Inclusive Education for All: A Dream or Reality?

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Overview of presentation

- What do we mean by ‘inclusive education’?
- What can we learn from research on inclusive education?
- Inclusive education – challenges to improving services
Defining inclusion– historical overview

• Up to late 1980’s – ‘Integration/mainstreaming’ referred to placement children with special needs in mainstream schools

• 1990’s – ‘Inclusion’ replaced the term ‘integration’ and included an emphasis on improving the quality of education for pupils with special needs in mainstream schools

• Since 2000 – ‘Inclusion’ now refers to removing barriers to high quality education for all children at risk of marginalisation: - ‘Celebrating/responding to diversity in schools and communities’
DEFINITIONS OF INCLUSION:
Some international documents


Definitions of inclusion embodied in these documents

• Inclusion focuses on equity and fairness and on the inclusion of all students regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity or other disadvantage.

• The overall goal is to provide education for all children, young people, and adults by 2015. (The World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000)

• These documents have been influential in shaping thinking and policy around the world, particularly in developing countries

• Reflected in the overall mission of NGOs such as EENET
ENABLING EDUCATION NETWORK (EENET)

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

- acknowledges that children can learn,
- acknowledges and respects differences in children’s age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV and TB status etc.,
- enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children
- is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society
- is a dynamic process which is constantly evolving,
- need not be restricted by large class sizes or a shortage of material resources

– (EENET, 1998)
Messages from National policy documents

UK Inspectors (Ofsted)

• “Educational inclusion” covers: -
  • Equal opportunities (for all pupils regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, attainment, background);
  • The education of pupils having English as a second language;
  • The education of pupils with special educational needs – including pupils with challenging and disruptive behaviour;
  • Pupils who are gifted or talented.
GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

• ‘An educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well being of every young person matters.

• Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools. This shows, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties…….’
The key message: Inclusion is concerned with ensuring that:

- all children of whatever background have access to high quality education,
- they are welcomed by teachers and other staff,
- their contribution is valued,
- any form of selection based on academic ability, or ability to pay fees is anti-inclusive.
BUT: Other UK documents

The Lamb Inquiry (2009)

The ‘Green’ Paper (2011)

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2005)

These documents refer to inclusion as being an SEN issue
Guidance from Hong Kong (HKSAR)


Hong Kong Whole School Approach

Promotion of Whole School Approach (WSA) to inclusive education (Education Department, 2002, p. 7)

“All school personnel, including the school head, teachers, student guidance teacher/officer, non–teaching staff, students and parents, are willing to accept students with special needs. Hence, a harmonious environment with a caring, supportive and inclusive school culture can be established.”

And WSA will “enhance team spirit among teachers, and encourage other school personnel to share responsibilities in looking after students’ individual differences and special needs”

The message: Inclusion is an SEN issue
So: What DO we mean by inclusion?

• Is it concerned with ensuring quality and access for ALL children?
• Is inclusion to do with the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools, the majority of whom have always been placed there?
• Is it to do with closing all special schools and relocating the children in mainstream settings?

Continuum OR contradiction?
INCLUSION: AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION (the ‘Gold Standard’)

• **Presence**: refers to the extent to which pupils attend lessons in mainstream classes in local schools and communities.

• **Acceptance**: refers to the extent to which other staff and pupils welcome all pupils as full and active members of the school.

• **Participation**: refers to the extent to which all pupils contribute actively in all the school’s activities.

• **Achievement**: refers to the extent to which all pupils make progress in academic skills and in their social/emotional development.
Inclusive Education – what can we learn from research?
Contrasting/complementary approaches to inclusive education research

Studies can focus on:
- Outcomes for children, and/or
- Factors that affect outcomes
Outcomes for children

For pupils with SEN, for example:
- Their learning/behaviour/social adjustment

For pupils without SEN, for example:
- Impact of inclusive education on their attainments

Typically data is numerical -
Assessment/ratings of matched samples of pupils with and without SEN
Factors that affect outcomes

For example:

- Parents’ views of inclusive education
- Teachers’ views
- The role of support staff
- The impact of staff training on attitudes and knowledge
- Classroom factors – e.g. teaching styles, curriculum adaptation
- Development and evaluation of whole school approaches

Studies can incorporate many different approaches e.g. surveys, knowledge and attitude measures, structured classroom observations, case studies, action research, focus groups, interviews, ethnographic
Some key findings from research on inclusive education

- Inclusion and pupil achievement
- Role of teaching assistants
- Leadership that promotes effective whole school approaches in mainstream schools
- Achievement and support arrangements for students with ID in Hong Kong mainstream and special schools
Inclusion and Pupil Achievement Study

Key Research Question

- Are the academic attainments of pupils in inclusive mainstream schools worse than the attainments of pupils in non-inclusive schools?
Methodology

• Analysis of the National Pupil Data Base (NPD) for all pupils aged 7, 11, 14, 16
• NPD includes data on many variables including attainments, SEN status, ethnicity, social class and many others
• We analysed data on over 500,000 pupils at each KS
Summary of main findings

• There is a very small negative association between inclusivity — and attainment. This remains even when a number of other variables are taken into account. But it accounts for a very small proportion of pupil scores, and:
  - it accounts for much less than other variables such as entitlement to free school meals.

• This relationship may not be causal. In particular, it seems plausible that the populations of schools with large numbers of SEN pupils have other characteristics which lower attainment.

• Overall there is nothing in the findings to suggest that the commitment to inclusion likely to have an impact on overall levels of attainment.
The role of Teaching Assistants (TAs) in making inclusion work.

Synopsis of findings from several studies:

• Terminology TAs, Non teaching assistants, para-professionals etc

• Huge growth in the numbers of TAs working in mainstream schools – 97,000 – 18500 from 1998 to 2010 in mainstream schools in England and Wales
Conditions of service for TAs

- Little or no qualifications
- Low pay
- Temporary contracts
- Few opportunities for further training

BUT: they are often responsible for teaching our most challenging pupils
Relationships between the TA and the class teacher

- Good communication between teachers and TAs
- TA seen as part of the team and not in school solely to support the child with SEN
- Teachers and assistants sharing ideas and trusting each other’s judgments.
Support and teaching arrangements

- Class teachers taking full ownership of the education of the pupil with SEN.
- A possible negative relationship between the amount of one to one support and the extent to which the pupil participates in the life of the school.
Effective leadership in mainstream schools to promote whole school approaches to the inclusion of pupils with SEN

Methodology

• Case studies of nineteen primary and secondary schools which had been identified as having strong and effective leadership for inclusion and pupils with SEN
Summary of findings

- **Culture and ethos**: strong sense of common purpose where emphasis is on the importance of respecting and responding positively to pupils diverse needs.

- **Practice**: Practice varied considerably between and within schools. But staff worked together to adapt their lesson plans in response to individuals within their classes.

- **Structures and systems**: To support the learning of individual students and to support staff in responding to the challenge of helping children with SEN.

- **Management and leadership**: Senior staff in the schools were proud of their success in improving the achievement of all children, irrespective of their characteristics, circumstances or impairments.
Pupil achievement and support arrangements for students with ID in Hong Kong mainstream and special schools

Compared the

- academic achievement,
- social-emotional functioning, and
- self-perceived acceptance

of pupils with ID in primary mainstream and special schools
Sample

- 42 students – 18 in mainstream (from 16 schools) and 24 in special (3 schools)
- Sample matched for
  - age (mean 11.4 yrs),
  - IQ (‘mild’ ID range – 50-69)
  - length of time support received (at least 3 years),
  - parental background
Summary of findings

• Academic achievement of students in mainstream schools was higher than those in special schools

• Better quality of peer relationships, lower emotional stress levels and more positive self perceptions for pupils in special schools
Interpretation of findings

Qualitative element of the study – interviews and observations in 2 mainstream and 2 special schools

Aimed to look at factors that contribute to effective support and student outcomes

Findings suggest that the following were important

- teacher expectations,
- curriculum,
- Emphasis on pupil assessments
Inclusive education – challenges to improving services
Inclusive education for children in special schools – can this be achieved?

Some information from the UK

- 1.3% of pupils with SEN in special schools - mainly severe and profound LD or SEBD
- Virtually all primary aged pupils with Down’s syndrome in mainstream school
- All barrier free schools
- Virtually all pupils with dyslexia in mainstream school
- Many children with Aspergers and autism in mainstream school
Range of “inclusive” provision for children who have traditionally been in special schools in the UK

- Full time placement in mainstream class – with support
- Mainstream class placement with withdrawal for “special work”
- SEN unit/resource base in a mainstream school
- Co-located special and mainstream school
- Dual placement – in mainstream and special school
- Occasional visits of pupils from special to mainstream schools
Making special education more inclusive: issues to address

- Transferring good practice from special to mainstream schools
- Use of support staff
- Preventing ‘in class’ segregation
- Adapting the curriculum
- Exam accommodations
Making special education more inclusive: issues to address (contd.)

- Should parents have the right to choose a mainstream school?
- What if their ‘right’ conflicts with the ‘right’ of the child for a good education
- Cost implications – as not all parents want the same thing! Some want special – some want mainstream
- Difficult for governments and local authorities to maintain control over the SEN budget
Concluding thoughts: Where do we go from here?

- There are no “quick fix” solutions
- Challenges (1) for all mainstream schools to provide good education for children with SEN who have always been in their schools
- Challenge (2) is to bring good practice in special schools within a mainstream context
- Mainstream schools should have range of “provision”
- My preference would be to close all special schools
- Set up units/resource bases in mainstream schools
Resource based model for inclusive education: Is this the optimal solution?

- Close all special schools
- Selected mainstream schools become resourced schools
- Children based in resourced classes
- These classes combine high quality specialist teaching with opportunities to for pupils to benefit from being in a wider community
- School uniform/use same entrance/start and end school at the same time/resourced bases are within the mainstream school
- Staff in resourced classes are part of mainstream staff

Would this work in Hong Kong?
And Finally ....

Inclusion is, and always will be, controversial
Many competing pressures
Governments have a difficult task in developing services that meet everybody’s needs