Between Meeting Individual's Needs and the Entitlement to Universal Curriculum

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Abstract: Disabilities are not homogeneous categories, not in terms of causes or educational-psychological level or content. Therefore, to delve into the subject of ensuring access to the curriculum is a real challenge as there is not an appropriate or universally accepted approach for the different categories of SEN (Special Educational Needs)— or even to just one of them. However, the educational process will not be effective unless it is based on the appropriate model of the curriculum for individual needs. The lack of an appropriate curriculum, which is both suitable and adequate for children with SEN has been posed as the primary reasoning behind exclusion and, as such, this issue ultimately requires special attention as well as the issue of developing a balanced curriculum which caters to the needs of different learners.

1. Introduction

The Salamanca Statement was adopted in 1994 by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. It urged all governments to adopt the principles of inclusive education as a policy, 'enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise' (UNESCO, 1994, Statement, p. ix). Moreover, inclusive schools were urged to identify and act in response to the varied needs of their pupils, stating that 'accommodating both different styles of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities' (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, p. 11-12).

Over the years, the state education system in the UK has attempted to raise the standards for all children in school; on the one hand, this has been attempted through the implementation of targeted policies and, on the other hand, through policies which actively promote inclusion (Norwich, 2008a). Three dilemmas now face policymakers when addressing diversity in relation to learners with disabilities: Identification, the curriculum (how much of an ordinary curriculum is significant to this group), and placement (Norwich, 1993). Inclusive schools are those which make significant adjustments to their organisation and processes in response to their pupils and their respective abilities (Norwich, 2008b). However, a key factor in these adjustments is the way in which teachers teach; in order to provide inclusive pedagogy, teachers need to enhance the access to

good quality information (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006).

As a further consideration, there is also the legal obligation for mainstream schools to provide 'effective learning opportunities for all pupils' by following three different principles which are: To set appropriate education challenges; to respond to students' various needs in regards to learning; and to overcome any potential obstacles to education and assessment for both individuals and groups of learners (QCA, 2000).

In spite of the fact that the term 'inclusive education' is frequently understood as meaning the education of children with SEN in ordinary schools, it is also believed that the term actually relates to a much broader notion. Therefore, in the context of this paper, the term is taken to refer to a learning system that constantly aims to increase involvement and ultimately remove segregation from any and all aspects of education (Booth, 2000), to such a degree whereby pupils with SEN feel that there are no differences between the education they receive in comparison to that of other pupils (Bailey, 1998) and also where efforts are made to ensure their attainment (Black-Hawkins, Florian & Rouse, 2007). Moreover, it is important to note that developing inclusive provision will be advantageous for all students — not only those who have difficulties (Carpenter & Ashdown, 1996). Therefore, in order to meet the needs of all pupils, there is the clear and apparent need to move towards a notion of inclusive pedagogy for all pupils (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). Furthermore, after examining inclusion for pupils with SEN, the significance of discussing the term 'SEN' has been determined.

2. SEN

When tackling the issue of access to the curriculum for pupils with SEN, there is first the need to provide some background information concerning the term 'SEN' with relation to the curriculum. The term SEN can basically be defined as being applicable when 'children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them' (DfES, 2001, p. 6). Since there is much confusion regarding the term and the nature of disability (Pearson, 2005) which ultimately has an impact not only on personal identity but also on the individual's position and successful inclusion in the community (Keil, Miller & Cobb, 2006), several different pieces of legislation — such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Disability Rights Commission, 2002) — have been put in place in order to emphasise the significance of what is explained as being the social model of disability. This model is 'based on an understanding that the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by disabled people is not an inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions but rather stems from environmental barriers' (Disability Rights Commission, 2005, p.172). The model increases the focus on the values of a universal design of a learning approach, which seeks to promote access to education and the learning environment by recognising pupil diversity during the entire process of design rather than adapting existing and frequently inappropriate approaches in an attempt to find effective solutions (Keil, Miller & Cobb, 2006).

It is important to note that SEN refers to a broad spectrum of needs: SEN are categorised into groups within which there are different sub-groups of children — all with diverse needs, dissimilar educational experiences and outcomes (Florian et al., 2004). However, there is the view that the diversity of the pupils with SEN is a problem in itself (King-Sears, 1997); however, it is believed that it is ultimately the barriers in place within the curriculum which are the root cause of the problem (Jackson, Harper & Jackson, 2005). Furthermore, it is insufficient that pupils with SEN merely have equal access to the general curriculum; it is important that they also have an equal chance to participate in all the aspects of school life (Florian, 1998).

The literature has illustrated that there are dissimilarities among learners from diverse SEN groups, for example, students with sensory and physical impairments are more motivated, organised and more independent learners than those with learning disabilities and SEBD (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) or those with SLD (Severe Learning Disabilities) and PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities) (Polat, 2001). Therefore, several schools find it easier to include students with sensory difficulties and more difficult to include students with EBD (Evans & Lunt, 2002). Furthermore, this paper is written with the belief that SEN students can have mild to moderate to severe learning difficulties, for example, dyslexia affects learners to varying degrees (Pavey, 2007) and, as such, it is therefore important to take the type and extent of need into account when considering the assistance which each individual learner requires in order to access the curriculum in as successfully a manner as possible. Moreover, as a whole, students with SEN are seen to achieve less than other non-SEN peers at each Key Stage and also at GCSE/GNVQ level (National Statistics, 2003). Moreover, there is also strong evidence which suggests that SEN students consistently miss out on both National Curriculum and non-National Curriculum subjects, although not necessarily in the same subjects across all schools (Porter & Lacey, 1999); this is due to physical and other barriers (Dockrell, Peacey & Lunt, 2002) — an area which will be further discussed later on in this articul. Furthermore, it is also believed that some aspects of the National Curriculum are considered unsuitable for students who have been diagnosed with SEN (e.g., Humphreys & Sturt, 1993), which ultimately causes a loss of curriculum resources in terms of staff and equipment (e.g., science laboratories) which may subsequently bring about a seriously imbalanced curriculum. Moreover, when discussing the relationship between SEN and curriculum, there is also the need to examine the term 'curriculum' as well.

3. Curriculum Scope

Accessing the curriculum has various different facets, although there is the primary concern of accessing a suitable model and an appropriate conceptualisation of the curriculum itself (Kluth, Straut & Bilken, 2003). Recently, there has been criticism concerning the structure, content and delivery of the National Curriculum as a whole (Daniels, 2000). Therefore, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 2002/3 (QCA, 2004) reviewed inclusive learning. Two of the key findings of this review (Section 3.1) highlighted that there is little consciousness regarding the National Curriculum inclusion statement, and that there is also an excess of concentration on assessment rather than on the debatably more important considerations relating to actual learning experiences. However, it is nevertheless vital to clarify that the National Curriculum is merely a part of the entire school curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999).

The QCA (2004) has found that the most important issue was differentiation: Teachers appeared uninformed in this aspect, and the National Curriculum 'prescribes what is taught rather than how it should be taught' (p. 6). Moreover, from the review it was also found that only special schools and mainstream schools with close associations to special schools 'appeared to be happy with differentiating the curriculum' (p. 6). Ofsted (2004) noticed that 'few of the schools visited had made substantial adaptations to the curriculum they offer to meet special needs and that mainstream schools have insufficient knowledge of curriculum organization in special schools' (p. 13). Additionally, from my own personal experience, I believe that this finding could be partly due to the demands placed on teachers in relation to 'coverage' of the National Curriculum.

Although the term 'general curriculum' has various meanings, this article regards the general curriculum as having an overall plan for the instruction adopted by a school or schooling system. The purpose of the general curriculum is ultimately to guide instructional activities and provide consistency of expectations, content, methods, and outcomes (Hitchcock et al., 2002). However, although teachers have different understandings of the concept of general curriculum, it is irrespectively believed that the general curriculum is the same curriculum taught to non-SEN students (McLaughlin, 1999).

There are four main components of the general curriculum, which have been defined as follows: Firstly, goals and milestones for instruction, often in the form of scope and sequence; secondly, media and materials to be used by students; thirdly, specific instructional methods which are often described in a teacher's edition; and fourthly, the means of assessment for the measuring of student progress (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

The curriculum for students with learning difficulties could and should be developed by schools in such a way that can be seen to match their aims, meet the diverse needs of their learners, fulfil legal requirements and ultimately provide for the needs of all learners, irrespective of capability (Norwich & Kelly, 2005). Furthermore, certain areas of the curriculum become priorities for students in later life, such as various aspects of PSHE (personal, social and health education), key skills and thinking skills, which need to be tailored towards particular groups of learners (QCA & DfEE, 2001). Other examples of ways of meeting the needs of SEN learners could be through the enhancement of communication skills for those students who experience difficulties with normal speaking and listening or otherwise through the running of a specific programme in physical

education (Norwich, 1996). In addition, when establishing the curriculum, it is necessary to shape the key curriculum components in such a way which actively takes into account those pupils with learning difficulties, and the subsequent contributions required from all those involved, i.e. the family, visiting professionals (Lacey, 1998), support staff, such as teaching assistants (Farrell, Balshaw & Polat, 1999), and staff in other schools (Tilstone et al., 2000). Furthermore, it is believed that in order to design an effective curriculum which achieves the goal of accessibility, the 'curriculum and assessment' should be treated as an indivisible term (e.g., Pearson, 2000). However, learners with disabilities might ultimately face many barriers to gaining access to curriculum, with some of these barriers being discussed within the next section.

4. Barriers to Access

It has been found that, in order to facilitate learners' access to the curriculum, there is a need to concentrate on learning, learning needs and learning opportunities for pupils rather than on their conditions, and to also 'include disabled pupils in the curriculum and learning experience rather than just to ensure they were "accompanying" their peers' (NFER, 2003, p. 3). Nevertheless, it has been highlighted that learners with learning difficulties do not constantly or consistently have access to the provisions they require (Harrison, 1996). Moreover, each school is able to differentiate between disabled learners by barriers to curriculum access — both inside and outside of the school (Gray, 2002). Such barriers appear to be frequently experienced by students with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour (Porter & Lacey, 1999).

It is believed that there are many barriers for pupils with SEN in regards to accessing the curriculum; for example, resources are an issue, such as for blind and deaf students, and are generally considered to provide insufficient access to curricular materials or equipment in their required format (Franklin, Keil & Crofts, 2001). In addition, from my own professional experience, I believe that the labelling of students as having special educational needs and the consequent expectations placed upon them are too apparent and may ultimately prove to be counter-productive; while such students ultimately receive extra support and assistance, the provision of the aforementioned resources can have a negative effect as it focuses attention on their weaknesses rather than on their strengths. With this in mind, it is fair to state that less time is spent on improving the areas where they have the strongest possibility of success and academic achievement (Markussen, 2004), which is in contrast to how things should operate. As such, students in this position are often

excluded from full participation, not only in regards to the curriculum but also regarding extracurricular activities (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). Content and organisation of the curriculum is a further area for concern; developments in design and frameworks should support the progression of pupils with learning difficulties (Byers, 2002).

Teacher education also poses further problems as the level of teacher education affects the support available to disabled pupils (Miller & Garner, 1997). Teacher attitudes and behaviour with regards to identifying the most suitable 'teaching approach' and 'curriculum design' is also a connected issue; a large number of teachers are not given any initial training in teaching pupils with SEN and, as a result, might subsequently feel uncertain of their knowledge or confidence in their ability to plan for these students (Silva & Morgado, 2004). The inadequacy of certain teaching approaches is problematic mainly because students with different learning disabilities may find it difficult to gain access to the general curriculum because of a specific approach adopted by their teacher (Norwich & Lewis, 2001). It is argued that 'the reason we do not teach more children with disabilities better than we do is not because we do not know enough but we do not teach them as well as we know how' (Heward, 2003, p. 201). Teacher support has always been of great concern, hence the DfES increasing the number of teaching assistants (TAs) (Blatchford et al., 2007). Moreover, I also believe that providing an imbalanced curriculum has a negative effect on the potential of accessing the curriculum as it does not provide equal chances for attaining standards of which they have the potential abilities. Therefore, the next section will discuss the balance issue in further detail.

5. The Balance

It is crucial that the school curriculum attempts to make preparations for all children's further lifelong learning (Dempsey, 2004). Furthermore, it is proposed that 'all pupils should have access to a curriculum of similar breadth and balance irrespective of their level of ability' (Smith, 2002 p.63). Thus, teachers often face a dilemma when seeking to determine and secure a balance between responding to students with SEN needs and when attempting to ensure their accessibility to the universal curriculum (Beveridge, 2002). Moreover, this paper does believe that the ever-sensitive balance differs from student to student and from time to time. Furthermore, the idea of a balanced curriculum is closely associated with the notion of differentiation (Brennan, 1985). It is important to note that 'entitlement' alone does not meet all pupils' needs; its existence does not mean that the curriculum suitably meets the variety of needs portrayed by all

pupils with SEN in schools (Ashdown, Bovair & Carpenter, 2001).

Five strategies have been approved in mind of the balance of the curriculum, which are differentiation, enrichment adaptation, elaboration, and enhancement (Riddell, 2006) which could make it possible for teachers to arrange an appropriate curriculum for individual students while also ensuring that students' studying follows the national curriculum guidelines. All learners are entitled to have access to the curriculum and, for some of them, that necessitates some adjustments and modifications to various different degrees (Beveridge, 1999). There are several different ways suggested by Beveridge (1999) for ensuring this: A common curriculum with additional support as needed (It is mainly concerned with the flexibility of the curriculum in terms of the speed of acquisition of learning goals for students and the suitability of objectives and the means to achieve, on one hand, and learning styles of individual students and their interests, abilities, experience and abilities on the other hand); a common curriculum with partial modification (it includes part of the curriculum modification, designed in order to meet the special needs of learners in the classroom; furthermore, this is considered to be essential for some SEN categories, such as blind students. However, I believe that determining the appropriate or inappropriate elements of the curriculum or elements which need to adapt and modify is not an easy process and ultimately needs collaborative decision-making and continued review); a modified common curriculum (to be used when the difficulties of the student — including most of the elements of the curriculum); or a wholly or partly special curriculum (for in the instance that it becomes apparent that the special needs of the pupil are very severe, and there is also the need to employ an alternative curriculum). However, I do believe that the last method ought to be used in only a sparingly fashion, as and when needed for a minority whose needs cannot be completely met in any other way.

The next section will discuss the teaching approaches which ensure curriculum access, and consideration will be given to the balance issue with specific attention to personalised learning.

6. Teaching Approaches

'All learners deserve to have their needs met through high-quality teaching and the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. They also have an entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which includes the National Curriculum' (Wales, 2006, p. 10). Moreover, in order to provide these entitlements, besides the input from a variety of professionals, a good partnership with parents is also necessary and even paramount (Murray & Curran,

2008). Therefore, the SCAA (The School of Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1996) guidance emphasises that a 'whole curriculum' is much broader than just the National Curriculum, and also that the exact definition of balance is an issue when determining priorities for every pupil. As a result, planning ought to begin from the basis of the needs, interests, abilities and attainment of pupils. Therefore, it is believed that teachers are obliged to firstly precisely identify the specific needs of each student; the sort of aims set as a result of this process might then be different for each student. In addition, teachers ought to avoid quick identification of needs based mainly on apparent behaviour.

Most studies relating to curriculum access focus on learners with higher incidence impairments and, in particular, on those with mild to moderate learning difficulties/disabilities (Keil, Miller & Cobb, 2006). However, there are some other approaches which address other relevant issues, such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the learning environment and the teaching programme (Sage, 2004). It has been found that most of the research carried out in relation to this issue has been conducted in the USA; however, it is believed that, in spite of any apparent cultural diversity, there are nevertheless sufficient similarities between the US and UK educational systems, which ultimately enables those relevant research to provide valuable pointers in a UK context.

Although many studies have revealed there is a lack of success regarding pupils with learning difficulties, there is nevertheless little evidence in relation to what may assist them on the path to being successful (Stodden, Galloway & Stodden, 2003). Moreover, neuroscience studies have provided a clear insight into the way in which pupils learn, and have also established principles regarding effective learning for those with complex needs, such as high-level multi-sensory disabilities where immediate and consistent feedback is required (Smith, 2002). However, it is believed that it is much easier to advocate the significance of equality than to attain it in practice as, in reality, achieving true equality in education is deeply problematic (Robertson, Childs & Marsden, 2000). Furthermore, it is also both important and essential that there is an awareness regarding the real difficulties and dilemmas faced in schools and classrooms (Berlin, 1997). With this in consideration, it is then vital to provide equal opportunities for all in order to meet individual needs and to simultaneously not try to help all pupils using the same or a similar approach (Mittler, 2000). It should also be taken into consideration that no straightforward solution exists for teachers in relation

to meeting the educational needs of all learners (Wedell, 1995).

Despite the obstacles, the information that is available does nevertheless highlight potential gains in areas reflecting socialisation and communication, and the results of grouping arrangements — for instance, co-operative learning, adaptive environments and peer tutorial arrangements — appear to present more encouraging gains than models utilising whole-class teaching (Babbage, Byers & Redding, 1999). Ofsted (2004) found that student grouping has a positive impact on curriculum access, and that teaching students with important learning and behavioural needs outside of ordinary classes 'risked disconnecting them from the work of the class' (p. 15). With this in mind, there are many approaches which could be alternatively used in order to ensure curriculum access and balance. For example, it is recognised that the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) is a valuable method in order to secure improvements in learning, despite the fact that there is no consistent application within the curriculum (Papert, 1993). In addition, although there is unfortunately no significant level of research into the usefulness of ICT when teaching children with learning difficulties (Williams, Jamali & Nicholas, 2006), the research which has been undertaken does nevertheless demonstrate that there are many benefits of its use with SEN students (Williams, 2005). Furthermore, there is also the belief that the use of ICT has the potential to promote inclusion of children with special educational needs (Florian, 2004).

While the literature mentions positive benefits in relation to using ICT — such as in improving exploratory learning (Florian, 2004), enhancing the paper-based work of illiterate pupils and giving access to a vast repository of images and other material (Williams, 2005) — there are nevertheless some barriers regarding the use of ICT by pupils with learning difficulties, which include difficulty with age-appropriate material and a lack of technical support due to insufficient staff training (Williams, 2005). Although it appears that there have been some negative experiences in relation to using ICT with students with SEN, this paper irrespectively believes that this is frequently because of the manner of usage and not due to the nature of ICT itself.

For students with SEN who have frequently experienced difficulties in schools, ICT appears to offer achievement in learning; for example, children with SEN are now able to submit a written task without words crossed out or spelling mistakes, and their work therefore looks as good as the work of other pupils in the classroom (Reynolds, Treharne & Tripp, 2003). Moreover, it was found that the use of

ICT was seen to have a positive influence on assisting students with SEN to gaining access to the National Curriculum (Prior & Hall, 2004). All of these considerations combined will no doubt have a positive impact on SEN students and their levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Moreover, ICT could assist teachers to provide a balanced curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties as an additional support or modification for the curriculum as using ICT strategies is effective in facilitating a wide variety of learning strategies, since ICT eliminates any barriers relating to teacher time and can also personalise each pupil's experience (Sampson, Karagiannidis & Kinshuk, 2002). However, this article focuses on the consideration of personalised learning, which is a positive way of ensuring access and also achieving a balance of individual and group needs.

7. Personalised Learning

Personalised learning is based on the notions first conceptualised by Dewey (1902, 1933). Various theories have since been further developed (Murdoch & Wilson, 2007), four of which are summarised here in no particular order: First, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1986), which can be defined as 'a range of skills that the person can perform with assistance but cannot quite perform independently' (Berger, 2005, p. 221); second, there is the Multiple Intelligences theory (Sternberg, Torff & Grigorenko, 1998), which has been recognized as a helpful framework for teachers when striving to identify pupils' diverse strengths and the various ways in which they learn (Noble, 2004); third, there is the Learning Styles theory (Dunn & Dunn, 1992), which may be defined as 'the way each person begins to concentrate on, process, internalize and retain new and difficult academic information' (Dunn & Dunn, 1999 p. 11); and lastly, there is Brain-Based Learning (Jenson 1998, 2000), which explains that pupils learn through three different networks of the brain, i.e. recognition networks, strategic networks and affective networks, all of which work jointly in order to coordinate the brain's activities (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

Several studies (Mayer & Gallini, 1990; Plass et al., 1998; Moreno & Mayer, 2002) have confirmed that pupils learn through multiple modalities. Additionally, it has also been found that preferences for instruction both exist and can be reliably measured (Lovelace, 2005). As such, teachers could assist in ensuring that a standards-based curriculum offers flexibility, and that diverse pupils in the same classroom are able to learn, perform and achieve to a high standard through the use of diverse methods (Villa, 2005). However, it is nevertheless important to distinguish between personalised learning and individual learning, as it might comprise collaborative group work (Miliband, 2006).

Moreover, it should be noted that there are only a few studies which present evaluative information on personalised learning (Sebba, 2007). Moreover, the DfES Personalised Learning website (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009) defines a personalised learning approach to promoting pupils as being '...about tailoring education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to ensure that every pupil achieves and reaches the highest standards possible, notwithstanding their background or circumstances, and right across the spectrum of achievement'.

It is believed that there are five components which make up personalised learning in the policy documents, and these studies have confirmed the positive impact on them: First, there is the assessment for learning, which provides pupils with the ability to analyse their own marking schemes (Black, 2005); second, there is effective teaching and learning, which, from time to time, emphasises learning styles by connecting them with multiple intelligences (Kudnick, 2006); third, is curriculum entitlement and choice, which ultimately increases students' engagement in learning (O'Donnell, 2006); fourth, school organisation, consisting of staffing, pedagogy or ethos, which could ultimately contribute to improved results of achievement (Davies, 2005); and finally, fifth, is the consideration of beyond the classroom, which shows the significance of the association with parents, society and other schools as being a key factor, although this last component is not likely to bring about results in itself (Cummings, 2005).

The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2006) published the need to use a variety of teaching styles, each of which encourages personalised learning. The strategy also acknowledges that personalising learning for pupils might be improved by ensuring that teacher development is also universally personalised. It has been emphasised that there is a need for all learners to study at a high level, and that education should be seen as a means of enabling various learners to build their own knowledge and to subsequently successfully expand their talents in a variety of different ways (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Moreover, it has been found that differentiation in the curriculum is a key means of ensuring accessibility and that teachers' skills are vital in developing effective pedagogies (Weston, 1998).

It is believed that there is the need to use a personalised learning approach in order to determine and establish a balance between teaching and curriculum assessment in such a way that provision is

appropriate for all pupils and accommodates individual differences through the implementation of diversity in teaching and evaluation when general adaptations are not sufficient (Norwich, 1994). Moreover, to accomplish this aim, the three different types of needs should be taken into consideration: First, individual needs, whereby the individual student has unique needs; second, exceptional needs which are shared with some other students; and third, common needs, which are shared with all students (Norwich, 1996). Since this view of needs reflects an important and positive change in thinking regarding students with SEN, it could, in fact, then be applied to the teaching and assessment of all students as it is believed that 'differentiation' is a modification of the process of teaching which takes into account the range of students' learning needs and that it could also be designed for a whole class, for groups and individuals (DfES, 2004b). Teachers could differentiate between the curriculum by Task, Equipment, Outcome and Support, including support from peers (DfEE & QCA, 1999). On the other hand, at least four elements of the curriculum could be differentiated by teachers: The content, the process, the products and the learning environment (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 2). Moreover, the benefit of differentiation is not unique to students with SEN (Beveridge, 2002). Moreover, from my own professional experience, I am of the belief that in order to accomplish the aims of personalised learning with the objective of ensuring accessibility and providing a balance, teachers should be trained in the use of and directed to encourage the use of ICT as it could be an influential tool; furthermore, ICT is valuable in accepting the diverse levels of response, changing task lengths and vocabulary, and varying the time and support for individual learners, while simultaneously bearing in mind that each area of the curriculum is given suitable attention via timetabling the provision and providing of extracurricular activities.

As evidence of the positive influence of personalised learning, it has been found that personalised education increases standards in schools to a considerably higher level than in those schools which do not actively implement such an approach (Visser, 2009). Furthermore, evidence also highlighted the fact that pupils benefited from personalised learning, ultimately achieving more than those not involved in such a method of education (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002).

It has been found that personalised learning reaps many positive impacts: It increases standards (The Centre for Collaborative Education, 2001) and enhances outcomes (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002), increases social performance (Baumgartner,

Lipowski & Rush, 2003), such as in regards to being healthy, keeping safe, enjoying and attaining (Hargreaves, 2006), which ultimately makes a far more positive contribution and accomplishes economic wellbeing (Herlihy & Kemple, 2004), which is the UK Government's goal for each child (DfES, 2004c); furthermore, personalised learning also strengthens the learners' voice within the school, which in turn raises their capability to contribute to decision making (Rudduck, Brown & Hendy, 2005).

This paper carries the belief that there are some disadvantages to the personalised learning approach, such as the time it consumes (Dean, 2006), the difficulties in providing this particular tool for the entire class (Pollard, 2004), and also the need for detailed record-keeping (Baumann, Bloomfield & Roughton, 1997). In addition, there are also further barriers, such as this method requires trained teachers (Murdoch & Wilson, 2007), sufficient financial support (Webster, 2008) and awareness of its importance (Visser, 2009), which needs to be recognised by both the students and parents alike. Therefore, this paper is focused around the belief that in order to properly and effectively personalise learning, there is the need to provide adequate space in the classrooms, with no more than 20 pupils per class, and a presence of sufficient materials to suit the characteristics of the students, and which also take into account the individual differences. Moreover, as a way of supporting personalised learning, there is a review of teaching and learning, '2020 Vision' (DfES, 2007), which is for 5–16 year-olds in 2020. The authors consulted a broad variety of resources, such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Ofsted, as well as obtaining information surveys and quantitative data, etc. The vision contains methods which have the goal of enhancing and maintaining the rate of progress of pupils, the strategies to improving teachers' skills, and ways for making the curriculum more flexible. This paper believes that the proposals contained in the 2020 Vision should be deemed essential and paramount for the educational system in light of striving to attain the highest quality of personalised learning.

8. Conclusion

This paper has examined the term 'inclusion', which advocates that children with SEN ought to learn as any other pupils do, and they are entitled to such. The paper has been built around the belief that children with SEN need their own needs meeting as any other pupil. Moreover, the paper progressed on to discuss the term 'SEN', which refers to various groups with various needs — even within the same group — and the term 'curriculum', which illustrates the need to develop a suitable curriculum for students with learning difficulties, as well as emphasising the

importance of seeing the curriculum and assessment as indivisible terms, and the balance between meeting the needs of every student while universally ensuring their accessibility to the universal curriculum.

Some of the different barriers to SEN students accessing the curriculum have been discussed within this article. Furthermore, the approaches which could be feasibly implemented and used for the purpose of accessing a balanced curriculum — such as personalised learning — were also examined with consideration given to different significant aspects associated with this approach.

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