

## The Collaborative Model of Professional Development

Teacher education in Scotland has developed in line with the evolving concept of 'special educational needs'. Professional development is now set firmly within a collaborative context in which teachers acquire the knowledge and skills which enable them to work co-operatively and to support learning across the curriculum.

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### INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

In the March 1997 issue of the British Journal for Special Education, Mel Ainscow in his article 'Towards Inclusive Schooling' suggested that the move towards inclusive education has implications in relation to the professional development opportunities offered to teachers. I would agree wholeheartedly.

However the professional development model he advocates has already been in place in Scotland for several years. Over the past decade or so there has been a significant change in thinking which has had tremendous impact upon policy, practice and provision in relation to special educational needs. The move towards inclusive education has been fairly rapid as can be demonstrated from my own experience and supported by some relevant statistics relating to the field of special education. In 1985 when I was Head of Learning Support in a large comprehensive school (1800 pupils) we had no children with records of needs (statements) on our roll. According to recent Scottish Office statistics for 1995, 14,288 children in Scotland had Records of Need (Statements). Of these 3,724 were educated in mainstream Primary Schools and 4,021 in mainstream Secondary Schools. There are of course still learners with special needs educated in Special Schools but for the vast majority the learning context is now mainstream.

This has obviously had an impact on the work undertaken by learning support/special needs teachers. There has been a move away from the deficit model with its focus upon inbuilt learner deficiency to a curricular model which caters for diversity and aims to provide opportunity for all within an appropriate curriculum. This trend is evident at all levels within the Scottish education system



with the current focus upon developing an ethos of attainment in all schools (SOEID, 5-14 Programme, 1991; SOEID, Higher Still Programme, 1996; SCCC, How Good is Your School, 1997).

### **AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE**

It is within this overall context of change that the Postgraduate Modular Programme at Strathclyde University has evolved. Ainscow suggests that those responsible for teacher education should "explore new possibilities, learning from both the successes and failures of previous experiences."

The Strathclyde University postgraduate modular programme is most certainly successful and it is worth sharing our experience with others. To fully appreciate where we are it is important to consider firstly where we were. I will therefore trace the process of change and demonstrate how our current postgraduate professional development programme, founded upon the principles of inclusion, collaboration and partnership, effectively addresses the needs of teachers, schools and education authorities.

### **THE EVOLVING CONCEPT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Although the term 'special educational needs' has only come into common usage in Scotland over the past twenty years or so its origin can be traced back to the late eighteenth century. At that time the focus was very much upon individuals identified as defective or deficient who were deemed eligible for training as opposed to education. As Warnock (1978) said, these "early institutions were protective places with little or no contact with the outside world. The education they provided was subordinate to training."

By the early 19th century the term mentally defective had come into common usage and in 1862 the Lunacy (Scotland) Act set up charitable institutions for the care and training of 'imbecile children'. This deficit philosophy underpinned practice and provision in Scotland for individuals with learning difficulties for the next hundred years (Thomson, 1983).

In 1872 the Education (Scotland) Act emerged within the context of the Industrial Revolution with its need for a disciplined work force. This Act outlined the provision of compulsory education for all but in practice, as attempts were made to implement this principle, it emerged that many individuals could not access effectively what was on offer due to their difficulties in learning.



## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL CLASSES**

However it was not until 1907 with the Education of Defective Children (Scotland) Act that school boards were empowered to set up 'special schools and classes'. Unfortunately the ensuing World Wars halted any further dramatic change in the system until 1945 when the Education (Scotland) Act heralded what appeared to be a new era when for the first time all children were "seen to have a basic right to education" (Pearson & Lindsay, 1986, p.4).

In reality this Act did not break new ground as it still relied heavily upon the 'individual deficit model' with its strong focus upon 'selection', 'segregation' and the provision of 'vocational training' as opposed to education. This Act simply presented a new 'three tier approach', i.e. 'educable', 'ineducable but trainable' and 'trainable and ineducable' (Education (Scotland) Act, 1945).

## **CATEGORIES OF HANDICAP**

Those educationalists who put forward this new tiered system probably did so for what they considered to be laudable reasons and for the good of those involved. In retrospect however, one can see clearly that they were oblivious to the potential damage inherent within such a system.

This system of categorisation was further expanded when in 1954 the Special Education Treatment (Scotland) Regulations identified nine categories of handicap, i.e. deaf, partially deaf, blind, partially sighted, mentally handicapped, epileptic, pupils with a speech defect, maladjusted and physically handicapped. These categories thus reinforced "the process of labelling which . . . tends to encourage the creation of stereotypes that are to the disadvantage of those involved" (Ainscow, 1991, p.2).

## **ENTITLEMENT**

Finally in 1973 the Melville Report moved a step in the right direction when it stated that "no child is ineducable". This move was given a boost by the Education (Mentally Handicapped Children) Scotland Act of 1974 which said every child was entitled to an education and "as a result junior occupational centres were replaced by schools appropriately staffed with qualified teachers" (Adams, 1990, p. 131). For the first time there was a recognition that all children including those previously labelled 'ineducable' were entitled to an education.



Although the situation was beginning to improve by the early 1970's the main focus was upon individuals labelled as 'retarded', 'handicapped' and 'remedial'. Provision for young people with special educational needs was based upon the principle of segregation based upon the deficit philosophy.

Early development in Scotland in relation to teacher education were based upon this deficit philosophy. The focus was very much upon teachers working with and supporting learners in segregated contexts (Dockrell, Dunn & Milne, 1978).

### **EARLY DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION - THE REMEDIATION MODEL**

As the concept of special educational needs gradually evolved so too did the idea that teachers working in this area should have specialist training. Jordanhill College of Education (now the Faculty of Education of the University of Strathclyde) was always at the forefront of such educational development.

In 1922 a one year course for Scottish teachers was established at Jordanhill. One must give credit to those who pioneered this course as it was at that time new and innovative. As Mortimer (1996) says: "In this way started the long association of the college with the training of teachers of children with special educational needs a field in which Jordanhill was eventually to exercise considerable initiative and influence" (Mortimer, 1996, p.124)

Further expansion occurred over the next few years and courses were developed to provide training for teachers working with 'physically handicapped', 'mentally handicapped' and those termed 'maladjusted'. These terms reflected the trend to label individuals and provide teacher training which reinforced stereotypical thinking. It was also recognised at this time in mainstream primary schools in Scotland that "there will still remain in many classes a backward group" (The Primary School in Scotland, 1950). These 'backward' or 'retarded' pupils were formed into remedial classes or groups and withdrawn from their ordinary classrooms. The belief was "that a fault existed which could be put right in time" (HMI Report, 1978, p.6). At the secondary school stage pupils were streamed according to ability and those identified as 'backward' were withdrawn from their peers and taught by remedial teachers.

The pace of change continued and in 1965, with the introduction of comprehensive education, a way had to be found to deal with the 'backward



pupils'. The solution was remedial treatment in separate classes and departments. Once again Jordanhill College responded to change by creating special courses which led to a qualification as a teacher of backward pupils and by setting up a separate Department of Remedial Education within the college as the training context for these new courses. Finally, the reference to backward children was dropped and the 'remedial teacher' emerged in both Primary and Secondary schools.

By the 1970's the Department of Remedial Education at Jordanhill was recognised nationally for its work in training teachers who would work exclusively in special school settings and teachers who would work as remedial teachers in mainstream schools. However it must be emphasised that these two parallel programmes were still heavily influenced by the child-deficit model. The teachers were trained to work mainly in isolation with children who were considered to be unable to access mainstream education. Terms such as 'remedial' and 'handicapped' still dominated practice and provision within the context of Scottish education and strongly influenced teacher education.

Sweeping changes were afoot however which were to have a dramatic impact on how individuals with difficulties in learning were perceived and it soon became crystal clear that traditional forms of teacher training were rapidly becoming obsolete.

### **FROM HANDICAP TO NEED - THE IMPACT OF CHANGE**

In 1974 the Warnock Committee began its review of educational provision for handicapped children and young people. This was the first comprehensive examination of special education undertaken this century covering England, Scotland and Wales. The committee called for a need to embody a broader concept of special education related to a child's individual needs as distinct from his/her disability. Thus Warnock reflected: "both the gradual disenchantment with statutory categories and the developing rhetoric of integration"(Gilbert & Hart, 1990, p.18).

Under previous legislation pupils who required 'special educational treatment' were placed in statutory categories. Warnock summarised the gradual opposition to this system. From the Committee's own viewpoint categorisation promoted too sharp a distinction between 'the handicapped and the non-handicapped.' According to Swann (1998, p.180), "the emphasis was to be on the child's educational need not his or her disability."



## **WHOLE SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SEN**

In the same year as the Warnock Report was published a significant key report was published in Scotland in 1978 by H M Inspectors. This was *The Education of Children with Learning Difficulties in Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland*. This report focused exclusively upon mainstream education and most of its recommendations reflected those of Warnock. The Inspectors were not happy with the narrow definition of remedial education and suggested that it should cover "the range and diversity of learning difficulties" (SOED, 1978, p.22).

They concluded that special educational needs was a whole school responsibility and that the curriculum could in fact be a source of learning difficulty. This was a new and far reaching idea which emphasised for the first time that learning difficulties resided within systems as opposed to individuals. All teachers were encouraged to rethink their educational philosophy and move away from a restrictive concept of 'remedial education' to one of 'supporting the learner' within the context of an appropriate curriculum. The keynote was changed and the idea was that all children should be able to access an appropriate curriculum (Sebba, Byers & Rose, 1995).

## **FOCUS ON APPROPRIATE EDUCATION**

To summarise, the deficit model gave way to a curricular model as a framework for understanding the concept of special educational needs and the most effective means of supporting individuals with learning difficulties. The HMI Report stressed throughout "that appropriate rather than remedial education is required" (SOED, 1978, p.25).

Both Warnock and the HMI Report influenced subsequent legislation and in 1981 the Education (Scotland) Act took on board the philosophy they advocated. This Act embraced the wider definition of special educational needs as advocated by Warnock. It supported concepts such as integration, established the Record of Needs (Statements) and placed importance upon the value of parents as partners and working collaboratively with other professionals.

In due course all of these developments influenced practice and provision across Scotland and as one would expect, the impact of such change was considerable particularly upon teacher training. Both Warnock and the HMI make reference to this. Warnock (1978) said, "There should be a recognised qualification in Special



Education to be obtained at the end of a one year full-time course" (p.355). The HMI report (1978) stated, "We have suggested that a new type of remedial specialist is required with a unique contribution to make"(p. 31).

### **FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION - THE CURRICULAR MODEL**

In 1978 the name of the Department of Remedial Education within Jordanhill College was changed to the Department of Special Educational Needs. This came about as a direct response to the changing philosophy which underpinned the concept of 'special educational needs' espoused by Warnock (1978) and HMI (1978).

Between 1978 and 1983 two parallel courses were validated. One course was for teachers working in special schools and the other for teachers working in mainstream schools. Both courses were known as the Diploma in Special Educational Needs, but were distinguished by the label Recorded or Non-Recorded. This referred to whether or not the child had a Record of Need. The content of these courses was designed so that teachers could interact but there were also specialist areas relevant to each particular course.

### **CO-OPERATIVE TEACHING AND DIFFERENTIATION**

For the first time in mainstream schools there was a clear shift in emphasis away from teachers working in isolation providing remedial treatment by withdrawing individuals from the mainstream classrooms. In special schools too the focus was now upon meeting needs through an appropriate curriculum rather than treating disabilities. All special needs teachers were now encouraged to work co-operatively in classrooms with their colleagues. Priority was given to the role of special needs teachers as consultants who would work collaboratively with parents and other professionals. The aim was to train professionals who could work across the curriculum supporting pupils and teachers. Differentiation as a means of ensuring curricular access was also given prominence (Carpenter & Ashdown, 1997). All of this implied that teachers who would work in the field of Special Educational Needs would require relevant professional development if they were to effectively meet the challenge inherent in the evolving systems of support for learning. This is summed up by Jordan (1994) when she says, "Working collectively with others requires organisation and planning which was unnecessary in the previous era of direct services based on short term withdrawal of children from classrooms" (p. 79).



## **MODULAR COURSES**

In 1990 the SEN courses were radically changed to meet the demand for appropriate training linked to the needs of the new professionals and a single Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs was proposed. This was the first postgraduate modular course (SEN) validated by the University of Strathclyde in 1992 and delivered on the Jordanhill Campus. It was an innovative development as this new Diploma was offered to all teachers regardless of the context in which they worked. The concept of generic modules taken by all and specialist modules forming unique pathways was introduced. This modular course was highly successful in meeting the needs of teachers. It served as an award for study but also provided a nationally recognised qualification for all special needs teachers.

By 1995, for professional reasons and to satisfy market pressures, the Department of Special Educational Needs brought forward yet another proposal. Nationally, eight modules had become recognised as the acceptable length for postgraduate Diploma courses and education authorities, schools and teachers were pressing for training courses to follow this norm. In 1995, therefore, an eight module Postgraduate Diploma in Support for Learning was validated as the route for all teachers seeking a qualification to support the learning of individuals with special needs. The change in the title of this award-bearing course again reflected the trend towards supporting all learners by helping them overcome barriers and access an appropriately differentiated curriculum.

## **ELEMENT OF CHOICE**

The key elements in this latest diploma are flexibility and adaptability. It provides opportunities for teachers to make choices in relation to modules studied. Patterns of delivery have been established which meet a wide range of needs. Overall the focus is on partnership between providers, local authorities and teachers. The emphasis has been placed upon co-operation, partnership and collaboration as the key principles and these are the principles which will be at the heart of all future professional development opportunities provided by the Department of Special Educational Needs of the University of Strathclyde (Jordanhill Campus). This collaborative philosophy underpins the latest report in relation to special educational needs from the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (1994) and is summed up as follows: "Pupils and students benefit most from support when those professionals involved work together in teams to integrate



their contributions....Working as full members of inter-professional teams in itself promotes staff development” (p. 16).

## **INTO THE MILLENNIUM - CO-OPERATION, PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION**

As we move towards the year 2000 it is clear that our understanding of the concept of special educational needs has evolved considerably and policy and practice has developed accordingly. The focus is now upon individual rights, opportunities for all, and the valuing of diversity (Children {Scotland} Act, 1995). These principles have been highlighted in the major national educational initiatives in Scotland in the 1990's. Special educational needs is now no longer viewed as a peripheral issue but as a vital part of all educational developments aimed at promoting effective teaching and learning for all (Hamill, Hewitt, & Robertson, 1993).

It is very important that teacher education/staff development in relation to special educational needs reflects this move towards partnership and co-operation. Consequently these are the principles which now underpin the Postgraduate Modular Programme in Support for Learning offered by the Department of Special Educational Needs of the University of Strathclyde (Jordanhill Campus).

### **TEACHERS SHOULD FOCUS ON LEARNING**

The departmental team are keen to ensure that they themselves actually demonstrate in practice a collaborative philosophy. Every effort is made to ensure that members of the team model the skills/attitudes and values they expect teachers to internalise. This is achieved by focusing fundamentally upon learning as opposed to teaching. The role of the course tutor is to facilitate, not dominate, the learning process. The roles of learner and teacher are seen as interchangeable and flexible as opposed to being passive and tutor lead. Learning is thus viewed as a shared process where all views and experiences are valued and respected. The teachers involved in the programme are encouraged to analyse and reflect critically on their own practice. Care is also taken by the course team to accommodate different learning styles and attainment profiles.

It is important however to emphasise that within the context of partnership the ultimate responsibility for certifying that standards of competence are attained must lie with the professional team responsible for the postgraduate programme. By the time participants have successfully undertaken all eight modules they will:



- be more widely informed in relation to good practice, the evidential basis for such practice and the varying context for such practice;
- be more effective in their ability to identify and use written, audio/visual and oral sources to inform their own practice and that of others;
- have further developed a critical approach to their own practice and what they read, hear and are told -- they will by reflective practitioners;
- appreciate the importance of collaboration within the SEN field. In particular they will be more effective as collaborative learners and collaborative practitioners;
- be able to operate as independent learners who can identify personal professional goals/targets and help others to do so;
- have internalised the concept of learning as a lifelong process and demonstrate a willingness to fully capitalise upon future opportunities to learn as they are presented to them.

These are the criteria which currently provide a framework for judging the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities provided within the Postgraduate Modular Programme in Support for Learning. They also set the context for planning and delivering future professional development opportunities which will take us into the millennium.

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the past century there has been a gradual shift in the philosophy which underpins the concept of 'special educational needs'. This can be summarised as a move away from a medical model to a child-centred curricular model. It is now widely recognised (SOEID, 1994) that, "...a shared understanding of the concept of Special Educational Needs is fundamental to planning and making effective provision at all levels of the education system" (p.7).

There is also increasing evidence that as we move towards the millenium the inclusive philosophy will continue to gain ground and eventually all children with



special needs will be educated in mainstream schools alongside their peers (Hegarty, 1993; Newman & Roberts, 1996; Thomas, Walker & Webb, 1997; Hall, 1997). If inclusive schools which celebrate diversity and accept difference are to emerge, it is crucial that such schools are staffed by professionals who understand and have internalised an inclusive educational philosophy. The professional development opportunities available to these professionals must have the concept of inclusion at their heart. They must understand the importance of teamwork, collaboration, co-operation and partnership as some of the basic principles which underpin 'inclusion'.

Ultimately, however, those who are responsible for planning, managing and delivering teacher education programmes in the field of Special Education/Learning Support must actively model these principles in their practice. Their motto must be "do as I do," not simply "do as I say". Thus leading by example, the professionals in institutions of Higher Education will play their part in developing a climate of teacher education in which inclusive schools will become a reality.

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