Inclusion in Scotland: History, Barriers and Benefits

Intro

Scotland has been the forefront in education since the late 1800’s. The idea of universal school education pioneered the pedagogical ideal and revolutionised the way the country and how many other countries viewed education. However, Scotland had its issues. During the mid-nineteenth century, one in three children were not in education. Buildings were unsuitable for learning and poorer families opted for young people to earn money, rather than get an education. This socially unjust Scotland is now far behind them and as a country have developed a system that is ever-growing into the awareness that education is for all. The acts introduced by parliament have created an inclusive system that does not discriminate against any class, gender and race, and allows education for all. Three established government policies that develop Scotland’s relationships and inclusion within a learning environment are the Early Years framework (2008), Getting it Right for Every Child (2010) and Curriculum for excellence (2010) . As early as 1708, Daniel Defoe had described the Scottish system in a positive manor, 'poorest people have their children taught and instructed' and this can still be translated to today’s Scotland.

History

In 1696, the Scottish Parliament passed an act that was to develop the religious understanding of the Scottish people. It embedded a public acceptance of educational standards and would later shape the modern Scottish educational system. The education allowed the population to read the word of God and aimed to educate the youth of Scotland and created a foundation that formed a meritocracy that allowed a child to climb up an educational ladder. However, Scotland was still receiving negative feedback. George Lewis, the editor of the Scottish guardian in the early 1800’s, published his book, “'Scotland a Half-Educated Nation”, criticising Scotland for not keeping up with the growing population, stating that two-thirds of the country were being tutored outside of the public system. It was estimated in 1834, parts of Europe had a fifth of its population at school, Scotland had one-fifteenth. The first step towards an inclusive education was the 1872 Act. This act abolished fees for schools and created a national board for education and was run by these newly established local school boards rather than the churches. It was put into place to tackle uneven schooling across Scotland. The free tuition for primary stages justly created an opportunity for any child to receive an education, and the introduced law that education was compulsory ages 5 to 13 was the start of Scotland’s journey to achieve education for all. This brought on free school meals for those who needed in 1908, which brought a socially just community into schools.

However, the legislation failed to address problems that still were present in the system. In 1897, still, only 5% of pupils continued to secondary education, and the main concern for middle-class students was to find a source of income. The 1918 Act acted on this and expanded secondary education, however, saw the division in children, “academic” from the “non-academic” which was a step back in relation to inclusion. This was due to secondary school still being paid, and it wasn’t until 1936 when secondary schooling was made compulsory that allowed any child to gain qualifications. 1965 saw the introduction of comprehensive schools

and this addressed the inequality in junior schools and senior schools. It marked a shift in educational philosophy and equality of pupils regardless of class or heritage became predominant rather than equality of opportunity. By 1978, the Warnock report was published in England, and this focused on children with special needs and integrate them into the regular school curriculum. However, the children were never fully integrated and socialised within schools. It was seen that children would be integrated in a manner to the extent that was appropriate to their circumstances. Therefore, full integration into mainstream schools depended on whether the child could assimilate to a largely unchanged school environment. Despite of this, the Warnock report was obviously intended to change school environments for the better, and this is what Scotland soon adopted and created its own inclusive policies.

Learning Theories

During the twentieth century, teachers were becoming widely educated and had begun to experiment with learning strategies. During the ’60s, Piaget was developing the cognitive approach to teaching. His ideas of learning through play and exploration are being seen and practised through to the modern-day. This inclusive way of learning started to make its way into schools, however, the theory believed there was staged based learning. This idea of categorising children was an unjust action, as children all develop differently through different experiences.

Vygotsky’s theory was that of an inclusive nature. As contrasting to Piaget, Vygotsky believed that children learnt through existing knowledge through social interaction and help, whereas Piaget saw children as dependant on their readiness to learn. The capability of children would often be matched with tasks that reflect their current ability and scaffold their learning. Children could develop at their own rate rather than based on where other children were at in their learning.

During the 1950s, a programme was released to teachers explaining that of behaviourist theories. This style is often to help those with special needs or lower aged groups. Breaking tasks down into smaller tasks, creating rules and using reward methods allowed those with extra support needs to include themselves within the curriculum. The idea of breaking down tasks can be seen in the newest curriculums. The likes of learning intentions and success criteria that are used in the new Curriculum for excellence, and though breaking down tasks, any child can complete a task or sense that they have achieved one aspect of the overlying task (learning intention).

Curriculum for Excellence

“Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 – 18, firmly focused on the needs of the child and young person and designed to enable them to develop the four capacities .” This is Scotland’s most inclusive and socially just scheme to date. It looks to respond to barriers for participation, learning and achievement and abolish them to promote high inclusion and equality for a sustained learning experience. The Equality act that was introduced in 2010 made it illegal to discriminate against; age, disability, gender, reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. This was a huge step forward in inclusion and social justice, creating a safe learning

environment and allowing any child to have a meaningful education.

GIRFEC is all about social justice and inclusion and this well-being is the heart of the curriculum for excellence and states, “No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children, young people and their families should always know where they can find help, what support might be available and whether that help is right for them.” This act promotes how inclusive Scotland’s education is striving to be, especially when one in four children live in poverty in Scotland. However, an article in the times in 2012 stated that teachers were not being taught sufficiently on the national policy.

In 2016, Nicola Sturgeon stated, “, …almost 4 in 10 students from the most deprived areas of Scotland left school with at least one Higher or equivalent,” and “for students from the most affluent areas, it was 8 out of 10. ” This attainment gap is not socially just. How can Scotland close this attainment gap and bring about an inclusive agenda? The Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland (2011) was introduced to draw together polices and encourage cooperation between the Scottish Government and the likes of the NHS and local authorities. The likes of extra funding strategies, nurture groups and parental involvement programmes were introduced to help with the poverty issue. The likes of using strategies of Vygotsky’s social constructivism have shown positive outcomes when working with children from low-income households. Approaches such as the Peer Assessed-Learning Strategies (PALS) were introduced. Some elements of peer tutoring that made it successful was to include the running of effective tutor education, structuring activates successfully, actively involving teachers in the organisation of tutoring groups and regular monitoring and support for tutors. This system was investigated and was shown to prove effective when relating to attainment in literacy and numeracy. Aifl has taken a major increase in Scotland, with a larger emphasis on prompting pupils to take responsibility for their learning, prompting teachers to adapt the curriculum from identifying the factors underpinning achievement. The likes of Success criteria give children aims and a sense of achievement, even if they did not achieve the “learning intention”. This Aifl strategy brings about inclusion through having smaller achievable goals, allowing any child to participate within a lesson and succeed, even if it be small.

The curriculum for Excellence was designed for flexibility. Schools and teachers can design context-specific, whole-school approaches that combine in school learning with outer school experiences. However, schooling in Scotland is still not fair, however low attainment and poverty are often not related. Pupil progress requires overcoming barriers rather than increasing their educational ambitions, and teachers heavily influence the educational outcomes of children living in poverty positively or negatively.

Inclusion

Inclusion is an issue even before getting into the classroom. Pupils are placed into all girl/boy schools, private schools, public schools or schools dictated by faith. Black-Hawkins states, 'who will be excluded from where and how will that limit their achievements'. But not only their achievements in the classroom but their social upbringing, interactions with “different' people and cultural awareness. Riordan claims that there are benefits to separating into different schools. The likes of an all-girls school would often benefit, especially for girls, as they would be less distracted. Schneider would argue that this is an inconsistent way to educate and that mixed-sex have an advantage in both social and emotional needs and diminishing the need of

regimentation and discipline.

Inclusion does not just span on the bigger picture, but what happens in the classroom that really puts the Scottish Acts into practice. Teachers deal with a range of inclusion, spanning from ASN to behavioural issues to social justice to physical disabilities to high achievers. Those who are more vulnerable to exclusion are the focus of inclusion for teachers and schools. Florian states, “Advocates and critics have simultaneously hailed and condemned (special education) as means of achieving equal educational opportunities and a perpetrator of injustice in education. ” This however contradicts the ideal of inclusion, as those who are “unjust” are therefore not included. Especially as music educators, inclusion comes in a variety of topics other than the above mentioned, from motivation to disengagement. Music often fails to respond to the problem that there is youth disaffection and see a music environment as a chance to “switch-off”. All children have the right to receive, “appropriate and equal opportunities for children to participate in cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities .” Music is such a different subject and is often difficult for students, and this becomes dangerous as student’s express difficulty of learning through disruption. Teachers often find themselves considering how they can include students by choosing relevant passions and experiences into the curriculum, yet still, students find themselves becoming disruptive. This becomes a problem for those who thrive in a musical setting, as teachers will often find themselves “distracted” with disruptive behaviour. Exclusive tendencies can be resolved when viewing, “a pedagogy that is open about questions, uncertainty and difficulty ”, “is more likely to make a real difference for individual young learners for whom most conventional approaches do not work .”

Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusions hope is to create a better social environment at school by eliminating segregated classrooms. This is hoped to be achieved by bringing services for children with handicaps into the regular classroom. However, there was a lot of debate that what is was meant to include. Riddell said, “If environments were adjusted and barriers removed, essentially through redistributive measures, then people with impairments would no longer be disabled. ”

Inclusion was brought about in Scotland to replace integration. Slee argued that “it had been little more than the calculus of equity, concerned with measuring the extent of a student’s disability, with a view to calculating the resource loading to accompany that student into school .” Inclusion was more desirable as it was more about student participation and how schools would change there, “structures, ethos and practices and on removing barriers (which may be environmental, structural or attitudinal) to children’s participation .” Cartwright’s study in 1981 claimed that children in special needs classes did no better than those in in “regular” classes. Madden and Slavin took this further and said that children with mild handicaps achieved higher when attending mainstream education classes than those in segregated classes.

McGregor and Campbell looked at inclusion with autism in Scotland and saw that pupils advanced their social skills through social interaction and academic development when placed in a mainstream class. They claim that by socialising autistic children along with their developing peers, the autistic children will view them as role models. They will often follow sociably and learn through social interaction with a task, as through the social constructive theories that Vygotsky brought about.

Inclusion can be as inclusive as needed, however, relating back to how flexible Scotland's system is. In a case study, two pupils with mild learning difficulties in the North-East of Scotland were transferred to mainstream schools from extra supported schools. The mainstream experience affected them in different ways, student A enjoyed the challenge within mainstream classes whereas student B enjoyed the social interactions. Student B developed their language far faster than what could have been achieved in isolation and student A achieved standard grades and grades that were above what was projected. Students showed that inclusion was a positive action for most of the time.

Barriers to Inclusion

However, inclusion has barriers of its own. Concerns have been expressed by teachers who have children with autism in their classes. Their emotional behaviour disorder becomes difficult, due to the child's lack of social skills and behavioural outbursts. Modifications are made to the curriculum and teachers are often left unsupported. Often teachers find themselves struggling to effectively teach children with autism whilst also teaching the rest of the students in the class. Teachers are often left "in the dark" on these certain topics, and Ross-Hill explains, "that not offering frequent and substantial training brings about "tension, stress, and strain for both teachers and students alike in inclusive settings. " By providing teachers support, the inclusive practice will be welcomed more. Florian and Rouse wrote a paper on how the initial Scottish educational programme had been revised (2009) to ensure that social and educational inclusion was properly addressed, and how teachers are to use such practices within their classroom. However, Macbeth in 2006 expressed concern on whether mainstream schools could offer an appropriate education for children with supported needs. Teachers were found to suggest alternatives for these students, and possibly that a special provision would better fit these children with more complex needs. NASUWT, describes total inclusion as "a form of child abuse" and Mackie has claimed that, "the strain imposed by social inclusion in some of our schools is in danger of becoming a time bomb waiting to explode unless properly 3 resourced. " An anonymous primary teacher, a part of the General Teaching council in 2004 said, "Teachers just cannot spread themselves equally amongst their pupils … Classrooms were never about learning, they are about social interaction and building confidence and about pupils becoming 'whole' people. No one would wish to exclude any child from being part of this experience but at what cost to others when the problems are such that the learning environment is destroyed, and everyone pays a price? "

This frustration comes from teachers misunderstanding of inclusion and who it is meant for and how it is effectively practised. With added pressures of raising achievement, policy demands and feelings of guilt from letting parents and children down, the likes of this can be addressed by simply training staff. The reaction from some teachers regarding inclusion is due to their lack of knowledge and experience. However, when a group of children were asked what inclusion was, the children quickly identified it was to promote inclusion and to remove barriers for all children. They commented that they couldn't understand why adults behaved in ways that restricted participation. Teachers have often seen "over-protecting" students with extra support needs and excluding them because of this. The barriers to inclusion become apparent when looking at studies like this. The awareness teachers have is nowhere near the level it should be at to effectively include those with learning difficulties. Barriers are placed in education systems and are seen and not understood, and by educating Scotland's teachers on the needs and ways to include them without singling out, the inclusive nature of Scotland's education system

would be hugely benefitted.