

## Inclusion, Cultural Diversity and Schooling

### I

The first thing I should say, before I say anything about inclusion, the curriculum and the pupil experience, because this is more than just about the classroom, is thank you for everything you *will go on to do* in stimulating teaching and learning in schools and elsewhere. That ‘thank you’ for what you will do in the future is partly in the knowledge that you, as a body of people *will go on to do* great things – as it is clear that people in this room have the ability to make a difference to many, many thousands of people’s lives. And, it is also partly a reminder that you should think yourself as duty-bound to do so.

What is today about? *Inclusion*. Where should I begin?

We are not born equal; neither do we live in equal circumstances, and both of these heavily influence our potential in relation to our educational outcomes and even our lifespan. These are the unsurprising headlines from two very recent surveys.

One survey suggests that the social class into which we are born influences our potential lifespan – both boys and girls born today into classes A and B can expect to live into their eighties, almost ten percent longer than those born into social class C. The presence, absence or role of parents can also be very influential; and research published only last November about pupils living in care tells us that their GCSE results - an easy, if not necessarily the only significant measure of success – are as poor as they can get for an identifiable group in society. While around 50% of pupils nationwide achieve 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, the figure for those in care is closer to 10%. That’s quite shocking, isn’t it?

Of all the things to start with, this type of information is as good as any. No matter how much we and others viewing from outside may consider our nation to be one where opportunity can be realised, equality of opportunity is not necessarily something that we would automatically assume exists. The two – the realising of opportunity and equity of opportunity in the first place - are not, of course, the same thing. With regard to social class, which my opening remarks are about, you don’t need to be some sort of unreconstructed Marxist to see this in society. And if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, then this macro view of the inclusion debate [or should we call it the exclusion debate?] can be clearly seen in the way that OFSTED League Tables act as the estate agent’s dear friend – house prices can increase markedly in school catchment areas worthy of financial investment in educational attainment.

You will all know schools which are the exception, but you will all know those which are not. And in general we know that a national map showing relative social deprivation would not look so different to the negative one mapping relative educational achievement. Educational attainment, as defined in League Table terms is highest in Kingston on Thames and the other usual suspects. By the way, many of

those schools can be found in this - *The Sutton Trust's analysis of The Social Composition of Top Comprehensive Schools*. It makes for interesting reading.

The other side of the coin is also clear and local, micro 'factors' be highly influential. A very good, well-publicised, even notorious example can be seen in the recently closed Rydings School where misbehaviour was only one of the issues, it accompanied low educational attainment; and it typified the crisis that has become increasingly apparent in the white working class male population in some regions. One explanation for the Rydings? It has been the popularity of grammar schools in the Halifax area which have helped to create a sink school situation, the effects of which will take an age to undo. I have to move on, but there's a very lengthy discussion to be had about the complex set of relationships between broader society, schooling, inclusion and educational attainment. I can only touch on them here, but they are worth remembering.

I am going to stay with the broad brush treatment for the moment.

I'm not one for auditing things without reason, but it is worth noticing that the new standards, the *Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status* clearly acknowledge the influence of these complex relationships. They recognise that teachers should understand 'that the progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of developmental ... influences' (Q18), and they go to the trouble of mentioning a broad range of influences - 'social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic'. They have mentioned 'social' first, and so I feel justified in doing so as well.

Let's stay with the professional standards since whether we like them or not they advise all of us in this room. The teacher's duty, they go on to state in the very next standard (Q19) is to 'promote equality and inclusion in their teaching', identifying the need for making 'effective personalised provision for those they teach'. Specific examples of those to be included are those with EAL, and those with SEN or 'disabilities'. The key phrase, I think is the need to take '*practical account of diversity*' (my emphasis). In case we need more specific guidance, they advise that the range of teaching strategies should promote 'equality and inclusion' (Q25a).

A more in-depth reading of the standards document could see inclusion elsewhere, indeed everywhere. I am only commenting on those where it is explicit. It is for you, if you wish, to root out how the operational aspects of your practise in schools, when differentiation and other kinds of adaptation provide 'opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential'. (Q10)

So, where are we so far? Here is a quick, if highly reductionist summary.

For one thing, there are macro-determinants – social class, etc., etc. That is very apparent if we do what I have just done and read backwards, from an analysis of educational and other outcomes, then into systems, then into teachers' practise. Second, there is weight given to a notion called inclusion – we can see *it* (inclusion) enshrined in that guide [wave yellow laminated guide] (or should I say god?) and it is being ingrained in us that it should inform practise.

It's the usual kop out in an introduction like this to use shortage of time to skim over the obvious, but I feel compelled to deconstruct the obvious. On a day about 'inclusion' it might be worth exploring what the term means and where it comes from. It's a phrase that trips so readily off the tongue; it might be easy to assume that there is some unspoken agreement about it. I'm not so sure; and this has become more apparent to me the more I think about it.

Let's take a cynic's view. Of course, I will historicise. Let me posit the theory that inclusion is the child of a policy quite at odds with it. In the very early 1980s, New Right politicians were seeking to 'rationalise' (that's a euphemism, by the way) the National Health Service. In fact, they were setting about dismantling the NHS and only took until 1989 to do this when so-called Trusts were created. This wasn't real devolution (a supposed objective of the '80s), in fact it was the opposite – and a strong rationale was cost-cutting. The philosophy behind this cost-cutting was apparently based on Italian approaches to healthcare: where possible, care was better done in the community, rather than by the state. *Care in the community* – a very familiar phrase became a stock phrase.



*Care in the community in London, 1988*

Anyone old enough will remember the immediate impact of care in the community. It led to many who had been institutionalised very quickly finding themselves *without* an institution and also not being cared for by the community. My overriding memory was of several cardboard cities, and some of their residents found it difficult to cope. Curiously, however, they found themselves in the mainstream – curiously, they found themselves *included*. At the time some estimates suggested that perhaps a quarter of those on the streets as a result of care in the community had some kind of mental health issue.

You see my point: they didn't particularly feel cared for; and the community didn't particularly want to care *for* them. Not that that was right. But let's be generous to the mainstream community – they just were not prepared for what happened.

There was a similar story unfolding in the schools' sector, especially from about 1984, when more and more specialist units found themselves financially imperilled and therefore 'centralised' (another euphemism). It led, in many Local Education Authorities, to a move to include more pupils, from those recently closed specialist units, in the mainstream. I was teaching in schools from the late '70s into the mid-90s and remember.

The good points? Obviously it gelled well with the principles discussed earlier – as it placed some of the excluded, if that is an appropriate term, in the mainstream, where mainstream opportunities could better be realised.

But there were other effects, which would determine the 'quality' of educational provision. You will not be surprised that it led to:

- A loss of experts (redundancy/demoralised);
- The use, quite often, of insufficiently trained staff in catering for pupil need;
- An interesting remodelling of the workforce, which nobody had been trained for.

By the way, nobody knew it was 'inclusion' or particularly called it inclusion; but it was only then in its infancy.

After 1997, the term inclusion gained currency (the term used as a counter to the way in which the 1980s had been seen as divisive); in fact the term inclusion became Labour's buzzword – but, truth be told, in 1997 it clothed, rather than substantially changed, the New Right's earlier approach. Hence, by 1997 we have a number of inclusions: social inclusion; educational inclusion, etc., etc. ***However, arguably it was inclusion by default.***

That might be an unpalatable, cynical line of argument, but still it is one. Whatever the case, the inclusion industry was underway! It has led to books galore; books on the gifted and talented; books on ages ranging from early childhood to the geriatric; books on disability; centres for inclusion; centres for inclusion studies; it has led to PGCE conference days on inclusion studies. I know I have taken a while to get to the point, but there is an argument that says that all the good that we probably know and assume underpins what we call 'inclusion' comes from a product with a very chequered past. The salutary lesson is one we should remember: inclusion is what we (the people, the educators) make it, as it grows into its adolescence. My guess is that its original construction and moulding by politicians bears little semblance to what we hope it should be.

This is not exactly a cheerful start to the day is it – social division underpinned by deep historical, national and probably international influences beyond our control. The perpetuation of exclusivity, especially in rich boroughs (and, of course, boroughs could be made richer through parents' contributions). Those of you who admire Greek mythology's accuracy in capturing aspects of the human condition might think of the mainstream teacher's job being like that of Sisyphus in legend; like him, you spend all day rolling a heavy stone up a hill, only to find, when you go back next morning that mysterious forces beyond your control (the politicians) have moved the

stone back to where it had been yesterday. But this is not my job today; this is hardly the way to fire you up!

## II

Today you have the opportunity to engage, in a hands-on manner with issues which we feel embrace the spirit as well as the operational detail of inclusion issues and I would like to take the opportunity here to thank all the tutors and visiting experts who have come to give us an array of workshops. Do make the very most of them.

In the time I have, I am going to take the liberty to explore one inclusion issue at the top of the nation's agenda, which I don't think is covered by the workshops.

Let me start by indulging in my subject. Historians like anniversaries and so I wouldn't want to disappoint myself by not using this as an opportunity; so I will sneak in one of this year's anniversaries which has some relevance to today's subject of inclusion. 2008 is the sixtieth anniversary of the landing of the *Empire Windrush*, a passenger ship which arrived at Tilbury Docks in the summer of 1948, with about 500 immigrants from the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> This is an important anniversary, as it does so much to remind us of one of the most important characteristics of our history - the islands of Britain have witnessed the arrival of boatloads of immigrants for several thousand years and these people have constantly helped to change and develop society. Additionally and importantly, in any consideration of 'social inclusion', the way that immigrants are *included* or *feel included* (which is not necessarily the same thing) acts as one barometer of the ways in which some people *may be* or *may feel* marginalised by systems in society.



*Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island*

The relevance is not exactly hard to see. To many, whether politicians or not, immigration and its effects now are crucial issues. Immigration tests many things: systems, people, tolerance, attitudes and so on. Even just concentrating on approaches to addressing the educational questions it poses to systems and practise is in itself staggering and not without controversy. Gordon Brown has pronounced on this and the obvious implications for educational provision – whether he wanted to or not. Let's enter the controversy. I will be a little unfashionable and suggest that one

place we might look to for advice on what, as well as what not, to do is the United States where language acquisition has been a concern of immigrants and those already embedded as hyphenated-Americans.

Looking at Newcomers' Schools in the USA might provide lessons. Right now, one third of children entering New York's schools at the age of 11 do not have English as their first language – that's about 100,000 pupils; some do not have it as their second language either. Since the 1960s in Queens, New York, there have been a number of approaches. For example:

- **Total immersion** (inclusion): thrown in at the deep end, perhaps with some lessons replaced with small group tuition. Mostly in mainstream schools.
- Schools with the equivalent of specialist college status, using, for example **Two-Way Developmental Education**. Switch Classes could be one method. These schools are a rarity and very highly subscribed to.
- **Newcomers Schools**. Pupils placed for a limited period in a language school which teaches them the New York state curriculum partly in their native language, but increasingly in English.

There are potential dangers in all these. Newcomers Schools allow pupils to optimise potential, learning, say, history in their own language at their age/ability level rather than at the level of their language ability in English. The downside? Ghettoisation/segregation, etc.; potential targeting by xenophobes, etc. Educating people separately always worries me.

The new generation of Newcomers Schools now takes pupils on day-release. 80% inclusion is the measure in New York in the borough of Queens. Is there anything we might learn?

Immigration is not new to us at all. Britain has witnessed waves of migration and invasion for thousands of years: there were Africans here long before the English arrived, though it is true to say that the largest number of non-European immigrants have arrived in the post-war period.



*Polish immigrants arriving in Britain, 2007*



*Immigrants in England, 2007*



*Polish migrant workers in Britain*

Decolonisation, since the 1940s has led to the phenomenon of the 'Empire strikes back' - peoples from the former colonies exercising their right to migrate to the former mother country. Since Britain had both the largest and most diverse empire in the nineteenth century, the consequence has been that it now has a very diverse set of people as inhabitants.

The picture is very complex, and even moreso with the latest waves of eastern European migrants. The idea of what constitutes a cultural minority has also changed over time and will continue to change. In the Leeds-Bradford area where I worked until recently, people from the Asian sub-continent form a significant minority overall, but a majority in certain districts. 18,000 eastern Europeans went to Leeds last year. In much larger areas, such as London, the term 'ethnic minority' is increasingly becoming a redundant and inaccurate phrase because of 'hybridisation' and cultural assimilation, which has been the result of long-term integration and/or the growth of groups. Interculturality, as a third generation of black British people grow up in the twenty-first century, is more than an idea, it is a reality.

The comparison I draw with the States is reasonable - in New York the inter of intercultural has long had a sharp focus, with so many complexly constructed hyphenated-Americans (and like it or not, there are parallels to be drawn). Each self-identified hyphen designates the acknowledgement of more interculturality: Italian-American; south Korean-American; Black-American; African-American; Irish-American; Native-American and so on. Me - I'm an Anglo-Indian-Londoner. There are over three hundred and fifty home languages spoken by London's schoolchildren; and, just like many other major cities, and again, like New York, there are more new children, who do not speak English, immigrating each year.

Complicated? Yes.

There are many other issues. Certainly, work by both academics and government has indicated that Islamophobia and institutional racism are prevalent problems in British society; and, there is both colour and culture prejudice. The influential Parekh Report

(2000) summarised that ethnic minorities experience problems in many crucial walks of life - education, housing, health and work and British society, if media representations are anything to go by, has quickly formed a very negative set of attitudes towards them. I am new around here, but I am starting to find that even in and around Worcester, albeit on a smaller scale at the moment, the picture is growing more complex.

I will draw a line under this by saying that nation states and also we as educators need to recognise the likelihood of increasing plurality, the hyphenisation of its individuals and their engagement with a complex material culture and society. Perhaps a question for us, then, is:

- how can the curriculum and the ‘whole curriculum’ cater for such an ever-increasing diverse set of pupils? (Importantly, that’s not only in educating the newcomers; it’s about influencing values of others too.)

Let me finish with a true story about somebody I taught – stories for me are the most potent reminders about issues in education. Let’s call it David’s story.

David was in my first A level history class exactly thirty years ago. He was:

- aged 18 when starting the Lower VI;
- had been to 10 secondary schools (due to his father’s job);
- he had only 1 CSE;
- He couldn’t write a sentence; couldn’t use full-stops or other punctuation – looking back, he was severely dyslexic (years before we had heard of dyslexia);
- He wanted to do History and Geography A level – immediately;
- He wanted to be a lawyer.

We taught him how to write a sentence; encouraged him through his Maths and English O levels. He got 3 A levels, one in law by correspondence. **All in two years.** He went to Birmingham Poly/now Birmingham City University and got a degree in law. He is now a solicitor.

His hard work and our hard work got him there. It was especially his hard work.

I’ve reflected on this vignette for almost a generation; long before I ever thought of making it a subject of grounded theory or went down the critical incident analysis route, I have thought about what it has taught me. Here, I will relate that to some thoughts on key features of inclusion. These are not measurables; they are not scientific, but they still inform my everyday practise and my whole approach to influencing systems, whenever I have had that opportunity.

Thinking of David, some cornerstones of making inclusion happen for me are:

- **Faith** – sometimes a great deal of it, not just by the pupil either. Have faith in your pupils. Sometimes that is very, very hard.
- **Hope** – when either pupil or teacher loses this, then a downward spiral ensues.

In my years of teaching, I think that when hope goes, so does confidence in both pupil and teacher – it drains away along with any chance of attainment.

- You are expecting me to say charity (aren't you?). **Persistence.** Not all your colleagues will believe in the pupil's ability or your ability. Sometimes the staying power of your energy levels and your self-belief will be tested or be run down.
- **Status** – or lack of it. Some tables of attainment are principally concerned with high attainers, not those at the bottom end of the table or, importantly, in the middle of the table either – those in the middle, the silent majority are sometimes forgotten and are not always included in a race for catering for the gifted and talented.

Of these, for me, the greatest one is **Hope**.

### III

How was it possible to go so long in any talk without mentioning *Every Child Matters*? That is, I suppose because we have always known about its contents; but each different generation gives it its own spin. For Robin Pedley, writing in his book about government circular 10/64, the underpinning notion is one that we might now call 'inclusion'. His book, written in the mid-60s, by the way was called *The Comprehensive Idea*. I am not suggesting for one moment that we haven't moved on massively, but it is important to remember that in some things the devil is in the detail – how we facilitate and effect individuals' experiences are the ways we engage with inclusion (whatever that is) on both a systems as well as a day-to-day basis. My advice to you therefore is this.

- Do what you should do (operationally) *on a daily basis* – that is the lived reality of those vignettes, like that of David.
- Ask hard questions. I'll ask you just one. *What can you do to deliver a relevant and interesting curriculum to attract and retain the interest and develop the achievement of a diverse pupil body?* IF YOU ARE COMMITTED TO INCLUSION, YOU WILL NEED TO ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION. (There are many other questions.)
- Let's be practical – here's some advice. In your Career Entry Profile if you were to choose, let's say, three areas for your own personal development, think about making one of them the promotion of your understanding, appreciation and practise in an aspect of inclusion.

Where does this leave me or, more properly, where do I remain?

First, one of the most important reminders can be found in the Professional Standards document itself, at the tail end of Q21b, which reminds you to not only know 'how to

identify and support' pupils, but to me, even more importantly, know 'when to refer them to colleagues for specialist support'. [There are very few things I remember from my own PGCE all those years ago, but I remember that advice.]

Second, let's end with a very broad brush. Generally speaking, we in England, and this is probably universal, in case you think I'm being Anglophobic, have an education system which has at its core the imperatives of social reproduction, and the maintenance of social structures, with all the accompanying patterns of inequality. Inclusion – looking at the big picture - therefore, won't ever be straightforward.

Third, I call on you to be inspirational and creative in your interpretation of government documentation, to hunt out the gaps, to be what we want our pupils to be - critical - and we should 'recognize and exploit these opportunities, (by) squeezing the ... curriculum'. Remember, you are the expert and the practitioner. My intention in talking today has not been to divorce theory from real life. I would argue that we squeeze every drop from governmental initiatives and the curriculum to keep the debate about inclusion at the top of the agenda: that, as Martin Luther King said we 'turn thin paper into thick action'.

Fourth, and this is my final point, you will be pleased to hear: I suggest you ultimately find ways into decision-making positions – that's what you can do in the future. I will end as I started. There is the wealth of expertise and ability in this room to do that. Because for me, teaching and learning is far too important to leave to the civil servants, the politicians and the managers, that is if you want to do more than just 'doing inclusion' – that is if you want to ensure that you make a lasting difference., because sometimes that difference can change lives.

Thank you and I do hope that that you enjoy the rest of the conference.

Keynote lecture given at the University of Worcester's Secondary PGCE conference on Inclusion, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

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Please contact the author for further details, references or the full powerpoint slide presentation.

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<sup>i</sup> A film clip of the press coverage of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* is shown at this point. [see <http://www.understandingslavery.com/citizen/explore/routes/gallery/?id=3779> ].

This article is dedicated to my very first primary school teacher, Mrs Lilian Tuppian, a West Indian, who in the early 1960s was a relatively new immigrant. She took the time and trouble to help me to learn how to read when I was the only one in the class still unable to do so. She knew that every child mattered and practised inclusion.