



Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD): the challenge for policy makers

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2nd ENSEC 2009, Izmir, Turkey



A Problem ...

- *It is no surprise that teachers, whatever their beliefs about inclusive education, find coping with special needs in mainstream classrooms difficult without additional training and classroom support [...] Growing numbers of special needs are behaviour-related. At the same time, teachers feel under increasing pressure to achieve academic results at all costs in a curriculum which makes few concessions to what one current television programme calls "the unteachables".*

(T.E.S. Editorial, 14th October, 2005)



Key questions that education policy makers must address

- What is the nature of SEBD?
- What is the relationship between SEBD and other aspects of social policy?
- What is the relationship between SEBD and Education?
- What is the relationship between SEBD and SEN?
- What are the implications of the above for education entitlement and provision?



What is the nature of SEBD?

- Social
- Emotional
- Behavioural
- Disruptive to individual
- Disruptive to others
- Unappealing/undeserving



What is the relationship between SEBD and wider aspects of social policy?

- Welfare
- Mental health
- Criminal justice
- Education



What is the relationship between SEBD and Education?

- Disruptive
- Discipline
- Poor educational attainment
- SEN



What are the implications of the above for education entitlement and provision?

- SEBD as unmet emotional, social and educational needs
- Barrier to educational engagement of the individual
- Unmet needs versus punitive, exclusionary practices
- Teacher training and support
- Support services
- Inter-disciplinary and inter agency co-operation



Three Dimensions to Educational Policy and Practice (MacBeath et al. 2006)

- Prescriptive policy
 - Idealized pedagogical practice
 - The realities and constraints of prevailing conditions in schools and the broader societal context
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- Effective policy *must* be ***rational*** and based on an understanding of the ways in which these factors interact with one another



Heart and Head I

- Heart:

- emotion
- intuition
- impulse

- Head:

- intellect
- rationality
- control



Heart vs Head II

- Cf Freudian psychology ... id, ego, super-ego
- Cf cognitive neuroscience ... the amygdala, frontal cortex
- Cf emotional intelligence/literacy relates to understanding and management of emotions



Policy, Heart and Head

- National policies reflect a government response to (i) political, (ii) economic, (iii) public imperatives
- These perceptions combine heart and head in complex ways that can cause problems for rational policy



Values

- Values combine heart and head in unpredictable ways, which are reflected in sometimes incoherent social policy ...



E.G: Inclusive Education

- The problem with inclusive education can, in part at least, be reduced to 'heart vs head' (MacBeath et al, 2006)
- ...too much heart, not enough head



SEN: too much heart, not enough head

- MacBeath et al (2006) studied 20 English schools committed to inclusive education
- 'In general teachers are positive towards the principle of inclusion.'
(p60)



SEN: Heart

- Perceived benefits: widening all pupils' understandings of diversity and developing improved tolerance levels...



SEN: Head

- Deep concerns were aired about the challenges posed by students with 'complex emotional and behavioural needs' and how such difficulties affected the ability of staff to provide 'a suitable education' for these pupils.
- Furthermore, concerns were expressed about the capacity of mainstream schools to meet the social, emotional and educational needs of 'children with complex needs'.
- The researchers note the tendency of pupils with SEN to be located in schools with high levels of social disadvantage, particularly those located in urban (as opposed to rural) areas, where 'parental choice' is made a realistic option owing to the availability of more than one school within reasonable travelling distance.



‘Head’, ‘Heart’ and SEBD

- Difficulties in coping with students with SEBD lead to problems for all students
- Children with other complex needs are neglected as a result of teachers’ difficulties with SEBD
- This sometimes leads to the development of secondary SEBD in students with other complex needs
- This situation leads to frustration and *feelings of guilt* among teachers committed to an ideal that they cannot fulfil



Underlying Problems

- Mainstream teachers often lack necessary specialist skills for dealing with complex needs
- Training (both ITT and CPD) in these areas is limited
- LSA's often lack even basic pedagogical training and may even has a detrimental affect on the progress of students with SEN (Blatchford et al, 2009)



Values are important but ...

- The primacy of equality and social justice as a core value of civilized societies must be upheld
- However, the ways in which we operationalize these values must be based on clear and rational thinking



Unhelpful, Irrational Ways of thinking...

- Values are all ...
- Knowledge derived from bio-medical and psychological models inevitably reify individual differences and lead to discrimination, and are unhelpful to teachers
- Special schools inevitably equate with negative discrimination and segregation
- All students should be placed in 'mainstream' schools



Helpful and Rational Ways of Thinking

...

- The concept of the 'mainstream' school is complex and requires deconstruction (cf. Cooper et al, 2000)
- 'locational integration' is inclusion in name only and (i) does not equate with social and educational engagement, and (ii) may lead to other forms of exclusion
- One view of the history of special provision for SEBD is that it arose out of the need to compensate for the inadequacies of 'mainstream' provision (Bridgeland, 1971; Cooper 1993)
- Diversity among students must be reflected in diversity of intervention and provision
- The importance of evidence, professional skills and professional judgement ...



Evidence, Professional skills and Professional Judgement ...

- Practitioners (i.e. teachers and other professional/paraprofessional staff) are the single most important resource in promoting the positive social, emotional and educational engagement of all students
- Policy makers and academics have the responsibility to provide them with the tools (*ways of thinking, skills and confidence in their own professional judgement*) they need to do the job that confronts them on a daily basis
- Values are extremely important, but it is a disservice to practitioners and to their students to overstate what values alone can achieve



In conclusion

- This is not an anti-inclusion argument
- Neither is it a plea to 'turn back the clock'
- It is a plea for rational and dispassionate look at the ways in which the inclusive education construct affects teachers and students in the real world
- We need to acknowledge that diverse educational needs require diverse intervention and provision with an emphasis on parity of esteem
- We need to acknowledge that positive social, emotional and educational *engagement* are the goals of educational intervention for all students
- Therefore, educational placements should be based on decisions on where opportunities for such engagement can be found, rather than on where some people think they *ought* to be found.



Heart vs Head IV

- '... the heart never takes the place of the head: but it can and should obey it ...' (C. S. Lewis, 1932)