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## The journey travelled – A view of two settings a decade apart

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**The journey travelled – A view of two settings a decade apart**

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**Keywords**

Policy, inclusion, collaboration, changing practice

**Introduction**

Inclusion has long been recognised for its “in-betweenness” (Corbett, 1997). It is generally recognised as an ongoing process (UNESCO IBE, 2008), an active process that might have no end (Flem and Keller, 2000). The capacity to reach out towards all learners is something that people work towards, continually strive for and which is not arrived at (Ainscow, 2000). Bates (2005) in working with mental health services to develop inclusive provision recognised the need for people to be given time to explore the complexity of policy and practice, professional and personal values, and that they had to go on a journey, in which their attitudes gradually changed through the acceptance of various relationships.

Given this need for shifts in policies, practices and values, it is possible that those who do not recognise the need for change may view inclusion as an event rather than a process (Blamires, 1999). However, the development of practice cannot be seen as a response to “a simple causal explanation or to linear and reductive prescriptions for change” (Benjamin, 2002, p142). Comparative research on special and inclusive education suggests that practice which is developed reflects political choices made previously over long periods of time (Richardson & Powell, 2011). The process is a messy compromise, mixing inclusion and exclusion, which can be seen in contrast to a more fluid concept of “continuous struggle” (Allan 2008).

The messy compromise is in evidence in policies around those groupings and issues associated with diversity (Black-Hawkins et al 2007) rather than in the hoped for “assault on oppressive vestiges of the past as a way of contributing to alternative futures” (Slee and Allan, 2001, p176). Here can be seen a range of congealed policy positions around inclusion and ‘special’ provision which cannot shift because of the inherent contradictions which underlie them (Slee, 2008). So, for example, intended as a transformative concept, the term ‘inclusion’ and its underpinning lexicon have become subsumed by those within ‘special’ education (Rix, 2011), becoming part of an overall story of progress within a rhetoric of transformation (Richardson and Powell, 2011).

Within many countries inclusion has become an option within the overall system. Countries which aim for inclusion nationally, such as Italy and Norway, can be seen to have increasing numbers in special education and to be replicating a range of exclusionary practices (Ianes, Demo & Zambottim, 2010; Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009). Whilst in other countries policies on inclusion have been compromised by the range of marketisation policy initiatives. Within England, for example, this has included the

traditionalist national curriculum, standardised testing, league tables and the investment in and development of a range of independent and alternative provision (Slee, 2006, Rix, 2011) resulting in increasing segregated and selective provision (Rix, 2006; Barron et al, 2007). Within the US the legislation around high stakes testing can be seen to have lowered the quality of provision for children with special educational needs within areas which were already struggling (Harvey-Koelpin, 2006), whilst the experiences in Sweden and the US suggest that policies aimed at extending school choice and autonomy, unless very tightly controlled, do little to raise standards (and may lower them) and also exclude the disadvantaged (Bunar, 2010; Söderström and Uusitalo, 2010; Howe and Welner, 2002, CREDO, 2009,). Such changes have coincided with on-going and disproportionate referral of certain ethnic groupings and social-classes to categories for intervention and treatment (Slee, 2008).

Against this background of compromise and dissatisfaction, this study aims to examine how two schools who express inclusive aspirations and intentions have weathered the last decade. There is a long tradition of case study examinations of individual settings or clusters of settings (eg: Vlachou, 1997, Carrington and Elkins, 2002; Peters, 2002; Skidmore, 2004; Black-Hawkins, 2007), and a number of studies which have produced system wide case studies (eg: Richardson & Powell, 2011; Rix et al, in press). There have been no longitudinal studies however which have returned to a range of settings after an extended period to examine the experiences of people within those settings. This is the process undertaken within the current study, with the intention of identifying the kinds of barriers and facilitators which occurred in recent years in relation to the aims and practices the schools identified would lead to greater inclusion.

## **Methodology**

School A was a mixed non-selective secondary school in an area of England with selective schools, which at the end of 2010 became an independent Academy with an intake of 942 students. The school had a resourced unit designed for up to 40 students identified with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs. This unit had a full-time teaching staff of 9, whilst overall in 2010 the school had 74 subject teachers, 33 support teachers and 14 additional staff. The numbers of children identified with special educational needs within the school was nearly double the national average, as a result both of the resourced unit and the selective policy at other schools in the area. School B was a mixed secondary high school in Scotland. Staffing numbers inevitably varied across this period, but there were not significant changes. At the start of 2008, they had a senior management team of 5, 68 subject teachers, 15 support teachers and 9 additional support staff. The school served a very mixed catchment area, providing support for a wide range of pupils identified as requiring learning and behaviour support. In 2005 they had an intake of 877, with average number of school days missed through absenteeism being a third higher than the national average and grades a third lower than the national average.

Each school was visited twice, on each occasion across a two-day period, following an initial visit at which informal discussions took place with staff at the schools. We captured the perspectives of 31 members of the school A community over two two-day visits in

2002 and 2009. We captured the perspectives of 50 members of the school B community over two two-day visits in 2002 and 2011 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Interviewee types and numbers at school A and school B in different years

| School A  |  | School B   |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| 2002  | 2009   | 2002   | 2011   |
| We interviewed 13 members of school community <sup>1</sup> :<br>1 Principal Advisor for Additional Educational Needs<br>1 Head teacher<br>1 Senior Manager within Special Unit<br>1 Science teacher<br>1 Humanities teacher<br>1 Modern Languages teacher<br>1 support teacher<br>4 Teaching assistants<br>2 students | We interviewed 18 members of school community:<br>1 Head of extended services<br>1 Head teacher<br>1 Head of unit<br>1 Senior teacher<br>2 class teachers<br>1 parent<br>4 teaching assistants<br>7 students | We interviewed 10 members of school community:<br>1 senior manager<br>1 senior teacher<br>1 class teacher<br>1 parent<br>Additional footage of activities and general discussions with 17 other members of school community<br>2 administrative staff<br>5 support service staff,<br>1 link teacher<br>4 teachers<br>1 support assistant<br>1 support teacher<br>3 mentors<br>6 students | We interviewed 23 members of school community:<br>2 senior managers<br>6 subject teachers<br>3 parents<br>2 support for learning assistants<br>1 support teacher and manager<br>1 school support staff<br>8 students |

These visits were led by two academic researchers accompanied by a film crew of three or four, using two cameras and recording equipment to observe diverse practices in a range of settings around the school. The interviews and discussions took place separate from the filming of practice and ranged from short explorations of an issue which emerged during filming of practice (such as the students use of their targets). These interviews might last for a few minutes or involve detailed discussions which could last for up to an hour and a half. There were also discussions with small groups, in order to explore certain issues which emerged. All these interviews took the form of responsive, extended conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The material was subsequently transcribed for analysis. The data from the interviews was subjected to a thematic analysis derived from grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) which both informed the narrative of the edited films and informed the focus of subsequent visits and interviews. The academics produced reports and edited the film materials as the basis for teaching modules at the Open University. This material was subject to detailed analysis by other academics involved within the course production, but not directly involved in the collection of data, and subsequent write ups of the material were redrafted four times on the basis of

<sup>1</sup> For 10 we have original transcripts, for 3 we have film transcripts

response from the academics, critical readers and an external assessor. The materials were also viewed and discussed by over three thousand students and forty associate lecturers, further informing the academic discussion and analysis.

## **Findings**

### **School A**

#### **Provision, practice and possible futures in 2002**

A focal point of the provision in the school at the time of the 2002 visit was a resourced unit for a specific group of pupils who were identified as having 'complex special educational needs'. Although located in a separate building the Head teacher in the Unit believed that the way the school was organised was distinctly different from other establishments and represented inclusion in action:

I've heard of other areas where they're talking their idea of inclusion is to have a special needs school on their school site. It might be at the far corner of their field and they say that's inclusion. I don't think it is. Inclusion is actually the - in the same school, in the same establishment working together because there are hundreds of benefits that pupils in the main school get from working with our children.

Different practices were highlighted by staff as being significant in developing pupils 'working together' in the school. The senior teacher who was responsible for placing children from the Unit in the main school emphasized the importance of the availability and specific skills of teaching assistants who could provide one-to-one support. Also the attitude of the class teacher was viewed as having significant impact on the placement being a positive experience for everyone because:

if the teacher is keen and the teacher's enthusiastic, if the teacher cares, then everything else can literally fall into place. (Member of Senior Management Team 2002).

However the main school teachers who were interviewed inferred that they often delegated total responsibility onto the teaching assistants :

Having LSA support there it's really good. It gives me the opportunity to focus on the other pupils and be reassured that (pupils from the Unit) are getting the attention that they need especially during practical as they are being watched at all times. (Main school teacher 2002).

Correspondingly the Unit seemed to represent both a platform for the inclusion of this group of children and a 'safe haven' from the challenges of learning in the main school. From talking to staff and pupils it became apparent that for some the unit was their core provision in which they spent most of their school day. Within the school this did not seem to contradict what they regarded as their principles as an inclusive school. This was because they had rationalized that for some pupils 'social inclusion' was the primary aim

The beginning of the day, break times lunchtimes, tutor times, personal and social education assemblies. There's such a high level of social interaction between our students and mainstream school students, that it would be

impossible really to say, oh we're just another establishment stuck on the corner of the playing field. (Headteacher, School A, 2002)

For some pupils such controlled access to being included in the main school was seen as reasonable because they would not be capable of learning at the level of more subject based lessons. Conversely the staff also felt that that there was no such restriction on which children could access and benefit from the unit provision. Such a hierarchical approach to inclusion seemed to maintain significant divisions in the way that groups of children were perceived within the school. A clear distinction between 'them and us' could be seen to permeate even the most positive examples of connections between pupils:

very pleased with the rest of the group... they accept them into the room and are quite happy to work with them, encourage them on.' (Main school class teacher)

In view of their perceived success it was not surprising that few proposed any radical changes for the school when asked about its future direction and aspirations. Indeed with the school being regarded as a 'beacon' and 'an example of the best practice of inclusion' by the Principal Advisor in the authority, deviation from the established aims and practices by school A seemed an unlikely course to be chartered.

### **Changes and new directions in 2010**

By 2010, as part of the re-development programme in school A, the Unit had been relocated to a part of the main building. For some staff this move from an outlying building to the centre of the campus represented progressive confirmation of the school's commitment to inclusion.

...they've got purpose built accommodation now in the main part of the school, but it's actually located at the heart of the school, and the aim has always been and always will be full integration as far as the students are able to take advantage of it. (Head teacher, School A, 2010)

Some staff were more circumspect about the new facilities because it was not completely on the ground floor level. This reduced access both out of and into the unit for all pupils and in many ways had increased isolation. Certainly a clear theme that emerged from the interviews was that there had been a shift away from the practice of setting up regular opportunities for the 'social inclusion' of the pupils in the Unit with pupils in the main school. These were now limited to lunch times and break times in the playground and the interactions seemed to take place under close supervision of the staff:

the main school children come and join them and we'll, we'll take them and play little games with them, little ball game activities or take them for a little wander round the playground and, and socialise with them which is great for our kids. (Head of Unit, School A).

The reasons that the staff gave for this move away from a practice that had been highlighted as indicative of the school's inclusive approach revolved around three factors: the changing needs of the group of children in the unit (which the staff associated with the

label profound and multiple learning difficulties); the increase in the numbers of pupils with more complex requirements in the unit; and the corresponding increase in the class sizes in the main school. Significantly the teaching assistants who were interviewed in 2010 reflected very differently on their roles than in the previous visit. They described their work as being more physically demanding, more dependent on receiving specialised training and ultimately more closely embedded in the day to day routine in the unit:

It was evident on the 2010 visit that some children continued to attend lessons in the main school. The head of the Unit described how inclusion in the main school continued to be built up gradually for certain individual pupils whilst they remained based in his provision. Even pupils that he envisaged would eventually 'cope with a bit of support' in the mainstream part of the school needed in his view to be reassured that 'we're still here'. Conversely the provision also represented an alternative for those children seen to be struggling in the mainstream, although the head teacher in the unit inferred that in some situations parents had needed persuading about the benefits of such a placement for their child.

Within the Unit itself the approach to teaching seemed to have become more insular. One teacher described how liaison with the head of department in the main school provided the basis for her planning project work but:

some other things I have to vary because it doesn't work with all of our children, but then I just come up and create different projects for different reasons really...' (Teacher in Unit, 2010).

There was also more emphasis on children working together in all age groups for significant parts of the school day, following

'a sensory-based programme with very simple activities, action/reaction things, touchscreens, working with musical instruments' (Head of Unit, 2010).

It appeared that the separation between the curriculum provided in the main school and in the Unit was being much more distinctly drawn.

Further differentiation within the curriculum and provision was also evident in the main school itself, which had not been identified during the 2002 visits. A 'Gold curriculum' group had been established for pupils at 'the lower SEN level of the mainstream school' who were seen to be 'struggling academically' (Head of Unit, 2010). This was described as a class drawn from several year groups who were taught by the same teacher for core subjects. In addition there was the 'Emerald' group for pupils seen to have emotional and behavioural difficulties which followed a non-academic based curriculum and was based in the youth group facility in the school. Set within the context of increased stratification of the school population, it emerged that the Unit was no longer considered an 'open door' for any child and that there might be some children who would not be suited to this provision. For example the head of the unit remarked:

We have autistic children within the Unit. But there's a severity of autism where the needs of those sort of children are I would think beyond what we've got.

The positive social impact of having a wider diversity of children within the school because of the unit remained a constant theme in the 2010 interviews. In fact some staff saw this factor as becoming increasingly important as the academic pressures on students throughout the school intensified. However, although some were keen to continue to focus on practices that facilitated social connections between young people throughout the school, others had clearly different priorities:

I'd be looking for a hydrotherapy pool, I'd be looking for therapy rooms, bigger classrooms, bigger social area - I'm not asking a lot am I - and that little bit of extra space for us to work in. (Head of Unit, 2010)

Clearly the continuing journey forward for School A had far from one clear direction and represented the possibility of embarking on divergent rather than convergent paths in future years.

## **School B**

### **Provision, practice and possible futures in 2002**

At the time of the first visit to school B in 2002 many schools in Scotland were involved in refocusing within the context of the New Community Schools initiative, set up by the Scottish Executive in 1999. Within this framework schools were encouraged to develop work with other agencies and integrated provision in order to engage more closely with families and the local community. The Head teacher acknowledged the impact of this top-down policy drive on some aspects of the direction that the school was taking at the time but also emphasized that the foundations of such a community focused ethos could not be simply attributed to government directives:

I think School B was a community school that was evolving to work more closely with external agency staff over many, many years'.

The themes that emerged from the interviews at the time revealed a broad perception of participation which involved collaboration; listening; and support. For School B the aims and practices that they believed would lead to greater inclusion looked beyond the issues of individual children and the classroom

The school was working hard at many different levels to develop collaborative working. Interviewees described how executive groups had been set up within the Authority involving heads of schools and area officers of different agencies. At a school level there was an acknowledgement that teachers needed :

'...the support and access to the skills and the professionalism of other groups of staff such as social workers, community workers, sports development workers to develop, extend and provide alternative curriculum for young people.' (Head teacher2002).

Part of the future vision of the school involved establishing these networks and collaborations more formally through the development of 'full service provision' in which social work, community and other support agencies would be based in the school to provide a year round facility within the locality.



The importance of developing such provision at the time reveals the underpinning focus on families at the centre of the school. There was a recognition of the need to go beyond the established methods of engagement with parents found in secondary schools revolving around parents' evenings and teacher consultations. The senior team at the school had set up parent focus groups where they could hear directly from families about the impact of the way the school was run on their daily lives. It seemed that there was a recognition that the school staff could learn from parents and that their contribution was essential in the school's development of inclusion and participation. One parent's comments exemplified this connection from a personal perspective:

when he did go back to school we had issues with – he was being tube fed um which he hadn't had before and the school said no problem. If you'd like to come in and teach us, SLA's and some of the staff what to do we'll be quite happy to do the feeding for him at school so that he can stay at school and continue his normal – normal day. (Parent 2002)

Similarly listening to pupils was also highlighted as a key component of this collaborative matrix within the school. At an organisational level there had been a long established pupil council within the school but this had developed into three separate groups to span the six year groups in the school. Through the monthly meetings the Head teacher remarked it was 'one of the ways in which I reach children' and the pupils interviewed were similarly positive about the opportunity provided:

'we can like say what we want to have and like if there's any problems that teachers might not know about we can say them and then we've got a chance of getting them fixed.' (Pupil 2002)

Within this collaborative framework the school had developed a positive reputation for including disabled young people. One pupil who had chosen School B for this reason commented that it had really lived up to his expectations in terms of the support offered and 'generally the whole access and the lay out of the place'. In defining inclusion during his interview, the Head teacher emphasised that it involved 'trying to provide a curriculum structure or an educational provision that will meet all of their needs' and that disabled children were 'part of the community and need to be in the school.' He also recognised that making such provision required flexibility in approach and did not always have to be classroom based. The Head also felt that although it was 'the people that count' in making inclusive practice work, resourcing from the local authority was key to moving 'the inclusion agenda forward'. Such tension between personal commitment and commitment of resources could be detected in the responses of some of the learning support assistants who were interviewed. They often talked about difficulties with managing personal workload and the need for more staff. Perhaps mindful of these strains within the system the head teacher was not fully committed to the possibility of all children being able to attend his school:

There will still be some [students] that we can't [include] – can't manage and need to have other provision I believe.

## **Changes and new directions in 2011**

By the time of the second visit, School B had been completely re-built on the original campus and the positive impact of these brand new facilities on the school community was in the foreground of many of the 2011 interviews. More respect and care about the property, a quieter environment, increased social interaction and improved motivation to learn were all cited as examples of the improvements that could be linked to the modernised campus. As one pupil commented:

I think when you're coming to a building that looks like that it kind of rubs off. Just in the psyche. And you can – that affects the attitude of, you know, young people. It probably affects staff as well. Now, with the new facilities, I think you can see that they treat the school differently. I think they're happier.

With improved access, lifts and 'more disabled toilets than disabled people' (Deputy Head, 2011), the appearance was of a school that was well equipped to build on its aspirations of being inclusive. However the staff from the additional support department felt that there had been no real benefits for them as a result of the re-build. They reflected on the fact that in the old school they were spread around the school with several bases situated on different floors. Now, with the department re-located to the basement of the school, in premises with smaller rooms than the staff had been used to working in, they felt 'out of sight, out of mind' 'less integrated' and 'stuck away in the corner'(Support for Learning Assistant, 2011).

Their reaction to the new facilities could have been exacerbated because the nature of their role seemed to have shifted away from working in the main school classes. All the learning support assistants interviewed in 2011 raised the point that currently they were involved in more small group and individual sessions which usually took place in the department. The reasons the practitioners suggested for this shift was the segregatory pressure resulting from the increase in pupils in the school identified as being disruptive and having behavioural difficulties. Significantly there had also been an organisational change within the school before the re-build in which the additional support team (which were designated to provide for pupils with learning difficulties) had been amalgamated with the behaviour support team. Consequently the role change, and perceptions of the LSAs, could be attributed as much to this re-organisation as any real shift in the pupil demographic. The head teacher also suggested that another factor which effected the nature of additional support in the school was the strong pressure not to exclude pupils imposed by the local authority. In these circumstances he felt that the school had 'just got into the habit of finding alternative ways of dealing with children.' The consequence of developing these 'alternative ways' were now being experienced by the LSAs in their daily work and were reflected in the Head of the support unit's own definition of inclusive practice:

I know that inclusion doesn't always mean being included in all mainstream classes – I know sometimes it's being in the building and having individualised packages of work.

Beneath the fabric of the new building, other shifts from initiatives that the school had held as central to their inclusive approach were also apparent. The Head teacher's aspiration

to locate support and community services within the school had not been realised and there was a sense that the impetus for this change had been lost. The additional funding for schools attached to the 'New Community Schools' initiative had reduced and so there was no possibility of appointing people to permanent posts to carry the initiative forward. For parents a consequence of the unravelling of the community schools initiative seemed to be some disconnection from their involvement in the general development of the school:

... on the whole not that much more information about, you know, how to become involved in the school, or what else is going on the school – we don't really see much information about that at all (Parent 2011)

To counter this the school had recently set up a parent council which although open to everyone was seeming to:

'attract the same type of parent that comes along from the same parts of catchment – the more middle class areas' (Head teacher, 2011).

Again the school's aim to include all parents as collaborative partners seemed to be faltering during times of internal and external change.

Staff that had been present in the school in 2002 also recognised that there was less formal emphasis on taking account of pupil's views and involving them in decision making about developments. Senior staff members acknowledged that there had been slippage in convening regular pupil council meetings particularly during the recent building project which had become consumed time and energy amongst the staff. Certainly the pupils talked about there being little significant consultation with them about the design, décor or equipping of their new school besides being asked for token 'wish lists'. Now that the building work was completed there was a feeling amongst pupils that even the basic practice of openly providing information needed to be re-established:

I'd like to see more communication between staff and pupils. Because like we're sort of left, not on our own, but left sort of wondering what's going on in the school currently and there's not really much information you can get. (Pupil 2011)

There were signs that the school management team were aware that they had lost sight of their principle of involving the pupil's voice in decision making. Plans were underway in 2011 to re-instate a variation on pupil councils albeit with much tighter controls around which students would be able to take part.

Since the first visit to the school in 2002, major curricular changes had impacted on all schools in Scotland with the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence by the Scottish Government in 2010. This top-down policy drive was a major theme in the 2011 interviews reflecting the impact of the changes that it had brought to the school. Staff commented on the rapidity of the change and also a predisposition within the school to work in this participatory way. However a cautionary note was sounded by one teacher who said :

I think what's difficult is that, with times of change and all the extra workload that Curriculum for Excellence comes – comes to the fore – often what happens is sometimes

participation between staff and pupils can fall by the wayside. So I think that it's important that as you bring in huge changes, like Curriculum for Excellence into the school, that you do not do that at the expense of clubs and activities in a school.

The suggestion here is that even principles and practices that the school held as central to the development of inclusion could become swamped in the wave of change created by powerful surge to establish the Curriculum for Excellence.

### **The journey travelled**

These case studies looked at two very different schools who had stated a common aspiration to develop inclusion and participation through their principles and practices. By taking a longitudinal view of their progress, some ten years apart, the variety and unpredictability of change has been evident. However although describing the nature of these changes is informative as an exemplar of lived experiences, a deeper question to consider is what shaped the direction that these schools took? Are there any common underlying influences that made the journeys travelled by School A and School B the way they were?

On a superficial level both schools endured substantial redevelopment of their premises between the two visits. Yet the impact of these physical reconstructions on the practice environment seemed negligible, especially in terms of enabling significant innovations that could lead to greater inclusion. In School A the Unit was relocated in the heart of the school but staff reflected that this did not facilitate more interaction with pupils in the main school. In School B, given the options available, the choice was made to relegate the Support team to basement premises and the extensive new sports facilities remained under-used by the local community. It was the decisions that were made about how to utilize these new surroundings that were key, decisions underpinned by complex social and political influences.

In both schools pressure exerted by local and national policy could be seen to have steered their responses over the time period. In School A senior staff were concerned about the enduring impact of the standards agenda and the assessment of school performance on the basis of exam results. Although the Head teacher in 2011 was adamant that this would not sway him from continuing to offer Unit provision, the need to enhance academic performance levels in the mainstream could have correlated with the gradual reduction of opportunities for inclusion for the pupils based in this designated setting. School B's direction of travel also seemed to be diverted by the imposition of top-down policy drives. The compulsory introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence, with its rapid time frame and resourced muscle, had seemed to overwhelm many of the initiatives that the school had previously prioritized as leading to greater inclusion. Senior teachers suggested that they had been diverted from developing collaborative practices by the magnitude of the challenge that the new curriculum represented. In addition the Local Authority policy of keeping exclusion numbers low shifted the focus of support of the LSAs in the school to working individually with pupils who were identified as having behavioural

difficulties. It also could be seen to have influenced the increase in the use of the support facility as an alternative classroom for some pupils.

In both schools the long view taken of the changes in the research also suggested that although current policy may have been a dominating influence, practice also reflected remnants of past initiatives, traditions and priorities. For example in School A the long established policy of selection at secondary transfer exacerbated the issue of school performance. As the head teacher observed 'In this area something like 38% of the students are creamed off to go to grammar schools, and this does result in my school and other local high schools having a higher percentage of special needs children...' In school B, the reverberations of previous policy directions could be seen to have a more positive influence. Here the staff had begun to revisit some aspects of the 'New Community Schools' initiative and were working to re-establish a collaborative approach by setting up a parent council and reviving student forums. It appears that when identifying the barriers or facilitators of change, the legacy of past policies should not be under-estimated.

The connection between policy and available resources is frequently recognized as a driver of change and in the case studies the relationship between these factors was evident. In School B particularly, the rapid turn over of policy initiatives meant that funding ebbed and flowed around different projects. Long term commitment to the New Community School development did not seem certain as only short term contracts could be offered for the positions with key responsibility to guide the initiative forward. The Head noted that it was difficult to fill the non- permanent posts and consequently the impetus for change faltered. In School A resources also played a part in shaping the changes that were seen as possible. The head of the Unit reasoned that because he worked with a fixed staffing budget, any increase in the numbers of pupils that required costly individual support had a negative impact on the capacity to provide for integration of students within the main school. However despite the significance of such resource pressures on the realization of change, it was evident that other underlying factors could have a marked impact on the both schools' ambitions to develop what they regarded as inclusive practice.

One example of such a factor was the legacy of established professional practice and the heritage of traditional ways of working. The Head of school B believed that even if the long term resources and funding had been available the development of a collaborative multi- agency approach to supporting families was not guaranteed. He described tensions between the education and other agencies emanating from the school being seen as the hub for convening and sustaining meetings. He cited willingness to share responsibilities, frequent staff changes in the other services and varying levels of commitment amongst other professionals to collaborative work, as major obstacles to progress. Within his own school there also appeared to be some inherent reluctance to step outside the established power dynamics in the relationship between teachers and pupils. This could be seen to underpin the gradual decline in consultation with the students over time, culminating in their relative lack of involvement in planning for the new school. Significantly although the mechanism for consultation with pupil councils was being restored by 2011, the control of who represented the students was going to be taken by the teaching staff. In school A, the

difficulty of relinquishing traditional practice could also be identified. Faced with the perceived increasing complexity of the needs of the students in the unit, the learning support assistants in the later visit seemed to cast themselves more in the carer/protector role. Although in the 2002 interviews there appeared to be an emphasis on acting as a facilitator and 'stepping back', by 2011 even student breaktimes were seen as situations where the protection of the vulnerable was an essential role for staff to fulfill.

The experiences of the learning support assistants in school A, in particular their reflections on the changing nature of their work, also demonstrates the powerful influence that practices established in special education have on the teaching of certain groups of children. In describing the growing focus on individual support, expertise, specific training, labelling and diagnosis within their practice, the medical model could be seen to be the predominant influence on teaching and learning. As the requirements of the pupils based in the unit were seen to change there was an emphasis on a separate, 'sensory' curriculum as being appropriate which was significantly different from the 'ordinary' school curriculum. Such incompatibility seemed to represent a rationale for a barrier to greater inclusion to exist. Similarly in school B the legacy of special education practices was important in shaping the response to the growing group of children who challenged the approaches established in traditional classroom provision. The additional support unit became an alternative and separate enclave for this particular group of children and the staff allocated to support them. It is interesting to consider why the transition back to such established practice for certain children happened so readily in both schools. The probability is that the underlying negative perception of difference, evident in the subtle 'them and us' attitudes of many of those interviewed, is a powerful and latent barrier to greater inclusion.

Finally the influence of the leaders in both schools on their direction of travel can also be regarded as a significant factor in facilitating change. In school A the Head teacher consistently maintained support for the unit being in the school but crucially saw the way that it operated, even when re-located to the centre of the campus, as being indicative of inclusion in action. Coupled with the head of the unit's special school background and his future vision of better equipped specialized facility, the impetus for a significant shift in approach seemed negligible. In school B the Head teacher, who in 2002 had been so enthusiastic about initiatives to develop participation, by 2011 was reflecting on retirement and the length of his time in the post as, in itself, representing a barrier to change. In one of his closing statements in the final interview he referred to what he thought was the foundation of change within a school:

I'm a big, big believer in the fact that in a school you have to have – the ethos has to be there, first and foremost. And from that comes everything else – comes your good education, comes involvement, comes a community spirit that engages not just the learners but engages staff, engages parents, engages other people that work within the school.

This research project suggests that although schools may assume they have a clear direction and purpose, the resilience of their principles will be continually challenged by the ongoing legacy of attitudes and systems that evolve in wider society.

## **Conclusion**

The journeys travelled by both these schools over the decade between visits highlights that beneath the imagery of progress, displayed in their new buildings and facilities, the reality of change is much more difficult to capture. Significant shifts in direction and emphasis were evident in the schools as they engaged with the process of developing inclusion and participation. In both cases there had been clear evidence of a move away from practices which were previously seen as being a route towards greater inclusion. In both settings people recognised much that had changed for the better, much that had not changed at all, and much that had created greater segregatory pressure. However these changes were often unplanned and unexpected shifts caused by the interplay of political, economic and social tensions both within and beyond the school.

From exploring the developments in the schools it was apparent that the pressures impacting on their decisions and practices were connected to entrenched ideas as well as their current situations. Drawing from Kalberg (1994), Richardson and Powell emphasised that within education 'the influence of legacies is particularly strong' because they 'cast their shadows' over attempts to change and innovate (Richardson and Powell, 2011, p.135). In both schools the legacy of previous policies, practices and provision could be seen to reverberate in the journeys they had taken and in the future directions that they were planning. In seeking to understand the development of inclusion in schools, it is important to recognise that such perpetuating legacies can represent barriers to progress that have deep foundations and which have greater potential to block change than current difficulties a school foresees.

A clear theme to emerge from this study of these two schools was the pervasive influence of the special education and medical model on their practice and principles. Despite their inclusive intentions, the direction that they took involved increasing separation of children in order to address the pupils' perceived educational needs. The heritage of special education is embedded in the education system as a whole and the school readily drew on its practices. Special and mainstream do not exist as separate entities but are a self-serving conjunction spreading across educational provision underpinned by traditional concepts of child development and academic performance. Consequently until we explore and unravel this relationship and its ongoing legacy, it is likely that more schools will travel the same journey as those in the research.

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