

This essay will discuss 'key social elements that impact on a learner's ability to access education'. The focal point of the essay will evaluate how a child's education can be affected when living in poverty. In addition, the writer will incorporate the challenges that children with special educational needs encounter when learning at school. This paper will include how a child and those around them may become socially excluded. Firstly, it is worth considering what is meant by the term 'social exclusion'. When a person is socially excluded, they will feel withdrawn from society. According to Duffy (1995) social exclusion relates to a person's 'inability to participate effectively in economic, social, and cultural life and, in some characteristics, alienation and distance from mainstream society'.

Corresponding to social exclusion, education plays a key role in bringing about social justice. Stated by Cameron (2007) "without good education there can be no social justice". The education system encourages all children to achieve their best regardless of their background. Unfortunately, inequalities between the rich and poor remain in society (Dorling, 2015). This reflects strongly within the education system. It is argued that those who are poor have become poor due to taking the educational system for granted (Smith, 2012). This implies that children have low aspiration and expectations to do well. This could feed from parents as if there is no encouragement, therefore there is no role model for the children and being poor is all that they know. In this essay many other contributing factors will be explored and a greater understanding as to why children are disengaged in education. It is important to remember that many issues that the schools are challenged with are out of their control. Guerra (2015) states that when working with children with additional learning needs, educators are provided with minimum training, therefore the children are automatically at a disadvantage to their peers.

Furthermore, the writer will evaluate the academic performance, behaviour and pre-judgements of the pupils who live in poverty and of those who have Additional Learning Needs.

The first social key factor the author will discuss is poverty.

"Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing

insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money”
(Rowntree, 2020).

The above quote suggests that it is a struggle for parents to meet a child's basic needs when living in poverty. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs a child limited in basic needs, such as a warm house, will be incapable of achieving their full potential (Carter, 2017). Consequently, this can have a negative impact on a child's development. Poverty affects a child in many ways, including their mental health. Firstly, children in poverty lack confidence in themselves; with no self-belief these children are not the ambitious learners' educators thrive for (Ayre, 2016). Frightfully, “1 in 40 children aged 5–10 engages in self-harm, compared to fewer than 1 in 100 of those with high socio-economic status” (Ayre, 2016, p.13).

The writer is going to explore how child poverty excludes a child from their learning. According to Purbita (2016), economic factors are a significant contributor for most families living in poverty. The unequal share of money in the world means that many families have no other option than to live in poverty. In the United Kingdom there are four point one million children living in poverty and this number is expected to increase significantly (Child poverty action group, 2020). The incline suggests that parents are now having to rely on organisations and food banks to feed their children, causing hunger throughout homes (Dorling, 2015).

Teaching staff have voiced that their students are attending school hungry. Research shows that ‘one in seven primary school children are struggling in class because they skip breakfast’ (Nolan, 2013). The Welsh Government has implemented breakfast clubs to make sure that children are provided with the correct nutrients to start their day (Welsh Government, 2018). In addition, families who have income support can access The Free School Meals scheme (Welsh Government, 2019).

Despite the help from the government, children are only in school for six hours. A family who is living in poverty may be unable to provide the nutritious foods that their child needs to concentrate on schoolwork (Margie, 2020). It is expected that a child who has an unhealthy diet is more likely to have health complications, such as, obesity. Cohen (2018) states that people need to realise that “it's poverty, not individual choice, that is driving extraordinary obesity levels”. This is important to

highlight in terms of labelling. Poor families are often labelled as 'lazy' (Le Miere, 2017). Buchheit (2015) explains that individuals from a poor background are the hardest workers. This implies that the problem lies within the structure of the education system not allowing all students to excel. Stigmas can cause people to feel isolated and anxious; when children feel this way, it makes it difficult for them to achieve their best (Mind, 2020).

Those who live in poverty are less likely to want to participate in extra-curricular activities. It is important for teaching staff to encourage their pupils to attend as this may be the only chance that they have to feel part of a team. Wijtzes (2016) explains that it is unlikely for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to engage in extra-curricular activities in comparison to those from advantaged backgrounds. Joining clubs outside of school is an extra cost to families and it becomes a barrier for the children living in poverty wanting to attend (Raphael, 2013).

Furthermore, educational visits are a barrier to children who are living in poverty. The extra expense means that they will miss out on valued experiences (National Education Union, 2018). This does not only exclude the child, but also the parents. When on school grounds, parents are likely to communicate about upcoming visits and the families living in poverty will be unable to participate in those conversations leading them to feel excluded and possibly guilty. Schools attempt to have inclusive and free educational visits in attempt to eliminate this. However, experience suggest that children living in poverty are still at risk of missing out. Most trips require sensible shoes or a warm coat which may not be possible for a child living in poverty. One in twenty-five children will live without having a warm coat (Rowntree Foundation, 2020, p. 34)

Low income families are unable to participate in social events that cost extra. In line with school children, this can affect a child's self-esteem. Jensen (2009, p. 17) explains that "low-income parents are often overwhelmed by diminished self-esteem, depression and a sense of powerlessness and inability to cope – feelings that may get passed along to their children" Having a low self-esteem can affect a child's approach to education; they may have negative attitude and appear distant in social interaction. A child with a low self-esteem is likely to feel lonely and anxious (National Health Service, 2020).

Children living in poverty will begin to realise that their lives differ to their peers. Access to resources and materials may differ, including the latest clothing trends (Keep your child safe, n.d.). This can lead to bullying, ultimately impacting on a child's attendance. Patchin (2017) expresses that when a child is bullied, they are unable to feel safe when at school. Regarding Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, children living in poverty are unable to continue to the next 'level', therefore, they are incapable of fulfilling their potential (Carter, 2017). It should also be highlighted that low attendance from a child who lives in poverty is not always solely their choice. For instance, if a child's home is run down, this can cause illness which will impact on their attendance (Uhrig, 2016). To tackle low attendance, schools implement programs that can track a pupil's attendance, alongside working with parents to make sure that the schools support low-income families the best way that they can (BC Teachers' Federation, 2016).

Lower academic performances and IQ scores have been linked to those who live in poverty (Kwon, 2015). Living in poverty is a stressful lifestyle for a child (Rich, 2017). Childhood is influential on the brain development, contributing to a child's working memory and creating a foundation for their future (Matthews-King, 2018). In addition, children who misbehave in school are more likely to be from a disadvantaged background (McBride, 2017). This can impact on a child's social development as their peers are less likely to want to work with them in group work as they are known to misbehave (Jensen, 2009, p. 18). Importantly, teachers should take time to understand their pupil's behaviour through evaluating their emotional needs. A small example of the behaviour a child who lives in poverty may display is "acting-out, impatience and impulsivity" which is difficult for a teacher to control when there is a large class (Jensen, 2009, p. 19).

Experience suggests that early years' intervention can be effective when tackling poverty. In Wales, there is a scheme called 'Flying start' which allows children ages two – three from disadvantaged backgrounds to be introduced to informal education, where they can begin to socialise with others (Flying Start, 2012). Throughout these childcare settings, a scheme called 'designed to smile' has been implemented which encourages children to engage with their personal hygiene (Designed to smile,

2020). Children are expected to clean their teeth every day in their setting and each term, children are provided with a new toothbrush and tooth paste to take home. The above text provides evidence of how child poverty can socially exclude children from their education. Chiles (2014) states that if you begin life in poverty you are likely to remain poor through to adulthood. This becomes a hard cycle to break for children living in poverty as they are the lowest achievers and their disengagement means that they are likely to not finish school (Uhrig, 2016). Educators should encourage children to have a positive outlook on life, break stigmas and feed the confidence required for children to go on and do well in their education (Jensen, 2009, p. 54). In addition, life could be made more affordable for everyone, such as reducing the costs of everyday necessities (Holland, 2020). Furthermore, the writer will explore the correlation between social exclusion and children with special educational needs.

“The children and Families Act 2014 denote that child or young person has SEN when he or she has a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provisions to be made for him or her” (Hodkinson, 2016, p. 3)

To make sure that educators are meeting the needs of children with SEN there is a Code of Practice which all schools must follow and refer to when teaching. The code is in place to make sure that children are given the best opportunity to achieve their best. Within the code there are four categories which include:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, mental and emotional health
- Sensory and/ or physical needs

It is important that the code is followed throughout schools as if needs are unmet children become disengaged and levels of poor behaviour increase (Hodkinson, 2016, p.5). To add to that, a child who misbehaves and has no diagnosed additional needs may be telling their teacher an important message. Poor behaviour may be an indication that there are underlying learning difficulties (BMJ, 2019). Early diagnosis and intervention can be crucial for children who have learning difficulties as this could put an early stop to the child falling behind, emotionally, socially and intellectually (American Library Association, 2020).

It is estimated that in the United Kingdom there are eight hundred thousand disabled children (Disabled Living Foundation, 2017). In addition, there are around two hundred and eighty-six thousand children with learning difficulties in the UK (Foundation for people with learning disabilities, 2020). Education is not an easy journey for SEN children. Many barriers can occur for SEN, resulting in exclusion from learning.

Firstly, communication with teachers, teaching assistants and peers can be a challenge for a child with special educational needs. The stress of not knowing how to structure a sentence to ask what they want or have the confidence to ask for help is a barrier for children with learning difficulties. Young (2020) explains that if a child does not ask for help whilst in school, they are likely to be behind their peers regards learning. Communication with someone who has SEN should be slower and in simpler form. This allows a child time to process information to gain an understanding of what is being asked. For example, instructions should be given one at a time so that the child does not get mixed up with what is being expected of them (Evans, 2016). The class teacher will get to know the child. A positive relationship between the teacher and SEN child allows for valued communication, as the child is willing to discuss problems about their learning without feeling ashamed. Children with SEN are typically more sensitive to comments and actions (Great Ormond street hospital for children, 2020). For instance, a child with autism will struggle when understanding facial expressions and jokes; this makes it hard for children to make new friends (Horton, 2019).

Due to the limitation of communication skills, this can impact a child's confidence, causing a sense of worry and self-judgement. According to Ehmke (2020) this can cause poor concentration levels and disengagement in the classroom.

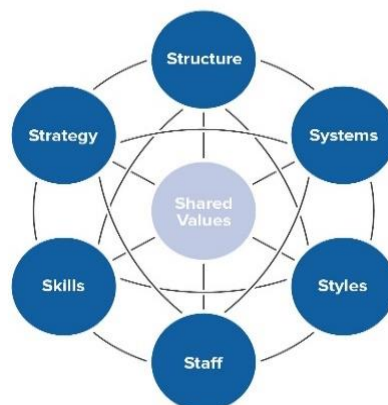
Having low confidence and self-esteem isolates children from socialising with other class members. There is always a fear of being bullied as there is a sense of being 'different' to others. Consequently, they would rather be on their own. A child who is being bullied will begin to view school as an unsafe environment; this impacts on the enjoyment and achievement levels of that child (Knowles and Lander, 2011, p. 147).

In addition, a child who feels lonely will not want to attend school which will affect their school attendance (Bowles, Scull and Russo, n.d.). It is claimed that a child who misses school regularly can be up to one year behind their peers. Therefore, it is vital that SEN children maintain their school attendance as they are already at a disadvantage due to learning at a much slower rate. Further to this, children with SEN have regular appointments to attend which takes them away from their education. In attempt to eliminate this barrier, schools offer multi agency work (Knowles and Lander, 2011, p.152).

“For inclusion to be seen to be ‘effective’, all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community” (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002, p. 3).

Learning can be a difficult task for SEN children, therefore the Government stated that their priority is to ensure that the highlighted individuals have equal opportunities to their peers to ensure that their education is enjoyable rather than purely focused on educational attainment. Personalised learning should be in place to allow their confidence and learning to grow. However, this can be forgotten when a teacher is highly stretched due to government funding cuts.

Further to this, concern for children with SEN is that schools do not facilitate their needs. The lack of adequate provision raises concerns for parents of SEN children as funding cuts continue to grow throughout the education system (Tickle, 2017). Research has been done to support that change needs to happen. A model that displays that is Mckinsey Model, see figure one. Scripted by The Secret Teacher (2017) schools are being left no choice other than not to support children with SEN.



(Figure. 1)

As educators it is understood that all seven 's' need to be balanced for a school to be pro-active. In this statement, change needs to be made to the strategy for SEN children, therefore change needs to take place elsewhere. To work alongside the economic cuts, schools can change their system. For example, there could be a set time for all SEN children to have time out during the school day; this could just be for a chat with a member of staff (Mind Tools, n.d.).

The writer will continue to evaluate social exclusion when a child is faced with the two social key elements discussed above. Throughout this essay it is highlighted that both, child poverty and special educational needs cause a demand on family income. With the high cost of living for a disabled child, this already puts households under economic stress'. According to Every Disabled Child Matters campaign (2007, p. 4) it costs 'three times as much to bring up a disabled child'. For a family living in poverty it is made impossible for them to care for their child. They will be entitled for allowances; however, they will remain in poverty and limitation will persist.

Following the high demand of care, parents may become unable to work, therefore they will experience a loss of income (Every Disabled Child Matters campaign, 2007, p. 5). To aid with this, the Employment Act 2002 gave parents the right to work flexibly alongside their disabled child. Living in poverty with a child with SEN does not solely isolate the child from their learning, siblings are at risk too. For example, they may not be able to ask for parental help with homework as they are too busy. Throughout this paper it is understood that Social Exclusion is a widespread concept, and anyone can be excluded from education. However, those who are more vulnerable can sometimes have a tough experience when trying to learn. The great pressure to do well with limited resources to support these children is where the main barrier persists.

The writer identifies that very often, early intervention for children affected by these social key elements can be effective. It could be argued that this is not used to its full

potential. It is very easy for children to be overlooked so unless support is pushed for it is difficult for these children to access help.

Unfortunately, these children will miss out on many experiences compared to their peers (National Education Union, 2018). This isolates them instantly as children like to talk about educational visits or what they did on over the weekend. For a child in poverty, they have an economic barrier to access this and for those with special educational needs, it varies dependent on their specific needs, however, if they are physically disabled they will not be able to have participate in lessons and activities in the same way as their peers.

In relation to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, all children need have their basic needs met for them to incline towards fulfilling their education (Carter, 2017). Both child poverty and children with special educational needs face the barrier of not meeting their basic needs. it is important to highlight the danger for disabled children, living in poverty. Unheated homes are more likely to have damp, this can make anyone unwell, however, damp can put disabled children at risk. Consequently, causing time off school to recover.

Additionally, throughout this essay the writer has become aware of the impact parents have on children, especially as the funding for special educational needs is so small within schools' children. Children can be unnoticed unless their parents continue to push for the right support for their child (Tickle, 2017).

Overall, a child living in poverty or living with special educational needs is more likely to have a negative experience of education. The writer expresses that if more schemes are implemented to support vulnerable children this will create more equal opportunities.

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