Context and pedagogy for children with special educational needs: principles, practices and challenges of inclusion from the UK
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Timings

- 09:00 – 09:10: Introduction
- 09:10 – 10:05: Part 1 - Context and pedagogy of teaching for special educational needs
- 10:05 – 10:15: Questions
- 10:15 – 10:40: Fika!
- 10:45 – 11:50: Part 2 - How do we choose technologies for learning and how do we know what works?
- 11:50 – 12:00: Questions
Part 1: Context and pedagogy

- UK context for children with special educational needs
- Defining inclusion
- Attitudes towards inclusion
- Autism and inclusion
- Autism and educational interventions
• UK Population 63 million

• Approx. 10 million school-age children
• About 20% of children in the school population have Special Educational Needs (SEN)
• About 3% have needs that require more support
England only

• Just over 1.5 million children have SEN
• In most OECD countries up to 1% of children are taught in special settings (special schools or classrooms)
• Avramidis & Norwich (2002)
% of pupils with SEN (England only)
Inclusive education

‘...the UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education.’

‘...a general presumption in law of mainstream education’

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years (2014)
'A pupil has SEN where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age. Making higher quality teaching normally available to the whole class is likely to mean that fewer pupils will require such support.'

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years (2014)
Wave 1
Inclusive quality first teaching for all

Wave 2
Additional interventions to enable children to work at age-related expectations or above

Wave 3
Additional highly personalised interventions
Social model of disability

The structures in society are the problem

- Lack of useful education
- Discrimination in employment
- Inaccessible environment
- Segregated services
- De-valuing
- Prejudice
- Inaccessible transport
- Inaccessible information
- 'Belief' in the medical model
- Poverty

Disabled people as active fighters for equality working in partnership with allies.

Medical model of disability

The impairment is the problem

Disabled people as passive receivers of services aimed at cure or management.
Inclusion...

- is a process focusing on changing schools / environments rather than children
- is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers to learning
- is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students
- involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement

Ainscow (2007)
‘In order for inclusion rather than integration to be effective, it is generally agreed that the school personnel who will be most responsible for its success – that is, mainstream teachers – should be receptive to the principles and demands of inclusion’

An example

Focus on child
- Assumes disability is inherent to individual
- Least effective interaction patterns

Focus on environment
- Disability is interaction between child and environment
- More interactions and persisted in supporting learning

School ethos
- Strongest predictor of effective teaching was the headteacher’s beliefs as enacted in practice

Stanovich & Jordan (1998)
Teacher attitudes can become more positive over time, but...

‘...there have been no studies which show the move towards more positive attitudes to inclusion leading to widespread acceptance of full inclusion.’

Avramidis & Norwich (2002 p.143)
Challenges

• Teachers much less positive about including particular learners (e.g. behavioural difficulties) (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; de Boer et al., 2011)

• Teachers more positive with more experience and training (Male, 2011; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002)

• More pupils with SEN in class can increase teacher burnout (Talmor et al., 2005)

• Lack of research evidence in support of better outcomes from mainstream inclusion (Lindsay, 2007)
Pupil and parent perspectives

- Children often prefer integration (‘withdrawal’) rather than full inclusion (Norwich & Kelly, 2004; Lewis et al., 2007)
- Pupils advocate choice based on needs (Lewis et al., 2007; Pitt & Curtin, 2004)
- High levels of bullying experienced by children with SEN (Norwich & Kelly, 2004)
- Secondary school can be particularly challenging (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008)
- Parents are very satisfied with special provision (Parsons et al., 2009)
Research can only provide a crude pointer to the success or appropriateness of inclusion...if inclusion succeeds in displacing special segregated education it will have done so because society considers it right to do so

Thomas (1997; p.104)
Rights-based inclusion

• Inclusion in wider society avoids stigma and isolation (and associated costs)
• A civilised society works to reduce inequalities and differences
• All children should be included in mainstream schools
• Salamanca Statement (1994): disabled children should attend the neighbourhood school 'that would be attended if the child did not have a disability.'
Needs-based inclusion

• Lack of research evidence in support of mainstream inclusion (Lindsay, 2007)
• Preservation of a range of provision to meet distinctive needs
• Specialist teaching methods and approaches
• General principles to optimize learning for all, but must consider individual needs and context (Lewis & Norwich, 2005)
Inclusion and autism

Is this a special case?
• 1 in 100 children have autism
• 100,000 children
• 0.5 million people
• 4 x more common in boys

http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/page/about_autism/stats_and_facts/index.cfm
Where children with autism go to school (England)

- Mainstream (general): 71%
- Special / other: 29%

England 2012
% of pupils with SEN (England only)
Inclusion and autism

• Most children educated in mainstream
• Spectrum diversity → no single type of placement can meet the needs of all
• Adequate support is required
• High risk of bullying and social exclusion (Batten et al., 2006; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008)
• Parents and pupils value teachers / schools that understand autism (Batten et al., 2006; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008; Parsons et al., 2009)
• In practice there is a range of provision
Types of educational placements

• Mainstream no support
• Individual support in mainstream
• Resource base
• Special schools
• Residential schools
• Private schools
• Home-schooled

http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/162
http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/outcomes
Educational provision

• Mainstream (general)
  – Mix of time in main classrooms and specialist support
  – Teaching assistants
  – Limited research to show what happens

• Special schools
  – Range of approaches
  – TEACCH (‘Structured teaching’) very common
  – Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Intensive Interaction
Ravet (2011): contradictory perspectives

• Autism labelling (rights-based)
  – impairment focused
  – deterministic and judgemental about abilities and potential
  – problems with learning and behaviour seen as within-child rather than within wider context
Needs based...

- Make sense of difficulties experienced
- Trigger for support and services
- Educational assessment and holistic approach involving the family
- Rights under Disability legislation
- Recognises and respects differences

http://eytanart.com/
Special pedagogy

• Instruction informed by specific needs of defined groups
• Specialist approaches
• Exclusionary
• Range of needs unique and specific to the autism spectrum (Jordan, 2005)
• E.g. difficulties in understanding non-literal language (idioms, irony, sarcasm)
• English as an Additional Language vs. autism
Teachers who do not understand the diagnosis of autism, or appreciate its import, will find it difficult to anticipate, recognise, understand and address the degree of distortion of development they are dealing with when confronted with a child on the spectrum.

Ravet (2011; p.676)
• By failing to recognise the individual needs in the context of the diagnosis teachers may take a ‘neuro-typical’ approach which may not be helpful
• ‘rights-based’ inclusion may be exclusionary if we fail to address particular needs
• Children have a right to have their needs met
• Failure to do this can be very damaging
• Differences in how friendships and relationships are desired and experienced (Calder et al., 2013; Humphrey & Symes, 2011)

• Children with autism perceive and experience the world differently (Mundy et al., 2010; Vermeulen, 2001; Lind, 2010; Frith, 2012)

• Mainstream secondary experienced as loud and chaotic; desire to ‘fit in’ but difficulties in doing so (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008)

• Must not make normative assumptions about people with autism (Parsons, 2015)
What does the evidence base tell us about ‘best practice’ for successful outcomes in autism education?
Systematic review of research evidence + review of expert guidance

2002-2008

100 research papers + 24 policy and expert guidance reports


Key conclusion 1

One size does not fit all

One particular type of intervention or approach is unlikely to produce the best outcomes for all children included
Decisions regarding education should be based on:
- needs and preferences of the person with autism
- views of parents, practitioners and providers
- in combination with what we know from research
Key conclusion 3

- There are substantial gaps in the evidence base
  - Older children and adults
- There are substantial gaps between research and practice
- The existing evidence does not tell us everything

Best practice

- Intervene early; ‘voice’ + peer interaction
- All different
- Range of provision
- Collaboration
- Training

- Parsons et al (2009; 2011)
Summing up

• No single type of educational approach will work best for all children
• Best practice incorporates views of individuals, parents and professionals as well as research evidence
• There is a continued research-practice gap
• There is a concerning absence of adults with autism from the evidence base
• Collaboration between stakeholders is needed to address all of these areas
Cited references – available on request

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Thanks for listening 😊