



‘Inclusive Education – the challenge for School Leaders’

“Inclusive education – missing links”

Missing Link

- ❖ All of our Education Systems evolve over time, just as the world we live in changes
- ❖ As a school leader do I embrace change, indeed do I lead this change?
- ❖ Do I create the culture to allow this change to happen and all of the links to join up, or am I the **Missing Link** preventing Change??

Inclusive Education in Ireland - Historical Context:

The last half century in Ireland in particular has witnessed a dramatic shift in the way in which children and adults with special educational needs have been viewed and treated. Depending on when you were born, your experiences as a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) were dramatically different.

Historical Context

. The 1950's Child with SEN and/or disabilities was categorised as “handicapped” and was educated (with the emphasis on **care** rather than **education**) away from his/her peers in one of the state supported, religious-run, residential **institutions/special school**.

This type of **segregation** was the official thinking of the time

Historical Context

For Children with SEN the late 1970's/early 1980's there was some chance that you would not be “sent away”. Increasingly national and international debate, fuelled by parents of children with disabilities and special educational needs were demanding a revision of the practice of segregation and exclusion.

Historical Context

In 1993 in Ireland there was a landmark judgement in the Paul O Donoghue court case. The Education Act 1998 along with the Dept. of Education circular (Cir/8/99) provided SEN students with an 'automatic' right and a 'guarantee' to avail of SEN provision in mainstream school.

- ❖ **Special Ed Review Committee (SERC) 1993**
- ❖ In 1993 there was a major change in educational policy towards children with special needs.

Education Act 1998

- ❖ The Education Act (1998) set out a legal framework for the provision of education in Ireland. It is a function of the Minister under the Act :“To ensure... that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person”.
- ❖ **Education Act 1998**
- ❖ Act established National Council for Special Education. (NCSE)
- ❖ Special Educational Needs Organisers
- ❖ Educational Plans./Individual Education Plans
- ❖ **This Education Act enshrined the right of parents to choose which school is best for their child**

Resource Allocation

The major changes for schools since 2004 are more to do with how resources are allocated.

Diagnosis – give the child a label – then allocate resources. For example a child with Autism was allocated 5 hours,

Since 2017 there is a New Model of allocations now that do not require labels or diagnoses.

Resource Allocation

- ❖ 2017: The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile
- ❖ The Educational Profile components are:
 1. The number of pupils with complex needs enrolled to the school.
 2. The learning support needs of pupils as evidenced by standardised test results.
 3. The social context of the school including disadvantage and gender

Challenge for School Leaders

For the past 20 years the School Leaders in Ireland have been challenged – many have embraced & led the change of culture to an inclusive school

Culture change: "It can be argued

- that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage cultures; (Schein, 2004)

Many Principals & Teachers have examined the Purpose of Education in their school!

Purpose of Education



Purpose of Education

- ❖ Does the purpose of Education change when a pupil moves from Primary School (4 - 12 years old in Ireland) to Secondary School (12 – 18 years old in Ireland)
- ❖ Does the major state examination at the end of Secondary School dictate the purpose of Education and gives it a very narrow focus?
- ❖ Does this purpose then affect what pupils are allowed to enrol in the school?

The Challenge for School Leaders in Lithuania

- ❖ The question is not whether children with special needs should be in your school, rather you should be asking what supports do they need to allow it to happen?
- ❖ What barriers are in place – Building, Culture, Teachers, Principal?
- ❖ Is school for your teachers or for your students?
- ❖ Role of Parents – do parents have the right of choice for their child?

Supports Required & Timelines

- ❖ Initial teacher training
- ❖ Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for School Leaders and Teachers
- ❖ National Psychological Service delivered regionally
- ❖ Therapy Services delivered regionally with ring fenced funding
- ❖ Fully resourced model to deliver the extra Support Teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

- ❖ Article 24 of the CRPD provides not only that children with disabilities should not be discriminated against but also that they are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability" and "**can access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in their communities**"?

Article 24

- ❖ The Minister for Education in Ireland has asked the NCSE to provide him with a progress report on its forthcoming policy advice on special schools and special classes. Implications of article 24 will be considered as part of this advice.
- ❖ **Schools to be banned from asking about children's disabilities by 2021**
- ❖ Informed rational debate required that might be triggered by the following questions!

Fundamental Questions for all of us

- ❖ **Should students with complex special educational needs continue to be educated in settings away from their mainstream peers?**
- ❖ What are the reasons why these students should continue to be educated in special schools and classes away from their mainstream peers?
- ❖ What are the reasons why we should adopt a fully mainstream approach?

What will your legacy be?

What will our generation of Educators be remembered for?

Will we truly make a difference to **All** of our pupils?

- ❖ **If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn. (*Ignacio Estrada*)**

Change!!



