Curriculum for Inclusion

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Why curriculum for inclusion?

One possible cause of this absence is the widespread presentation of the topic of inclusion in Teacher Education courses as a generic analysis of definitions, principles and policy drivers. While these provide essential context for inclusive teaching, this approach fails to recognise the fundamental role of curriculum areas as ***an organising principle of school and teaching life***

*Subjects are integral to school organisation. They are the 'units of delivery' and resourcing of educational experience at secondary school level, while at the primary school level they serve to enable auditing of what is taught so that principles of balance and breadth can be upheld. More than that, curriculum specialisation is one of the facets from which many teachers construct their professional identity****. It is from the starting point of good subject teaching that inclusive teaching can develop.***

(Essex, 2020: 416-417)

What is curriculum?

- A body of knowledge/ skills/ attitudes that it is intended will be taught (explicit curriculum)
- The 'hidden curriculum' is those things that are implicit in the pedagogy, often attitudes and values
- The basis of a common assessment framework (Dann, 2019)
- The means of exercising or acquiring power & control
- Organised according to principles defined by specialists e.g. scientists

(Young, 2019)

What is the purpose of having a curriculum?

To deliver the purposes of education

- Qualification
- Socialisation (into whose culture?)
- NOT subjectification (individuation) (Biesta, 2010)

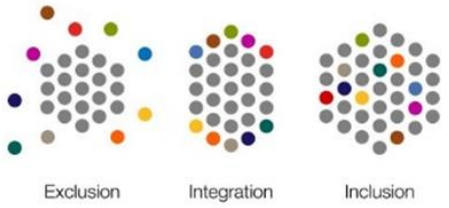
Under neo-conservatism (e.g. Thatcher's Education Reform Act, 1988)

To ensure a common and verifiable educational experience for pupils

Possibly to control and constrain teachers

Under neo-liberalism

To ensure the consistency of 'product' for the 'purchasers' (parents, rate payers, government) (Hill et al., 2016)



What sort of inclusion can appropriate curriculum achieve?

- Göransson and Nilholm (2014) identify four distinct notions of inclusion:
- (a) the physical placement of pupils with special needs in mainstream classrooms
- (b) individually-focused practices that meet the academic and social needs of disabled pupils
- (c) inclusion aimed at meeting the needs of all pupils irrespective of their classification
- (d) inclusion as a mechanism for building community in schools & classrooms

Curriculum can contribute to all four of these models BUT only if it is flexible & responsive and there is not an informal triage of teachers for certain learners.

In what ways can curricula be exclusionary?

- Culturally normative and unresponsive to variation (Sahin, 2003)
- Conveying the ideology of the hegemony without critique (Ahonen, 2011; Apple, 2001)
- Leads to over-focusing on assessment (Dann, 2019)
- Makes pupils prone to performativity
- Issues of marketization (Apple, 2001)

Image from ACAS

How can curricula be made inclusive?

- ***Inclusive design*** *aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation. It enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities.* (Design Council website)

1. Identify likely barriers and those specific to named learners
2. Consider possible ways of lowering or removing barriers
3. Scrutinise for issues associated with the 'hidden curriculum'
4. Incorporate factors to enhance motivation

All these require a high level of pedagogic content knowledge (Shulman, 1986), with the ability to de-construct it, **and** commitment to inclusion

Consider the science activities as an example.

Start by considering the multiple benefits of the curriculum area
e.g. for science

- For pleasure, multi-sensory learning is stimulating and engaging
- To develop thinking skills (reasoning, finding patterns predicting, using evidence to make meaning)
- Citizenship, to understand the world around them
- To give them agency, controlling experiments
- To give them status (Essex, 2018b)

Identify likely barriers and those specific to named learners

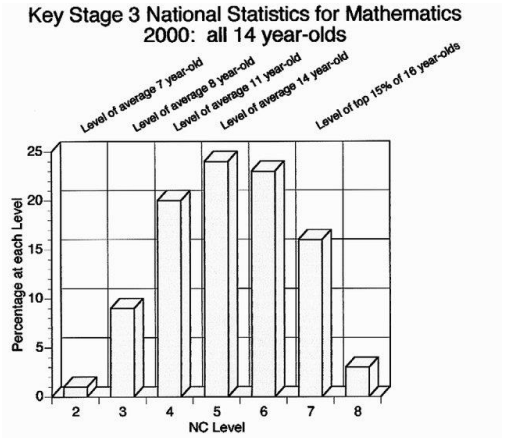
- For science these are commonly:
- High processing demands
- Dependence on recall of prior learning (Villanueva and Hand, 2011)
- Technical vocabulary and ‘third person’ voice
- Numeracy demands
- Manipulative/ sensory issues
- Notions of objectivity, remoteness from everyday lived experience

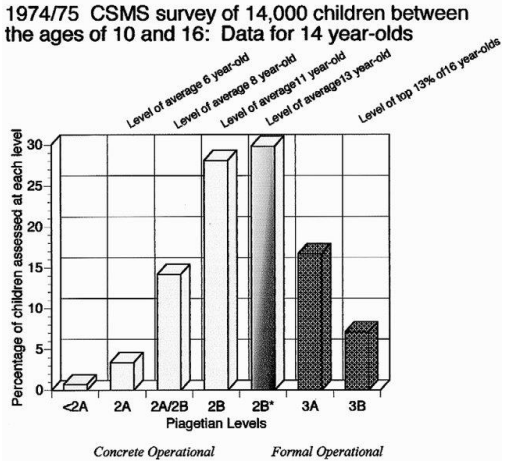
Scrutinise for issues associated with the ‘hidden curriculum’

- Assumptions that science is for an elite
- Associated presumption that it ‘isn’t for all’ (Pygmalion/ expectancy effect)
- Notion that inclusion is frequently presented as a ‘watering down’ that will disadvantage the majority (Essex, 2018a)

Consider possible ways of lowering or removing barriers

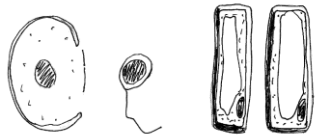
- Re-considering the emphasis on formal and abstract concrete rather than tangible experiences
- Adjustment of pace of curriculum delivery
- Scaffolding
- Reviewing ideas about 'coverage' versus the value of repetition
- Considering the necessity of higher order thinking skills for <u>all</u> learners

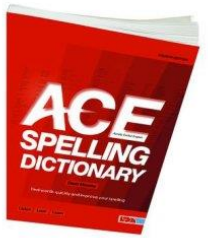


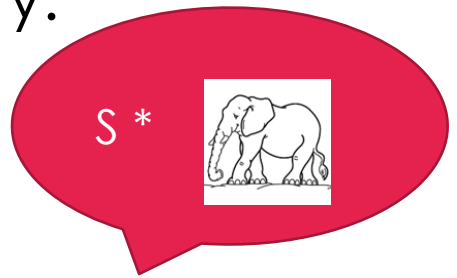


Enhance the ability to communicate and understand disciplinary knowledge creation

- Technical vocabulary is a key element of formal science, conveys rich meaning 'economically', required in assessments. Various strategies can be used to help <u>all</u> pupils develop fluency in the target vocabulary.
- Careful selection of the key words/phrases
- Repetition of target terms



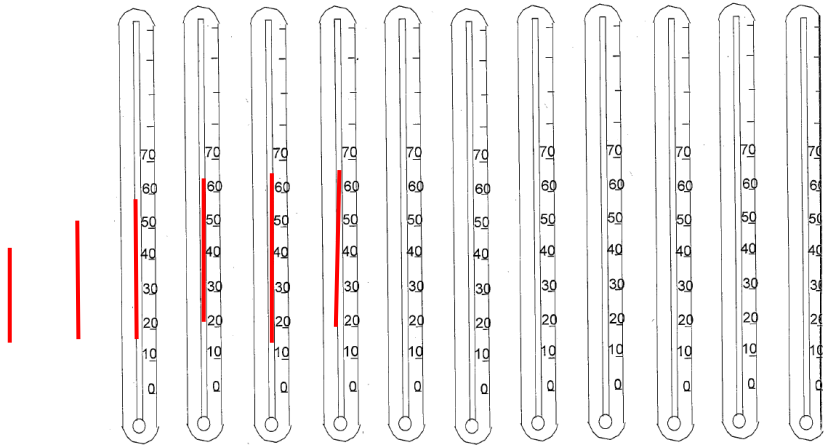




- Strategies to help pupils make conceptual associations with technical terms e.g. writing a glossary, pictographs, morphograps, word bingo, charades……
- Technical approaches to accuracy e.g. morphographs, aurally coded dictionary
- But these approaches all take teaching time and may feel like a distraction from content delivery. What we <u>don't</u> do enough is to discuss critically why we use technical language and what alternative words might be more accessible for some learners and acceptable for assessment purposes.

Enhance the ability to communicate and understand disciplinary knowledge creation 2. Numeracy

- Build up from qualitative descriptions, big, medium-sized
- Invoke ‘number sense’
- Use physical models to support a developing sense of scale e.g. colouring in thermometers rather than completing a results table gives direct correspondence between observation and record
- Encourage number ‘play’
- Encourage ‘plausibility checks’
- Avoid decimal places where possible



Incorporate factors to enhance motivation

- Multi-sensory/ haptic learning
- Giving learners ownership, make it relevant
- Frequent feedback
- 'Chunked' information so that completion is possible
- Use diverse assessment types, so that all pupils can succeed
- Support only to the extent that it is needed

Reflection

- Consider what you you teach
- In what ways does it exclude some learners?
- What ways can you think of to remove the barriers?
- How would your modifications affect learners not explicitly identified as being at educational risk?

References & further reading

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