

‘What is considered good for everyone may not be good for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities’:
Teacher’s perspectives on inclusion in England.

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the findings of two studies one completed in 2010 and another in 2019, which employed Q-methodology and post Q-sort semi-structured interviews to an investigation of teachers', in the West Midlands, perspectives of the inclusion agenda. The findings of the 2019 study, demonstrate commonality of findings with that carried out in 2010. The findings reveal that teachers in both studies employed integration and inclusion interchangeably in their attempts to define and operationalise inclusive education. Second, the findings of both studies demonstrate that teachers support inclusion at a theoretical level but in practice find it a difficult concept to operationalise. The 2019 study, though, denotes that a significant barrier to inclusion is whether children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should or should not be included in SATs. The article details and reflects on the findings of both studies and concludes that the continuous use of SATs needs to be reconceptualise especially in how they enable the inclusion of all children.

Keywords- inclusion agenda, teachers, primary, education. SEND

Introduction

Before we move to consider the current research itself, it would seem useful to place it and the original study within the context of the development of inclusive education. The literature review, that follows therefore highlights key issues that were addressed by the two studies these being- what is inclusion and what is inclusive education and how might we define such. Additionally, the review highlights the tensions that teacher's have experienced in attempting to make inclusive education happen within an education system that is dominated by the accountability of standards and a commodified performance driven culture..

The international importance of inclusion - a human rights agenda

A significant move took place internationally in the early 1990's that led to educational systems away from integration to inclusion and an acceptance of a rights-based approach to education. In 1993, the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) determined that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should be considered within all mainstream planning and curricular activities, (Rustemier, 2002). A year later, at Salamanca, representatives from 92 governments and 25 international organizations confirmed that a rights-based approach to education should focus on development of on inclusive schooling (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca statement envisaged a system in which the norm would be for all children to be educated in mainstream schools, regardless of need (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006). Since this statement, inclusion and inclusive education has become part of government rhetoric in England, gaining status in schools and the mass media (Hodkinson, 2012).

Inclusion, at this time, theoretically aimed to change societal and educational perceptions of disability by encouraging an acceptance of diversity (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

Inclusion, here therefore, appeared to become a platform for social justice (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006), dependent not only on structural changes in provision and support but on educating professionals to practice inclusion "in relation to equality, diversity and the rights of all children" (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019, p.9). Therefore, it appeared that "...all forms of segregation are morally wrong" (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000, p.192).

As Barton (1997, p.233-234) stated:

It is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members and about celebrating 'difference' in dignified ways...inclusive experience is about...how, where and why, and with what consequences, we educate pupils...[and] involves a serious commitment to the task of identifying, challenging and contributing to the removal of injustices".

Inclusion: can it be defined?

However, despite the cogent argument forwarded that inclusion was educationally and socially desirable. No fixed nor cogent definition of inclusion was solidified within the

literature (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). In its practical operationalisation inclusion became therefore a concept that had a lack of ‘version control’ in theory and practice within both national and international contexts. This led some researchers to argue that inclusion should be defined by its operation rather than through its conceptual multiplicities and manifestations (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006). Within the English education system, like elsewhere, such questions and confusion relating to inclusion were highlighted. Despite the passage of time between the two studies and a seeming change in policy which relates to SEND and a new Code of Practice (See Hodkinson & Burch, 2017) key questions relating to inclusion still exist. Such as, what is actually meant by inclusion, who should be included and actually if inclusive education is possible within an assessment and standards driven educational system. For some, (Slee, see Hodkinson 2019) inclusion, therefore, has become ‘one of those bullshit terms’ that says everything but means nothing.

To exemplify some of these conceptual confusions it is important to consider how ‘integration’ and ‘inclusion’ have been defined and operationalise over time. For instance, in the late 1990’s integration was replaced in England with the term inclusion. The difference between inclusion and integration we were told was that school environments needed to change to accommodate the needs of all learners, including children with SEND (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019). This meant, therefore, a move away from focusing on the placement of children with SEND into mainstream schools to a change in the accessibility, attitudes and values espoused within schools themselves. In doing so, inclusion was supposed to promote the creation of a non-discriminatory environments in which difference was to be positively embraced (William-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019). However, despite governmental rhetoric, confusion still reigned in the distinction between integration and inclusion. Furthermore, there was a clear resistance from some teachers to the placement of children with SEND into mainstream settings. Consequently, some professionals believed that they were discussing inclusion, but in fact they firmly remained focused on integration (Brown, 2013).

Moreover, a significant ‘inclusion confusion’ appears to lie in who teachers, schools and the government believe should be included. Indeed until 2000, inclusion was focused mostly on children with SEND. However, many researchers and educationalist viewed inclusion in a broader terms (Booth and Ainscow, 2004). Inclusion, from this perspective, centred on the need to value all pupils and where considering that difference was a resource that could be

employed to support learning. Inclusion in this context, therefore, related to children with SEND, "...as well as gender, sexual orientation, race ethnicity, culture and social class" (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019, p.11). However, despite such broader definitions of inclusion, a pattern in inclusive education legislation developed whereby children with SEND were separated out. Fredrickson and Cline (2002) believed that government legislation focused either on disability or issues of advantage and marginalization rather than focusing on inclusion as a holistic concept. As example, the *Excellence for All Children* (DfEE 1997) Green paper was introduced at the same time as the separate *Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs* White Paper (DfEE 1997). It became apparent that the government claimed to be including all children and disputing all forms of marginalisation, yet at the same time considered children with SEND separately from their peers (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002). It is understandable, therefore, that without such clarity in the inclusive educational concept, professionals remained confused as to what inclusion and inclusive practice actually meant within applied educational settings.

Inclusion, then, could be considered to be an ideological tool which can be utilised to consider the future of education in which all children could be fully included in every aspect of the schooling experience (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw, 2000; Winter, 2006). However, in the cold reality of the classroom the definition and theory of inclusion, meant that in practice teachers, and schools were left with the in enviable task of determining how it was to be implemented . Such implementation was made doubly difficult, not least, because inclusion was placed within competing school and national agendas where marketization meant inclusive education became a comprise of commodification. Such comprise may be observed within the 'small words and phrases' emplaced within legislation which left large absences in the government's inclusive ideal. For example, phrases such as ... 'wherever possible' and 'children should generally take part in' legitimised flexibility and enabled competing agendas to coexist in a surreal educational harmony. For example, note the phraseology in early inclusion legislation ...

Pupils with SEN[D] should wherever possible receive their education in a mainstream school, but also that they should join fully with their peers in the curriculum and life of the school. For example, we believe that... children generally take part in a mainstream lesson rather than being isolated in (DFES, 1997, np).

Such weasel words and the flexibility they legitimise ensured that “presence and absence [then] were secreted into inclusive education they were symbiotic acting not in binary opposition but as an amalgam of blurred and continuously blurring perspective” (Hodkinson, 2011, p.181). Within such ‘inclusion confusion,’ where presence becomes absence and absence is presence Clough (1998. p.5) relates that inclusion became a ...

... multinational urge [where] lies the danger of physical inclusion but curricular and emotional exclusion unless children are included for and of themselves, by teachers who are professionally and personally equipped to provide appropriate education for all. For inclusion is a radical deal more than physical location.

Inclusion: all can achieve?

From the outset, then, inclusion was subsumed within a standards and commodification agenda. Evidence of this hides in plain sight in that there is an emphasis on incorporating inclusion objectives into the standards agenda. An agenda which dominates the education system in England. From the start, inclusion ensured that all children, including those children with SEND, participated in the same standards objectives (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019). An example of this is clearly observable in this early inclusion legislation:

The participation of all pupils in the curriculum and social life of mainstream schools; the participation of all pupils in learning which leads to the highest possible level of achievement; and the participation of young people in the full range of social experiences and opportunities once they have left school (DfEE, 1998, p.23).

Note how, in the statement above, the standards agenda is balanced equally with the premise of inclusion. On these scales of social justice though, justice may be seen to ‘blind’. In addition, note this statement from 2004,

We need to do much more to help children with special educational needs to achieve as well as they can, not least if we are to meet the challenging targets expected at school (Charles Clarke, Department of Education and Skills [DfES], 2004, p.16).

Clarke's words here clearly demonstrate that there was to be no balance on these scales of social justice and that the inclusion would not act as counterbalance to regimes of accountability. In the reality of the classroom the standards agenda, National Curriculum, SATs, league tables and Ofsted ensured that schools and teachers were accountable for their actions not in terms of equality but in terms of results.

Moving forward we observe various developments, especially in terms of curriculum and teaching, such as the p scales, scales which attempted to accommodate children with SEND within the teaching of regular classrooms. However, the scales of inclusion have constantly been loaded, through government policy and mass media rhetorical mantras of "high expectations", "standards" and "school improvements" (Armstrong, 2005; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019). Inclusion, therefore, became intrinsically linked with the need for higher standards in education. This meant a continued need for all children to conform within the narrow parameters of success of the standards agenda (Armstrong, 2005). Gamarnikow and Green (2003, p.209) relate of education "there are, of course, winners and losers...[promoting] belief in the myth, or at least acquiescence to the rhetoric, of excellence for all- everyone's a winner". Every one indeed could be a winner in this system but only if you played their education game by their rules.

The scales of inclusion then became fixed – inclusive education was not equally weighted with accountability. Children had to conform within narrowly prescribe parameters of success. Accountability set within these narrow parameters of achievement became the most serious challenge for inclusive education (Glazzard, 2014; Hodkinson and Devarakonda, 2009). As Glazzard (2013, p.184) states, "The current education system celebrates high achievement over the valuing of difference (Goodley, 2007), which inevitably forces educators to invest more time into those learners who will produce valued outputs". Within this zero sum game, there were, in terms of inclusion and equality, only losers as full participation and achievement for all was balanced out by barriers which created exclusion for those children who could not play the game of meeting national academic standards.

Teachers' positions on the inclusion agenda: the original study

It is within this unbalanced agenda and 'inclusion confusion' that teachers, in the original study, were forced to operationalise inclusive education within their classrooms. The original

research, 2010-11 (see Brown 2016) examined how teachers were coping with their attempts to operationalise inclusive education within the standards and performativity agenda. This research investigated 26 teachers' positions on the standards agenda in six mainstream primary schools in three different Local Authorities in the West Midlands. The study's sample included two schools in affluent locations, two in low socio-economic locations, one Catholic and one Church of England primary school. Teachers in the study varied in the years they taught and the length of their teaching experience. The study used Q-methodology and post Q-sort semi-structured interviews. (see the methodology section for further detail).

The findings detailed four main contributions to knowledge and understanding of inclusion. These being:

- the complexity and confusion in defining inclusion across the participant sample;
- the dominance of the standards agenda in implementing inclusion;
- a continued focus on children with SEND when referring to inclusive practice; and,
- a variety of pragmatic perspectives held by the participants about how inclusion could be implemented effectively in practice. This included some participants detailing their perceptions about the detrimental impact of inclusion on the education of children with SEND and their peers.

The original findings also detailed three groups of teachers that had differing 'pragmatic' perspectives on how to make inclusive education effective. Whilst for these participants differing perspectives on inclusion evidenced the 'inclusion confusion' discussed early it was evident that they all believed in the ideological concept of inclusion. However, they did not believe the objectives of inclusion were fully possible to implement in practice. The first group, named here as, *'I would if I could, but in a standards driven system it's practically impossible'*. Teachers in this group mainly taught from year 3 upwards. They believed that the inclusion objectives were too flexible and easily lost in needing to implement the standards agenda. The second group, including seven teachers, entitled, *'I feel a moral obligation towards inclusion, even though I struggle with the practical barriers I face'* where mainly from schools in less affluent areas. Teachers in this group based their perspective on their core beliefs. So, whilst these teachers embraced the concept of inclusion, and tried to implement it, they felt there were barriers that prevented full implementation of this agenda. The third group was entitled *'Inclusion sounds lovely in theory, but it has practical consequences for children with SEND and the education of the rest of the class'*. Nine

teachers held this position, and were mostly those with significant teaching experience ranging ten years' and over. These teachers felt that constraints from the standards agenda and barriers such as funding and training prevented the effective implementation of inclusion. They believed that inclusion had consequences for all children. They believed that inclusion, as an externally driven agenda, led to significant problems in educating children with SEND and their peers simultaneously (Brown, 2013, Brown, 2016).

The original study, therefore confirmed others in the literature base that teachers experienced significant 'inclusion confusion'. In addition, the finding revealed that these teachers were struggling to balance the theoretical rhetoric of inclusive education with the practical necessity to conform to the rules of the pedagogy of accountability which had become dominant within the standards agenda. The second research, completed almost ten years later sought to ascertain whether such perspectives on inclusion and inclusive education had changed over the intervening years and within the of a new Code of Practice which specifically sought to reduce the bias of inclusion (see DoE, 2015, Hodkinson, 2019).

The study's methodological design

This study, like the first, had two main objectives. First, it sought to investigate the views of educational professionals with regard to the inclusion agenda. Second, it sought to investigate practitioners' perspectives on the standards agenda. The findings detailed in this paper focus on the study's first objective that of professional perspective on the standards agenda. The main research questions, therefore, were:

- What are practitioners' perspectives on the inclusion agenda?
- Is inclusive education effective and does it support the achievement of all learners?
- Have professionals' perspectives changed, in relation to the inclusion agenda over the last decade or so?

The second study investigated 32 teachers' positions on the standards agenda in five mainstream primary schools in three different Local Authorities in the West Midlands. The study's sample included one Church of England school in an affluent location and four academy schools in low socio-economic locations. Teachers in this study also varied in the years they taught and the length of their teaching experience. This form of purposive

sampling was not intended to produce a comparative study, but was directed at gaining a wide selection of possible mainstream primary schools and teachers.

The interpretivist focus of both studies was on the participants' positions, acknowledging that these positions and one's actions can alter over time and can be dependent on situational circumstances. Findings can then be compared and contrasted between different periods of time or between different places (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Q-methodology was deployed because it is a means of gathering quantifiable data from highly subjective viewpoints (Brown, 1997). Q-methodology investigates the complexity in different participant's positions on a given subject where differences of opinion are expected (Combes, *et al.*, 2004). Q-methodology is a way of thinking about research that focuses on providing subjectivity to participants. This approach to research enables an exploration of shared meaning through consideration of the social context in which participants find themselves (Kitzinger, 1999). Q-methodology involves participants sorting a set of statements onto a distribution grid, shaped as a reversed pyramid. Participants sort these cards based on whether they agree or disagree with each statement. The distribution went from -4 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). As such, participants are comparing and contrasting the statements – there is no right or wrong response in the card sort (Brown, 1991/1992).

In both studies the methodology and the way the data was collected was the same, except in the original study, post Q-sort interviews were also carried out but this wasn't possible in the second study due to access issues and time restraints. In total teachers in both studies sorted 48 statements covering the inclusion agenda objectives alongside the need for standards in schools. The only change in the second study was to change 'Special Educational Needs' to 'Special Educational Needs and Disabilities' in line with current parlance in schools. The Q sort statements included ones such as,

'I think that all children are considered within this initiative';

'Inclusion within the context of this initiative focuses upon the placement of children into mainstream schools'; and,

'I feel a moral obligation to fulfil the objectives of this initiative.

There were also statements including in the set that described the standards objectives. For example, 'Statutory Assessment Tests are worthwhile for every child' and 'It is necessary for the school to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process'. There were a

few statements, that had to be changed from the original research because of changing terminology created by new initiatives, legislation and the new Code of Practice. For instance, not all schools still implemented p-scales (some had moved to s-scales) and ‘the Statement’ had changed to Education, Health and Care Plan. However, instead of changing these statements participants were informed that the statement was the same as the original study and that they needed to consider them in light of their current practice.

As in the previous study, qualitative data, during the card sort was enhanced by asking participants to describe, on a report sheet, why they had placed statements in the most extreme distribution columns. Direct quotes from these report sheets are included in the group’s interpretations of the statements. The distribution data was then analysed qualitatively and also quantitatively using the PQ method, which is a computerised method of inputting data and producing factors, known as ‘groups’ in this paper (Eden, Donaldson and Walker, 2005). The factor analysis process generated three strong factors (with greater than 1.00 eigenvalue) that accounts for 26 of the 32 participants. Each of the factors (groups) in the findings represents commonalities in participants’ positions on the inclusion agenda objectives.

Findings

The study retained three groups that had an eigenvalue (strength of factor) of 1.00 or higher. Each group was given a descriptor that attempted to capture the essence of the collective standpoint. These descriptors are as follows:

Group one: I feel a moral obligation and believe in inclusion, but in a standards-driven system there are many barriers to fully implementing its objectives.

Group two: I agree with inclusion and believe it is practically possible. There are constraints and barriers, especially with the focus on standards, but I remain focused on all children.

Group three: I agree with the concept of inclusion, but I don’t believe all children with SEND can be included because of the standards driven system in education.

In the interpretation of these factor, each Q-sort statement was detailed with a number and may appear in more than one factor. Where a statement appears in a particular factor, the strength of agreement or disagreement is also numbered within brackets. For example, example: Factor one, (3: +4) would refer to the position of statement, ‘I believe that this

initiative focuses on children with SEND' in the strongest positive position in group one. Alternatively group two (3: -4) would indicate that the same statement was placed in the strongest negative position in that particular group.

Group one: 'I feel a moral obligation and believe in inclusion, but in a standards-driven system there are many barriers to fully implementing its objectives'.

In total nine teachers became included within this group. Their demographic details are detailed in Table One below. Teachers in this group mostly taught in year four or below, with five of the teachers teaching (at least at times) year 4. They ranged in experience from 1-33 years.

[insert table one]

This group agreed that they felt a moral obligation to fulfil the objectives (28; 4) and believed in the ideological concept of inclusion. Participant 32 said "I feel a moral obligation as I became a teacher to ensure that all children receive an equal opportunity". However, the group did not feel that inclusion can be fully implemented practically (15; 3) and agreed that their position has been influenced by their experience (30; 2). Participant 18 stated:

Unfortunately my perspective of inclusion isn't always positive. In theory, it would be fantastic but children have particular needs which need to be addressed often out of the mainstream classroom. Inclusion puts pressure on teaching staff and with budgets being cut this cannot be achieved.

This group chose to highlight the constraints and barriers present in implementing inclusion objectives. Their position on how they defined inclusion was not evident because they placed many of these statements in the neutral or disagreed columns of the distribution grid. This included disagreeing that all children are considered (5; -3) and slightly disagreeing that inclusion focuses on children with SEND (3; -1). They were also indifferent on whether inclusion focuses on placement (9; 0) and slightly disagreeing that the school system can adapt to accommodate children with SEND (16; -1). They did disagree that children with SEND hinder the education of the rest of the class (12; 2). They also disagreed that every child cannot be fully included (10; -3). Participant three stated:

From my experience I have observed how SEND children are fully included and can achieve their full potential. However, I have also seen that there has not been enough guidance, support to enable teachers to feel equipped, confident or prepare children academically or with life skills.

They also agreed that children with 'mild SEND' find it easier to be included than those with severe SEND (18; 3). Participant 3 stated "In some cases of children with SEND the agenda works well and all children can benefit from working within a mainstream setting. However, for some children some children's needs are too complex and it is not of benefit if children need specialist teaching/resources etc...".

The group emphasised that the SAT process has a negative impact on implementing inclusion. They agreed that more emphasis is placed on SATs than any other objective (42; 3), but disagreed that they should focus more attention on children who could achieve the 'national average' (43; -4). They disagreed that it is of paramount importance for children to achieve academically (47; -2) and they strongly disagreed that SATs are worthwhile for every child (7; -5). Participant 9 stated "...Each child's opportunities should be suited to them. Not every child is academic and learn in different ways...most children leave primary school without other skills".

They agreed that it is necessary for the school to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process (45; 2). However, they believed that in the government's opinion to be a 'good teacher' is to achieve in the league tables (36; 2) and disagreed that this was their opinion (35; -3). Participant 5 added "to be a 'good teacher' I believe that it is supporting all of children's needs including, PSE skills. Promoting their well-being is key".

Overall, they felt pressure to try and fulfil the inclusion objectives (26; 4) and felt torn between their personal and professional opinion (27; 2). They agreed that they have little choice with how they implement inclusion objectives (39; 2) and they had to focus their attention on the majority of the class (37; 2). However, participant 32 (who teaches year 6) stated that it is the higher achieving/middle achieving pupils who miss out on enough of her time. She explained:

Inclusion, by the very nature of the word should include all. Every child is entitled to support and level of education. The agenda to create equity is back firing due to

higher achieving/middle achieving pupils being neglected due to an increased focus on those who may not 'fit into' the education system due to individual needs.

This group highlighted a significant amount of barriers to implementing inclusion that extended beyond the constraints they experienced from standards objectives. These included a significant lack of support from the local authority (20; 5). Participant nine said "there is very little support from the LA. Referrals take ages to be received and be followed up on. There is a total sense of non-understanding with regards to how children with significant SEND cope within mainstream settings". The participants also stated there was a need for more time to implement the agenda effectively (23; 3) and disagreed that they have had enough funding to implement (22; -3). Participant 32 added "there is not enough funding or 'man power' to achieve inclusion- we are constantly chipping away to help but without the external agencies being available it is an impossible task". The participants of group one also disagreed that the government provides good guidelines for inclusion (1; -2) and disagreed that the language used for inclusion positively benefits all of their class (6; -2).

Group two: ' I agree with inclusion and believe it is practically possible. There are constraints and barriers, especially with the focus on standards, but I remain focused on all children'.

In total 10 teachers developed this group. Their demographic details are detailed below in Table Two. Teachers, in this group, mostly taught in the lower years (up to year 4) and two defined themselves as the school SENDCO's. They ranged in experience from 2-33 years.

[insert table two]

This group agreed that they had a moral obligation to fulfil inclusion objectives (28; 4) and agreed that their position had changed through practical experience (44; 2). Participant 22 stated:

[Inclusion] is of vital importance in ensuring that all children, regardless of background or need, have access to the same opportunities. Inclusion means that it is our responsibility to enable children to achieve and facilitate success for all.

They did not agree with the statement, 'I believe in the ideological concept of this initiative but do not feel that it can be fully implemented practically (15; -1). It appears from the findings that their disagreement was in the latter part of the statement. For instance, participant 19 stated "I think that the inclusion agenda is crucial for today's world. All children should have the chance to be part of a mainstream school and feel valued and considered". They also emphasised that inclusion was fully possible, for instance they were the only group to agree that children with SEND can be fully included within every aspect of the schooling experience (14; 4). However, participant 20 described an inconsistency in approaches to inclusion stating that :

I think that its implementation can vary widely in different schools. Inclusion is really successful here and done very well. There are schools where that is not the case and children with SEND are not fully included which makes me feel that the agenda is not consistently approached across the country.

This group agreed that the school system adapts to accommodate children with SEND (16; 3) and slightly agreed that inclusion focuses on the placement of children into mainstream schools (9; 1). They also slightly agreed that all children are considered in the inclusion agenda (5; 1) and placed statements on inclusion focusing on children with SEND and disadvantaged children in the neutral column of the distribution grid (3; 0; 4; 0). As example, participant 13 stated "all children should feel included in the classroom. Teaching should be adapted to meet the needs of all children". They disagreed that they have little choice in how they implement inclusion (39; -2) and also disagreed that there is too much flexibility in its objectives (34; -2).

Group two had a strong negative perspective towards the dominance of the standards agenda in school. They disagreed that SATs are worthwhile for every children (7; -4), but agreed that more emphasis is placed on SATs than any other objective (42; 3). They also strongly disagreed that if all of their class do not achieve the 'national average' they are failing in their education (46; -5). Participant 20 stated:

“It really feels that the government pressure on targets etc fails SEND children. I have taught many who feel like failures and give up because they can’t write, but have so much else to offer. They just have different intelligence that can’t be measured in the statutory assessment, so they are ‘lost’.

Participant 29 added “...what is considered good for everyone may not be good for pupils with SEND”. Group two strongly agreed that in the government’s opinion to be a ‘good teacher’ you have to achieve in the league tables (36; 5). They also, disagreed that this was their opinion (35; -3) but was just an educational reality. This group did feel pressure to try and fulfil this agenda (26; 2), but disagreed that they focus on the majority of the class (37; -2) and also disagreed that children with SEND hinder the education of the rest of the class (12; -3). Participant 29 stated:

“The inclusion agenda is based on sound evidence but relies on the person centred approach to the graduated response. Regrettably, being empathic, genuine and positive non-judgemental in your regard of children and their families does not carry the same value/weighting in inspections/funding etc as results!”

This group highlighted fewer barriers to practically implementing inclusion than the others. However, they did specify a couple of barriers that they felt were important. For instance, they did however agree that there was a lack of support from the local authority (20; 2). As participant 29 detailed:

“I’m a part time SENDCO with 50 children identified on the register with many having high needs yet we do not have enough evidence to have EHCP requests accepted”.

Another barrier Group two, felt was significant was funding. They did not agree that they had enough funding (22; -2) but agreed with the statement that they need more time to implement the agenda effectively (23; 2). As participant 12 stated “it is the correct agenda for the vast majority of children. However, often it is seen as cost cutting: real inclusion costs money!”.

Group three: ‘I agree with the concept of inclusion, but I don’t believe all children with SEND can be included because of the standards driven system in education.’

In total 7 teachers developed within this group. Their demographic details are listed below in Table Three. Teachers in this group mostly taught from year 3 upwards and had a range of experience from 1-20 years.

[insert table three]

This group agreed that they felt a moral obligation to fulfil inclusion objectives (28; 3) and their position had changed through practical experience (44; 3). They agreed in the ideological concept of inclusion, but did not feel that it could be fully implemented in the practical environ of school (15; 2). As participant 6 stated “I feel a lot of these things/policies/agenda are written without thought for the practicality”.

This group focused more on detailing their position with regard to inclusion for children with SEND rather than focusing on constraints from the standards agenda. They agreed that inclusion focuses on the placement of children in mainstream schools (9; 4) and strongly agreed that the school system also adapts to accommodate children with SEND (16; 5). As participant 6 stated: “I feel schools do their utmost to accommodate SEN[D]. However, there is an ever changing list of demands and support for the changes”. Group three, slightly agreed that inclusion focuses on children with SEND (3; 1) and agreed that children with ‘mild SEND’ find it easier to be included than children with more severe SEND (18; 2). However, they did not agree that children with SEND can be fully included in every aspect of the schooling experience (14; -3). Group three were the only group to agree that the p-scale (or equivalent) system benefited children with SEND (33; 2). As participant 14 added: “in order for SEND children to receive an inclusive and personalised education it’s essential that they have daily opportunities that are tailored for their needs”.

Group three, though, did feel under pressure to implement the inclusion agenda (26; 2), but disagreed that children with SEND hinder the education of the rest of the class (12; -2). Participant 25 stated “It is a good agenda in an ideal world, meaning that all children have access to a good education. However, it has put immense pressure on schools as the current way to measure standards is not fair for all, therefore goes against inclusion”.

Group three agreed that it is necessary for schools to be accountable to external inspection and their associated assessment process (45; 2) and were less agreeable that the government’s opinion to be a ‘good teacher’ is to achieve highly in the league tables (36; 1). For these

teachers, then, their disagreement with the standards agenda was its focus that all children had to participate in SATs. The group also strongly disagreed that SATs were worthwhile for every child (7; -5) but agreed that more emphasis is placed on SATs than any other objective (42; 3). Participant 17 stated "...I feel that for children with certain needs, taking statutory tests can cause undue stress and affect mental health and can make children feel like failures, and also does not highlight the successes of the child". Furthermore, this group also disagreed that if all of their class did not achieve the 'national average' they were failing in their education (46; -2) and disagreed that it is of paramount importance for children to achieve academically (47; -4).

Group three mentioned quite a few barriers to fully implementing inclusion. For example, they disagreed that they had had adequate training (24; -3) and agreed that they need more time to implement inclusion effectively (23; 4). As participant 14 stated:

"Every child has the right to be 'included', regardless of background, ability or any other factors, Under the constraints of the roles and responsibilities within the progression of teaching, more time should be given in my opinion to inclusion as other aspects are often prioritised".

Moreover, they disagreed that they have enough funding (22; -4) and also disagreed that the government provides them with good guidelines to implement inclusion (1; -2). Participant 27 stated "I believe that there are some children with SEN[D] that it is just *not* possible to fully include in mainstream due to time, money, needs of the majority, etc".

Discussion

Comparing and contrasting the findings of the two studies

There are significant consistencies in the findings of the current study with that of the original study. First, the findings confirm that for these professionals there remains confusion as to how to define inclusion and how such definitions squared with the standards agenda. For instance, Groups one's position, on inclusion, was overshadowed by the effects of the standards agenda meaning that statements which related to defining inclusion were either less important to this group, or simply revealed that they did not know how to define inclusion itself. However, the qualitative comments reveal, that for this group, inclusion related to the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools. Groups two and three agreed that inclusion was focused on the placement of children in mainstream schools and the school adapting to accommodate children with SEND. As in Hodkinson and Devarakonda (2011,

p.54) research, for these professionals inclusion had become, “subject to conceptual confusion and terminological ambiguity”. The effect of such was that teachers were left to define inclusion as evidenced in their own practice rather than in any national agendas.

The findings of this study, as with those of the original, also appear to suggest that the language of inclusion was subject to amalgamation with integration. As evidence earlier, the move to inclusion was meant to mean less of a focus on the placement of children with SEND into mainstream schools and more emphasis placed on the school environment changing to accommodate the needs of learners, including children with SEND (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019). Teachers in groups two and three, of the current study, believed though that inclusion focused on the principles of integration and inclusion. This belief centred on the dominance placed on the standards agenda in schools. Teachers in all of the groups emphasised difficulties in accommodating the needs of children with SEND at the same time as meeting standards objectives. They also emphasised the detrimental effect of standards objectives, such as SATs, have on children with SEND. They therefore questioned whether some children with SEND, because of their needs, should be included in mainstream schools at all. This emphasis on considering inclusion as a focus on children’s individual needs seemingly runs contra to what inclusive education was meant to be; which was to move away from locating the “causation of disability” within the child (Callaghan, 2009; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Teachers in this research did mention the many barriers and constraints to implementing inclusion in practice and that they could not change and adapt schools to accommodate to all the needs of all children. These findings suggest that teachers are forced to focus on individual’s needs and the placement of children with SEND at the same time as having to fulfil the objectives of the standards agenda, especially, but not least, SATs. These findings suggest that inclusion has not moved forward but has in reality revealed that competing educational agendas has encouraged a return to integration, or at the very least a focus on physical or locational inclusion (Clough, 1998; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009).

It is therefore not surprising that all of the teachers in the current study held pragmatic perspectives on inclusion. This finding is directly comparable to the original study in that, teachers in the current study believed in inclusion, but highlighted barriers and constraints that stalled its full implementation. There was though more emphasis, in the current study relating to a lack of local authority support than in the original study. This belief centred around, the move from statements to EHCP’s. Teacher’s articulated their frustration in their

abilities to access additional support and funding for children whom they felt needed EHCP plans. Other teachers highlighted barriers to inclusion which included lack of training, lack of practical experience, funding and resources. These findings again remain consistent with the original study.

The findings of the current study like those of the previous one continue to emphasise the dominance of the standards agenda. Each group within both studies, still emphasised the practical consequences, for children with SEND and their peers, in trying to implement the inclusion agenda alongside the standards agenda. It is interesting though to note that none of the groups in the current study believed that inclusion of children with SEND hindered the education of all children. This finding stands in stark contrast to the original study and thus provides a glimmer of hope for the future of inclusive education. Other qualitative comments also provide some hope for the development of inclusion. For example, teachers in the current study did emphasise the need for a further focus on inclusion so that all needs can be met and that education acknowledges the successes of all learners.

However, despite such positive comments it is concerning that the current study, unlike the original one, noted the pressure teachers felt in trying to implement the inclusion and standards agenda concurrently. In the original study whilst teachers felt the pressure of implementation of the standards agenda they did not do so in relation to inclusion. Furthermore, the teachers in the current study also detailed the negative effective that SATS can have on some children SEND. They questioned, therefore, whether inclusion meant that all children should have the same experiences, or whether experiences (including assessment) should be tailored to individual need. Glazzard (2013) notes that one of the significant difficulties in balancing inclusion against the standards objectives is that children who cannot meet these standards can often end up being excluded whether they are inside or outside mainstream schooling. Teachers, in the current study, implied that limited exclusion, of some children with SEND, might actually lead to more effective inclusive education. Whilst it is already possible to exclude some children with more severe SEND from SATs it is evident from the current findings that teachers believe that as children with SEND experiencing detrimental effects, including mental health concerns and perceptions of failure, that their ability to exclude children from assessment should be increased.

Concluding comments

For the authors, one of the current problems with inclusion lies in the education system celebrating high achievement over valuing difference (Goodley, 2007). It is this that creates barriers to full participation and achievement and thus results in failure or exclusion for those who cannot meet these national standards. If we consider inclusion to be a form of human rights, surely, we cannot continue to practice inclusion “in relation to equality, diversity and the rights of all children” at the same time as excluding some children based on their needs from the SATs process. It’s the system therefore that is broken and one which needs to change to accommodate the needs of all learners (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019, p.9).

Implications for teachers

These findings clearly indicate that teachers are confused by what is meant by inclusion. The agenda is left for individual teachers to interpret what inclusion means to them and how effectively they can implement it in their practice. The inclusion agenda needs to be seen as a priority equal to school standards. There needs to be a clear message provided to the teaching profession that defines inclusion to avoid further confusion surrounding the term (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). The definition needs to move away from focusing on the placement of children with SEND either into the school or in specific activities. Instead inclusion needs to focus on the school system adapting to fully accommodate the needs of all children. This would then focus on the accessibility, attitudes and values espoused within schools themselves (Williams-Brown and Hodkinson, 2019).

In current practice it is understandable why the standards agenda dominates and limits inclusive practice. Since the late 1980’s the standards agenda has remained consistent by retaining its original objectives of accountability and achievement. In doing so, the focus has remained on providing teachers, schools and LAs with objectives that they must meet (Strain and Simkins, 2008). The introduction of the inclusion agenda did not change standards objectives. Instead, add-on systems, such as adaptations to the curriculum and assessment processes were put in place to ‘accommodate’ children with SEND (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Inclusion has therefore had to ‘fit into’ existing standards objectives like SATs. This is why inclusion has become reduced to whether children with SEND can or

cannot participate in SATs. It is apparent in these findings that SATs are not inclusive and accessible for all children. This is because the assessment focuses on narrow parameters of success that concentrate on academic achievement (Fieldings et al. 1999; Wyse and Torrance, 2009). This is why it is presently necessary to protect and shield some children with SEND by excluding them from the assessment process. If we are going to fully embrace inclusion the SATs process itself has to change. Ideally because of its exclusive nature we should remove it, but at the very least it should include a wider mark of success that can celebrate all children's educational achievements. This would then promote the creation of a non-discriminatory environment where difference would be positively embraced.

Inclusion, therefore, seems impossible without a change in what constitutes success and achievement and the way such are measured. The scales of social justice, in relation to inclusion appear fixed and weighted into an existing order of performativity and commodification- where not all children are considered to be equal. In order for inclusion to be successful there needs to be a radical change to policy so as to move it away from its focus on accountability, standards and economic prosperity (Hodkinson, 2012). Inclusion therefore seems to have become more like its historical ancestor – integration. The study's current findings also determine that the standards agenda is narrowing the parameters of educational success. If inclusion success becomes diluted to a focus on including and excluding children with SEND from assessment, as the study's teachers indicate, this then would draw focus on the individual needs of children with SEND and in turn the identification, assessment and placement, inclusion and exclusion of children with SEND. Here, then we would continue to return the scales of social justice to a past setting – where medical models and exclusion dominated. Inclusion, for the authors, can only be achieved if the education system is suitable for all learners in the first instance. In order to be able to include all learners it is the system of SATs that must be reconsidered as the measurement of achievement and academic success.

It would appear that unlike Shakespeare's notion of justice, the inclusion agenda is not scaled equally to that of performativity and commodification. As such it will never have surety as a concept of human rights within education and thus its cause cannot prevail . . .

'Poise the cause in justice's equal scales,
Whose beam stands sure, whose rightful cause prevails.'

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Table one: Demographic information for group one

Participant number	Female/male/other	Year taught	Years' experience
3	Female	Reception	33 years
5	Female	Nursery	3 years
9	Male	Year 4	4 years
10	Female	Year 1-4	20 years
11	Female	Year 3-4	5 years
15	Female	Year 4	1 year
18	Female	All	11 years
31	Female	Year 2	26 years
32	Female	Year 6	10 years

Table two: Demographic information for group two

Participant number	Female/male/other	Years taught	Years' experience
12	Female	All	33 years
13	Female	Year 2	12 years
16	Female	Reception (identified as SENDCO)	4 years
19	Female	Year 3	20 years
20	Female	Year 2	10 years
21	Male	All	15 years
22	Female	Year 4	2 years
23	Not identified	Year 2	3 years
24	Male	Year 5	12 years
29	Female	Identified as SENDCO	Not identified

Table three: Demographic information for group three

Participant number	Female/male/other	Years taught	Years' experience
6	Female	Year 3-4	2 years
14	Female	Year 3	5 years
17	Female	Year 1-2	12 years
25	Female	Year 5	20 years
26	Female	Year 4	2 years
27	Female	Year 3	6 years
28	Female	Year 5	1 year