

Social inclusion could be defined as people and groups within society, valuing other groups and, overcoming differences in beliefs, morals and values (Boyle et al, 2012). Social inclusion lends itself to the idea of a harmonious, cohesive society which does not let issues of race, gender, class or disability break the cohesion. Some may call this utopia; others may say it is impossible to achieve. Equality is a major player in the field of education of late, with many policies and initiatives being introduced in the UK to narrow the gap for disadvantaged groups and allow all children to become the best they can be. As stated by Schweiger & Graff, 2015 "each and every child is entitled to reach a minimum threshold of certain important functioning's and capabilities, which are essential to her well-being and well-becoming". Groups or individuals who are socially excluded are associated with negative issues such as "poor skills, unemployment, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdowns" (Shucksmith, 2000). This essay will explore the implications of social class and disability on inclusion. It will also explore the impact of labelling and stigmatisation of these groups within education and society. Theories such as Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological system, Fiske's (2002) Stereotype Content Model and Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital will be used to explain some of the background ideas about exclusion of groups from education and within society. The Salamanca Statement (1994), The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (1989), The Equality Act (2010) and Welsh Government Initiatives will be used to explain the movement to inclusion for all children in education. During this essay my setting shall be discussed. It will be referred to as School A. All the children in School A have Additional Learning Needs (ALN), it is situated in a deprived area and has 150 pupils. Just over a third of School A's pupils are on Free School Meals (FSM).

When speaking of the issue of social class, it can be seen as a hierarchical way of distinguishing groups within society. Social class is widely classified into three distinct groups; Lower Class, Middle Class and Upper Class. People from the lower-class group may be viewed as destitute, uneducated and unrefined. All these observations are stereotypes but as stated by Narayan et al, 2000 "The poor themselves define their well-being and deprivation as multifaceted, with both monetary and non-monetary dimensions (such as life expectancy, literacy, housing quality etc.)". The lower classes problems are not always defined by income and research has shown that

household income is not always an accurate measure, and does not express the full impact of poverty (Dickerson & Popli, 2015). The DfE and DWP (2011), published their Child Poverty Strategy, which highlighted 10 separate measures excluding income, which could define child poverty. Similarly, Welsh Government (2015) published their Child Poverty Strategy and the two documents seem to focus on the causes not the symptoms of child poverty. Both documents heavily refer to the detrimental implications of children coming from a home where no adults work. They both highlight that often people living in low income households pay higher rates for heating and food. It could be argued that these documents insinuate that non-working parents lead their children to be non- aspiring. Again, these documents could be shown as accusatory and stereotyping society which is a barrier to inclusion. Fiske (2002) explains stereotype by two concepts; Warmth and competence. Fiske argues that society links low competence with warmth and high competence by a coolness i.e. a successful educated person is highly competent but not approachable whereas an incompetent, uneducated person is warm and encompassing, or has a strong feel for community spirit. To make inclusion work society needs to strive to make everyone competent and everyone warm. It could be argued that the language used to describe people's circumstances in policies needs to be used carefully to ensure that it is not labelling and stereotyping.

The UNCRC (1989) holds several articles which pertain to equality for all classes of society such as articles 2, 4, 27 and 28. These articles call for equality for all children with no regard for background or class and that all persons of power are responsible for ensuring those rights. Distribution of wealth and resources is also an important factor when considering child poverty in lower class households. Children usually have no control on how money or resources are shared out within their household and this can lead to some children facing a different kind of poverty to their siblings (Ringen, 1988; Ravallion, 1996). It is important for schools to be aware of household circumstances so they can provide the best route to inclusion for the individual child's circumstances. The conceptions of class have been explained by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Bourdieu theorizes that children from lower class backgrounds have less cultural capital. This can have an adverse effect on inclusion in schools due to the difference in habitus from the teaching staff. It could be argued that teachers are from more middle-class backgrounds as they have had

access to higher education and therefore may not have the same social, economic and cultural capital as lower-class pupils. The teacher may therefore have a bias towards lower class pupils and exclude them from certain class discussions due to their assumptions of the pupil's cultural capital.

The self-defined problems faced by lower-class groups can lead to exclusion from educational settings. If a mother has poor literacy skills, she may not be able to engage with letters sent home from her child's school, or be able to help with homework. So, what are schools doing to combat such issues? School A is a rights respecting school and ensures that all pupils are made aware of their rights using a communication method that is appropriate to the individual child. School A has face to face meetings with parents to ensure that they are communicated to in the most appropriate way for the parent. Often, there are transportation problems for lower income households (Government Office for Science, 2019). In these circumstances, School A's Family Liaison Officer (FLO) will visit their home. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory highlights the importance of a positive relationship between a child's microsystem using the mesosystem as a measure of successful relationships. If these relationships are successful then inclusion is achieved. A criticism of Bronfenbrenner's theory is that it does not look at the child itself being able to influence its development. It purely states that the child is a product of the environments in which it exists. It does not give scope for behavior to impact upon the child's standing within society. Letters are sent home with symbols on using computer programs such as communicate in print. Therefore, parents with poor literacy skills can use the symbols to interpret meaning. School A also uses phone calls as a means of communication with parents to ensure that important messages are received and understood. If a parent is struggling to afford school uniform, the government has made grants available to help with the costs (Welsh Government, 2020). School A has set up a school uniform recycling shop, which allows parents to get nearly new uniform items at a fraction of the price. When looking at recent events, such as the Covid 19 lockdown period, work packs were being sent home via email. If parents were struggling with printing the work packs, School A printed and posted to their home. All these initiatives have helped to make School A an inclusive environment ensuring that all children had access to the same opportunities as their more affluent peers.

Children with ALN face obvious barriers to inclusion. Limited mobility can mean access problems to educational settings. Language difficulties such as deafness or speech impairment can be a barrier to communication in educational settings. Learning and behavioural difficulties can be viewed as a bigger barrier to socialising within the school's society (Gray, 2009). There have been many government reforms pertaining to the inclusion of children with ALN in educational settings. The Salamanca statement (1994) could be seen as the springboard for this movement. The statement called for inclusion for all children in education irrespective of their abilities. In the UK the Equality Act (2010) states that disability is a protected characteristic and therefore reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure inclusion of people with disabilities, in all aspects of society. Welsh Government have outlined their intention to improve inclusion and quality of education provided to learners with ALN in their ALN Transformation Programme (2020). The shift from using the term Special Educational Needs (SEN) to Additional Learning needs (ALN) destigmatizes children with disabilities and the term ALN encompasses all learners' additional needs such as looked after children, or children living in poverty.

When looking at inclusion of children with ALN in schools in Wales, Welsh Government (2020) states “22 per cent of all learners at maintained schools in Wales have SEN”. This is in stark contrast to Norwegian schools where “All children are the responsibility of the local school. Very few are in special schools; less than 1%, and about 2.2% of students in compulsory school age (6–16) are in private schools” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). About 97% of students attend local mainstream, free school settings in Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2008) and this inclusion rate is supported by ensuring all learners with ALN are given Individual education plans (IEPs). They are taught in mainstream class with support from a SEN setting on a part time basis and local educational psychologists provide extra support when needed. (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). Norway has a long-standing history of inclusion with a law being passed in 1881 to advocate for all children, specifically those with ALN, to have access to education (Engen, 2010). This shows that Norway has historically taken a proactive approach to inclusion, many policies state the importance of removing barriers to ensure that all pupils have access to education (Nes, 2014). In contrast to

the approach Norway has taken to inclusion, the UK did not have an official law to ensure the education of children with ALN until 1970 (Mencap, 2020).

In school A there are several policies that ensure that the pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum. Due to the school being a school for only ALN pupils it doesn't represent society as a whole so inclusion would be hard to measure in this environment. In contradiction the school is excluding its pupils by making them into a segregated group but it is a group of equality. Staff receive training to ensure they can support pupils with health care plans which leads to good attendance. Staff are trained in many forms of communication such as Makaton and British Sign Language to ensure that all pupils can have a voice. There is also a whole school approach to communication via Makaton so pupils can communicate with their peers. Positive relationships are built with the local community, therefore reinforcing social inclusion. It could be argued that staff training is imperative to inclusion. It has been argued by Boyle et al (2013) that teachers values and beliefs are likely to have a large impact on inclusion. They also argue that teachers experience and training in teaching children with ALN will affect attainment and also the teacher's self-confidence. Due to teachers experience their perception of the severity of ALN could differ greatly between class or even school (Van Der Veen et al, 2010). A robust training module on teaching children with ALN needs to be included in initial teacher training. Opportunities for experience in an ALN environment need to be made available to teaching staff so that inclusion can be promoted in all schools. The diversity of teaching staff needs to be explored more within the education industry. How can inclusion be promoted in primary schools for example when most of the teaching staff are female and there is a higher percentage of male children with ALN (Guarino et al. 2010).

In conclusion, it seems that governments across the UK are trying to achieve the same goals in education. Inclusion is at the top of the agenda but there are no positive measures of success yet. Teacher and teaching staff training needs to have inclusion at its forefront for inclusion to become part of everyday life in schools. Facilities need to be accessible to all and reasonable adjustments need to be made to ensure equality. Norway seems to have been forward thinking and to have some exciting ideas when it comes to ALN, but at what cost to its more gifted children. It has been shown by Mortimer (2004), in reference to the education system in Norway,

that “Talented children are probably under-challenged in class and hence underachieving”. If we look at expectations on society, with particular reference to schools, if inclusion is to be achieved then all of the school community will need the same values. This may prove hard to achieve. In school A, a philosophy of community, ambition, respect, excitement and safety is promoted to the whole school community. These steps to inclusion rely on everyone having the same set of values and as stated by Koutsouris et al, 2020 “This is an admirable aspiration, yet it does not acknowledge the possibility of different, even conflicting, interpretations of the same values”. There is no evidence or way to measure that values are shared (Pirrie & Head, 2007). The way that society looks at people, and puts them into a social class group, will be a difficult change to make. Perceptions of people's financial standings effect the way individuals are perceived and stereotyping may be impossible to eradicate. Education is the biggest tool in helping individuals to become understanding and compassionate. It is essential that all children have equal access to high quality education. By passing laws and installing policies governments can reinforce inclusion, but essentially inclusion relies on interpersonal relationships within the members of the society (Koutsouris, 2014). The best that any government can do is to ensure a level playing field by providing funding, education and care for its most disadvantaged groups within society.

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