From Inclusion to Engagement

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Outline

- 'Inclusive education' is a problematic construct. This particularly so in relation to Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD).

- The concept of 'educational engagement' is presented as a more viable approach to addressing social and emotional needs in order to promote effective social, emotional and academic learning.

- It is argued that David Smith's idea of 'attachment to schooling' is an essential feature of educational engagement that is highly relevant to SEBD.

- Educational engagement is measurable and there is evidence to suggest hat this can be achieved through the development of teachers' skills and adjustments in school organisation within the context of broader multi-disciplinary initiatives that are devoted to this end.

The Problem with Inclusive Education

- In spite of a number of legislative moves, inclusive education has been surrounded by debates for various reasons. First, what is declared in legislation is not necessarily adequately implemented in practice […], or evenly within the borders of one country […]. Second, some debates centre on the very nature of inclusion […]. Researchers do not uniformly agree on what, in fact, constitutes inclusive practices.

(Curcic, 2009: 517)

But surely, inclusion is the opposite of 'exclusion', which is easily defined.
Isn't it … ?

- '… observers agree on only one point: the impossibility of having a single criterion with which to define exclusion. The numerous surveys and reports on exclusion all reveal the profound helplessness of the experts …'

Weinberg and Rauno-Borbalan (1993:12)

The Philosophical and Operational Contexts of Inclusive Education

- Emphasis on the importance of social justice in and equality of access to education.

- This is entirely in tune with the founding principles of all liberal democratic societies.

- Serious problems arise, however, when attempts are made to operationalize these principles within education systems, without an adequate appraisal of conceptual and practical issues.

Questions which are Evaded

- How can it be possible for government policies and educational practices to be made in the name of a concept for which there is no agreed definition?

- In these circumstances, what is the basis for believing that such policies might be successful?

- What is the educational value of a construct that cannot be operationalized or evaluated?

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)

"Regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all. Moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system."

The status of the Salamanca Statement

- Seminal influence on some educational academics and policy makers
- It is a statement of belief
- It misuses concepts of 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' which imply empirical support which is still not available.

Evidence Base for Inclusive Education

- 'Inclusive education/mainstreaming has been promoted on two bases: the rights of children to be included in mainstream education and the proposition that inclusive education is more effective. This review focuses on the latter issue. ***The evidence from this review does not provide a clear endorsement for the positive effects of inclusion. There is a lack of evidence from appropriate studies and, where evidence does exist, the balance was only marginally positive.*** It is argued that the policy has been driven by a concern for children's rights. The important task now is to research more thoroughly the mediators and moderators that support the optimal education for children with SEN and disabilities and, as a consequence, ***develop an evidence-based approach to these children's education***.'

  - (Lyndsay, 2007, emphasese added)

The Discourse of the Extreme Inclusive Education Position

- The history of Special Education equates with oppressive segregationist regimes (slavery; the subjugation of women; apartheid)

- Therefore, an often unintended consequence is that special education practitioners can be, unjustly, equated with slave overseers; misogynists; racists)

View from the Classroom

- 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 Oct, 2005)

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)

- inattentiveness in lessons; non-compliant behaviour and oppositionality; anti-social behaviour including physical and verbal aggression; bullying, extreme shyness and social withdrawal; test and performance anxiety; stealing; school refusal and truancy, and general disaffection.

- SEBD may be the result of a mental health problems, including: specific diagnosable emotional and behavioural disorders, e.g. AD/HD, Conduct Disorder, Anxiety and Depressive Disorders etc.

Life Long Risk Factors Associated with SEBD and Mental Health Problems

- Impaired social emotional functioning
- Relationship problems
- Educational underperformance
- Occupational problems
- Delinquency
- Premature death

In Hong Kong

It has been estimated that 16.5% of adolescents in Hong Kong exhibit DSM-IV disorders (Leung et al, 2008)

The incidence of SEBD in some mainstream schools is a major challenge to the achievement of inclusive education

(e.g. Chong & Ng, 2011; 2011b; Poon-McBrayer & Lian, 2002; Forlin and Cooper, in preparation).

Adolescent Suicide in Hong Kong

- Suicide rates across the population in HK increased between 1999 and 2009 from 13.2 to 14.6 (per 100,000).

- Male suicide (15-24 age group) rose (approximately a 33% increase between 1995 and 2006), and remains the leading cause of death among this age group (Paul et al., 2004; Berman, 2011).

Influences on Suicidality: Positives (Shek and Yu, 2012)

- **High self esteem**
- **Social competence**
- **Cognitive , behavioural and moral competence**
- **Coping skills**
- **Social problem solving skills**
- **Self determination and self efficacy**
- **Social involvement**
- **Spirituality**
- **Positive view of the future**
- **Positive family environment**

Influences on Suicidality: Negatives

- Low family SES (Knock, 2008)

- Unhappy family life (Yip et al, 2004)

- Poor child-parent communication (Kwok & Shek, 2010)

- Remarried parents (Shek & Yu, 2012)

- Use of illicit drugs (Yip et al, 2004)

- Adolescent sense of hopelessness (Kwok & Shek, 2010)

- Low cognitive and behavioural competence (Shek & Yu, 2012)

Cognitive-Behavioural Competence

- A recent study in Hong Kong found a **<u>positive</u>** association between Cognitive-Behavioural Competence and Deliberate Self Harm and Suicidal Behaviour (Shek & Yu, 2012)

- Cognitive-Behavioural Competence includes: cognitive competence, behavioural competence and a sense of self-determination

A Possible Explanation

- '… if people believe that self-harm or suicide could be an effective way to cope with painful events and ton relieve one's sufferings, those with higher self-determination may be more likely to take real action, that is commit self-harming or suicidal behaviors.' (Shek & Yu, 2012)

The Role of Schools

- Schools do not cause SEBD, mental health problems and suicide in a simplistic sense.

- Schools, however, can be part of the problem or part of the solution – there is no neutral ground

- Schools can provide socially-emotionally supportive environments or socially-emotionally challenging environments (Liu, 2009)

Inclusion, SEBD and Mental Health

- There are examples of schools in Hong Kong and in other parts of the world that are demonstrably successful in promoting positive the mental health of their staff and students.

- There are, however, schools where this is not the case.

- Also, there are elements common to education systems in advanced and developing economies that undermine the mental health of vunerable students.

Time Out Hong Kong: 7 December, 2011:

'... each year, from September to November, a dramatic spike in teen suicide will occur, "because September is the beginning of the new semester and students face sudden pressure – and at the end of October there are many exams that generate huge pressure."'

Time Out Hong Kong: 7 December, 2011

"'Parents and teachers, the education system, the social system, everyone sees academic performance as the only baseline of a student's success and failure … So, once they fail, they'll think themselves useless and want to escape through either uninhibited indulgence or death."

Time Out Hong Kong: 7 December, 2011

- '"Most teachers want [suicide prevention] programmes [within secondary schools] … but they find it hard to squeeze them into their students' schedules. They have too many lessons at school and, after school, they need to go to different cram schools.'"

Heart vs Head

- "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)

Heart

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

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 (cf. 2010 OFSTED views on this)

- Training (both ITT and CPD) in these areas is limited

- TA'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

Inclusion as Locational Integration

- Too often the effectiveness of the inclusive education project is measured in relation to the location of the student with SEN. It is implied that those who are in mainstream schools are, by definition, included, whilst those in non-mainstream provision are not included.

'Education cannot compensate for society'

(Bernstein, 1966)

- general slow down in upward social mobility in both the USA and UK at the beginning of the 21st century

  (Sutton Trust, 2008; Carnegie Foundation, 2007)

- Children who come from socially deprived backgrounds are at much greater risk of educational failure than children who come from privileged backgrounds

- There is a further association between educational failure and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, as well as an association between social, emotional and behavioural problems and social disadvantage.

  (Shneiders, et al, 2003).

- Net family income is a far stronger predictor of gaining entry into the top professions (such as medicine, the law, banking and journalism) for people who were born in 1970 than it was for those who were born in 1958.

  (Centre for Market and Public Organisation, Macmillan, 2009)

'Education cannot compensate for society' (1)

(Bernstein, 1966)

- approximately 50% of the undergraduate places at Oxford and Cambridge Universities are taken up by students from the 7% of the general population who have attended fee paying schools.

- one in three members of the UK's House of Commons benefited from a privately funded education

(Macmillan, 2009).

Negative Effects of Performativity Culture

- Student SEBD is one factor within high pressure education systems which fail to achieve an appropriate balance between particular kinds of highly focused educational outcomes and the very human needs of the students who are required to achieve these outcomes, and teachers who are employed to facilitate this.

'Education cannot compensate for society'(2)

(Bernstein, 1966)

- …education systems and their parts do not develop spontaneously […] and they do not develop out of purely humanitarian motives. They develop because it is in the interests of particular groups in society that they should develop, and that they should develop in certain ways. (Tomlinson,1982:27)

Educational Engagement (Cooper, 2005; Cooper and Jacobs, 2011)

- Educational engagement is concerned with the ways in which a learner is involved with the social and academic aspects of learning.

- 'Engagement' can be thought of as incorporating cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions.

The 'cognitive' dimension

- thoughts and thought processes that the learner employs in learning situations. These include perceptions of self and others, memory, reflection and problem solving approaches.

The 'social' dimension

- ways in which the learner interacts with other people in the learning situation. Significant aspects of social engagement include those behaviours and orientations that can be described as either pro-social, or anti-social.

The 'emotional' dimension

- the feelings and unconscious motivations that all individuals possess. These include the individual's sense of emotional security (i.e. safety), fears, anxieties, happiness, jealousy, and so on.

Cognitive, social, and emotional interactions

- These three dimensions of human development interact with one another in ways that have significant consequences for student engagement with education.

Educational Engagement and Attachment to School

- When students are educationally engaged they are 'attached' to schooling, in an emotional sense.

- Attachment to school refers to the degree of commitment towards and engagement with schooling that a student feels. Students who have a strong attachment to school believe that schooling is a worthwhile experience in itself and that success in school will lead to significant rewards both in the short term and in later life. Weak attachment to school is characterized by indifference or hostility towards teachers and skepticism or disbelief in relation to the value of schooling.

(Smith 2006)

Educational Engagement and Inclusive Education

- The idea of educational engagement is not incompatible with the broadest definitions of 'inclusive education', though it places a stronger emphasis on the interaction between social and individual factors.

- A key underpinning is a bio-psycho-social perspective which recognizes that there is a wide range of human diversity, that when properly understood enables schools and teachers to make accommodations.

- When we develop such understandings we learn things about human functioning in general that enable us to improve learning environments in ways which benefit all students. For example, an informed understanding of ADHD raises awareness of the mechanisms of human self regulation and the environmental factors which can help or hinder the efficient functioning of these mechanisms.

It follows that …

- This definition of educational engagement, therefore, rejects the view that diagnostic categories are necessarily discriminatory and stigmatizing. Though it is acknowledged that they must be used in responsible and informed ways.

- Serious damage can be done when diagnoses are ignored and/or belittled.

- Barriers to multi-agency cooperation can be created by arid arguments about language and terminology, which in turn distract attention from what should be the primary focus of educational services: to promote the fullest possible educational engagement of all students.

The Importance of Evidence Based Practice

- The construct of Educational Engagement is founded on the principles of evidence based practice:
  - Commitment to achieving the best outcomes
  - Respect for appropriate, high quality research evidence on 'what works'
  - A willingness to be led by the evidence rather than ideology
  - Reflexivity: continuous, critical self evaluation

Evidence of Effective Practice in Relation to SEBD

- NCSE (Ireland) International Literature Review (Cooper and Jacobs, 2011)
- The most persuasive research evidence:
  - involves random controlled trials RCTs;
  - employs normative constructs based on psychological theories which define SEBD in terms of behavioural and emotional dysfunction
  - draw on therapeutic approaches based on behavioural, humanistic, cognitive behavioural and systemic principles
  - eschews crude dichotomies between types of provision

And in the End …

- We are doing a good job for students with SEBD when we give them **respite** from those conditions which harm them;
- a **relationship** which is affirming and honest,
- and opportunities to reinvent their view of themselves as decent and worthy human beings (**Re-Signification**).
- It is what we as individuals **do** that matters, regardless of the label on the door of the place where we do it …