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## Foundations for Inclusion

This book is aimed at the teacher of 7–14 year olds who is planning to meet the diverse learning needs of children that are placed within his or her mainstream classroom. It would also be useful to the special educational needs coordinator who wishes to support and advise his or her colleagues about developing inclusive teaching approaches. Teachers are likely to be in different places in terms of their knowledge, skills and beliefs. What we need to ensure is that we offer the right support to enable teachers to develop their knowledge, skills and beliefs about inclusion. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, it is easier to change the way someone thinks about inclusion by helping them do it than by trying to persuade them to believe in it and waiting for their practice to change. Essentially, once you are supported with the ‘how’ of inclusion you are likely, through having a go and experiencing some success, to find that you do believe in inclusion!



### Case Study

Mrs Brown is an experienced teacher of 7–11 year olds. This academic year she is concerned because of the range of needs she has to meet in her class. In addition to a large ‘low achievers’ group, two children are identified as dyslexic, one is diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and one further child with moderate learning difficulties. The advice she has received from specialists involved in each learner has made her feel overwhelmed and that she cannot begin to meet all their needs. However, with the support of the special educational needs coordinator and the teaching assistant she works with she is able to identify the needs that these learners have in common and develop an action plan of strategies that will address the needs of all her more challenging learners. As the new approaches embed she finds that she enjoys the challenge of developing new teaching strategies, and that all the learners in her class are benefiting from them.

Inclusion and inclusive teaching have been defined in many different ways. The term integration preceded the term inclusion and seemed to imply that the learner whose needs were 'different' from the majority would be placed in a mainstream classroom and adaptations (to the environment and/or curriculum and/or teaching methods) would need to be made so that they could participate. Inclusion is sometimes seen as part of the human rights agenda, and additionally as a means of achieving human rights (through what might be seen as the social engineering function of schooling). Inclusion can mean different things in different contexts and refer to many different groups of learners, for instance: ethnic minorities, boys, girls, learners with special educational needs or disabilities, those with behavioural or emotional or social difficulties, those from lower socio-economic groups and so on. In the context of this book we are addressing the issues around teaching learners with diverse learning needs in mainstream classrooms, specifically those who might be experiencing difficulties learning from the teaching strategies usually employed. The premise is that although the usual teaching strategies may enable many of the learners to make progress, more attention to the particular strategies that are described in this book will lead to better progress for nearly all learners, including those who might usually find learning difficult.

In many books on inclusive teaching you will find chapters outlining approaches and techniques suitable for children with different sorts of needs, chapters headed for instance 'supporting the child with dyslexia/dyspraxia/moderate learning difficulties/cerebral palsy' and so on. This approach suggests that a myriad of different teaching approaches are necessary according to the identified conditions of learners within that class, and also that there are particular ways of teaching learners with special educational needs. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) regards this as what is 'different from and additional to' what other learners need. The approach of this book is to reduce the need for provision that is 'different from and additional to'.

Research has failed to find any substantive difference in teaching practices between special educational needs teachers and mainstream teachers (Cook and Schirmer, 2003; Lewis and Norwich, 2005; Florian, 2007). No specialist pedagogy for pupils with special educational needs has been identified, just what might be characterised as teaching strategies that vary in intensity along a continuum from high to low (Florian, 2008). It seems good teaching is good teaching for all, if a strategy works with those who experience difficulty in learning, and it works with those who do not, then all can benefit from these strategies identified as best practice.

This book will help you to enhance the effectiveness of education for all learners, by ensuring that you can provide so well for all learners that only those with the greatest needs will require a substantially different approach to learning. There is now a great deal of knowledge about good practice in teaching. In summary the research refers to approaches such as:

- Flexible grouping, not fixed ability grouping or setting
- Collaborative approaches, including discussion and debate
- Metacognitive approaches, which includes self-assessment, pupil-focused target setting and review, sharing learning objectives and attending to existing knowledge
- Positive adult to learner and learner to learner relationships
- Continuous dynamic assessment (assessment for learning)
- High teacher expectations for all, including positive attitudes towards inclusion
- Specifically trained teaching assistants working in close partnership with teachers who continue to take responsibility for teaching and learning
- Direct experiences for learners based on their lives and realistic problems, engagement with the local community and the wider world
- Engaging higher order thinking through questioning and problem solving.

There is also a body of research to call upon regarding the nature of learning difficulty and barriers to learning. I have summarised these difficulties as existing within the framework used in this book: difficulties with memory, motivation and/or communication. Difficulties in any of these three areas may be experienced by any learner in unique combinations.



### Case Study

Rosie (age 11) has a diagnosis of moderate dyslexia. She has difficulties related to her ability to acquire literacy skills; specifically she has a reading age two years below her chronological age and has difficulty learning spellings. As she reads less than her peers her vocabulary is also less well developed. She is also a somewhat reluctant learner, especially when required to record her learning in writing. Her difficulties relate to all three aspects – memory (difficulty learning spellings), communication (writing difficulties and poor vocabulary) and motivation (specifically around written work). She would benefit from being taught memory strategies such as *mnemonics* and expanding rehearsal for spellings, and communication strategies such as specific vocabulary teaching. Using 'think pair share' in class time would offer her an opportunity to demonstrate her learning without writing. Motivation could be improved through increasing the use of collaborative learning approaches since this will allow her to work to her strengths.



### Case Study

Jacob (age 8) has a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He has great difficulty remembering what has been taught. His difficulties with attention control mean that he does not easily encode new learning as memory. His ongoing behaviour problems have also resulted in difficult relationships with adults in school and he is increasingly reluctant to engage in classroom activities. His difficulties relate to memory and motivation. He would benefit from memory strategies that emphasise routine and avoid long activities. Increasing novelty and variety in his classroom activities and planning in regular brain breaks would also help. Motivation could be improved by a structured approach to praise and reward. Since Jacob also has the support of a teaching assistant for part of the week, careful consideration should be given to how this support might improve his motivation and independence skills, rather than result in learned helplessness.

In this book we see how inclusion friendly teaching could look in your classroom, by drawing together the two areas of research on good practice in teaching and barriers to learning. We must therefore consider what learners with SEN (and those without) have in common, and therefore, what approaches the teacher can use in teaching to maximise learning for all. Rather than focusing on the differences between learners I shall identify what common strategies will enhance the learning of all, based on the common concerns of teachers working with pupils who have SEN. Our starting point will be the good teaching and learning strategies that work for the diverse population of learners in any inclusive classroom. It is not 'different' or 'additional'; it is good quality for all.

The approach I shall take here is one of expanding the range of strategies used in your general teaching so that individual needs are met without separate provision. I will not be addressing differentiation in terms of curriculum, but instead focusing on pedagogy, that is, on developing inclusive teaching strategies.

This in no way implies that all learners will benefit from being taught in exactly the same way. Inclusive education is that which accepts the differences between learners. There will be, in some mainstream classrooms, individual learners whose learning differences make it necessary to provide a highly personalised teaching approach. These personalised approaches will remain on the continua, albeit at the extreme high intensity end. In this instance the most appropriate approach might be a matter of providing better opportunities to deliver these highly personalised approaches in small group and one-to-one situations, and rarely in specialist provisions such as special schools and units. However we need to be aware that sometimes learners are placed in special provisions not because of their needs, but because the mainstream has not made the provision that it could have done. This book, however, aims to make your teaching accessible to nearly

all the learners in your class, nearly all of the time, thus minimising the need for specialised approaches for individuals and reducing the workload of the teacher. It could be characterised as differentiation by support, rather than differentiation by activity.

Much of our education system is organised around the notion that intelligence is fixed, measurable and normally distributed – that is, intelligence does not change, it can be measured and in some way relates to educational or life success. A certain percentage of the population is present at each ‘level’, with most of us clustered around an average, and very few at either extreme. This view is now widely discredited. There is some discussion about what exactly intelligence is and some disquiet amongst many psychologists (and teachers) about how such an intangible could be expressed neatly and numerically as an IQ score. Intelligence is now more often seen as the totality of what a person has learned. Learning here does not just mean traditional subject-based learning, but the broadest range of human learning, including such skills as interpersonal, intrapersonal, creative and so on. We also know that the brain is much more plastic than previously thought, and that even in adulthood your brain makes new connections (learns) in response to teaching (Goswami, 2004). While learners are still individuals, and it is undeniable that some find learning more difficult and are more challenging to teach than others, intelligence is fluid, changes over time, and responds to teaching. This is good news for teachers: we really can and do make a difference!

What teachers believe about learning is important here too. We know that where teachers have a genuine and articulated belief that all learners can make progress, that achievement is not fixed but can be changed, where progress is a real expectation, learners do indeed make better progress. The best teachers are open to experience and willing to make errors and learn from them, and to seek feedback from learners. It is the intention of the author that working with the materials in this book will support teachers in this process. Those teachers who study their own practice and respond to what they find out are those who are most effective in raising learners’ attainment.

Teachers and researchers commonly identify the following issues as having a key impact on a learner’s access to learning, and on the teacher’s confidence in meeting their learning needs:

- **Memory** Working memory is now thought to be a highly significant factor in educational achievement, even more so than IQ, and those who struggle the most with learning are usually those who have the most limited working memory. Learners may be unable to learn by rote facts to support abstract concepts such as spellings or times tables, or may appear to know something and later forget it. Memory systems include functions related to attention control. Teachers may notice that learners may not attend to the important bits or attend to only small parts of learning experiences, seem to daydream, have difficulty following instructions, and lose their place in multipart activities. Working memory can be overloaded, leading to a breakdown in the ability to concentrate and learn.

This overload can be avoided through careful lesson design. Key aspects of memory are encoding, storage and retrieval. These can be improved through supporting attention, organising information and rehearsing its retrieval to achieve well worn brain pathways. Strategies such as brain breaks, mnemonics, teaching for understanding, using graphic organisers and study packs are effective.

- **Motivation** Current theoretical models of motivation place emphasis on the needs, beliefs, experiences and interpretations of the learner in his social context as being central to any explanation of how s/he might be motivated towards particular goals. Learners can be described as ideal, improving or reluctant. Learners may have persistent negative attitudes to self, school and learning which result in a lack of effort and underachievement – this is often called failure syndrome or learned helplessness. When learning is difficult a poorly motivated learner will stay stuck unless an adult helps, they may lack an understanding of how this task relates to other tasks or previous learning, and/or think they have finished before they have checked. Their independent study skills and awareness of their own learning are likely to be poor.

Approaches such as managing praise and reward, establishing collaborative learning approaches, teacher–learner conferencing, and using real life experience as the basis for learning can improve motivation. The way teaching assistants are used in a classroom can also impact on motivation. In the best scenario teaching assistants should be well trained and supported by the teacher.

- **Communication** Learners may have difficulty saying what they mean and understanding what is said to them. Underlying language difficulties affect the ability to think clearly, since thought is carried out through the medium of language. Thus the ability to organise learning and respond to teaching is impaired. Difficulties with language are known to lead to difficulties with social skills and self-esteem, attention control, anxiety and challenging behaviour, all of which will affect learning. These learners are also likely to experience particular difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Since all learning and social activity in school requires some degree of spoken language skill, and the curriculum becomes increasingly abstract and language based as the learner gets older, learners with difficulties in this area will need particular teaching strategies. A classroom that is designed to increase structured opportunities to speak and listen will be vital to progress. Teaching approaches such as scaffolding questions, drama type activities for developing comprehension of narrative texts, showing learners how to be reading detectives, developing study guides for particular topics, direct teaching of vocabulary and modelling writing processes will support communication and improve comprehension.

I am sure that you recognise these issues of memory, motivation and communication as barriers to learning from your own teaching experience. You will also notice that I have not said these are characteristics of pupils with special educational needs. Any learner can experience a difficulty with any

of these aspects at any time. These difficulties exist on a continuum of need, from only a little in certain areas, up to a great deal in all areas.

These areas that may give rise to difficulties in learning are mirrored by much of the evidence about effective teaching. Effective teaching can be characterised as that which generates an enthusiasm and desire for learning, ensures learners learn how to learn and remember concepts, knowledge and skills, builds on previous steps in learning, and supports the growth of thought and language.

Each of these areas of difficulty is addressed separately in this book. Chapter 2 focuses on memory, Chapter 3 on motivation and Chapter 4 on communication. Each chapter fleshes out the nature of the difficulty and the theoretical underpinning for it, and then goes on to describe teaching strategies at varying degrees of intensity to provide support in each area. The reader will note that many of the strategies will support difficulties in more than one area, for instance collaborative learning approaches are described in Chapter 4 on motivation; however they are also an excellent way of developing effective communication skills.

## The Inclusive Curriculum

This book deliberately does not address the differentiation of curriculum content; it focuses only on the teaching and learning approaches that will facilitate inclusion in the curriculum for the greatest number of learners, with an emphasis on metacognitive approaches. Your choice of curriculum for learners experiencing difficulties will take account of the existing learning that they have in any subject or area, and plan to move the learner through the learning steps necessary towards meeting suitable learning objectives. The aim of the strategies in this book is that fewer learners will need a differentiated curriculum since the teaching and learning approaches employed in their classrooms will reduce the need for differentiation in the curriculum. There will of course be a few learners who need to be supported through small steps in learning in a highly personalised curriculum. The strategies in this book would be equally useful for them when the teaching strategies are adapted and used intensively whilst delivering their personalised curriculum. A crucial part of these choices about curriculum is a process of dynamic assessment; short cycles of formative assessment that take place minute-by-minute and day-by-day in classrooms with skilled teachers (commonly called assessment for learning). This type of assessment is powerful because of the positive impact it has on learner motivation and the way in which it improves the responsiveness of the teacher to the needs of the learner.

Teachers often feel that unless they are delivering the full national curriculum to the learner with special educational needs they are failing in their duty. Whilst it is indeed true that every learner has a right to a broad and balanced curriculum, the national curriculum does make provision for those whose priorities may need to be adjusted. You are permitted to develop

individualised timetables and programmes, prioritising certain aspects of learning. The learner who has reached year three without learning the basics of reading and spelling must spend whatever time is necessary developing this skill. However, on a note of caution we should avoid creating an individualised timetable for such a learner which consists of all the subjects that he/she finds difficult, this would be guaranteed to de-motivate and dishearten even the most cooperative of learners. What we need to achieve is a balanced approach that enables priorities but allows for pleasure in learning.

## The Audit

In order to make best use of the materials in this book it is a good idea to begin by using the audit tool which can be found at the end of this chapter (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). The use of this tool, based on careful observation and assessment of individual pupils, will direct you to the best starting point for developing your inclusive teaching. When it is completed you will know which area – memory, motivation or communication – should be the priority for your class, and thus how to make the quickest positive impact. The items described in the audit are broad and may be observable as a result of a range of factors. Each item is checked to indicate which of the three areas – memory, motivation or communication – it is relevant to. You will notice that some of the items are checked for two or even all three areas. You will need to apply your knowledge of the learners and your professional judgment to decide which factors are likely to be most significant. For instance a learner who you characterise as giving up quickly, may be doing this because they lack motivation, or because they do not fully understand the task due to communication difficulties. Similarly a child who you note often appears to be daydreaming or ‘zoning out’ may be doing this because they lack motivation, or because they are unable to fully understand what is being said, or because they cannot remember enough of the lesson to actively learn and make connections. You will probably have a feel for which it is likely to be, but if not, look at the other items you have marked and see which area is the most likely area of difficulty.

Begin by identifying a small group of learners about whom you have concerns. Take a copy of the audit and write their names in the first column. Then observe their learning behaviour closely, ideally with the support of a colleague who knows the learners, for instance a teaching assistant, and mark the relevant cell of the audit with:

- 1 – where that behaviour is rarely or never seen in that individual
- 2 – where that behaviour is sometimes seen in that individual, or
- 3 – where that behaviour is often or always seen in that individual.

Now, highlight all cells marked with a three for ease. Next highlight those marked with a two in a different colour. You will then be able to see how intense your planned response to each key area should be. The best starting point would be the area of greatest need.



Now go to the checklist of activities for each key area (see Figures 2.4, 3.6 and 4.7), starting with your priority area, and respond as appropriate. The checklists indicate, using a 1, 2 or 3, what level of intensity the strategy corresponds to. So for a class with a high level of need in one area, you should try and ensure that you implement strategies marked 1 and 2. For individual learners with high levels of need, strategies marked with a 3 may be needed in addition to the strategies used with the whole class at levels 1 and 2. Next have a look through the relevant chapter, where you will find the strategies listed described, many with photocopyable resources to support you.

You will notice that the checklists for memory, motivation and communication friendly classrooms have items in italics. These items are strategies that will support learners with difficulties in more than one area. Often these strategies will be a good place to start work as they may make an impact on more than one difficulty.

After completing the audit go to Chapter 5 and follow the instructions on how to create an action plan and how to select strategies and plan your inclusion friendly lessons. This is an essential step since a coherent plan relating to the difficulties you have identified will improve the impact of the strategies selected and enable you to focus carefully on a step-by-step approach, without becoming overwhelmed by the range of strategies described in the book. After completing your action plan you could revisit the audit and see if the observations you make have changed for the better. Do bear in mind that any new strategy takes a while to embed and make a difference, so always seek to consistently apply an approach for around six weeks before judging its success.

### Further Reading

- Cook, B.G. and Schirmer, B.R. (2003) 'What is special about special education?', *Journal of Special Education*, 37(3): 200–205.
- DfES (2001) *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*. DfES Publications: Annesley, Nottinghamshire.
- Florian, L. (2008) 'Special or inclusive education: future trends', *British Journal of Special Education*, 35(4): 202–207.
- Florian, L. (ed.) (2007) *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education*. London: Sage.
- Goswami, U. (2004) 'Neuroscience, education and special education', *British Journal of Special Education*, 31(4): 175–183.
- Lewis, A. and Norwich, B. (2005) *Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for Inclusion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### Downloadable Resources

The following resources are also available as downloads from <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/sarahherbert>:

- Auditing the needs of your learners 1
- Auditing the needs of your learners 2



