'* formulated three final rules for overall school behaviour, which students could now understand having worked through the process. The students were *the authors* of these *school rules*. They experienced ownership. This aspect of the overall process was critical to success. The *Three Rs* effectively realised the broad aims of the SPHE Curriculum (NCCA, 1999):

l. Respect for self

2. Respect for others

3. Respect for the environment

Wednesday

Follow-up sessions were held within each classroom to provide the conditions that must be present to learn social and emotional skills, Opportunity, Continuity and Support. The importance of opportunity for students to engage in discussion with their own peers, within the smaller context of their classroom, was acknowledged by the planning team. The 30 minute in-class sessions provided discrete time for reinforcement and practice of the developing skills, such as a stepped approach to problem-solving (Stoplight Strategy).

All aspects of the curriculum were employed in these classroom sessions. The emphasis was on a thematic, child-centred approach to the curriculum to ensure transfer of skills and generalisation within a natural setting.

It is important to note that significant issues arising out of this Emotional Literacy programme were shared with parents. Such forums may produce evidence for consultation with other professional outside agencies. This did not arise in the pilot study. However, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist assigned to the school was supportive of the programme but was not a participant.

In conclusion, findings from the pilot study provide evidence that Emotional Literacy levels can be raised. The study does present a direct correlation between socially appropriate behaviour and emotional literacy levels, which supports Goleman's claim (Goleman, 1995). The concept of emotional literacy enriched the whole school culture and climate.

Conclusion

Karol Defalco, writing an educator's commentary in the book entitled *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence* (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997: 33), remarks that 'some educators implement emotional competency lessons *in response* to a problem'. This study viewed the concept of emotional literacy as *a proactive approach* to behaviour management.

The introduction of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum (NCCA, 1999, 2002) in Ireland has provided discrete time, which can be used to facilitate emotional literacy training in line with Goleman's (1995) framework. Many of the skills taught through the SPHE curriculum are central to his framework (See Table 1). SPHE curriculum seeks to promote intrapersonal development by

> *Helping children to recognise, understand and accept themselves as unique individuals…helping the child to set his/her own goals, to be able to manage his/her own behaviour… to build a sense of self-efficacy which in turn can*

> *increase his or her sense of personal control, promote self awareness and*
> *enable self-directed learning*
>
> (NCCA, 1999: 3)

The Irish National Teachers Organisation (2004) cites such skills as critical in the promotion of positive behaviour. Emotional literacy is not an extra programme for Irish teachers to adopt but rather one that can be considered integral to existing curricula. Lessons in emotional literacy became part of overall school interaction in this pilot study which is in keeping with Goleman's experience in the US: 'Some programmes in emotional and social skills take no curriculum or class time but infiltrate their lessons into the very fabric of school life' Goleman, 1995: 272).

Garner (1999: 54) suggests the need for an 'holistic' strategy for dealing with students with behavioural problems that provides a synthesis of all aspects of school life and relates each of them to the needs of pupils with problems. Matthews, 2006, argues that research on holistic development of the child contains little or no discussion on the development of the student's emotional intelligence. Emotional literacy concerns itself with the education of the whole person. The affective aspect of development may have been overlooked in the past by emphasis on attainment:

> *There is an increasing recognition in education, and indeed beyond that,*
> *into business and commerce, that the affective domain has been seriously*
> *overlooked. All the indicators are that emotional literacy is a significant*
> *contributor to success as measured on a whole range of criteria*
>
> (Sharp, 2003: 1).

The Emotional Literacy programme made clear that all emotions are worthy, happy or sad, angry or excited. The process emphasised that it is the way in which we deal with these emotions that is critical:

> *Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right*
> *person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in*
> *the right way – this is not easy*
>
> (Aristotle, The Nicomacheam Ethics)

Consequently, children not only need to label their feelings but they do need to know how to act on them appropriately. According to Aristotle, *self-awareness is the ability to 'know thyself'*. Goleman (1995) considers it one of the crucial elements of his framework. Impulsiveness, according to the research, is associated with lack of reflectiveness, which in turn is associated with a lack of emotional *self-awareness* and *self-regulation* (Cooper & O'Regan, 1999). Goldstein, (2005), states that 'children with a diagnosis of ADHD possess the self-regulation or self-control of children approximately two thirds of their chronological age'. Grossman (2005) and Fitzgerald (2005, pers. comm.) agree

that students with SEN have difficulties with regard to self-awareness and consequently self- regulation. Extant research emphasises that emotional development is a priority learning need for students with SEN who characteristically have emotional deficits (Nabuzoka & Smith, 1995). Adrian Faupel, in his extensive research in the UK with regard to Anger Management, concurs with the centrality of emotional literacy in one's ability to self regulate (Faupel, 1998). He goes on to stress the importance of a proactive approach by saying that 'angry children disrupt the learning of other children as well as their own. Children learn best in a secure and fairly predictable environment'. Developing social and emotional competencies can create such environments according to evidence from the pilot study.

The Principal, originally felt challenged by the process of the whole school devising and implementing a programme of emotional literacy but was open to the trial. It was critical that the whole school was involved, but he was a reluctant participant initially. Goleman (1995: 279) discovered from his research that

> *…many teachers may be reluctant at the outset to tackle a topic that seems so foreign to their training and routines, there is evidence that once they try it, most will be pleased rather than put off.*

In accordance with this research, a significant finding from this pilot study was the change in attitude of the Principal. He became enthused by the process, seeing endless potential for future development in emotional competencies. The election of a Student Council was explored as an outcome because natural leaders had presented in the democratic process of the whole school circle meetings. Roles of Carer, Communicator, Negotiator, and 'Guide on the Side' became apparent over the twenty-week period. While such a student body has not been established, as yet, the skills learned through engagement in the programme will enrich the lives of these students as articulated by the Principal to the visiting teacher.

A newly adopted view among the teaching staff as a result of the project created a balance between the importance of teaching emotional and social skills and teaching the skills to develop literacy as traditionally understood in reading and writing. Emotional literacy was taught like other literacy skills, sequentially and as part of a planned and comprehensive programme through modelling, practice, generalisation and reward. Emotional literacy was taught to every child and differentiation was required for those with particular needs.

Emotional Literacy can help schools to help children in so many ways. Positive, measurable outcomes were realised in this study. Classrooms where emotional literacy is taught and practiced have been shown to create a culture and climate that supports civility and respect according to Elias *et al.* (1997). Schools have an important role to play in the development of emotional competence

alongside that of parents and the child's wider social network (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Ashforth, 2001; Cohen, 2001; Matthews, 2006). Goleman believes that

> *As family life no longer offers growing numbers of children a sure start in life, schools are the one place that communities can hope to correct deficiencies in emotional and social competence.*

He goes on to emphasise the value of the teacher in the learning process by stating that 'there is perhaps no area where the quality of the teacher matters so much, since the teacher's handling of the class is itself a model' (Goleman, 1995: 279).

In Ireland there is a growing belief that:

'Expectations of schools are now higher than they ever have been: Schools are expected to help all children succeed and behave well. When children master the skills associated with social and emotional learning they are more likely to succeed in school and in life'

(CDU & HSE, 2006: i)

The implementation model for Emotional Literacy presented in this article may help schools to help all children to succeed and behave well.

> *'It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because we can only do a little – Do what you can'   (Smith, S.)*

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Old Friends are Best: (In Praise of Learning Laboratories)

Jerry Mc Carthy

The most famous and successful teachers and communicators of the past have been celebrated and recorded by history. Aesop, Archimedes, Solomon, Virgil, Plato, Froebel, Tillich, Solzhenitsyn and Montessori are names that immediately come to mind. I suspect that the search for best methods and models of teaching and communicating began soon after the emergence of the first teachers, at the genesis of civilisation, and has preoccupied and engaged successive generations of the teaching fraternity since then. Intermittently, this pedagogical odyssey and search has meandered into the swampy lowlands of the sister disciplines of psychology, anthropology, sociology and social science. Many of these investigations resulted in the construction of some new theory or model of teaching and learning, which was initially heralded, fêted and promulgated as the definitive and consummate model to replace and surpass all existing theses. However, when tested in the cauldron of classroom dynamics, most of these theories have been exposed as being incomplete, ill-informed, one-dimensional and flawed. Consequently over time, many learning and teaching theories have fallen from grace and have been discarded. The research odyssey would appear to have intensified and gained momentum in the last two decades, in response to the emergence of the myriad of complexities and challenges posed by the modern heterogeneous classroom. The intensity, pace and fervour of contemporary educational research has resulted in the emergence of the most comprehensive, insightful and holistic thesis of learning developed and constructed to date, namely the thesis of constructivism.

Constructivism is based on the belief that knowledge, cognition and comprehension are constructed from within. This thesis states that we are constantly involved in the creation of meaning for ourselves. We have to continuously and systematically interpret and make sense of our world and our experiences. The eye and intellect of the beholder are the conduits through which understanding is imported, constructed, reconstructed and extended. "Understanding" and "cognition" are the root metaphors within the constructivist paradigm. Orton (1994) suggests that the current constructivist paradigm contains an eclectic collection of inter-connected tenets, theses and sub-hypotheses. Each of these sub-hypotheses is grounded in a specific hue and interpretation of the complex dynamics of constructivism. Each edict and sub-hypothesis provides important and complementary insights into how individuals learn and construct meaning. The emergence of the constructivist paradigm began with the seminal research of Bartlett (1932). Bartlett developed the concepts of "schema" and "schemata" within his emergent macro-thesis of

constructivism. He posited that people's interpretation, understanding and remembrance of events are shaped by their expectations or prior knowledge and he suggested that these expectations are stored in memory and presented and arranged cognitively in some sort of schematic framework or tapestry. Bartlett contended that these cognitive frameworks or "schemata" are constantly being adjusted, realigned, deconstructed and reconstructed by the constant stream of incoming stimuli. Cook (1989) describes how each new incoming stimulus becomes assimilated into the existing fabric of schemata. This schematic fabric mutates and adjusts to accommodate the inclusion of the new stimulus and new information.

One of the most valuable insights, that the thesis of constructivism provides, is that students need to be provided with multiple opportunities to construct meaning for themselves. Constructivism infers that, for real learning to occur, the learner needs to be actively engaged in the learning process. Real learning can only take place as a result of the learner's actions and subsequent reflective and cognitive processing. For many reluctant and resistant learners, this means being frequently provided with opportunities to engage with a range of experiential, stimulating and age-appropriate resources. I believe that reading laboratories / learning laboratories (e.g. "S.R.A. Reading Laboratories", "S.R.A. Reading for Understanding" kits, "S.R.A. Mathematical Laboratories", "Ward Lock Reading Workshop" kits and "Ward Lock Reading Workshop Remedial" kit) provide a comprehensive array of graded, differentiated, age-appropriate, developmental, progressive, individualised, investigatory, constructivist and experiential learning opportunities for a wide ability-range of primary and second-level students. Learning laboratories are designed and graded by the levels of difficulty and challenge that they provide for the learner. Learning laboratories provide the teacher with a wide selection of work-cards and assignments, which are arranged in topics and in levels of difficulty. Colour coding is used to indicate the specific level of difficulty of each suite or unit of work-cards. There are usually eight or ten work-cards available at each level of difficulty. The level and gradient of difficulty, contained in any specific learning laboratory, is clearly indicated in the Teacher's Manual and on the cover of the kit (e.g. "1A", "1B", "2A", "2B", "3A", "3B" etc.). Learning laboratories include an initial assessment test to identify the most appropriate entry-point and "starting level" for each student. Learning laboratories enable the students to construct meaning for themselves, at their own rate of learning. For the more able students, there will be rapid progress through the levels, with a large number of the elementary tasks being skipped over and not attempted, while for reluctant and resistant learners, there is a concentration on the core material and on easier learning tasks. Despite their appeal across the ability spectrum of students, I consider that the real value and worth of learning laboratories lies in the way that they can ignite, stimulate and sustain an interest and excitement in learning among the cohort of reluctant and resistant learners in our schools.

Gilbert and Haeften (1988) suggest that reading laboratories, learning laboratories and reading schemes were developed in the seventies as possible solutions to the perceived and anticipated shortage of teachers at that time. This first generation of learning laboratories and reading schemes attained instant popularity and appeal because they were marketed as being student-focused, student-friendly, teacher-proofed, devised by specialists and commercially produced so that they were readily available at reasonable cost. I believe that the effectiveness of learning laboratories has not diminished over time. In the modern classroom, learning laboratories are being used to stimulate independent learning, to provide a menu of individualised learning opportunities for students, to encourage the development of a cadre of self-directed learners and they are widely regarded as an essential component in the construction and creation of differentiated and inclusive learning environments.

The most effective use of learning laboratories in the classroom requires that the teacher assumes and performs new and additional roles. With learning laboratories, the teacher is no longer required to exclusively perform his traditional role-set which included being the "resident expert", "sole provider of information" in the classroom and the singular taskmaster who determines, identifies and explicitly states the learning intention, who continuously structures and monitors the learner's "time-on-task", who arranges, sequences and subdivides the content of the syllabus into "bite-sized pieces" and into specific learning tasks and who evaluates, assesses and provides feedback on the outcomes achieved in the learning. With learning laboratories, the teacher takes on the critical mantle of "manager of learning" (Wain, 1994).

Educational research literature uses a variety of descriptors and labels when referring to learning laboratories: e.g. "resource-based learning", "supported self-study" and "reading laboratories" (Wain 1994). The Kent Mathematics Project ("KMP")(1978) and the Secondary Mathematics Individualised Learning Environment ("SMILE")(1980) were attempts to develop and implement individualised learning schemes and projects on a macro and extended scale. The more-expansive model of "open learning" appears to have had its genesis and roots in the conceptualisation of individualised instruction and in a desire to replicate, in the wider context, the successes achieved through the use of learning laboratories in the classroom. The Wakefield "Open Learning Project" is considered to have been one of the most successful of the "open learning" projects that were planned, developed and implemented. "Open learning" projects are very well funded and provide access to a very comprehensive range of resources including the most modern technological resources. In the Wakefield project, work was not confined to a specific classroom; corridor space and adjacent rooms were used as well. Every classroom contained a selection of the project's resource packs, commercially produced schemes, "enrichment and extension" materials, a library of reference books, computer software, computers and a store of equipment. In the Wakefield project, the "working unit" usually consisted of three or four

students. Each unit worked in a variety of ways. On occasions, the group worked collaboratively and cooperatively. At other times, each member of the group worked independently of his or her peers. Each group regularly reported back, to the entire class, on what they had discovered and learned in their assignments. When an assignment was completed, each member of the group was required and encouraged to reflect on his or her own learning.

The provision of opportunities for students, to engage systematically and regularly with learning laboratories, has, at times, been erroneously critiqued as a "waste of time", "not grounded in the prescribed syllabus" and "not directed exclusively towards the terminal exams". Certainly, providing students with regular and sustained opportunities to work things out for themselves, through their engagement with learning laboratories, requires a considerable investment of time. However, if a level of mastery and competence is acquired, by the students, in a range of subject areas and in key skill domains through this engagement, there can, in fact, be a significant overall net saving of time and effort, through the elimination of the onerous requirement and necessity of having to re-visit, revise and re-teach the same topics and key skills over and over again.

The many benefits and advantages of using learning laboratories in the classroom have been clearly documented and elucidated in educational research literature:

- Learning laboratories offer "an organised, systematic programme that can significantly improve reading skills, study habits and feelings of personal responsibility" (Parker 2000).

- The learning laboratory is "a flexible program that can be easily implemented to fit into a variety of school calendars and schedules"(Parker 2000).

- Best results can be attained by using the programme "over a fairly concentrated period of time instead of spreading it out across the entire school year" (Parker 2000). Parker also contents that "when practice periods are kept close together, there is carry-over learning from one day to the next. When practice periods are too far apart, carry-over is lessened and students tend to forget, not only the information learned, but even the procedure to follow".

- By using learning laboratories, students begin to "learn how to learn". The individualised format of the learning laboratory encourages the student to become a self-directed learner and to assume ownership for, and take control over, his own learning. The student has to regularly "make decisions about what to study and when, about how to find a way through the content of the work and about integrating the topics learned with one another" (Wain 1994). The habit and discipline of private and independent work is developed. "Giving students more responsibility for their learning does not impair their learning" (Wain 1994).

- Learning laboratories provide opportunities for real differentiation to occur. Students can work on the same topic but at different levels (Wain 1994). The differentiated format of the learning laboratory enables different pathways and routes to be taken by different students through the material. The individual needs and existing knowledge, skills and competency levels of the individual student determine and indicate the most appropriate learning route to be taken by the student. Each student follows a unique track through the available material, the choices available at any stage being dependent upon progress made, level of understanding attained, interest, motivation and application. The learning tasks cover a wide range of content and interest areas (Banks 1976).

- The rate and pace, at which each individual pupil is capable of working, "is respected at all times" (Wain 1994).

- Learning laboratories work equally well in mixed ability or in streamed contexts (Wain 1994).

- Many of the learning laboratories, which were developed in the seventies, have been upgraded and redesigned. Some learning laboratories currently provide software to supplement the printed materials (Wain 1994). (e.g. S.R.A. provide "Listening Skills Builder" audiocassettes and audio CDs and "Programme Management and Assessments" CD-ROMs).

- Learning laboratories can encourage extended and in-depth investigation of a topic by directing the student to source and trawl through a wider range of additional and supplementary resources (Wain 1994).

- With learning laboratories, sporadic absences are school are not excessively problematic. "The individualised nature of the work makes it possible for students to easily pick-up on their studies after absence, without the common problem of having to catch-up on missed work" (Wain 1994).

- Formative feedback is available to the student. This formative feedback will suggest and indicate the student's next matrix of tasks and unit of work to be undertaken. The level of success attained at each assignment will determine whether the next prescribed and recommended assignment, on a similar topic, is designed to move the pupil rapidly forward, to provide a steady and incremental progression or to reinforce, recapitulate and consolidate the current work. With learning laboratories, the student's learning is subjected to "a regular feedback mechanism which is used to match the work set to the pupil's stage of development, maturity, aptitude and interests" (Wain 1994).

- With learning laboratories, the student's level of self-esteem and confidence can improve significantly (Eraut et al. 1991).

- The flexible learning framework, that is at the core of learning laboratories, is designed to encourage "new ways of learning" which are critically

important for the "future lives of young people" and for participation in modern society where "knowledge learned at school will certainly not carry them through, unless they have developed the competencies needed to adapt and learn new things" (Department of Employment 1991).

Between September 1998 and May 1999, I undertook an action research investigation (unpublished) to identify the benefits of using the "S.R.A. Reading Laboratory 2B" in my own classroom, in a "disadvantaged school context". The target group was a class of twelve first year students who were provided with opportunities to use this learning laboratory three times each week. This meant that the total contact the target students had with the learning laboratory each week, was one hundred and twenty minutes. The action research project spanned twenty-seven weeks. The following are some of the findings from this action research project:

● Motivation levels were enhanced and improved and more positive attitudes toward learning and reading were observed.

Most learners, particularly resistant and reluctant learners, can easily and quickly become de-motivated if they perceive the curriculum as being dull, boring and far removed from their real-life experiences or if their interpretation of what is expected of them is such that it is without real purpose, too hard and unintelligible. The wide-spectrum and differentiation of learning assignments together with the range and diversification of interesting themes and topics, that are provided in learning laboratories, ensure that there is something for everyone in a S.R.A. learning laboratory! The range and choice of learning laboratories, currently on the market, ensure that every learner is indeed catered for. I am convinced that, with learning laboratories, success in learning, and the creation of enhanced motivation to learn, become inevitable. Rosenholtz (1991) suggests that success becomes the "propagator" of motivation; motivational levels inevitably increase as the student experiences regular, sustained and consistent success in the learning environment.

● The learning laboratory provided a myriad of opportunities for constructivist and experiential learning to occur.

Through sustained engagement with learning laboratories, cognitive and reflective competencies are improved and extended in students. The assignments and learning tasks, that are built-into learning laboratories, require that students have to "think things out" for themselves.

● "Lateral transfer" and "vertical transfer" of learning were facilitated and improved through the use of the learning laboratory.

Vertical transfer is the successful transfer of learning across a range of topics, concepts, skills and themes within a specific subject-area or discipline. The progressive and developmental format, employed in the design of learning

laboratories, ensures that multiple opportunities are provided to the student for vertical transfer to occur. Lateral transfer occurs through the successful osmosis, integration and transportation of generic knowledge and key skills across the curriculum and across subject boundaries. Integrated learning and lateral transfer can also occur when themes, procedures and concepts from the student's prescribed textbooks are revisited in, and reinforced through engagement with, the learning laboratory.

- A multiplicity of learning opportunities was created by the learning laboratory.

Learning laboratories are designed to provide a student with creative learning tasks that are relevant, realistic, rational and real. Learning laboratories cater for visual and kinaesthetic learners and provide opportunities for the development and enhancement of investigative and inquiry skills. Both conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills can be developed through systematic engagement with learning laboratories. Social learning opportunities can also be provided to the students by encouraging them to work in pairs or in small groups.

- Immediacy of feedback on completed assignments was available to students, by referring to the answers section of the learning laboratory.

- The students began to make connections between the themes and topics in the learning laboratory and the content in their prescribed textbooks.

Regular and sustained contact with the learning laboratory made the students aware of the richness and the wealth of learning opportunities that are available to reinforce and supplement the material of the prescribed textbook.

- Success in learning became inevitable.

The introductory assessment test identifies and indicates the student's existing level of understanding, skill and knowledge and pinpoints the most-appropriate entry-point into the programme for that student. The availability of differentiated entry-points ensures that each student begins to work with material that correlates exactly with his current knowledge, competencies and skill levels.

- The individualised nature of the learning laboratory ensured that competitiveness was removed from the learning environment.

- The student was able to control his own pace of learning.

In the past, learning laboratories were sometimes haphazardly purchased by school managements, prior to the appointment of a remedial or learning support teacher and without any thorough investigation being undertaken to identify the learning needs of the target students for whom the learning

laboratories were purchased. One of the initial tasks that I had to undertake, on being appointed as remedial teacher/learning support teacher in my school, was to perform a stock-take and create an inventory of all the resources that were arbitrarily purchased prior to my appointment. These resources included the full suite of S.R.A. Reading Laboratories. I hasten to add that the "3A" and "3B" versions of these reading laboratories were never used by any member of the Learning Support Department in our school because they were much too academically-challenging and difficult for the students in our care!

In his seminal work in 1938, Spens declared that each teaching and learning "tool" has a zeitgeist phase where it attains its maximum appeal and popularity. Spens claimed that, over time, "tools become obsolete and better ones take their place". It would appear that learning laboratories reached the zenith of their appeal, usage and popularity, in the Irish context, in the seventies and eighties. Many factors contributed to the demise of learning laboratories from classrooms in the nineties. The challenges and demands placed on teachers, in heterogeneous classrooms, by time limitations, cluttered school days, timetable constraints, persistent examination pressures and the requirement to cover and deliver overloaded curricula meant that whole-class instruction, of necessity, become the preferred pedagogical option of many teachers. In many classrooms, the "luxury" of making individualised learning laboratories available to students became an impossibility and a rarity. In some schools, learning laboratories had been set aside and replaced by interactive software, student laptops and interactive whiteboards.

However, I am happy to report that, contrary to Spens' forebodings and predictions of premature departure and banishment, the popularity and usage of the new generation of upgraded and re-designed learning laboratories appear, once again, to be on the rise. Educational suppliers report increased sales of all levels of learning laboratories, primarily to newly-appointed learning support teachers, resource teachers and special needs teachers. This new cadre of support teacher will ensure that the light of individualised instruction will continue to shine brightly, today and into the future, in the Irish educational firmament.

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Challenging Behaviour in Schools: Can Mainstream meet the Challenge?

John Visser

Introduction

There is a need to maintain a perspective in regard to Challenging Behaviour based upon evidence rather than being ill-informed by the media's need to sensationalise particular incidents within Schools. This sensationalisation often leads to public and professional perceptions that some schools are in chaos, with 'standards' falling and open rebellion by students about to breakout. The story of challenging behaviour in schools is a complex one and seldom can it be encapsulated in a sound bite or headline. In arguing that violence needs to be considered within a more evidence based discourse I tread a dangerous path. It is not that violence and challenging behaviour do not occur in schools, rather it is that professionals and researchers are in danger of talking up both the number of incidents and their severity.

I want to present two inter-related positions. The first is that there is neither more nor less challenging behaviour in schools than in times past. The second is to argue that the solutions to Challenging Behaviour lie not so much in the creation of new strategies or the implementation of new policies as in the spreading of existing good practice. There is a need to keep violence in schools at the forefront of the professional agenda of educational policy makers and teacher trainers as well as society at large, but not in a manner which puts the challenge of behaviours out of proportion to their actual incidents. A large number of reports [see for example Daniels, Visser, Cole and De Reybekill (1998); Foster, Brennan, Biglan, Wang and al-Gaith (2002); Gittens (2006); Kendall and Kinder (2006) Munn (1999) Ofsted (2005) Steer Report (2005) Elton Report (1989), Martin (2006); Wilkin, Moor, Muirfiled Kinder and Johnson (2006)] have shown that most children and young people most of the time in nearly all schools are not violent nor is their behaviour particularly challenging. These Reports do not diminished the importance of tackling behaviours which are challenging but do identify that the majority of behaviours teachers find challenging are of a low level and can be managed within a mainstream school. As the Children's Commissioner for New Zealand put it 'We simply do not know if there is more violence within Schools, more violence within our communities and families, or if we are tolerating less violence than before and responding differently to this violence'. (Backley and Maxwell 2007 p2). I am drawing for the bulk of this paper on a study undertaken in England and reported by Visser (2003) and Ofsted (2005).

The Study

Since 1989, English Schools have been subjected to an inspection every few years carried out by Ofsted. A frequently given reason on the part of the Schools for poorer than expected results was an increase in challenging behaviour from students.

In the light of these comments Ofsted commissioned a study which in summary sought to establish whether:

● there was a consensus amongst the major stakeholders in education as to what constituted challenging behaviour

● how wide spread was challenging behaviour and was there an increase

● could good practice in mitigating challenging behaviour be identified?

(Visser 2003, Ofsted 2005)

The Study was in two phases. The first was a review of literature, a set of detailed and structured focussed group meetings with practitioners, interviews with children and young people; local government officers and a survey of 1300 schools in eight local authorities. This provided a rich source of quantitative and qualitative data which informed the second phase which was a detailed survey by Her Majesty's Inspectors covering some eighty one schools across ten local authorities. So a substantive piece of work involving the analysis of rich data sets covering various aspects and perspectives on the issue of challenging behaviour.

Three themes emerged in the first phase which I now want to focus on:

1. Describing Challenging Behaviours is an imprecise science!

2. Good Quality teaching and learning mitigates the levels of challenging behaviours in schools.

3. Most but not all children and young people with behaviours which challenge can have their needs met within a mainstream school.

Describing Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviour as defined by practitioners is largely synonymous with the description of that group of children and young people who have special educational needs and are labelled as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). These definitions are frequently individualised and take a particular young person or incident and generalise from that (Daniels et. al. 1998). It seems educationalist can describe violent and challenging behaviours but arriving at a definition that is precise and transferable across settings, time and context is fraught with difficulties. Researchers on the other hand tend to avoid the issue of definition preferring instead to talk about very specific aspects of a particular generically described behaviour such as bullying but even here authors have difficulties in being consistent.

An important strand of the study sought to understand what professionals meant by challenging behaviour and so used interviews, structured focus groups and a survey to gather their views. In nearly all cases the study found that professionals constructed their understanding of challenging behaviour not by pointing to some agreed definition or set of criteria but by listing the behaviours of an individual child whom they saw as challenging. Often this was a child or young person they had dealt with recently. So they went from the particular to the general. This was in contrast to research literature which tends to go from the general idea of a challenging behaviour such as bullying to then explore a group purporting to exhibit that behaviour.

There are some definitions of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the literature. These definitions are also contentious because there is little uniformity in their underlying premises; purposes; and underlying conceptual models. The definition provided in circular 9/94 (DfES 1994) is one that the literature suggests is widely accepted. However Visser (2003) and (Daniels, et al 1998) found that professionals rarely point to this or any other definition when asked to define challenging behaviour.

In exploring definitions of challenging behaviour a list of behaviours considered challenging was adduced. Some behaviours were repeated by respondents a significant number of times; others were only mentioned by one or two respondents. Analysis of this list indicated two distinctive though perhaps overlapping sets of behaviours. The first set is those that are agreed by nearly all respondents to be challenging whatever the circumstances or context in which they occur and thus are challenging per se. The second set was where the behaviour was seen as a challenge depending upon factors in the context, and crucially the perceptions, tolerance and expectation levels of the adult involved.

Challenging Per Se
There was wide spread agreement that two types of behaviour are challenging whatever the circumstances. The first of these is intense aggressive behaviour and the second relates to non-compliance or defiance.

The term aggressive is used here to cover physical behaviours such as biting and pinching through to throwing furniture and physically assaulting another person. It is also used to cover verbal aggression, for example, streams of verbal abuse, racially focussed abuse, and 'in your face' actions where personal space is invaded to threaten the other person. The second type of behaviour, that of defiance and non-compliance, covered those actions where children and young people refuse to follow an instruction or request, or to engage with a task. These behaviours were often described as being accompanied by assertive verbal communications conveying the young person's intention or inviting the adult to 'make me' perform the required action.

Two characteristics were evidenced as making such behaviours always challenging. These were the extreme intensity and the unpredictability of the

behaviour. Where the behaviour is not predicted, its 'surprise' element can provide the adult with a difficult to address challenge. These behaviours are usually 'one-offs' and can be of a spectacular and even sensational nature which catches media attention and becomes a local or national 'cause celebre'. However they rarely occur in children and young people whose behaviour gave no previous cause for concern. The evidence indicates that these incidents, challenging as they are, are not experienced very often in schools and most teachers have never experienced this level of violence and challenge. Schools are not it would appear full of violent challenging children and young people about to burst out in open rebellion. Nearly all children, and young people all of the time are compliantly on task.

Many teachers have however felt that they have experienced these challenging behaviour but at a lower order (not so sensational) where their ability to be or remain in control still feels threaten because of the behaviour has not been predicted. On these occasions the adult being taken unawares has less chance of remaining in control of the situation. When the professional can predict the possibility of a behaviour occurring it ceases to be so threatening.

The second characteristic of behaviours felt to be challenging per se was when there was extreme emotional intensity in the behaviour. Often when describing these behaviours the words used would be that the child or young person 'was out of control' meaning they were not in control of their emotions. Teachers frequently gave indications of feeling helpless in the face of this emotional intensity whether that emotion was one of distress or anger. Of note was that when it was one of anger they felt that there were some strategies they could use. Where it was one of distress they were less confident about what could be done

Challenging behaviour: context dependent
The study has similar findings to those to be found in an earlier study known as the Elton Report (DfEE 1989) and those found in the studies referred to in the table late in this paper. Namely, that many challenging behaviours are challenging because of a number of factors which are contextually based. Factors such as

- age and size of child
- the frequency of the behaviour
- the predictableness of the behaviour
- the tolerance levels of the adult
- the levels of expectation within the setting

Age and Size of Child.
As one participant put it when 'when they are smaller they are less of a challenge'. This is not to convey an impression that young children cannot display challenging behaviours, rather that adults feel less threatened by these

behaviours, though equally concerned for the well-being of the child. Respondents who were in an advisory or consultancy role in relation to behaviour in schools expressed some concern over a rise in the number of young children being identified as having challenging behaviour. Besides pointing to possible wider societal causes for this they also raised the possibility that teachers, because they were lacking knowledge of child development, were making inappropriate judgements about children's behaviours.

Frequency

Where intensity of the emotional content in the behaviour is low and the behaviour infrequent the behaviours could be viewed as minor, being more irritating than challenging. Where the behaviour becomes frequent and the adult is unwilling or feels insufficiently skilled or lacks the confidence to address the behaviour, it becomes challenging to that adult. Swearing is an example of this. The child who utters an expletive when a piece of work goes wrong will in most cases receive a low level reprimand or may not even be 'noticed' by teachers. The child whose 'every third word' is an expletive and who fails to respond to an adult directed intervention to diminish or eradicate this behaviour can be seen by some as very challenging. It is the non response on the part of child or young person to the adult's intervention that is challenging because it threatens the adult's feeling of control of the situation. Others whilst acknowledging that swearing is inappropriate and is to be discouraged don't ever see it as a challenging behaviour.

Behaviour, which is frequent, can be measured; its frequency rate noted. Questions can be raised such as what triggers the behaviour, is there a pattern to its occurrence, and in what circumstances is it absent? What reasons can be found or deduced which is the 'cause' of the behaviour? Answers to such questions can guide possible interventions to lessen the frequency or eliminate the behaviour altogether. The study also found that in settings where practitioners use information about pupils' behaviour to address issues of classroom management, whole school policies, and developments in their teaching and learning did not find those behaviours challenging. (see also Daniels et al. 1998). Rather they found them a stimulus to examine their practice and provision; particularly their teaching and curriculum to see what changes they should make to alter the behaviours of the children and young people concerned.

Predictableness

A high degree of predictableness enables adults to engage in a range of strategies to address challenging behaviour. Many teachers however experience behaviours which are not predictable from their knowledge and experience of the child or young person. This behaviour may be of low level, but still worthy of note such as the child being withdrawn, quieter than usual, or perhaps appearing more easily irritated by their peers. Evidence from the study indicates that good quality provision will note such behaviour, and use knowledge about the child

to provide a suitable low level intervention rather than seeing that behaviour as challenging. Such behaviours are frequently reactions to some incident in the child or young person's life outside of School for which they may need further support.

Tolerance

The tolerance level of individual adults plays a major part in their determination of what is a challenging behaviour. What affects tolerance levels are individual's beliefs and values together with the degree to which the adults have skills to address what they see as challenging behaviour. The study found that many pupils' challenges to adults can be addressed within the bounds of good quality teaching and learning where classroom management skills are of a high order and where teachers have a secure belief in the value and the abilities of children and young people with challenging behaviour. The study did not support an existential view of behaviours in that it clearly indicates certain behaviours as always being challenging. Nor does it support the view that challenging behaviours should be tolerated, respondents shared many ideas, interventions and strategies to address challenging behaviours. What the study found was that an individual's tolerance levels has some governance on when a particular behaviour becomes challenging for that individual. For example the study examined respondents attitude to spitting. Some participants would not tolerate spitting in any circumstances and saw it as a behaviour which was both inappropriate and challenging. Others might tolerate it when it was an action occurring at the end of some strenuous exercise such as a football match but not if it occurred in a classroom. For others it was dependent upon the child and the degree to which they viewed this as a key behaviour to be addressed rather than other more (in their view) challenging behaviours the child or young person was displaying. For example, nearly all respondents agreed that 'spitting in one's face' was a challenging behaviour. However not all respondents felt this; one indicated that his response to being spat at would depend on who did it, when they did it and why they did it!

Levels of expectation.

Institutional levels of expectation are another factor in determining what can be challenging behaviour. Evidence from the questionnaires returned by Schools as well as the sites of good practice demonstrates the importance of institutional ethos in addressing challenging behaviour. Where levels of expectation had a high degree of imposition by Senior Management the ascription challenging behaviour was awarded to behaviours which Elton (DfE 1989) and Steer (2005) describe as of a very low level. In one interview an example was given of pupils being excluded for behaviours described as challenging such as arriving without equipment and throwing paper across a room. Arriving late to a lesson was reported by participants in the study as a behaviour some institutions would regard as challenging behaviour. Where there was a high degree of pupil involvement in setting of expectations, challenging behaviours were perceived to

be less frequent in occurrence. For example, comments such as 'good clear practice understood by all staff and pupils', 'The staff work as a team supporting each other and the pupils'; 'all members of the school community can develop positive self-esteem '.were associated with schools where the term challenging behaviour was infrequently used to describe children or young people's behaviours.

Comparataive data

The study reported on here is but one of many published by various agencies cross OECD countries in the recent past. Students whose behaviour challenges, is not a recent phenomena, nor is it confined to one education system or another. In the recent past there have been some eight major reports covering the United Kingdom and Europe which have made recommendations on how mainstream schools can lessen challenging behaviours. Table 1 collates the recommendations made in these reports. What is immediately apparent is the degree of unanimity in the recommendations. They accord with those which emerged from the study reported here and largely relate to recommendations for systemic changes addressing issues of policy, the delivery of the curriculum, the training of teachers, involvement of parents and the use of additional support and multi-agency provision.

Of particular note for readers of this Journal is the publication of School Matters (Martin 2006) which provides a comprehensive and authoritative exposition of behaviour and learning in mainstream schools. As the table shows it came to similar conclusions to those of other countries.

Conclusion

What then do we know about Challenging Behaviour in schools…..We know that individual acts of extreme violence are rare and have occurred throughout the history of schooling. They are often not predictable, though often the media with its 20/20 vision in hindsight blame schools for 'not seeing it coming'. These individual acts of violence will unfortunately continue.

We know that the quality of teaching has a direct affect on the quality of behaviour and that the starting point for tackling challenging behaviour lies in ensuring high quality teaching and teaching experiences.

Recommendations – Challenging Behaviour and Mainstream Schools – Table I

Country	Source	Year	Whole School Policies	Teaching and Learning	Teacher Education	Leadership	Respect of Students	Additional Support	Class Size	Parents	Multi-Agency	Special Provision within Mainstream	Physical Environment
Rep.of Ireland	Government Report	2006	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Scotland	The Educational Institute of Scotland	2006	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
Scotland	Scottish Executive	2006	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Europe Wide	NFER & CIDRER	2005	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓		
Europe Wide	Council of Europe	2005	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓
England	Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted)	2007	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
England	Department of Education and Skills	2005	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
World Wide	The International Academy of Education	2002	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			

The reports in this table are * in the reference list

We know that the greater the feeling of belonging and inclusiveness a child or young person experiences within school the fewer behaviour problems are incurred. This is achieved in context where respect is given to children and young people so that they in turn can learn to give it to others.

What is becoming apparent then is that a great deal is understood about how mainstream schools can address the issue of challenging behaviour, even if they are not always clear as to what constitutes challenging behaviour in general terms and what is identified as challenging can vary according to context. The question then arises if what to do is known, why does challenging behaviour remain an issue?

I believe it is because we need to move from seeking systemic answers to answers to the question why does what work, work? What are the underlying principles which enable systemic change to bring about changes in behaviour. Systemic change must be accompanied by changes in attitudes, beliefs and values. On the part of adults working in mainstream schools. I have term these verities (Visser 2002), eternal strands of truths which underpin all good practice. The elimination of challenging behaviour is probably not possible, but mitigating its occurrence is. To do this the systemic recommendations made in reports such as Martin (2006) require adults attitudes, beliefs and values display the verities of good practice which are:

- Belief that Behaviour can Change
  And that for behaviour to change the adults need to change their behaviour.

- Prevention beats Intervention
  The staff are thinking ahead to prevent rather than being effective in a reactive way after the event

- Instructional Reactions
  That staff provide consistently and coherently in all aspects of their communication with young people in a positive manner what the behaviours are that they want from young people

- Transparency in communications
  That staff are honest with young people… giving them respect and differentiating being the act and the actor

- Empathy not sympathy
  Staff who can see the world through the experiences of the young person and can thus provide appropriately the boundaries and challenges which provide a sense of purpose and well being

- Boundaries and Challenges

  A sense of community which having an explicitly expressed sense of purpose sets young people 'rubber' behavioural boundaries and learning challenges which meet their need for achievement and progression providing structure within which good quality teaching and learning experiences can flourish

- Positive Relationships

  Where respect is a two way process based on celebration of achievements

- Humour

  A sense of liveliness, fun, pace, excitement, enjoyment and a relationship in which young people and staff 'enjoy and achieve'.

This paper is based upon the findings of a large study undertaken for Ofsted who funded the research. Details of these findings can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=
pubs.summary&id=3846

The extensive review of literature upon which this paper also draws was conducted for Ofsted and published by them at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary
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Reflections on Teacher Education in Special Educational Needs in Ireland.

Elizabeth O'Gorman

Introduction

The focus of this article is on professional development programmes for teachers working in the area of special educational needs in Ireland. It is set in the context of the changing discourse on disability and evolving legislation and policy. The central argument is that the nature of professional development courses for SEN teachers should be determined with reference to a number of factors and be grounded in research based evidence. For the purposes of this article the term SEN teacher encompasses both learning support and resource teachers.

Revision of the concept of disability

In recent decades the concept of what it means to have a disability and 'special needs' has been radically revised. The change reflects the move from a medical model of disability to a social model of disability. The medical model of disability which had prevailed viewed disability as a deficit within the individual, highlighting the person's inability to function within the established structures and systems of society. In the education sector, the result of this perception of disability was the establishment of segregated classes and special schools which focused on strategies of remediation – identifying an individual's 'problems' and developing specialised programmes to enable the person to adapt to society.

The re-visioning of the concept of disability resulted in an adoption of a social model. This perspective recognizes that humankind consists of a diversity of individuals, all with unique characteristics and needs. Hence, 'disability' is construed as society's inflexibility in accommodating the differing needs of individuals. This social model of disability is further supported by the human rights movement which demands equal rights and access to opportunities for all people irrespective of differences such as race, gender, disability and class. The inclusion movement in education, rooted in this social model and rights discourse on disability, promotes an inclusive approach to education wherein students with disabilities are educated alongside their peers, within the local community. Within this framework mainstream schools are required to adapt and accommodate a diverse group of students with a variety of needs.

Within the European Union and internationally, increased participation in mainstream education for children with special needs is enshrined in legislation and policy. (EU, 1990; UN, 1993; UNESCO, 1994; EA, 2003). Equally, recent

changes in legislation in Ireland (Ireland, 1998; Ireland, 2002; Ireland, 2004b; Ireland, 2004a and the Department of Education and Science policy changes with regard to special educational needs in Ireland (DES circulars 20-90 to 51-07), all support a move towards inclusive education for children with special educational needs. This is the situation within which we now work in our schools: Children with special needs have the right to be educated among their peers in mainstream schools. School communities must adapt to ensure that these rights are not denied.

The Rationale for Teacher Education in SEN

To date the main concerns of the inclusive movement in education have been lobbying for changes in policy to legislate for inclusion; promoting organizational changes at regional and school level to enable inclusion; and developing research on appropriate curricular content and strategies to accommodate students with SEN in mainstream schools. There is also much research on the outcomes of inclusive education for students with special educational needs (Florian and Rouse, 2001).

Many variables contribute to positive educational outcomes for students. The most influential are non-school variables such as family and community background, ability and attitude (OECD, 2005). However, of the in-school factors which impact on student learning, teachers are the single most significant source of variation and student benefit from a well educated teaching force (OECD 2005). The importance of a highly skilled teaching profession is also noted by the EU in the document '*Education and Training 2010*'. In coming years the recommendations emanating from this document will increasingly impact on teachers' professional lives such as the ten common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications (EC, 2005) Nationally, the commitment to establishing principles for teachers has been initiated by the Teaching Council of Ireland which has adopted a Code of Practice including standards of teaching, knowledge skill and competence (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2007).

If we accept that the expertise and proficiency of teachers who teach children with special needs is crucial to a child's experience of the education system, then the development of excellent teacher education programmes in the area of special needs must be the next challenge for supporters of inclusion and policy makers.
Teachers' skills and abilities are developed through apposite teacher preparation programmes. It is the quality and strength of these programmes that ultimately influence children's educational experience. The importance of high quality teacher education programmes to ensure optimum quality learning experiences for students with special needs cannot be over stated. The content, methodologies and assessment of such programmes must be rigorously evaluated and continually improved.

A logical progression of this argument is that research on the preparation of SEN teachers is of paramount importance in ensuring that students have access to the best possible education for their needs. Unfortunately, such research has been sporadic. If we are to enhance the quality of learning for students' with special needs, we must continuously upgrade the quality of teacher professional development through systematic research.

Teacher Education in SEN in Ireland

It is helpful to think of teacher education as comprising three phases. The first phase is initial teacher education which occurs prior to entry to the teaching profession, the second, the induction phase, is when teachers begin their teaching career, and the third phase is subsequent in-career professional development.

Virtually all of the initial teacher education courses in Ireland contain modules on special educational needs. (Kearns and Shevlin 2005), thus ensuring that future teachers are attuned to the task of teaching a diversity of students. Teacher education in the induction phase is a recent development in Ireland and currently being piloted hence not available to all teachers. However, through research SEN has been identified as one of the priority concerns for induction programmes and beginning teachers are offered input in this area (Killeavy, 2006). In contrast, the third phase of teacher education is characterized by number of widely available opportunities to engage in teacher education in SEN. Currently, professional development in the area of special educational needs is offered by a number of course providers ranging from government funded third level postgraduate degrees to commercial on-line certificates. The courses offered by third level institutions are formally accredited while other courses are subjected to varying degrees of scrutiny and evaluation.

At present, the DES recognized professional qualification for teachers working in the area of SEN is a one year fulltime postgraduate diploma provided by universities and colleges of education. Other diploma courses in SEN exist, offered on a part time basis by various institutions. Additionally, there are taught degrees at masters' level and research based masters and doctoral programmes.

Short courses, some certified, in special needs teacher education are provided by the Special Education Support Service (SESS) established by the DES in 2003. Among other activities, this initiative provides assistance to teachers and schools in the form of individual teacher/school in-service and regional in-service. Further assistance, in the area of whole school planning for SEN, is available through the DES primary and post-primary school development planning initiatives. Additional help is available through curriculum and classroom practice oriented support programmes provided by the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) and Primary Support Programme (PSP) both of which are funded by the DES. The teacher unions also provide some courses for teacher in the area of special needs.

Another source of information on SEN accessible to teachers are the commercially produced SEN on-line courses which are part funded by the DES. Numerous other distance education options are available from Universities and Institutes of Education within and outside of Ireland. On occasion the DES may part fund these courses if deemed appropriate.

Overall, the provision of professional development in the area of SEN is characterized by a diversity of providers and a range of certified and non-certified options.

Factors affecting professional development programmes in SEN
Designing professional development programmes in SEN for teachers is a complex undertaking and a number of factors must be considered. Among these are obtaining academic consensus as to the selection of content and learning outcomes, aligning the programme with the external and internal criteria for accrediting courses, incorporating information on legislative and policy changes, reflecting a range of other considerations such as the following: adjustments implied by adopting a social model of disability; teachers' emerging roles; cutting-edge, research based knowledge on SEN related issues; current pedagogical methodologies; advances in teacher education methodology; the views of key stakeholders; and, most crucially, the self-selected professional development requirements of SEN teachers. These factors can be loosely grouped into the following categories: Factors relating to content, to delivery, to assessment and to accreditation. There is a tendency for concerns over the content of the course to dominate and the juggling of the relative demands of practical and academic input.

Academic v. Practical Elements
In the design of a course, a balance must be achieved between academic and practical elements. If academic elements predominate then a lack of relevance to working life may be perceived. However if practical 'tips for teachers' predominate, then participants may not have the opportunity to develop the theoretical background which is essential in determining the value of existing practices and evolving their own practices. Consequentially, as part of SEN programmes, teachers often study a broad range of the core foundation disciplines such as philosophy, sociology and psychology. Teachers may not initially regard these topics as being of immediate value (O'Gorman, 2006). The rationale for their inclusion in professional development programmes is the necessity of developing the conceptual framework which will ensure that teachers' practices are grounded in current educational theory and in the rhetoric of inclusion. Otherwise there is a danger that teachers' school practices are unable to adapt to meet new challenges and they revert to traditional pedagogical or segregating practices.

In relation to the practical elements of a course; it is a key requirement that teachers are introduced to practical skills which enhance their work and which

they can disseminate to their colleagues - such as assessment techniques and teaching strategies. However, a teacher is a professional, not a mere technician, and a course which relies on merely presenting a selection of skills and teaching tips is insufficient to be designated professional development. Equally, reliance on perfecting a few strategies and techniques is a short term solution to a long term career. Unless teachers have had opportunities to develop critical and analytical skills which enable them to evaluate, adapt and develop their own thinking and practice, the value of a course is self-limiting. Change is inevitable and teachers must be given the tools to respond appropriately over a long period of time. This is the creative artistry of teaching where teachers respond to change with new and innovative approaches to the challenges presented to them. In this regard, teachers must use the theoretical, conceptual and practical information from a course to become active researchers of both their own practice and that of the school community. The notion of teacher as a researcher must become an elemental part of the professional development course. In this way, through interpersonal reflection and interaction with others there occurs continual questioning of practice. This is the hallmark of the teacher as a professional – the ability to analyse, develop, renew and create.

External Criteria
Among the external factors influencing course design are the university's own accreditation requirements and the structural adjustments necessary following from the Bologna Accord (EU, 1999). These European based factors which have already impacted on course design, will enable students transfer academic credits between institutions of the EU and also allow for the comparability and transferability of qualifications within the EU.

In Ireland, discussions pertaining to developing parity between teacher education programmes in SEN have been taking place. It is now an opportune time to broaden these discussions and introduce a European dimension. Agreeing on accreditation processes and core programme elements which should be common, European-wide features of professional development programmes in SEN will be a complex process. However, there is a need to develop a quality assurance mark for courses which will indicate comparable criteria were used in the accreditation process, and core competencies and knowledge were included. Although the debate on standards and competencies in teacher education is unresolved (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson, 2005), general principles relating to courses in SEN can be developed which take into account the differing systems and which do not result in the homogeneity that can stultify change and limit development.

Legislation, Policy and Guidelines
A further influential factor impinging on course design is the impact of policy and legislation on the changing the role of the SEN teacher. The need for course designers to be cognisant of current policy and legislation is essential and this information must be in the public arena and openly available. While the

implications of the Education Act 1998 and the EPSEN Act 2004 are possible to divine from the statutes, educational policy in the areas is not quite so well defined, particularly at post-primary level. At primary level, the organization of provision for students with SEN has been determined by DES circulars, periodic communications to schools and by the publication of a set of guidelines. However, in the post-primary sector, despite significant changes in special education generally, few DES circulars have been issued to indicate how schools should orchestrate the supports they have been allocated for special needs. Post-primary schools were at liberty to determine how best to utilize their resources. The result has been the evolution of an array of differing practices of varying quality. With the recent publication of the guidelines relating to the IEP process (NCSE 2006) and post-primary guidelines on SEN (DES (Irl), 2007) there is now a useful resource to refer to for planning and organizing SEN practice. However, it will take some time to eradicate any previous misuse of resources. Consequently, awareness of current legislation, policy and guidelines is a key component of a teacher education programme in SEN.

The Changing Role of the SEN teacher

The most recent development in special needs education in Ireland has been the official melding of two separate special education roles, the learning support teacher and the resource teacher at primary level. Previously, each teacher had responsibility for a distinct cohort of pupils who were distinguished mainly by results on standardized tests. The learning support teacher provided help for children scoring between the second and twelfth percentile and the resource teacher, provided support for those students scoring below the second percentile. The current situation is that a primary school is allocated ex-quota 'special education teacher' posts dependent on school enrolment, with somewhat lower ratios for disadvantaged schools and boys schools. Additional teaching hours may be allocated in cases of more severe educational needs. The amalgamation of the two teaching roles is significant and moves Irish education further along the inclusion trail in that it recognizes that there is a broad spectrum of overlapping special educational needs. It also mirrors the practice at second level where both learning support and resource teacher roles generally have had common responsibilities. These changes in the roles and responsibilities of SEN teachers must be incorporated in the professional development programmes on offer.

Social v. Medical Model of Disability

In responding to the increasing diversity of children attending mainstream schools, teacher education courses in SEN now include much detailed information on various disabilities and recommend appropriate tests to identify the challenges faced by students and strategies to overcome the associated difficulties. While this knowledge of aetiology and assessment is essential, there is a danger that the teacher's focus may reflect the medical model of disability – determining what is 'wrong' with students and remediating them, rather than

take the approach prompted by the social model of disability and seek to change and adapt pedagogy and curriculum in ways that include the child. It is far easier to decide that the source of the problem lies with the student with special needs rather than take up the challenge of altering current teaching practices and developing appropriate curriculum. Therefore, programme designers must be attuned to the implications of the course content and seek to redress any imbalance.

Individual v. Community Expertise

If the emphasis of a course is one where specialist knowledge and techniques are given prominence, it may inadvertently lead to the creation of an expert teacher who is solely responsible for the educational attainment of all the students with special needs in the school. This directly contravenes the aims of the inclusion movement and Irish legislation and policy as outlined in the 1998 Education Act EPSEN Act 2004 and DES circulars. These categorically state that each teacher has responsibility for the education of all the children in their class, including those with special educational needs. Consequently, there are other dimensions of the SEN teacher's role which need to be equally highlighted in a course such as collaborating with colleagues, with parents and with other professionals. Emphasising these aspects will promote the dissemination of the skills and knowledge developed by individual teachers on the course to the whole school community. Thus, having had one teacher from a school attend a professional development course in SEN, a waterfall effect takes place whereon the whole school community share the expertise and the child's educational experience is enriched in a manifold way.

Moreover, moving from an emphasis on individual experts towards community expertise is in tandem with the idea of developing a community of practice. Growing acceptance of the social constructivists interpretation of knowledge and learning (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978; Lave and Wenger, 1991) have led to the recognition that we learn and absorb knowledge as members of society. This is true for students, for teachers and for the wider school community. Correspondingly, part of current DES policy is to support and develop communities of practice within the education system. In consequence, SEN programmes need to incorporate this reconceptualisation of the role of the SEN teacher - from that of individual expert to that of a facilitator, developing a community of practice in the area of SEN. This revisualisation also necessitates input from the wider school community into SEN programme design to ensure that teachers are aware of the wider school community's needs.

Thus we see that factors affecting course design which may not be currently fully tapped are the opinions of SEN teachers in indicating their needs for future training and input from members of the wider school community. As such, parents, students themselves, other SEN practitioners, such as therapists and psychologists, school principals and support organization representatives should all be included in the research preliminary to designing courses. It is important

to recognise that elements which are important for parents and other members of the wider school community may not feature as part of the repertoire of teachers' or course designers concerns. A broad spectrum of interest and opinions will add diversity, depth and breadth to a course.

The Affective Domain

Furthermore, a programme which solely focuses on developing the teacher's expert knowledge of and skills in SEN, may diminish another dimension of the SEN teacher's role – the pastoral care role. In the student's eyes this which is often the most important aspect of a teacher's role. Having one teacher who cares about them and who regards them positively may be the single element which transforms school from a negative to a positive experience Hence, if a course focuses exclusively on ensuring that information on SEN is transmitted to teachers the affective domain may be overlooked and with it the nurturing and nourishing of the student which is crucial in special needs education. It is important to acknowledge the myriad of ways in which a teacher contributes to the growth and development of the whole person and to legitimise and develop these aspects of a job in the design of a professional development programme in SEN.

Other Considerations

Space constraints prevent the discussion of other factors that should contribute significantly to course design. Among these are the methodologies utilized in ensuring that teachers engage actively in their learning. It is paradoxical that teachers are often required to sit through lectures delivered by experts while being exhorted to adopt active learning strategies for their own teaching. Problem based learning can play a key role here in ensuring that professional development is more than the presentation of information to a passive audience. Linked to this, and similarly important, is how teachers are assessed on the learning outcomes of the course. Given that assessment drives learning, there is a need to ensure that the type of assessment used encourages deep rather than superficial learning (Biggs 1999). Only is such circumstances will the course impact not only on the teachers' skills and knowledge, but also on the educational experience offered students. The enrichment of that educational experience is, after all, the primary rationale for teachers participating in a professional development programme in SEN.

Current and Future Progress in Professional Development in SEN

The professional qualification in SEN in Ireland – the one year DES funded postgraduate course for qualified teachers, is provided by seven autonomous institutions – universities and colleges of education. Despite some differences regarding proportional content and comparative length of the theoretical and practical elements, the homogeneity of the courses is remarkable, yet, each institution independently developed their own course which was ratified by the academic councils of the accrediting university and is annually subjected to the

rigours of external examiners. These teacher education programmes in SEN encompass areas such as knowledge and skills relating to special educational needs, opportunities to undertake practical experience in working with students with special educational needs, both of which are accompanied by some form of assessment of teacher learning.

There appears to be a consensus among course providers as to content of professional development programmes and the courses also received the imprimatur of the funding body – the DES. This unity of thought is welcome but we must not be satisfied with accepting tacit assumptions of what the core elements of such courses are without exploring alternatives and continually upgrading programmes. There must be on-going research in the area to determine current needs, to respond to change with change and to be innovative in developing imaginative professional development programmes for teachers in the area of special education.

To date, some interesting research has been carried out in Ireland identifying teachers' professional development requirements in relation to aspects of SEN (CICE, 2005) (Phibbs, 2005) (Morgensen, 2005). These studies need to be continued and expanded. At present, a large scale project in ascertaining teacher professional development needs is underway. This research is being conducted by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning in UCD and is part funded by the National Council for Special Education. Other, similar research projects are needed to explore this emerging area and to ensure that professional development courses in SEN are founded on critical research and reflect the whole spectrum of practitioner and other stakeholder needs.

Conclusion
Clearly, given the range of factors outlined here that should contribute to the design of a teacher education programme in SEN, a course of a single year's duration is insufficient to include all the necessary dimensions. Furthermore, it is inconceivable that one year of professional development could prepare a teacher for all the pedagogical and educational challenges that will inevitable arise over a forty-year-long career. Through teacher and institution based research, problems will be analysed and potential solutions offered in a constant spiral of increasing knowledge. The funded postgraduate diploma course in SEN offered by a number of Colleges of Education and Universities should not be seen as an isolated, one-off course but as the embarkation point for a life-long journey of continuous professional development.

Interested parties who wish to contribute to the research in teacher professional development in SEN please contact Elizabeth O'Gorman, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, UCD. Tel. 01-7168269 e-mail: elizabeth.ogorman@ucd.ie

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Inclusion as Pedagogy:
Teaching all Learners

Máirín Barry

*Children grow and learn from the daily curricula and
also from the way in which schools respond to difference.*

School Learning

We have known for a long time that there is a lot more transfer of information happening in our schools than that itemised in our curricula and syllabi. The Primary School Curriculum, (DES 1999, p.7) declares the highest aspirations for our children and schools, in enabling students to live full lives as young persons; in preparing students to live and participate in society; as well as preparing them for further education. They present a monumental challenge that cannot be detailed within the limitations of such finite documents. The organic, dynamic nature of life itself renders it so. Nonetheless, in looking at the prescribed curriculum, we must endeavour to be mindful of the critical influence of the hidden curriculum and its detrimental role, (Dreeben,1968; Hargreaves, 1978; Gotto, 2003)

At its most extreme, the underlying message acquired by students could be that identified by Toffler (1981) in looking at the historic origins of the U.S. public education system, where he holds, future roles in society were imbibed.

> *…education taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, a bit of history and other subjects. This was the 'overt curriculum.' But beneath it lay an invisible or 'covert curriculum' that was far more basic. It consisted - and still does in most industrial nations – of three courses: one in punctuality, one in obedience, and one in rote, repetitive work. Factory labor demanded workers who showed up on time, especially assembly-line hands. It demanded workers who would take orders from a management hierarchy without questioning. And it demanded men and women prepared to slave away at machines or in offices, performing brutally repetitious operations.*
>
> (Toffler 1981 p. 29)

According to Nolet and McLaughlin (2000, p.18), teachers are inclined to have a very specific view of curriculum and are used to thinking about it in the context of a particular classroom or student. They would maintain that teachers are primarily concerned with what to teach 'today', 'this week' and 'this year'. They plan lessons, monthly or termly programmes and look to cover the designated syllabus in all areas that they have responsibility for, in a given school year.

Student Self-Concept

However, the hidden curriculum involves a wide range of factors which, while they may appear subtle, can be extremely powerful in their effect. Foremost of these would be the information, attitudes and experiences indirectly or implicitly transmitted not only by teachers but also by the whole school community. Even the materials, the buildings and the organisation of space, have a message for the learners who experience them. These factors may be encountered very differently by each individual pupil, but, for those with learning difficulties the hidden curriculum can often instruct them that 'they are not able to cope, that they are too stupid to understand, what their peers understand, of the daily content of lessons. They feel failures; they become failures, grow disheartened and cease to make an effort.' (Montgomery, 1998 p. 43) If this is what students learn from their experience at school, then it is the educators, not the students, who are failures. The importance of upholding self-esteem is crucial to the student's entire sense of self.

> *By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes, and customarily maintains, with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and wanted.*
>
> Coopersmith, (1967 p. 5)

As students become older, relationships with their peers may change and the weight placed on the judgements of their peers assumes huge importance. Micheline Mason, a woman with physical disabilities, recalls her sudden awareness as a teenager, of her own difference in writing about her life experience.

> *Up to the moment I think I had somehow believed that when I grew up I would become 'normal', i.e. without a disability. 'Normal' then meant to me, 'like my big sister' , pretty, rebellious, going out with boys…leaving school and getting a job, leaving home, getting married and having children. I suddenly realised that my life was not going to be like that at all. I was going to be just the same as I had always been, very small, funnily shaped, unable to walk. It seemed at that moment that the sky cracked… everything took on an ominous hue…*
> *I believed that I was just not equipped to cope.*
>
> Mason, (1981, p.24)

Although many teachers do not use negative labels and endeavour to be very careful with terminology, they may still convey negative attitudes by becoming impatient when asked to repeat, or by being sarcastic when points are not understood or remembered. It is worth noting that the very students who have least need of positive reinforcement are often the ones who get it most. Those who quickly grasp a new concept and display their understanding of it are highly praised, while those who have to put in the most effort and take the longest to

acquire it, rarely have that achievement acknowledged. However, Montgomery (2000, p. 122) would maintain that damage can also be done by sympathetic discrimination, where differences in treatment observed by other pupils lead to their regarding the recipients as inferior. Montgomery (2000) holds that different and lower levels of work can make the pupil feel of lower status. She particularly derides the practice of handing out untutored worksheet drills in basic skills areas to pupils with learning difficulties, for a large proportion of the day.

Selecting Lesson Content

Westwood, (1997, p.198) maintains that whatever the general curriculum may be, the characteristics of certain pupils with disabilities will significantly influence the priorities given to certain aspects of the curriculum. He supports Brennan (1985) who suggests that some learning is so important that it must be regarded as 'core content'. Corresponding with Rousseau's thinking, he proposes to apply a '4R Test', asking four key questions in order to help teachers to select appropriate content for inclusion. (Brennan,1985, in Westwood, 1997, p. 199)

- *Is it real? (Does it figure in the student's experience?)*
- *Is it relevant?*
  (Will it be of value to the student to know this or to be able to do it?)
- *Is it realistic? (Is it achievable at this time?)*
- *Is it rational? (Can the purpose of this learning be made clear to the student?)*

These issues seriously affect, not only the type of provision that schools make for pupils currently regarded as having special educational needs, but also for all other pupils. Students with disabilities require supports to allow them to benefit and systematic adaptation is necessary to create effective, accessible learning opportunities.(Hallahan, Kauffman and Lloyd, 1996) The global aims of education are "to educate each pupil to his or her full potential". (Montgomery 2000, p. 45.)

Teachers need clear models whose general principles are simple enough to apply quickly as they work and adapt flexibly in creating learning experiences . Many call for direction in relation to decisions on curriculum and methodology, so that the main special needs can be met while providing a developmental curriculum for both able pupils and those with special needs. Montgomery, (2000, p. 43), would maintain that the broader curriculum should be considered as inclusive of extra curricular activities, sports, plays, community projects and clubs. She reports that the Scottish Education Department (1978) found in its review of school leavers that many left school early due to inappropriate curriculum and inadequate teaching and indeed the Post-Primary Guidelines on Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs warn us that poor attendance is an early indicator of difficulties and the need for intervention strategies is in evidence (DES Inspectorate, 2007).

Selecting Teaching Strategies

The selection of appropriate teaching to match the needs of pupils with learning difficulties is equally important as the content, in meeting student needs. Cognitive process models can be very useful in presenting curricular material in a way that all pupils may participate in the same task in a positive fashion and achieve their learning goals, but different goals may be set for individual students. Montgomery (2000, p. 81) in particular supports this form of differentiation as being most beneficial, rather than specifically tailored individual programmes defined by the teacher. She also designates curriculum based assessment as the procedure for determining the instructional needs of the student, based upon the student's performance within existing course content (Montgomery, 2000, p 106). The variables and procedures can be controlled by the teacher and can therefore be more effective, giving useful and relevant feedback, which can be acted upon. Gangné (1969, 1973) demonstrated the value of these techniques, as did Gronlund, (1970) where complex tasks are broken into shorter teaching units, creating small steps towards behavioural or performance objectives. These are characterised by descriptions of what the pupil should be able to do after learning has occurred. Ideally these objectives should be quantifiable and measurable. Differentiation is about matching what teachers want pupils to learn - the curriculum - and what pupils bring to the learning - their experiences, knowledge, skills and attitudes. It follows that assessment and differentiation are entwined, (Falconer Hall, 1992, p 20). It may be appropriate to write targets for and with pupils using the popular smart formula:

> *Specific, Manageable, Achievable, Relevant, and within a Time frame*
> Tilstone et al. (2000, p. 19)

This approach has a lot to recommend it, particularly in that it enables outcomes to be easily measured and certain progress monitored. However, it may not be appropriate for all targets, as Tod, et al (1998, p.44) note. It may certainly successfully target precise, narrow aspects of learning, but may not then allow for important, unintended learning outcomes. Sometimes the most beneficial learning is in fact that which is not measurable. According to Black and Wiliam who identify problems with this narrow form of assessment,

> *…..the irony is that it is precisely the demand for accountability, which has produced unprecedented pressure to improve education systems, that is likely to be the biggest impediment to achieving that improvement.*
> (Black and Wiliam, 2005 p. 249)

Effecting Learning

Vygotsky, in contrast to those who would measure and label, would have us take a different perspective and look at what the student can do, pointing out that the child's own knowledge develops through experience of adults guiding the child towards a more sophisticated solution to task. (Butterworth and

Harris,1994, p.22) The Vygotskian view of learning within adult - child relationships sees the adult as "scaffolding" the child's learning, helping the child to understand the sort of problem to be tackled. He stresses the role of social interaction as the "motor" of cognitive development. This occurs to a large extent through the internalisation of "cultural tools", a process that shapes personal knowledge and thought. He would hold that development and instruction are not separate, (Vygotsky, 1962 p. 116 -117)

> *The intellectual development of the child is no clockwork sequence of events; it also responds to influences from the environment, notably the school environment. Thus instruction.......need not follow slavishly the natural course of cognitive development in the child. It can also lead intellectual development, by providing challenging but usable opportunities for the child to forge ahead in his development. Experience has shown that it is worth the effort to provide a growing child with problems that tempt him into the next stages of development.*
>
> Bruner (1974, p. 417)

Bruner not only sees the role of teaching as critical to learning, he also claims that given the right kind of instruction, learning can lead to development. In the Sixties and Seventies, Piagetian theories about developmental ages and stages led to chronically fixed notions of "readiness", depressing expectations and discouraging teacher intervention. More recent studies demonstrate what children, given effective teaching, can achieve. They show that learning is essentially a social and an interactive process. They place emphasis on the teacher, as teacher, rather than "facilitator". Such insights are, according to Alexander, et al, critical to the raising of standards in primary classrooms, (Alexander, et al, 1992, p. 14). The expectations teachers have for learning outcomes, both in an immediate context and for their students' future lives are crucial to the educational experience they will provide (Rosenthal et al, 1992). Gardner argues that children already enter school with distinctive profiles of intelligences and that these need to be cultivated through suitable activity-centred curricula, (Gardner, 1993 page 210). He is highly critical of the disembedded nature of much of school learning and proposes that children's development is best served when learning is embedded in real-life practical contexts,(Gardner, 1993, p. 201). It is now well established that students learn in different ways or have different learning styles, (Armstrong, 1997; Gardner, 1993; Nieto, 2000; Dunn and Dunn, 2003) While this is certainly becoming widely accepted, universal practice as of yet, is far from reflecting it.

> *Curriculum should be adapted to children's needs, not vice versa. Schools should therefore provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests.*
>
> UNESCO (1994, p.22 , para.28)

The educational philosophies of Vygotsky and Bruner have greatly influenced the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and have been developed further in the Learning support Guidelines (2000) and the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines (2007). Classroom based learning, early intervention, a supplementary teaching approach within the class, whole-school planning and collaboration between teachers and between parents and teachers, are strong new directions highlighted in its approach (Learning Support Guidelines, 2000 p. 9-10). '*Inclusion …..implies that the diverse needs and learning differences of all students are accommodated*' , (DES Inspectorate, 2007, p. 39.)

> *Curriculum planning for students with special educational needs must look to the future and have clear goals in mind. All students, but particularly those with special educational need, need access to a range of educational opportunities and genuine choice in the directions that their education may take.*
>
> NCCA (1999 p. 43)

Teacher Power

The role of the class teacher is fundamental in relation to all students in the class, including those with S.E.N. and this is central to achieving successful outcomes for these students. Being able to capture and hold students' interest and attention is not easy. Effective inclusion requires the development of a number of key features.

> *To make these aspirations a reality requires the development of clear school-based strategies on dealing with individual difference, straightforward strategies for spelling out staff support implications and the availability and timetabling of additional resources and technologies.*
>
> (Griffin and Shevlin, 2007, p. 151)

Keeping all students engaged and motivated in daily instruction can be a monumental challenge to teachers and one that requires experimenting with a variety of approaches. It requires active, not passive learning (Rief, 2005). It also requires that teachers incorporate a variety of formats and activities woven throughout their lessons. Ainscow (1995) found that one of the strongest forces in successful inclusion is teachers' willingness to make things work and find ways to overcome difficulties. Forlin et al (1996) also found that the views of teachers are a key element in the effectiveness of inclusion. Carlson and Clapp (1983) noted that the development of positive attitudes among teachers is more important that teachers acquiring specific skills, using technology or special materials. Stone and Brown (1986) also support the view of the importance of teacher attitudes.

> *Mainstream teachers make a critical contribution through the creation of a supportive, caring environment in the school for students with special educational needs, through which these students are affirmed in their ability to learn and to participate generally in the life of the school.*
>
> (DES Inspectorate, 2007, p.71)

Many research studies have shown that the attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities are influential and significant factors in determining the social, academic and personal adjustment of these students. (Haring, 1957; Strain and Kerr, 1981; Klein, 1975; Fine, 1967; Maartmek and Kaper, 1981; Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1965, 1992). Klein (1975) noted that the teacher's attitude towards a child with a disability in the class is the key factor in having the child accepted by the class group. More than any other influential factor the teacher is key to creating the learning environment, relationship and experience that will lead and support each student in learning.

> *Schools are a microcosm of society and must reflect values we want for the greater society. If we want, as a society, to value all of its members, then we must teach through our words and efforts that no individual or group should be segregated or rejected.*
>
> (Falvey, 1995, p.155)

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