

SALLY TOMLINSON

# A SOCIOLOGY OF SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Exploring the manufacture of inability



# A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education

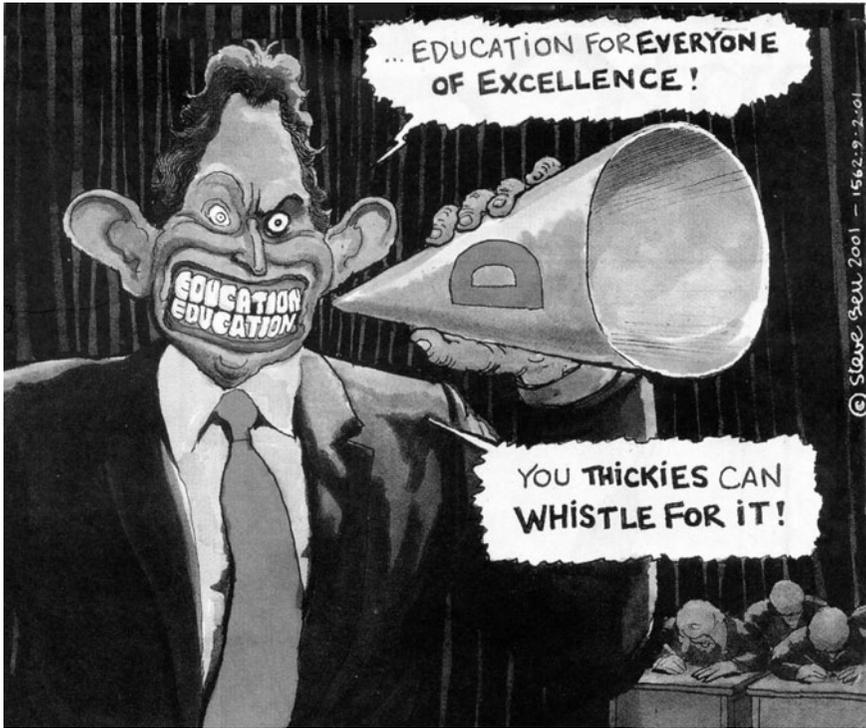
*A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education* brings sociological perspectives to bear on the social, political and economic policies and practices that comprise special and inclusive education, and the education of lower attainers. Increasingly governments have accepted the premise that education should incorporate all social and ethnic groups, especially those regarded as having special educational needs, disabilities and difficulties in learning, but despite a plethora of literature on special and inclusive education world-wide, governments are still unsure of the reasons for this sector's expansion in their national education systems.

Professor Tomlinson applies critical sociological perspectives to the social processes, policies and practices that comprise special and inclusive education, particularly in England and the USA. She clearly examines the way in which people or groups exercise power and influence to shape this area of education, and discusses the conflicts of interest that arise in resulting social interactions and relationships. Key questions asked include:

- Why and how has a whole sector of education dealing with young people regarded as having learning difficulties, low attainments, behaviour problems or disabilities developed?
- How have special education programmes and resources become subsumed into variations of inclusive education?
- Why have ideological beliefs in hierarchies of ability, limits to learning potential and IQ as measurement continued to legitimate the treatment of young people?
- What happens to young people after their special, included or lower attainers' programmes, in terms of work and life chances?

*A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education* will be of interest to a wide range of educators, professionals, practitioners and policy-makers concerned with special, inclusive and vocational education, in addition to undergraduate, post-graduate and research students and academics.

**Sally Tomlinson** is Emeritus Professor at Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK, and an Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK. She has written and researched for over 30 years in the areas of educational policy, special education and the education of minorities. Her recent books with Routledge are *Ignorant Yobs? Low Attainers in a Global Knowledge Economy* (2013) and *The Politics of Race, Class and Special Education* (2014).



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**To John Richardson and Tom Skrtic,  
Persistent Critical Sociologists of Special Education**

I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundred-fold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment, except ignorance, to prevent such a state of society becoming universal.

(Robert Owen, address to the inhabitants of New Lanark, 1816)

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# ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Disorder
BTEC	Business and Technical Education Council
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CEM	Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EBD	Emotionally and Behaviourally Disturbed
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EMA	Educational Maintenance Allowance
EMH	Educationally Mentally Handicapped
ESN	Educationally Subnormal
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FE	Further Education
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
G and T	Gifted and Talented
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LD	Learning Disability
LDD	Learning Difficulty or Disability
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEET	Not in Education Employment or Training
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

xiv *Abbreviations*

Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
RCCCFM	Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulty
SPLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
UTC	University Technical College
YOPS	Youth Opportunity Programme
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

# INTRODUCTION

The future (of defectives) will not be favourable ... because women are being employed more than ever neglecting their homes and families ... Tea and other injurious articles, figure in their diet...men are becoming lazy and ready to join the unemployed ... it is not uncommon for headteachers to have a list of defective children in their schools.

(Potts, RCCCFM 1908, vol 5:87)

For some 200 years in western countries, interest in the education and employment of people considered to be defective, in that they could not or would not adapt to an industrial society, has been a focus of attention. Policy, practice, intervention and literature have alternated between cruelty, charitable or punitive benevolence and, more recently, a conditional inclusion into an unequal society at lower levels. Tea may now be less likely to be blamed for social problems, but women, either working or not, feeding their children unsuitable foods, and the unemployed, are still likely to be linked to producing children considered to be less able, disabled, have special educational needs, or any of the other euphemisms used to describe those regarded as not quite normal and in need of attention from governments, professionals and practitioners of all sorts.

This book brings sociological perspectives to bear on those social, political and economic policies and practices that comprise special and inclusive education, and the education of lower attainers. While nation-state special education systems emerged from the nineteenth century as subsystems of mainstream or regular education offered to a majority, by the end of the twentieth century special education had been subsumed into the wider global movement of inclusive education. World-wide, education systems were expanding and developing. Where previously higher education was reserved for elites, basic education for some and exclusion from education for many, increasingly governments were accepting the premise that education should incorporate all social and ethnic groups, especially those regarded as having special educational needs, disabilities and difficulties in learning. The Salamanca Statement was signed by 92 governments and 25

## 2 *Introduction*

international organisations in 1994 after a meeting to “consider the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs” (UNESCO 1994). In 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, there was global affirmation of “Education for All” children, young people and adults (UNESCO 2000). A United Nations “Education for All” (EFA) global monitoring team was set up and inclusive and special education were thus conjoined at the global level. Whether this holds at national or local level is still debatable, and at the global level an EFA monitoring report in 2015 complained that disability status continues to increase the risk of educational exclusion. In India and other developing countries, as Jha pointed out, inclusive education as globally promoted, was intended as a wide concept, referring to the removal of educational disparities and inequities for all non-literate adults and children, for women, ethnic minorities, excluded and scheduled castes and tribes, the disabled, destitute, child labourers, street children and orphans and victims of war, violence and natural disasters (Jha 2002).

In developed countries it became clear that the expansion of education systems was leading to an expansion of institutional arrangements, resources and funding for groups previously excluded or offered only a minimal education mainly through labels of disability or special educational needs. But this now included large numbers who had difficulty in achieving in systems that functioned with constantly raised expectations beyond basic education. The issue of low attainers, who might leave schools without or with only minimal qualifications, drop out or be excluded from school and join the ranks of the unemployed, became politically and economically important. All national governments, believing that success in global economic competition is driven by higher levels of education and skill training, were increasingly concerned that all groups of young people should attain beyond minimal levels of education. Special education programmes became subsumed under notions of inclusive education, giving rise to a whole industry writing, explaining, prescribing and arguing about meanings, organisation and programmes. Much of the literature concentrated on the more normative, recognisable physical, sensory and severe disabilities, whereas for the majority of children and young people the assessment, and categorising of their ‘problems’ depended on the value judgements of professionals and practitioners. These ‘non-normative’ descriptive categories (Tomlinson 1982:65) are produced when there are no agreed criteria and decisions depend more on the beliefs of those making judgements than any qualities intrinsic to the young person. The whole edifice of mass education in developed and some developing economies is now underpinned by expanded provision of various kinds for those regarded as lower achievers, having learning difficulties, or acquiring one or more of the myriad descriptions of special educational need. While this can be regarded as a positive development in that it conforms to a global affirmation of “Education for All”, it also feeds the idea that children

and young people can be differentiated in terms of 'ability', disability and 'potential' and treated differentially and unequally. The differentiation, accompanied by the more privileged education given to those separated out as gifted or talented, or in private or in advantaged mainstream schools, reinforces hierarchical structures that serve political and economic ends.

The present book can perhaps be regarded as Mark Two (!) of *A Sociology of Special Education*. Over 30 years ago when I wrote a book of that title (Tomlinson 1982) it seemed possible to introduce some serious sociological inquiry, into the social processes, policies and practices that comprised special education at that time. Theory and practice then was informed by a variety of disciplines, but sociology was not one of them. Medical, psychological, administrative, prescriptive educational and technical approaches influenced and informed special education practice, which at that time was concerned largely with separating children out of mainstream education on the grounds of defect, disability or disruption. Professional and practitioners beliefs were largely based on theories of deficits and disadvantage within individuals, families and social and racial groups,<sup>1</sup> and teachers and parents were being asked to accept clinical, psychological and pedagogical judgements that were highly debatable. I noted that at the time there was some hostility to sociological perspectives, despite a report in 1978 suggesting that some 20 per cent of the school population would require some form of special education (DES 1978), surely a matter for social inquiry. It seemed that there was a need to present wider historical, social and political perspectives on what was clearly an expansion of a system to deal with lower attainers and the 'special'.

Special education is permeated with an ideology of benevolent humanitarianism, which provides a moral framework within which professionals and practitioners work. But it is important to recognise that the recognition, classification, provision for and treatment of children who have at various times been defined as defective, handicapped or as having special educational needs, may very well be enlightened and advanced, but is also a social categorisation of weaker social groups.

(Tomlinson 1982:5)

One eminent reviewer of the book was concerned that critical views of special education at that time stressed social and professional conflicts, whereas, in her view, professionals were only motivated by a "disinterested desire to minimise the misery" of children. Indeed, she considered that analysing social phenomena in terms of conflict was a Marxist activity (Warnock 1982). Some psychologists and practitioners then as now were uncomfortable with sociological incursions into their territory, especially as debates over the closure of special schools developed and anti-inclusionist arguments became acrimonious (see Ballard 2003; Farrell 2006; Kauffman and Hallahan 2005). While the concept of 'benevolent humanitarianism' proved useful and has been widely quoted over the years, it does not

#### 4 Introduction

adequately describe the treatment of these social and racial groups either in the past or currently. Richardson's elaboration of the concept as punitive and paternalistic benevolence seems more accurate (Richardson and Powell 2011; Richardson et al. forthcoming 2017). Despite hostility, sociological perspectives did prove popular and enduring (Allan 1999, 2010; Barton 1996; Barton and Armstrong 2007; Brantlinger 2008; Powell 2011; Slee 2011; Thomas and Vaughan 2004).

Attempts to demystify existing special education and then inclusive education processes to teachers, parents and children, and offer some knowledge as to how those with power can keep and legitimate their control over education, were welcomed by many. One purpose of sociology is to take the 'private troubles' (Mills 1959) of individuals and trace them back to structural roots, and sociology can also challenge the presentation of social reality by those with power and influence. Critiques of psycho-medical influence now abound, and the Disability Movement from the 1970s based its successful claims on a social understanding that it was social institutions and processes that restricted the lives of those categorised as disabled (Oliver 1990; Oliver et al. 2002). This understanding has resulted in legislation and more public understanding of much physical, sensory and some other kinds of disability. There is less understanding about the majority of young people who are regarded as 'having SEN' and those whose milder learning difficulties or disruptive behaviour and failure to accommodate to demands for higher test scores, are regarded as major problems by schools and policy-makers.

A major issue in the enormous literature on special education and inclusion is that writing often concentrates on the relatively smaller groups who have more recognisable or newly recognised 'disabilities'. For example, the articles cited in the 3000-page *Encyclopaedia of Special Education* (Reynolds et al. 2014), mainly describe work on more severe disability, and some 240 books on autism were published over the last two years, including a four-volume set of books on autism and education (Humphrey 2015). But on both sides of the Atlantic, critical writing on SEN and disability has persisted and proved influential in changing practice, and there is now a large critical literature on a variety of categories and disabilities and a plethora of literature on inclusive education. One problem with the literature, as (Artiles et al. 2011) pointed out, is that academics and professionals tend to publish in different journals. Thus work on special education, disability studies, race and class, global inclusive education, psychological, medical and neuroscience interventions run along parallel tracks while dealing with the same clientele. This perhaps illustrates the dangers of Kuhnian pluralism, and Thomas Kuhn's (1962) notion that changing scientific paradigms could be used to justify the dogmas of different 'experts', with resulting competing claims and ideological wars. It should be noted that ideological wars have broken out again with reference to the concept of 'race', where a resurgence of sociobiology has led to arguments that "the prevailing claims that race is a social construct lacks biological reality and there should be more emphasis

on links between human genetic traits and racial categories” (Shiao et al. 2012:67). In reply, Morning (2011, 2014) pointed out that ‘races’ exist as sociopolitical categories developed from historical attempts to construct biological classifications. Furthermore, “any belief system which seeks to separate people on the basis of genetic endowment, or different physical or intellectual features is simply inadmissible in human society”, Messer (2014) quoted at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in February 2014. However, Katz, in “The biological inferiority of the undeserving poor” (2013) has suggested that research in environmental epigenetics – external and possible historical influences on genes – has mainly been concerned with poor and disadvantaged groups, and could become part of a new governance of the poor and a return to biologically based class racism.

## **Why Mark Two?**

A major rationale for this book is that despite a plethora of literature and policy recommendations on low achievers, and special and inclusive education world-wide, governments appear to be unsure about the expansion of this area and dismayed at its cost. School practitioners are also unhappy and often fearful of the demands made on them, professionals, especially if privately employed, increasingly defend their own interests, and new ‘expertise’ appears daily purporting to explain individual and system deficiencies. Parents, while promised more say in what happens to their children, still find barriers and obfuscation in finding out what is going on, although some parents are becoming adept in obtaining special education resources and finding ways of getting their children into sought after schools. The future of low attainers and the specially educated is especially precarious, as income and wealth inequality world-wide continues to grow. While debates over causes, deficits, placements, organisation, resources, funding and professional incursions into the education of the young people continue, there has been astonishingly little interest, research or inquiry into what has and will happen to the young people after leaving education.

The book attempts to bring together information and discussion about the expanding numbers of children and young people variously regarded as lower attainers in schools and colleges, having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and special educational needs and what happens to them in the job market. The expansion is linked to the development of a competitive global economy in which national governments believe that higher levels of education and skill training for all are needed for successful competition in a global knowledge economy. All young people, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are expected to invest in themselves and their human capital, constantly achieving higher test scores and new skills, and competing with each other in stratified education systems and disappearing job markets. All young people are expected to become economically productive and not

reliant on unemployment or welfare benefits. Those who find difficulty in learning to required levels, and may go on to low-level vocational courses and low-level jobs, or remain a 'burden' on the society, are regarded as problematic. Young people who do not achieve in education and employment and are regarded as delinquent, may end up in young offenders' institutions or prison. Characteristics of those drawn into expanding systems at lower levels are that they continue to be from lower socio-economic groups, more males than females, and with an over-representation of racial and ethnic minorities. There has, however, been an expansion of middle class demands for resources for those of their children who find difficulty in learning in competitive school environments, which has fuelled an expanding 'SEN industry' (Tomlinson 2012; Riddell et al. 2016). The future of all young people in the global economy is becoming more precarious and there is now even more competition for extra educational services and resources.

Paradoxically though, mass education over 150 years in western countries has been a slow and partial success. From nineteenth century opposition to the education of lower class and racial and ethnic groups, to the deliberate withholding of equal resources, these groups have demonstrated that they can be educated. But far more are now educated than can be employed in what is becoming a global digital economy. This may be one reason why there are now attempts to row back from this success and demonstrate the likely inherited incapacities of these groups, via a new eugenics and notions of fixed ability, 'low IQ' and 'deprived brains' there is an attempted manufacture of inability. To maintain 'strategic levels of ignorance' in hierarchical school systems, for young people who actually are perfectly capable of learning, appears to have become a policy goal in Anglo-Saxon countries. This is one reason why the book concentrates on the UK and USA and their policy, practices and literature, as these two countries have most clearly adopted the model of market neo-liberalism, creeping privatisation of education, and competitive individualism between young people. The UK in particular, has always regarded vocational education and training as second class to an 'academic' education, and middle and aspirant groups have long been adept at avoiding the vocational. This is in contrast to other European countries where technical and vocational education has more respect.

It is not accidental that it is in the UK and USA that heritability studies attempting to show genetic inferiority of lower social groups are heavily researched, and that these two countries have the highest levels of income inequality in the richer world (Dorling 2015; Stotesbury and Dorling 2015). In the USA in particular, the inferior education of whole populations, especially African-American and other minorities, continues to be emblematic of an unequal society, and other countries, notably Australia and New Zealand, also appear to believe in the inherited incapacities of large numbers of their populations and treat them unequally. The book attempts to explain how and why special and inclusive education plays a part in a continued reproduction of inequality. It raises the question as to whether policies now are designed to manufacture levels of ignorance in populations

by denying them access to a common education. It also attempts to disrupt the myth, held over the past for at least 120 years, that something called 'intelligence' can be measured by IQ tests, with scores conveniently placed along a bell curve, establishing notions of fixed high and low ability, the bright and the dull, the academic and the practical mind.

The book is concerned with the following questions:

- Why and how has a whole sector of education developed dealing with up to 25–30 per cent of young people regarded as having learning difficulties, low attainments, behaviour problem, or disabilities?
- How have special education programmes and resources become subsumed into variations of inclusive education?
- Why have ideological beliefs in hierarchies of ability, limits to learning potential, and IQ as measurement of supposed genetic attributes continued to legitimate the treatment of young people?
- What happens to young people after their special, included, or lower attainers programmes, in terms of work and life chances?

## **Plan of the book**

Chapter 1 suggests that the expansion of special and inclusive education cannot be understood without understanding how education systems develop, and their relationships with the economy. Education systems and their parts do not develop spontaneously and do not necessarily change to benefit different groups of young people. They change and expand because of the goals of the people who control them and involve conflicts and power struggles. The systems cannot be studied without taking account of globalisation, a concept that refers to economies, markets, job competition, production, financial flows, information, lifestyles and much else. Education is now 'capital' and part of a global industry, and what is considered valuable knowledge is a commodity to be bought and sold. Those with power can regulate the amount and kind of education offered and use a 'strategic maintenance of ignorance' (Archer 1988:190) directed at subordinate groups, determining the amount and kind of education they will receive. Those who have limited or no 'educapital' are at a disadvantage in national and global economies and this particularly applies to young people who have been in the special educational needs, disability, disruption or lower attainers areas of an education system. The chapter looks at some sociological theories and explanations for educational expansion, noting the expanding literature and practices associated with disability, special and inclusive education. The emotions and antagonisms generated illustrate contradictions that have long social and political histories. Despite assertions of inclusivity and equity, no country has ever achieved this, and what is happening may be attempts to maintain traditional hierarchical social orders in a rapidly changing world by manufacturing the 'inability' of young people who are troublesome to existing systems, especially by mantras of

fixed ability/disability. Paradoxically, this may also be linked to a fear that most young people are actually capable of learning and working in national and global economies.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the emergence and development of special education in England, as supporting prevailing social, political and economic interests rather than as solely humanitarian progress. The chapter gives an overview of events from the mid nineteenth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century and illustrates the economic and control imperatives behind provision for the disabled, with business concerned to make the groups profitable and fit for labour, and governments concerned with the control of paupers, handicapped, and delinquent children in institutions and in segregated schooling. Medical and the psychological interests were dominant in defining the defective and less able, and teachers had an interest in the removal of troublesome children from their classrooms. Early eugenic views were influential, especially the control of women producing defective children who threatened the (British) racial stock. Post-war post-colonial immigration introduced issues of race and ethnicity in the special education area from the 1960s. Debates on integration were overtaken by notions of inclusion from the 1990s, and by 1999 New Labour policy indicated a familiar fudge – inclusion with exclusion, and an £8 million Standards fund to promote an inclusion that included special schools.

Chapter 3 gives a similar brief overview of the social origins of special education in the USA from the nineteenth century. Historians of special education have noted that compulsory attendance in public schools, intended to include all potential 'Americans' already excluded poor, defective and disruptive children and that from its origins special education was associated with profound beliefs in racial inferiority. As special education expanded it disproportionately included 'nonwhites' and second language speaking children. Debates after 1975 (Public-Law 94-142) focused on integration or inclusion as a positive development, and a concern that there was a perpetuation of inequity and racial inequality via special education. While there has been more focus in the USA than in the UK on the preparation of young lower attainers and special students for college or the job market, sociologists Richardson and Powell (2011) have pointed out that the population of young people served by SEN services must be studied alongside issues of vocational training, incarceration and general educational and social segregation and stratification. The chapter notes that a concern with the 'achievement gaps' between poor and minority students and more privileged students could rightly be described as an 'education debt' (Ladson-Billings 2006).

Chapter 4 offers a reminder of the unpleasant history of nineteenth and twentieth century beliefs in the concept of 'ability' and mental measurement, and the supposed genetic inferiority of the poor and of racial minorities. IQ testing, although supposedly abandoned by many psychologists, is still an unproblematic notion in many parts of the world. As Kamin noted "there are

few more soothing messages than those historically delivered by the IQ testers. The poor, the foreign born and racial minorities are shown to be stupid. They are shown to be born that way" (Kamin 1974:16). The works of 'old' eugenicists and psychologists in the UK and USA are reviewed. The belief systems built up in post-colonial Europe and post-slave USA by which Social Darwinist and eugenic beliefs that spread the notion that lower social classes and racial minorities are genetically mentally inferior are discussed. There is a resurgence now of debate about the inheritance of low cognitive ability, in the UK and USA particularly, supposedly reinforced by developments in neuroscience and behavioural genetics. In England the work of Robert Plomin and his colleagues appears to have influence on governments. He advised that children should be tested, and given an education suitable to their genetic and learning profiles (Asbury and Plomin 2014). In addition, a casual relationship between mental (cognitive) deficiencies and social pathologies has persisted. Governments of all persuasions in England, appear influenced by a new crypto-eugenics that can support social and educational segregation and inequality (Dorling 2010).

Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which governments in the UK and USA are concerned to create strategic levels of ignorance among young people. The notion, more common in these countries than in other European countries or indeed world-wide is that children have a fixed amount of 'cognitive capital' and a fixed ability that will determine the amount and kind of education they should receive. In the UK the economic imperative in dealing with those children and young people who could not attain required levels in mainstream education either with or without SEN labels became more important from the 1980s, when market reforms in education and neo-liberal ideologies were beginning to take shape. Economies, it was assumed, could not grow with unprofitable groups who were less likely to contribute and more likely to claim resources. Despite signing up to inclusive education and pressured by parental and social justice claims, governments were more interested in cutting costs and reducing numbers of those claiming resources, especially by legislation and a new Code of Practice in 2014. From the election of a Coalition government in 2010 and an intended five years of a Conservative government from 2015, policy concentrated on cost-cutting, and the social control of potentially disruptive groups, especially via legislation in 2016 designed to remove these groups into expanded 'alternative provision' to mainstream. Neuroscience was pressed into service to provide evidence for 'deprived' brains of poor children – a new strategy for maintaining ignorance. A stress on an academic national curriculum has created more difficulties for lower attainers and a High Ability industry has developed alongside a Special Needs industry. As confusion still prevails as to who the special and low attainers actually are, the chapter includes information from a research project asking heads, college principals, administrators and teachers in three countries how they defined the groups – more information on this is offered in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 discusses the expansion of professional influence in the assessment, discovery and treatment of the special, disabled, defective and troublesome. The dominance of the medical profession and the influence of psychologists and techniques of mental measurement has been well documented, and the battles for control of definitions, causes and destinations of these groups noted. While in 1996 it was possible to document some 35 professionals who had an interest in dealing with the 'special' (Tomlinson 1996), the expansion of a SEN industry and dealing with lower attainers has created a need for more and varied professional groups. New professional interests from neuroscientists and behavioural geneticists are involved, as is the influence of those advocating psycho-medical drugs for behavioural control. Therapeutic education, dealing with self-esteem and emotional well-being, and mental health issues has expanded, as have expanded administrative bureaucracies. Governments of all persuasions have always used medical, psychological and allied professions to support educational and social ideologies, and are now interested in a search for 'better brains', and control of disruptive behaviour. The chapter explores the dilemmas for teachers, who have always had an interest in the identification and possible removal of troublesome children from their classrooms, and are now urged to be inclusive while 'raising standards'. The expansion of Special Education Needs departments in schools under the direction of SENCOs, and the creation of a profession of teaching and learning assistants who are now the primary educators of low attainers and the special are noted. This appears to be a way of denying the attention of qualified teachers to these children and whatever the good intentions of these professionals, helps to manufacture ignorance.

Chapter 7 considers the influence of parents in the expansion of special/inclusive education and the response of governments and professionals. Historically parents and carers for children excluded from mainstream education were subject to cursory and patronising treatment, a legacy of the assumption that they were largely lower class or inarticulate. In England, parenting classes and programmes aimed at lower socio-economic parents are funded by the Education Department and neuroscience is used to suggest that inadequate mothering produces defective children. Evidence that upper and middle classes could produce 'dull and defective' children is still discounted. While parents can still be subject to negative treatments and the assumptions that lower social class and racial minorities will over-produce problem children, there are now dilemmas for governments that promised more parental choice, and the growth of litigation if provision is not made as promised. One suggestion in 2016 was to remove any parental influence via governing bodies from state schools. Knowledgeable parents increasingly claim that their children suffer from medical, neurological or therapeutic disorders that impede learning, and demand special resources. This is connected to the ideologies underpinning the competitive nature of education in the global market economy, and the fears of middle class and aspirant groups that their children will not attain the necessary qualifications

and diplomas to function in the job market. Governments have produced policies that punished the families of the poor and disabled by reduction in benefits, and there was a corresponding rise in abuse directed at disabled benefit claimants as 'welfare scroungers', contributing to a 'Broken Britain'.

Chapter 8 discusses the major problems for developed countries which centre on whether and how economies can employ those who have been in special education programmes, or are classed as lower attainers. Both developed and developing countries face challenges of job creation and the social inclusion that follows from work at any level. If all young people are to be included in education systems the question of what happens to the special or lower attainers after education becomes crucial. The UK's low skilled young face more barriers to employment than in other developed countries and a large group are classed as NEET (not in education, employment and training). While a majority of the young people are from working or non-working homes, middle class groups now fear that in the competitive market economy many of their children may not find or keep employment. Human capital theories are now redundant as there is a 'global auction' for jobs (Brown et al. 2011), and many of the middle class young have joined the traditional working class as a 'precariat' – with low-paid short-term jobs. Despite this the middle classes are still reluctant to send their children into vocational preparation. The consequences of the spread of a competitive global capitalism and digital economies has important consequences for those classed as special/lower attaining. In developed countries lacking educational policies that properly include all young people and employment policies that could offer work for all, the default position continues to be 'blaming the victim'. In the USA there is much research on the school-to-prison pipeline that incorporates many African-American and Hispanic young people. The views of school and college principals in three countries who actually deal with the young people are discussed in more detail and the absence of detailed information on the work and life destinations of all these young people is noted.

Major conclusions to this book centre round the policies that continue to separate out young people on the basis of ability or disability and the resulting separation by social class and ethnicity. It brings together the various ways government policies, especially in England and the USA, continue to manufacture the inability of a mass of young people, who are actually capable of learning with no limits to their 'potential'. The rhetoric that schools are failing, children are deficient, social mobility has stalled and lower attaining young people are disruptive, demotivated and lacking working skills, is a consequence of policies and practices rather than individual deficits. Positive policies could centre round developing an economy and society that could develop more civilised ideas of what constitutes 'education'. It could find work for all its young people, whatever their level of attainment, and arrange to care for those who may not be capable of employment but are still worthy citizens and do not need paternalism or insult.

**Note**

- 1 In the plethora of literature attempting to define race, racism, ethnicity, culture and multiculturalism, the definition adopted here “Racial and Ethnic groups are groups to whom common behavioural characteristics are attributed rather than groups actually having these characteristics.... Racial groups are groups thought to have a genetic or other deterministic base, ethnic groups are thought of as groups whose behaviour might change” is by Rex (1986:17). Terminology in Western countries defining racial groups changes over time and between countries. In the UK the term BME – Black and Minority Ethnic – is currently used. Census questions use the term Black and also countries of origin and the term ‘coloured’ is no longer acceptable, while in the USA ‘people of colour’ is acceptable, along with descriptions by country of supposed origin, for example African-American, Mexican-American, Latino, and Native American.

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## CHAPTER 1

# A SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION

The national education system represented a watershed in the development of learning. It signalled not only the advent of mass education and the spread of popular literacy, but also the origins of state schooling – the system which has come to predominate in the educational developments of all modern societies.

(Green 2013:11)

Why do education systems develop and how and why do they expand? This is not a question most policy makers and practitioners worry about in their busy lives. But the expansion of special education and the development of inclusive education cannot be understood without understanding how whole education systems develop and consequent relationships with the economy. Although there has been limited theoretical interest in the question we know from social historians that public education systems have emerged in western countries over the past two hundred years as nation states were emerging. The role of education in state formation in East Asian countries is also increasingly studied and debates include whether and how their systems developed prior or post industrialisation (Green 2013). Those creating and running the nation states eventually appeared to agree that education should be applied to all social groups and could serve a variety of social needs. There may have been a rhetoric, especially in an emerging USA composed of migrant groups, that education could help create a more cohesive society, and by the early 2000s the maintenance of social cohesion in a rapidly globalising world had become a key policy issue (Green et al. 2006). National governments increasingly hoped that education and training and the inclusion of more young people who were previously excluded, could increase social cohesion. But that hope has always foundered on the contradiction that in western societies mass education was never oriented towards a common good, but developed from economic, social, political and religious interests, often in competition with each other. It remained cohesive for other purposes as, in some countries more than others, the hierarchical structures of education systems and the accompanying ideologies, ensured the reproduction of lower social groups.

In developed countries for well over a hundred years state education systems, made up of nationwide collections of institutions and people devoted to formal education, have continued to expand and serve a variety of interests. The systems are enormous in size and complexity and extremely expensive,

which is one reason why governments are now trying to return much provision to private interests. National systems are now interspersed and affected by global interests, influences and conflicts. Education is part of a global industry and what is regarded as valuable knowledge is now a commodity that can be bought and sold. Those in powerful positions can regulate the amount and kind of education offered to various groups, and controlling groups often use a ‘strategic maintenance of ignorance’ (Archer 1988:190) directed at subordinate groups, determining the amount and kind of education they will receive. This has always been the case for those in some form of special education. In global economies educational qualifications are increasingly regarded as a form of capital in themselves, and only the very wealthy can avoid their children obtaining some ‘educapital’, although they usually legitimate their position by educating their children in expensive private schooling, and seek places at the top global universities. Those who have limited or no ‘educapital’ are at a distinct disadvantage in national and global economies and this particularly applies to those young people who have been in the special educational needs, disability, or lower attainers, areas of an education system.

## **Globalisation**

No discussion of education systems and their sub-structures, increasingly organised to deal with these groups of lower attainers, special, disabled and so on, can take place without an understanding of globalisation – the combined consequences of the economic, political, social and cultural changes that now affect every country. More than ever before, education systems, their structures, content and outcomes, are enmeshed in global networks.

Historically, globalisation is not a new creation, as industrial capitalism and imperialism created world trade links, and the connections between an educated and skilled workforce and global competition have been made since the rise of industrial society. W. E. Forster, introducing the elementary Education act in Britain in 1870, claimed that “upon the speedy provision of Elementary Education depends our industrial prosperity. Uneducated labourers are for the most part, unskilled labourers” (Forster 1870), although there was to be no coherent vocational training, and the middle and upper classes were to have a different education. Trade with colonised countries provided ready markets and there was economic competitiveness between countries, especially Germany, where vocational training was emphasised. As a Master of an Oxford College remarked, with the snobbery that has long characterised the English upper and middle class avoidance of vocational education and training, “German education makes good use of its second grade ability which in England is far too much a waste product ... it has not made profitable use of second grade intelligence” (Sadler 1916). The persistence of a disdain for vocational skills and the assumption that only ‘second grade intelligence’ will undertake vocational training remains one of the major tragedies of the English education system.

Over the past 30 years governments in developed countries now adhere to beliefs that in developed economies education and skill training are necessary for successful competition in global economies and there is much discussion of a knowledge economy, where a flow of knowledge and information via digital technology increasingly replaces a material economy. British governments in particular, have used a rhetoric of human capital theory, in which all young people, including those with disabilities and learning difficulties, must engage in life-long skills learning and continually 'upskill' themselves, whether or not jobs are available locally or nationally. Beck, one of the earliest and more pessimistic writers on globalisation, described the post-war period from 1945 when western states provided a measure of security and economic growth, as a first modernity, now replaced by a second modernity, defined by precarious work and lower wages, especially for the low-skilled. They easily become victims of a 'jobless capitalism' as owners of transnational companies transfer their companies and outsource to where labour is cheapest (Beck 2000). Beck also pointed out that the new globality cannot be reversed, especially given the expansion of international trade dependent on multinational corporations who do not give loyalty to nation states and their governments, and where the global financial markets, the ongoing ITC revolution, and he might have added, the money to be made out of selling education, take precedence over citizen rights.

A positive outcome of globalisation does appear to be a demand for human rights and social justice world-wide, which has helped with the movement towards inclusive education. The expansion of educational systems means that defenders of existing arrangements and traditions do have to make concessions and compromises with opponents. Ethnic, gender and disability groups have emerged to influence education and legal structures, especially using anti-discrimination law. But, overall, economic globalisation has not contributed much to social justice or equality in most countries, and Stiglitz has argued that governments in developed countries have always tried to manage globalisation in unethical ways that benefited themselves and their powerful groups (Stiglitz 2002). Dorling has produced the best presentation to date of the inequities produced within the most affluent countries (especially the USA and UK) in which social injustices are being recreated and supported by the self-serving interests of powerful elite groups. Supporting the gross income inequalities, and the denigration of poor people are gross educational beliefs that "the majority of people in affluent societies have come to be taught, and then to believe, that a few are especially able and hence apparently deserving, and others are particularly unable and hence undeserving" (Dorling 2015:115). Countering these views is a major task of this book.

## **Some theories about educational expansion**

Sociology as a discipline is not well-placed to discuss issues of special and inclusive education. In 2013 the new editor of *The British Journal of Sociology* wrote in his first editorial the "Crisis is our discipline's default position. The

question ‘what is sociology’ is in principle never resolved” (Slater 2013:1) and many sociologists have been preoccupied with theoretical wars rather than with the sociological problems of the social world. Nearly 40 years previously John Rex, who played an important part in developing sociology in the 1960s and 1970s, had predicted a similar dismal future for the discipline if Thomas Kuhn’s notion of paradigm shifts were taken to justify a pluralism, where dogmas and cults, ideological wars and flights back to empiricism (count them, do the surveys and give us the facts) all passed for serious intellectual enquiry (Rex 1978). In the special education area ‘counting and labelling them’ have certainly passed as necessary facts, but usually with little explanation apart from finding deficits in those counted. Sociologist Emile Durkheim was convinced of the necessity of understanding social facts, but he was referring to social phenomena or forces – established beliefs and practices, political and religious ideologies, social organisation – that need to be studied to understand how people are treated in the social world. He was also wary of using psychological explanations for individual behaviour, his famous study of suicide (Durkheim 1897) demonstrating that individual mental states and behaviour could not be understood without understanding the social conditions around them. He would certainly have understood the increase in the number of disabled people killing themselves in England after supposedly being found ‘fit for work’ as a social, not an individual phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> As a European liberal socialist concerned with explaining the role of mass education in creating social integration, Durkheim might have been dismayed with the current policy discourse around education, especially in market oriented societies, which is about education as a prop for the labour market, reproduction of elites, control of recalcitrant groups, and the coercion of even the more severely disabled into (often non-existent) work.

Sociology as a university subject, usually including courses on the sociology of education remains popular, with studies demonstrating the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, much of it oriented towards explaining and ‘impacting’ on policy and political problems. There are some excellent introductions to the sociology of education (Boronski and Hassan 2015), introducing old, new, phenomenological, radical, critical, post-modern, feminist and other theorists, and usually concluding that what passes for theory is most often meta theorising about inequalities in class, race, gender and disability relations. Labelling, discourse, and deviance theories all have resonance in the special education area, and intersectional theories, such as ‘Discrit’ – merging disability, feminist and critical race theories, describe the perverse patterns of educational organisation that ‘create’ disadvantages (Connor et al. 2016). Essentially, what constitutes theory are attempts to explain seemingly intractable problems, although there is a paucity of explanation about the emergence of structures within which inequalities take place and disadvantages persist. The hand wringing over the lack of social mobility, and the money spent on research to identify how to improve the mobility of the ‘disadvantaged’ are nonsensical in societies where the education systems and labour markets are structurally designed to prevent such mobility.

Whatever theories are put forward to explain the expansion of education systems and the various subsystems of special, inclusive, and alternative kinds, it has to be stressed that education systems and their parts do not emerge spontaneously. They usually develop in order to benefit particular groups of young people, while discriminating against others. The systems develop their characteristics because of the goals pursued by the people in control and there is a need to know about who the controlling forces are and what kinds of educational structures and content they are advocating (Archer 1979). For example, in England in the early 1990s the Conservative government was forcing through a policy of market competition and school 'choice' and publication of examination results in football style league tables. This had the immediate effect that schools developed strategies to exclude 'undesirable' children who would not improve league tables, with resulting social, ethnic and disability divisions. The Shadow Labour Education Minister produced a paper outlining what a genuine comprehensive school in every locality might look like, which included a section entitled 'Every Child Matters' (Taylor and Tomlinson 1994). This was ignored by the ruling party, and repudiated by Tony Blair, the recently appointed leader of the New Labour party.<sup>2</sup> The Labour party came into government in 1997 and in 2003 produced a paper entitled 'Every Child Matters' (HM Treasury 2003), which outlined a new framework of services for all children 0–19. However, they kept in place the increasing competition for 'good' state schools, which continued to have a divisive effect on the whole school system and also introduced a policy suggesting schools separate out their 'gifted and talented' children, with Learning Support units for the not so gifted. The Labour party had in 2002 set in train a policy by which schools could be removed from local influence and become sponsored 'Academies', run by unaccountable individuals and Trusts. By 2016 a Conservative government was proposing to complete this surprisingly undemocratic removal of the school system from any local authority partnership, in a forced academisation programme under which schools would be run by Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and overseen by government appointed Regional School Commissioners (RSCs). This illustrates that the provision of education and associate services happens because those with power can impose their views and goals on others, although the effect of this may have serious consequences not necessarily understood by governments. However, even ruling parties may have to compromise if opposed, and forced Academy conversion was eventually put on hold.

The motives of those in control can vary and often depend on how assertive groups can be. The English 'public' (private) school system, backed by powerful professional associations, and producing future elite members, has long resisted change, especially suggestions it should merge with the state system. Established religious groups, initially the only providers of education, have in England also retained control over their own schools, joined in the later twentieth century by assertive newer religious groups. A special school teacher union in Germany has been assertive in resisting special school closures. Less prestigious nineteenth-century private school providers in both

the UK and the USA were gradually squeezed out by expanding state systems, central, federal and state and district local government coming to exercise control. But assertive central or state governments are now returning much educational control to private organisations. Despite the wealth of developed countries with public education systems, there is private provision at all levels, pre-school, special schooling, faith schools, vocational and trade schools, business schools, and universities. Explanations for this centre round perceived crises of funding for governments as educational systems are claimed to have grown to unaffordable limits, implacable beliefs in the superiority of private provision, or decisions to ‘shrink the state’ and move away from a social contract with citizens that the state will guarantee social provisions. Newer assertive groups in education are ‘philanthrocapitalists’, individuals who have made fortunes often in new technologies, who ostensibly ‘donate’ but in fact organise the financing and thus control of schooling at home and abroad (McGoey 2015).

### **Some explanations for educational expansion**

Popular explanations for the expansion of education in developed countries have usually been described as functional for economies. Industrialising countries needed a workforce with more education and skills, ready for a division of labour with a majority working at repetitive low wage jobs. But links between industrialisation and educational development needed wider explanations. These could be found in social conflict theories stressing the way factory production and urban living, with huge population increases in cities, created new problems for labour control and social order. Public education was one answer to problems of child and female labour, and the crime and delinquency in urban slum living conditions. Radical sociologists (Katz 1968; Bowles and Gintis 1976) offered explanations that centred round the new forms of socialisation needed for low-waged labour and social class control. As traditional forms of family education broke down, educational reformers saw the elementary school as a way of instilling habits of obedience, subordination to routine and strict discipline. Religious groups had a common interest with factory employers in controlling and ‘moralising’ the urban poor. The young people themselves were not always happy to be controlled in schools, then as now drop-outs found life outside school more attractive. As Sanderson (1983) studying early nineteenth-century education found – the last thing juvenile vagrants considered was going to school to get an education. Urban degeneration and the breakdown of family life appeared to be a major factor for the expansion of public schooling, as liberal educational reformers and industrial employers found a common cause. The poor and ignorant displayed “rude manners, profane language and the vicious habits of low-bred idleness” (Katz 1968:31), which seemed a good reason for elementary schooling to inculcate good manners, morals and working habits. Castigating the poor for their manners and family life has certainly resonated across the centuries. Bowles and Gintis (1976) continued to theorise about the role of education in reproducing a social division of labour, and were able

to point to the rapid embrace of IQ tests in purporting to separate children out by ‘intelligence’ as suitable for different schools and jobs. They did not particularly note the use of IQ testing to separate out children for special education, but did, however, regard IQ more as a mechanism for the legitimisation of inequality than telling much about an individual capacities – a point taken up later in this book.

The work of Max Weber is especially important as a theoretical background for understanding much of what constitutes the organisation of special and inclusive education programmes. He demonstrated the way dominant groups managed to persuade others of their legitimate authority in deciding what happens to weaker social groups. Outright coercion is not necessary, although Section 54 of the 1921 Education Act enabled an authority to ‘certify’ children and compel parents to send their ‘defective’ children to special schools in England or be fined or even imprisoned if not paying the fine (a situation notionally in place until 1981). What is necessary in situations of mass education is a large bureaucracy dealing with the various clients of the system (Weber 1947). Those who have had contact with the expanded bureaucracies dealing with lower attainers and the ‘special’ will recognise the barriers and obfuscations bureaucracies provide. He also introduced the importance of the concept of status whereby some groups seek to distance themselves from other groups whom they consider beneath them and must be avoided. The history of special education provides a host of examples of stigmatised groups being avoided. Following Weber, the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) was also concerned with the function of an education system in legitimating and perpetuating a given status order. Their work gave rise to now popularly accepted notions of the importance of cultural capital in children’s schooling. They argued that while educational advancement is based on ostensibly fair testing the system demands cultural competences not possessed by many families. The lack of cultural capital, along with deficiencies in social capital, has entered into the vocabulary and consciousness of educationalists and politicians, as a way of explaining working class educational failures. Bourdieu, in his book on *Distinction*, drawing on interviews with some 1200 French middle and working class adults in the early 1960s (Bourdieu 1984) explained the perpetuation of status distinctions between the classes in terms of the cultural ‘goods’ consumed, which provided obvious differences between the classes. Cultural preferences, educational capital, and parental occupation were all closely linked. While this was a laudable theoretical understanding, policy makers and school systems became adept at using the insights as explanations for low academic achievement at school and linking it to home and family backgrounds.

## **Some explanations about special and inclusive education**

The expanding literature and elaborated practices associated with disability, special and inclusive education plus the emotions and antagonisms generated by these terms illustrates the paradoxes and contradictions that have long

social and political histories. Why, despite a world-wide movement towards the inclusion of previously excluded populations, has special education, increasingly located in mainstream schools, flourished? Why have governments acquiesced in the expansion of a ‘special needs industry’ (Tomlinson 2012)? How far will those regarded as defective or deficient be increasingly regarded as a surplus population in global economies: does special education really meet the needs of diverse groups and whose interests are actually served by the expansion of programmes for the special and lower attainers in schools? In attempting to answer these questions it has to be recognised that there cannot be any theories about special and inclusive education, without understanding the social and historical influences on policies and practices, and the psychological and medical influences that became so pervasive, now joined by neuroscientists, behavioural geneticists and others. There are also historical contradictions to be faced. For example, in Sweden discussion about the ‘integration’ and ‘normalisation’ of children with disabilities into mainstream schools was taking place in the 1950s and 60s, at the same time that compulsory sterilisation of ‘defective’ women thought likely to produce deficient children was in operation

One of the most coherent analyses of the development of special education as an institutional practice related to mainstream education, and the complex administration needed to legitimate the changing assumptions and practices, was produced by Skrtic in his book *Behind Special Education* (Skrtic 1991). In his view, in the USA it was industrialisation, immigration and compulsory school attendance that produced the large number of students who were troublesome to mainstream classrooms. The issue was reframed as a problem of inefficient school organisation and defective students. This encouraged the development of an educational administration to deal with the troublesome, which in turn encouraged the development of a special education sector. Among the many insights in the book was the notion that special education is constructed and sustained as a machine bureaucracy, whereas what is needed in the twenty-first century is an ‘adhocracy’ in which people collaborate and learn from each other. He pointed out that segregation, ability groupings and trackings have no place in an adhocracy as it reduces young people’s capacities to learn from one another. Curiously, variations of adhocracy now form a rhetoric of governments urging business entrepreneurs and even schools to collaborate and learn from each other!

Neither can any theorising about special and inclusive education be useful if the wider national and global contexts are ignored, and there are numbers of studies using cross-cultural description to examine the policies and practices going under the rubric of inclusive education. Richardson and Powell (2011) have produced an authoritative sociological analysis of the origins and development of special education, and took up the challenge of examining special education practices in societies with widely different cultural, religious, political and economic systems. They described the structures established for dealing with disabled and disruptive children and young people and established why historical antecedents and cross-cultural differences are important in understanding what societies are doing when they send large

numbers of their young into lower-level instruction and limited futures. They also pointed out that special and inclusive education practices in developed countries cannot be discussed without understanding the relationship to vocational training and the recourse to youth offenders' institutions and prisons for those who cannot adapt to school systems and lower level courses.

## **Defining inclusion**

Explaining and defining the global and national interests in inclusive education from the later twentieth century has proved an even more difficult task than explaining the complexities of special education. There are a plethora of attempts at defining inclusive education, none of which appear satisfactory to participants, who are often emotionally concerned to defend existing special education practices. This is understandable, as what was being suggested was a reversal of a century of traditional practices concerned with the separation of young people, into separate institutions, or classes, and instructional practices. It is also a reversal of traditional understandings of child development, and learning, and established concepts of ability and potential. There are currently over 7000 books on inclusion listed on the Amazon website, and the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, founded in 1996, is only one of numerous journals publishing hundreds of articles discussing, defining, criticising, explaining and theorising about the area. There are also attempts to synthesise the concept of inclusion of children with labels of disabilities and learning difficulties while retaining traditional forms of special education. Recent work by Hornby (2015) illustrates these attempts. He describes what he terms a theory of inclusive special education, which is actually a blueprint for dealing with these expanding groups of troublesome children by assessing their different defects, training professionals and organising classes and schools on a continuum of separation.

Although often what passes for theory turns out to be description and prescription, this is perhaps as far as understanding can go, although adherence to human rights and social justice underpin many of the attempts to define inclusion and the place of special education programmes and localities within an inclusive education system. Artiles and his colleagues discussed a concept of social justice that acknowledges the social context where class, race, gender and language and other markers constrain access to participation and resources and used the concept of equity to examine how inclusive education and practices have developed in a comparative perspective (Artiles et al. 2011). The large amount of literature on racial disparities in educational placements and achievements in the USA, and the continued disproportionate numbers of minority young people in special education has led to numerous attempts to move beyond description and data collection to use notions of equity and power structures, and make sense of the intersections of race, class and poverty that ensure spatial and economic segregation. If segregated inner-city schools are six times more likely to have students in concentrated poverty than schools with overwhelmingly white populations, as is the case in many American cities, then theories that combine multiple disadvantages are

needed. One of the most coherent explanations for disproportionate representation is the combination of the concepts of institutional ableism – the failure to provide proper services to persons with disabilities or difficulties – with institutional racism – the failure to provide proper services to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin – to transpose legally acceptable special education discrimination to maintain illegal segregation by race (Beratan 2008).

## **Manufactured inability as an explanation**

Despite assertions of inclusivity and equity no country has ever achieved this. Under the mountain of research reports, government papers and academic literature describing inequalities, and bemoaning the development of an underclass, a lack of social mobility and the seemingly unstoppable expansion of social problems – exclusions, drop-outs, delinquency and mental health issues currently topping the lists in the UK and USA – there is a distinct lack of coherent explanation about what is going on. What may be going on are attempts to maintain a traditional hierarchical status quo in a rapidly changing world by recourse to manufacturing the ‘inability’ of many of the children in lower socio-economic groups and removing them from mainstream institutions. Four ways of doing this are:

- Perpetuating the belief that there is only inherent potential in the few, and fixed levels of inability in most children, and that many need a ‘special’ education.
- Perpetuating the belief many children and young people have less ‘ability’ and ‘human capital’ to develop, and thus cannot perform well in a knowledge economy.
- Removing young people who are regarded as interfering with expected standards and credentialing of others into separate institutions, alternative education, and young offenders institutions.
- Denying that educating previously excluded social and racial groups has been partially and slowly successful.

The fixed ability/disability mantra is offered to explain the expansion of a sector of education systems in developed countries that now includes around 25–30 per cent of children and young people at the lower end of the systems and treat them inequitably. The expansion is linked to the expansion of inequalities in societies; and to deterministic assumptions that these young people are born as less able, unable or disabled. The myth is sustained by assertions that ‘intelligence’ can be measured by mental tests and IQ scores conveniently placed along a bell curve. Originally, this curve labelled children as idiots and imbeciles at the lower end and high ability at the other end. The fixed ability myths and the continued attempts to reinforce beliefs in inherited ‘potential’, which were linked to early twentieth-century popular eugenic theories, are now being resurrected via advances in biotechnology and human genetics to support the notions of the bright and the dull, the academic and

the practical mind, the grammar school, secondary modern student and special school or programme student.

The history of special education indicates that early provision for the disabled and disruptive was a product of the economic and commercial interests of a developing industrial society which needed as many of these young people as possible to develop their human capital and accept employment at low levels without complaint. A major concern, then as now, was that social order should be preserved and any potentially useless citizens should not become a burden on the society. Elementary education was needed to inculcate lower levels of skills and moral behaviour and those who disputed this were quickly weeded out into special education. A situation developed where for over a hundred years governments have organised structures that ensured varying levels of ignorance among populations and justified this by manufacturing beliefs in the inability of these groups. Proctor (2008) raised the question as to how ignorance is made, maintained and manipulated by powerful groups to sustain their own interests. He promoted a study of ignorance and noted that the denial of knowledge to some groups is usually a deliberate policy. Those who dominate debates and policies on, for example, levels and amount of education, on welfare benefits and reforms, on disability allowances and claims, and on intervention in families considered dysfunctional often have a punitive agenda, designed to ensure existing hierarchies of power and influence, and attempt to ensure that those suffering in an unequal society remain quiescent. There is also a paternalistic agenda evident, as some concessions have to be made to improving the situation of the lower groups. Thus in the UK, there is a concern with social mobility, especially via a Social Mobility Commission which supports efforts to move some disadvantaged individuals up the educational and social ladder.<sup>3</sup>

Paradoxically, the need to manufacture inability is also linked to a fear that most young people actually are capable of learning and working, and even 'competing' in a global economy. A long-term project of neo-liberal governments and those who have power and influence over social, economic and educational structures, has been to try to denigrate social democratic attempts to value the capabilities of all citizens. In the UK in the 'Long Revolution' Raymond Williams described an attempt from the early eighteenth century and the industrial revolution, to gain opportunity, education and voice for those constantly regarded as inferior members of the society (Williams 1961). Ranged against them were the powerful interests of those determined to keep hierarchical social structures with wealth, power, social and eventually educational goods. The major weapon in the structuring of inferiority and inability has been the belief propagated by elites that there really are strong differences in the educational potential of young people. The belief still resonating in schools, universities, with politicians and the general public is that children are born with the potential to be very able, average, less able or disabled and have to be treated differently and unequally. Understanding the attempts to manufacture the inability of large sections of the population is not new. Archer, as noted, introduced the 'strategic maintenance of ignorance' in historical and cultural terms in 1988. More

recently, Slater (2014) has discussed the ‘manufacturing of ignorance’ in a paper discussing the punitive stance of government, supported by a hostile media, against those at the bottom of the class structure, although it could be suggested that particular kinds of ignorance are also manufactured in expensive schools populated by the upper classes. As one among many explanatory tools, the notion of a manufacture of inability in education may underpin the wider political intent to perpetuate structures of inequality in whole societies.

## Notes

- 1 “Deaths and suicides link to work assessment: more evidence needed” *Disabled People Against Cuts*. [dpac.uk.net/tag/samuel-miller](http://dpac.uk.net/tag/samuel-miller) 25/12/2012. Samuel Millet, disabled activist in Canada, drew up a list of over 70 disabled people in the UK who up to 2012 had killed themselves after being found ‘fit for work’ by the French firm ATOS, appointed by the government to assess disabled benefits claimants as ‘fit for work’. The company had its contact terminated in 2014.
- 2 In 1994 Shadow Education Secretary Ann Taylor wrote *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* (Taylor and Tomlinson 1994). This was approved by the then Labour leader John Smith, but on his death in May 1994 and the election of Tony Blair as leader, the paper was repudiated.
- 3 The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is an advisory body created by a 2010 Child Poverty Act and amended by a Welfare Reform Act in 2012. It is chaired by former Labour Health Secretary Alan Milburn and its brief is to monitor government progress in improving social mobility.

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## CHAPTER 2

# THE EMERGENCE OF SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

## England

Man's wisdom is nothing before God but rather all of us in our wisdom are like the fools. Therefore the fools, our brethren, stand before us.

(Paracelsus 1530/1967)

While Paracelsus was interested in arguing that those regarded as fools, people who were seen as 'not normal', were in fact as human as those who thought they were superior, much of the history of treatment of the disabled and the 'deviant' from what currently passed as normal has been cruel, degrading and at best paternalistic. Ryan and Thomas (1981) demonstrated that a complex mix of religious, medical and moral beliefs over the past five hundred years, while occasionally showing some sympathy, more often showed censure and abuse. The Christian religion largely took the view that disability and defect were a punishment for evil, Protestant Martin Luther being especially unpleasant in his view that the misdeeds of parents were responsible for producing defective children. Islam took a kinder view, the Prophet being recorded as accepting disabled people as friends (Pervez 2014). Until relatively recently in both England and the USA, the history of disability and special education attracted few scholars, and into the twenty-first century there were complaints that historians were not interested in disability (Armstrong 2007). But over the past 30 years there has been more attention given to exploring the historical dimensions of current policies and practices and most textbooks for students of special and inclusive education now briefly include some historical explanation.

David Pritchard's detailed history up to the 1960s (Pritchard 1963), which presented a narrative of progress in the treatment of the 'handicapped' was heavily relied on by the committee chaired by Mary Warnock (DES 1978). The report of this committee was instrumental in removing statutory categories of special education and substituting and extending the notion of special educational need, although the concept of 'special needs' had been pioneered in Birmingham from the 1960s by Tansley, a city inspector for special education and Gulliford, eventually the country's first Professor of Special Education (Tansley and Gulliford 1960). In the USA historians have also noted that the history of special and inclusive education was often told as a story of liberation and normalisation, although eugenic policies and practices

continued. In 1981 the development of an Open University course (E241) on special educational needs raised interest in the origins and expansion of special education, not only for the more severely disabled, but also for the larger majority of slower learners, disruptive and troublesome groups – the “grit in the educational machine” as Lewis (1987:68) noted. The edited book accompanying this course (Swann 1981) was critical of the progress narrative, pointing out that the pathological assumptions about those regarded as handicapped, disabled and deviant, may have had more to do with economic and social needs than progressive humanitarian responses.

Maureen Oswin’s book *Children Living in Long-stay Hospitals* (1978) exposed the cruelty and deprivations that more severely disabled children were exposed to in institutions, as did Potts and Fido, recording the inhumane treatment of the so-called feeble-minded, segregated in an institution from the 1920s until the later 1980s (Potts and Fido 1991). Despite promises of improvement, a scandal of the treatment of learning disabled patients in Winterbourne View private hospital was exposed in 2016 (Tregelles 2016). Hurt’s (1988) book took the unambiguous position that arrangements for the disabled and troublesome were primarily a response to perceived threats to social order and showed that the provision for pauper and defective children both before and after state education developed was designed to prevent them becoming a burden on the society. For example, workhouse schools before 1870 were explicitly designed to eliminate what was regarded as an hereditary tendency for children to become poor or criminal and an aim was “to remove the social threat of pauperism at the least expense to the propertied classes” (Hurt 1988:14). This chapter covers the social origins of special and inclusive education over 150 years in the light of prevailing social, economic, political and professional interests, rather than a humanitarian narrative.

## **Punitive benevolence**

After an initial study of the history of special education, I wrote in 1982 that “Special education is permeated by an ideology of benevolent humanitarianism, which provides a moral framework in which professionals and practitioners work” (Tomlinson 1982:5). While, as noted, this notion has been widely repeated, further study of the social origins and the present policies presents a situation that is by no means benevolent. The forms and arrangements special and now inclusive education have taken over the years are the products of particular vested interests in society. Notable characteristics have been political interest in keeping funding costs as low as possible, the control of disruptive social groups, ensuring the defective were if possible in work even if unpaid, and also power struggles between medical, psychological, administrative, educational and other personnel to influence definitions and practice. What was described as individual or charitable enterprise to reduce misery was seldom the product of altruism and disinterested humanitarianism.<sup>1</sup> The major committees reporting on dealing with the defective and disruptive in England in the later nineteenth century were mainly chaired by aristocrats,

with political and economic interests in mind, and politicians in the twentieth century were more interested in separating out the unprofitable, educationally difficult and the disruptive.

Into the twenty-first century, the major political interest, under a rhetoric of inclusion, appears to be the wholesale exclusion of a mass of the special and lower attainers from competing in the examination factories that English schools have become. While some appreciation of social justice and inequalities have undoubtedly influenced policy-makers it has been social protest and voice from the recipients of the benevolence that were more likely to have influenced change (Barnes et al. 2002). The notion of *punitive benevolence* (Richardson and Powell 2011), apparent in England and the USA, seems a more likely description of past and current policies, although benevolence is less and less in evidence. Twentieth century text books for teachers of ‘handicapped’ children often demonstrated a kindly *paternalist* benevolence (Taylor 1946; Jackson 1969), overlooking the legal imperative of parental compulsion to send their children to special schools, and the class-based nature of the clientele they were dealing with. Punitive benevolent systems work with a disregard for any structural disadvantages young people and their families experience – geographical, economic or social – politicians asserting, with monumental hypocrisy, that they are encouraging all children and young people into schooling and work, while placing massive barriers in the way of their achievements.

An early policy for dealing with problem children was simply to send them off to the colonies. In 1597 a Poor Law Act allowed “dangerous and defective children of who the city of London is desired to be unburdened” to be sent to the newly acquired American colonies. By the nineteenth century Australia was the favoured destination for the dangerous; a 1744 Madhouses Act had taken care of the mentally defective (lunatics) and by 1845 an Asylums Act had made it compulsory for every county to build an asylum for idiots and imbeciles – the Royal Albert Asylum of the Northern Counties was opened in style at Lancaster by the Earl of Zetland, Grand Master of the Freemasons of England. This asylum charged between 50 and 200 guineas for those few wealthy families admitting to defective members. Workhouse schools took in pauper, vagrant, orphan and delinquent children, hopefully training them to become God-fearing independent workers, and some enlightened textile mill owners took in a quota of idiot children along with the pauper children the workhouses supplied for mill work. As the century progressed elementary education for the masses developed, aiming to produce a minimally literate population to assist commercial interests, and to control potential demands and unrest among the working classes. An expanding capitalist economy, with an imperial trade, was not helped by existing schooling – dame schools, ragged schools, charity schools and from the 1830s mainly Anglican and non-conformist schooling where there was little interest in the education of defective children.

It was business people who realised that it made economic good sense to make as many young people as possible profitable through some kind of training. From 1760 the Braidwood family, capitalising on Thomas

Braidwood's talent for teaching deaf students – the first students in their Edinburgh Academy being from wealthy families – ran their asylums for the deaf in Edinburgh, London and Margate as businesses, with Hodgson (1953) recording that they made profits from underpaying teachers. Other business men, often with members of their family affected, followed, raising money for schools for the deaf in Liverpool, Manchester, Exeter, York and Newcastle, and the Rothschild family opened a Jewish deaf school in London in 1864. The Rev Henry Dannett opened a school for the Indigent Blind in Liverpool in 1791, aiming “to render the blind useful by removing habits of idleness” but discharged any ‘incapable of labour’ (see Tomlinson 1982:36) and a London school for the Indigent Blind, opening in 1799, had the sole objective of instructing the blind in a trade. Blindness and deafness were admitted to affect all social classes, unlike mental and to some extent physical disabilities, which the middle and upper classes were often at pains to conceal. In 1866 a college in Worcester had opened to ensure that “blind children of opulent parents might obtain an education suitable for their station in life” (Thomas 1957). The assumption that it was only the lower classes that produced ‘dull and defective’ children was assisted by the ability of the upper and middle classes to provide privately for any dull children. Tredgold, who produced a text book on *Mental Deficiency* in 1908 (going into an 8th edition in the 1950s) painted a delightful picture of upper class dullness.

Throughout the country there are hundreds of feeble-minded persons, many of them gentlefolk by birth...they perform little household tasks and take up simple hobbies like poker-work, stamp collecting and amateur cabinet-making, and enter into the ordinary social amusements of their class.

(Tredgold 1908:175)

For the lower social classes Tredgold advocated euthanasia for idiots and imbeciles and the sterilisation of defectives (ibid.:492).

After the beginning of state education economic interests in making the blind, deaf and other troublesome social groups productive became more pronounced. A Royal Commission was set up in 1885, chaired by Lord Egerton, whose family had interests in the West Indian sugar trade. The brief of the Commission was clearly economic,

The blind, deaf and dumb and the educable class of imbecile, if left uneducated, become not only a burden to themselves but a weighty burden to the state. It is in the interests of the state to educate them, so as to dry up as far as possible, the minor streams that must swell to a great torrent of pauperism.

(Egerton Report 1889, Introduction)

The Commission illustrated what became a permanent feature when dealing with these problem groups – a need to keep the cost of any provision low while making them productive to the economy. In the event separate schools

for the blind and deaf were recommended, the imbeciles and feeble-minded left largely to the influence of the medical profession. Provision for the physically handicapped was also based on economic considerations, A Crippled Home and Industrial School for Girls opening in 1851 in London, followed shortly by a National Industrial school for Crippled Boys. Expenses were kept low by using voluntary teachers and using the girls to do the domestic work. Economic interests were certainly served by removing defective people who were interrupting workhouse labour and possibly train them for productive work, and political interests were served by the removal to work, or care and confinement, of potentially disruptive social groups. Any work done by these defective children and adults was either unpaid or for very low wages.

It was the medical profession, struggling for professional recognition during the nineteenth century, which enhanced its prestige by claims to care for mental and physical defectives. From the 1840s medical practitioners had urged the government to grant them professional status, and in 1858 a Medical Act established a National Register of practitioners. As part of the bargain, it served state interests that the confinement and subsequent education of defective children should be overseen by medical men. Medical domination over the field was extremely successful; from 1945 doctors signed (HP) Handicapped Pupil forms with a statutory duty to determine which children had a 'disability of body or mind' and although from 1975 new (SE) Special Education forms with a summary form signed by a psychologist were introduced, up to 1981 it was medical officers who had the statutory powers. Important to medical and early psychological influence was the developing interest in the possible hereditary nature of defect, culminating in the eugenics movement and the assumption of 'racial degeneration' within the society by the reproduction of the feeble-minded and defective, assumed to cause all manner of social evils. The links between Social Darwinism, eugenicism and a new eugenics are covered in Chapter 4 of this book. A lasting influence was John Langton Down, who in 1866 explained 'Mongolism' (later Down's syndrome) as an appearance equivalent to the physical characteristics of what was described as the Mongolian race,<sup>2</sup> which encouraged a passion for classification along biological and racial lines. The expanding and reworking of various labels of defect, and disability over the past century and a half were largely due to eugenic, medical and psychological influences, to which could be added the emergence of influential pressure groups over the years, notably associations furthering the interests of dyslexia and autism.

## **Educating defective children**

The introduction of compulsory state education from 1870 focused attention on children who were neither idiots nor imbeciles but merely regarded as dull, feeble-minded and troublesome. State schools, with teachers 'paid by results' had an acute 'need' to get rid of such children, and the creation of special schools and classes was set in motion by various interest groups. The Charity Organisation Society, founded in 1869 to co-ordinate charity and

encourage thrift and self-help, campaigned for segregated schools for the feeble-minded, the patrons of this society being upper class men connected by their class. They included Lord Lichfield, the Early of Derby, and 17 other peers. Lord Egerton, chair of the Egerton Committee reported above, was a neighbour with adjoining estates of Lord Lichfield. Sir Charles Trevelyan, secretary to the COS sub-committee on idiots and imbeciles, had in the 1840s helped administer famine relief in Ireland, thought death by starvation was a 'discipline', and his view was that defective children needed special control. Medical and educational interests began to collide in seeking to influence the establishment of special schooling. Medical men had the advantage, as they had come to dominate the asylums and asylum education.

The first schools for special instruction opened in the poorest districts and by the 1890s the London school board had opened schools or classes for "children who by reason of mental and physical defects, cannot be taught in ordinary standards" (see Tomlinson 1982:43). The required standards were labelled 1-6 and some schools had established standard zero classes. Schools for special instruction opened in poor areas, in London, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol and other cities, the children catered for being mainly the dirty, difficult and disruptive children of the labouring poor. While there was agreement that these children must be removed to allow the smooth running of normal schools there was early conflict over who should select the children. Dr Kerr, a Bradford medical officer, thought that if teachers were allowed to select out children they would attempt to get rid of all their dull children. A Poor Law School committee report in 1896 and a Committee on Defective and Epileptic children in 1898 encouraged the passing of the 1899 Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, which provided grant money for separate education, providing the children received manual instruction as well as basic literacy. The cost of separate instruction was always an issue; the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself worried that too many local authorities, 'especially in Ireland' would discover too many defective children. But the transfer of defective children out of ordinary education meant that the preparation of a productive workforce was not interfered with providing costs were kept low and children segregated who might prove troublesome to society, given the assumed links between defect, crime and unemployment.

Special schooling was indeed a safety-valve, allowing the smoother development of the normal elementary education. By the early twentieth century there was a move to greater segregation of defective children, with the influence of the eugenic movement leading to greater political anxiety that these children were a danger to society, defect being linked to moral depravity, crime, pauperism, unemployment and prostitution. A Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded report in 1908 (RCCCFM 1908) was convinced that continuous control over such children in schools, 'colonies', and other institutions was necessary. This Commission, chaired by the Earl of Radnor (examined in more detail in Chapter 4), was highly influential in promoting the view that there were large numbers of mentally defective adults and children "over whom no sufficient control is exercised, whose wayward and irresponsible lives are productive of crime and

misery...and of much continuous expenditure wasteful to the community” (RCCCFM 1908, vol.1, introduction). The social problems detailed in the brief of this Commission were more or less identical to the problems detailed a century later in a 2006 report on what the Conservative Party were referring to as ‘Broken Britain’, produced by the Centre for Social Justice.<sup>3</sup> The emphasis on the control and direction of children in special schooling was aimed at producing low-paid labour, and the indefatigable Dr Kerr informed the Commission that “years of schooling seem a wasted outlay...if they could be separated effectively at the age of ten or twelve, a training to become hewers of wood and drawers of water might make them happier and more useful” (RCCCFM. vol 1, Kerr. evidence). More evidence was given by Mary Dendy, a lady who encouraged the life-long segregation of the feeble-minded, as it was a great evil to be stemmed (*ibid.* 1908: vol 8). She was influential in the inclusion of the category of moral imbecile in a 1913 Act, which was aimed at young women who produced illegitimate children.

The medical influence on the Commission was, however, frustrated, when a recommendation that a medically dominated Board of Control should take over the assessment and care of defective children was repudiated by educational interests. Educationalists had realised that their own interests lay in retaining control of as many children as possible and 175 authorities had made some provision, with a 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, and a further Act in 1914 making such provision compulsory. Education authorities had the duty of ascertaining which children were defective and only those ‘incapable of education’ were to be passed to medical authorities – a situation not remedied until 1970. A further Act in 1921 (section 54) enabled local authorities to compel parents to send their children to special school via a ‘certification process’, which increased the stigma of special schooling.

## **Professional and paternal interests**

By the 1920s the stigmatisation of defective children as a category set apart from normal children had reached a high point, and this was also a decade when eugenic fears of the defective were most pronounced. It was a decade when medical officers, working for education authorities were keen to consolidate their new area of competence, and discover more defective children in the school population. Psychologists were also seeking a foothold in the assessment procedures as the rise of the mental testing movement had been closely allied to measuring defect and ‘subnormality’. A profession of special school teachers had developed, claiming skills and competences in dealing with defective children, and normal schools, mainly the elementary schools now with a leaving age extended to 14, were using the referral procedures to move troublesome children out of their classes.

In 1924 the Boards of Education and Control set up a committee chaired by the Reverend Wood, to enquire into the extent of mental deficiency in the country. This committee reported in 1929, its deliberations influenced by a medical investigator for the committee. They reported that “it is impossible in many cases to decide whether a child is feeble-minded or merely backward,

whether its retarded development is due to poor mental endowment or bad home conditions” (Wood Report 1929 part 4: 59). The committee was also convinced that “for the measure of general intelligence, fairly efficient psychological tests have been devised. In almost all civilised countries such tests form the main criterion in the diagnosis of mental deficiency” and true to form “defective families contained a large group of insane persons, epileptics, paupers, criminals, unemployables, habitual slum dwellers, prostitutes, inebriates and others....the social problem classes” (Wood Report 1929:80). Social problems included delinquent lower class children who had been before the courts, and in 1933 residential Approved Schools were set up providing education and training, in 1969 becoming Community Homes with responsibilities shared between local education authorities and social services.

The issue of who was defective (had a special educational need) and who was merely backward (a low attainer) can be seen as a long-standing problem. In the event, the Wood committee recommended that educable defective children and the dull and backward should be regarded as a single educational and administrative group, children should be discovered by mental tests, certification be abolished and special schools be presented as a helpful variant of normal schools. This did not please the National Union of Teachers who were opposed to the abolition of certification, and special school teachers were concerned that that they would be submerged under large groups of retarded children. It was however, an early attempt at ‘integration’ if only into special schooling. The interests of special educators were considerably furthered by the 1944 Education Act, which laid the duty of securing provision for any pupil suffering from ‘a disability of body or mind’ on local education authorities and any requiring special educational treatment from age two. The model of ascertainment was medical, with medical officers given the statutory duty of assessment, with any unsuitable for education passed to the local health authority. At this time some 8 per cent of school children were regarded as handicapped and the Handicapped Pupils and School Health regulations of 1945 defined 11 categories, blind, partially sighted, deaf, partially deaf, delicate, diabetic, educationally subnormal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped, and speech defects, the delicate and diabetic being joined in 1953. The ‘ineducable’ joined education in 1970, the ESN category being split into severe and mild or moderate subnormality.

A Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act in that year, which was regarded as the first rights-based disability legislation, recognised dyslexia and autism as disabilities, though not as statutory categories of special education, and various voluntary organisations campaigned vigorously for this to happen. Other suggested categories, the neuropathic child, the inconsequential child, the psychiatrically crippled child, the aphasic child, the clumsy child, the severely lethargic child and others, did not become statutory categories. The category of educationally subnormal (ESN) became the favoured way of removing low attaining and disruptive pupils from classrooms,<sup>4</sup> the number of full-time children in ESN schools increasing from 15,173 in 1950 to 118,355 in 1976 – an increase of 150 per cent, with the ‘backward child’ taken care of in expanding remedial classes in normal schools. The category

of maladjusted, examined by the Underwood Committee on Maladjusted Children (1955) recommended a child guidance service with psychiatrists, medical officers and psychologists involved, and numbers of the maladjusted expanded from 6,333 children in 1961 to 20,338 in 1976. Numbers in a non-statutory autistic category went from nil in 1961 to 951 in 1976 – an infinite increase.

Meanwhile, comprehensive education at secondary level had been continuing to expand after the Labour government issued its Circular 10/65 requesting all local authorities to reorganise their schooling along comprehensive lines, although some 36 never did this. A Labour government in 1976 produced an Act designed to compel all authorities to reorganise, which included a clause (section 10) that changed the emphasis of special education in special schools, to the provision of special education in ordinary schools. The Secretary of State for Education at that time noted that the principle of integrated provision for the education of handicapped children was not new. In the event this Act was never implemented, and most reorganising authorities retained their special schools. The city of Birmingham, for example, had finally reorganised in 1972, with 112 secondary comprehensive schools, 8 remaining grammar schools and also 42 special schools.

The majority of children were in ESN schools or those for the ‘maladjusted’, and were from lower social classes, with IQ scores meticulously documented. For example, from a 1946 textbook for teachers we learn of:

Henry, whose intelligence quotient of 86 placed him on the verge of pure dullness. His family was a product of one of the worst slum areas in the city, where his father was employed as a carter. His home environment was slovenly, dirty and coarse, and his mother fierce and truculent and liable to fly into fits of hysteria.

(Taylor 1946:3)

And “Catherine...a ragged docile child who spoke little, and often came to school unwashed and sleepy...a teacher visited her house and found it unbelievably squalid” (Jackson 1969:10). A Guild of Teachers of Backward Children, with Cyril Burt as a Patron (see Chapter 4), was created in the later 1940s. It aimed to provide “a richer and happier life...for many school failures who now swell the army of juvenile delinquents” (Segal 1963:7). In 1976 a report of a committee on child health services, noted that

the prevalence of slow-learning children among unskilled manual workers is many times that found in other social groups...and it is well established that families that are socially disadvantaged, poor, overcrowded, unskilled, ignorant, in ill-health or socially incompetent are at special risk of having children who are mildly mentally retarded.

(Court Report 1976:240)

The Warnock Report continued the deficient family theme with an initial comment that “We are fully aware that many children with educational

difficulties may suffer from familial or wider social difficulties .... because they do not obtain from their families the quality of stimulation or wider sense of stability which is necessary for proper educational progress” (DES 1978:4). It would seem that by this time lower class defective young people had been a problem for over a century.

## **Race issues**

While the issues of race, special education and low school attainment were more decisively joined in the USA, in the UK the period 1870–1920 was generally taken by historians to be the high point of the British Empire, coinciding with the development of mass state schooling, and the exclusion of defectives described as a danger to the ‘British race’. Equally dangerous were overseas colonised ‘races’, as nineteenth-century thinking on race created a set of stereotypes about black colonised people, portraying them as “savage figures who needed to be controlled at all costs and also as helpless beings in need of missionary care and protection” (Rich 1986:12) much the same as lower class defective people were dealt with. The incorporation of debates about the origins of races led to the doctrine of Social Darwinism and claims of a white British genetic superiority over non-white races. While debates on categories of defectives were taking place, early social biology was dividing supposed major races into Caucasoid, Mongoloid and Negroid, handing out superior and inferior characteristics and capabilities. As Chapter 4 notes, these categories were still in use in some literature in the 1990s (see Rushton 1990), and there is currently a resurgence of attempts to define ‘races’.

However, it was not until the post-war period, which saw migration from colonial and former colonial countries into the UK, migrants invited to bring their labour, that the issue of ‘immigrant’ children and their over-placement in special schooling became an issue. In 1966 the inner London Education Authority reported that 23.3 per cent of the children in ESN day schools were of immigrant origin, primarily ‘West Indian’, and by 1967 this had risen to 28 per cent. Schools thought misplacement was four times more likely and black parental anxiety that their children were not being fairly treated became evident, a North London West Indian Association meeting Haringey Council in 1969 to raise the issue, and lodging a complaint of racial discrimination with the then existing Race Relations Board. A Caribbean Education Association, formed in 1970, held a conference in August that year, at which Bernard Coard, from Grenada and a teacher in an ESN school, spoke on the problems of over-representation. His paper was expanded and published as *How the West Indian Child is made ESN in the British School System* (Coard 1971, reprinted 2005) and this became an important document in what is still proving a struggle to educate black, especially Caribbean children, fairly (see Rollock et al. 2015).

The journal *Race Today* published a series of articles on special schooling during the 1970s, Dhondy (1974) claiming that ESN schooling had become a battleground for failure of the school system to educate black children, instead offering pseudo-genetic and cultural deprivation factors as explanations

for black and working class low school performance. Dhondy (later a TV producer and executive) pointed out that other historical factors were at work in the process of separating out the clever and stupid, the educable and the ineducable. A 1973 House of Commons Select Committee report on *Education* and a 1976 report on *The West Indian Community* were severely critical of the practice of consigning Caribbean children to ESN schools and remedial classes in normal schools (by this time 4.9 per cent of all children in ESN schools were of Caribbean origin although only 1.1 per cent of the total school population).

In 1973 the Department of Education sent a letter to all chief education officers, suggesting that they examine their assessment processes. Schools, aware of the issue, began to refer the children instead to schools for the maladjusted, later termed emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and into special Units and Guidance Centres, and some were sent into what became known as Intermediate Treatment Centres for delinquent and truanting young people. Eventually, schools set up Pupil Referral Units for the troublesome, in which the students remained on the school roll and were thus separate but integrated. A further issue that became a permanent fixture was how far children who were second language speakers also had special educational needs. This applied particularly to children immigrant from the Asian sub-continent, but also to Caribbean children whose Creole languages were denigrated as poor English.

## **The invention of special educational need**

The major event in special education in the 1970s was undoubtedly the publication of the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people, the committee being chaired by an Oxford university friend of (later) Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. As Secretary of State for Education from 1970, Thatcher's first action had been to cancel Circular 10/65, allowing local authorities to cease reorganising into comprehensive schooling, although by the end of her tenure over 60 per cent of secondary school students were in notionally comprehensive schools. Mrs Warnock, who in 1985 became Baroness Warnock, chaired a committee of doctors, psychologists, administrators, heads of special schools, a university professor and a retired and knighted NUT secretary. One parent was represented and she was also a member of the National Deaf Society. No disabled person served on the committee, which reported in 1978 (DES 1978). In similar vein to the 1929 Wood Committee the report attempted to present special education as a helpful variant of normal education, deploring any stigma and at the same time recommending an expansion of special education and a reworking of categories. The committee considered, on the basis of two research studies, that one in five children would at some point in their school career need some form of special educational treatment, and this quickly became a norm – the 'Warnock 20 per cent'. There was an assumption that 2 per cent of children would 'need' special segregated schooling and 18 per cent stay in mainstream schools. Statutory categories of handicap were

abolished but descriptive labels were to be attached to children. A description of a 'child with learning difficulty' was to include the former ESN-M and remedial children. Children who had been placed in the collection of units and centres for disruptive children were now to come under special education and 10 types of school provision, ranging from integration in normal school classes with support, through to full time education in special schools and classes was advocated – a 'continuum of provision' that allowed for both separate special education and integration. While there was no suggestion of abolishing special schools Warnock herself wrote in 1980 that "ordinary schools must expect to cater for more children with special needs, and the whole concept of children with peculiar difficulties, or indeed peculiar talents, must be a natural part of the comprehensive ideal" (Warnock 1980:27).

Economic interests, however, ensured that there was to be no widespread integration of children already assessed out of the system, a White Paper in 1980 preceding a 1981 Act, referred more to present economic circumstances than special educational needs. Government regulations confirmed the assumption that nationally some 20 per cent of school pupils might have special educational needs but that this would mainly be provided for in mainstream schools. The 1981 (Special Education) Act (HMSO 1981), confirmed the duty of local education authorities to assess and provide special educational treatment for the small number of children with severe or complex needs who would be afforded the protection of a Statement of their needs and offered places in special schools, or even places in mainstream schools, but mainstream schools would be responsible for dealing with anything up to 20 per cent of children deemed to have a variety of learning difficulties and milder disabilities. The Act specifically mentioned that children with English as a second language should not be regarded as having SEN.

Contradictory political views ostensibly supported the integration of more children into mainstream primary and comprehensive schools, providing it was economically efficient and those with special needs did not disrupt the education of the other children. Egalitarian policies inclining towards the merging of groups previously excluded from the mainstream were increasingly constrained by the competition over resources and increasingly alarms about declining standards in education (see Cox and Boyson 1977), which still required the removal of those who could not contribute to raising standards. The incoming Conservative government in 1979 announced that comprehensive education was no long national policy. But, while the traditionalists were claiming lowered school standards, the new Education Minister Mark Carlisle himself asserted that comprehensive schooling had indeed allowed more pupils to take public examinations and more were staying on into higher education, thus standards could not have declined. He was soon sacked by Mrs Thatcher, who recorded her support for selective schooling separating out the 'able'.

From the 1970s and into the 1980s it was disability activists, in England, the USA, Canada and Sweden who rejected individual, medical and personal tragedy assumptions about those with physical, sensory and other disabilities and argued that economic, social and cultural factors exacerbated disability.

A social interpretation of disability argued that whatever a person's impairments, they were further disabled by society's failure to accommodate to their needs. Vic Finkelstein established England's first disability studies course for the Open University, and was a founder of the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation, and other activists included Colin Barnes and Mike Oliver, who worked for a social model of disability, arguing as many came to agree, that it was social policies, attitudes and lack of resources that helped perpetuate any disability and Ayesha Vernon, a blind scholar, who was the first to research the experiences of disabled minority women (Barnes et al. 2002). Len Barton, possibly the first secondary modern school graduate and a carpenter to become a Professor of Education, worked with activists and academics to provide venues and publications, especially founding what became the journal *Disability and Society* (Tomlinson 2010). It is certainly the case that in the 1970s it was as rare to see people in wheelchairs in public as it was to see men pushing prams. Forty years later both situations were partially remedied.

### **The creation of integration and inclusion**

Into the 1980s in the UK as a whole, a language of integration, morphing gradually into inclusion, characterised the decade. There was an expansion of numbers of children regarded as having special educational needs in mainstream school classes, units and special schools with varying levels of segregation, including facilities for dealing with disruptive and truanting young people. A variety of new labels for various kinds of difficult behaviour were becoming popular. The American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, had by 1980 included Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in its list of disorders, and influential pressure groups claiming resources for dyslexia became more vocal, notably the British Dyslexia Association, which claimed that around 10 per cent of the population were dyslexic.<sup>5</sup> This organisation expanded to become an industry in itself, running a Dyslexia Institute offering Diplomas in Dyslexia, courses for teachers, and screening tests, and support for the expanding number of journals associated with dyslexia. One unfortunate consequence of the condition being mentioned in the World Foundation of Neurology in 1968 was sperm banks later refusing sperm from men who were officially dyslexic as it was listed as a neurological disease. This has not halted claims from many successful and well-known men that they suffered from dyslexia. This raises the interesting question of whether women can have dyslexic eggs. During the 1980s government was concerned to find that some parents were taking court action for their dyslexic children to attend private schools at local authority expense (Harvey 1987), although local authorities were required to pay for children with more severe disabilities in non-maintained special schools run by charities and voluntary groups. Finland, a country with high levels of education, managed to assist children with reading problems without recourse to the label of dyslexia. Autism and autistic spectrum disorders<sup>6</sup> became an increasingly popular 'diagnosis' to explain disruptive or difficult behaviour in

educational settings, and was included in 1994 in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. As with dyslexia there is now an autism industry, with national associations, Autistic Research Centres, autism self-advocacy networks and a large literature purporting to explain causes, behaviours and treatments, and even claims that many of the highly paid employees in the high-tech Silicon Valley were likely to be autistic (Silberman 2015).

Globally, other countries were also seizing on the notion of special educational needs, to differentiate within their school systems. The primary purpose was to separate out the larger groups of children and young people, who were defined as unable or unwilling to participate in systems largely designed to produce academic elites, and offer those unlikely to be academic successes or economically profitable in post-industrial societies a different and usually inferior education, but rationalised by a rhetoric of catering for special needs. In England, the 1981 Special Education Act (section 2) (HMSO 1981), put the principle of educating all children with special educational needs in ordinary schools in place but authorities were initially reluctant to close their special schools. In 1984 the still unitary Inner London Education Authority appointed HMI John Fish, who had been an Assessor to the Warnock Committee, to review provision for special education in London. The Authority at that time recorded 113 special schools, of which 57 were for moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties, and over 130 other units for specific learning difficulties (largely dyslexia) and others set up as a result of a special programme to combat disruptive behaviour and truancy. The Fish report (ILEA 1985) suggested that while some special schools might be necessary, most segregation should be seen as temporary, and the Authority should draw up plans for integration of most children and young people from nursery to further education, in mainstream schools and colleges.

Keith Joseph, then Minister of Education, worried about the 40 per cent of all young people who in mainstream schools were low achievers unable even to take public examinations, and set up what proved to be a short-lived Lower Attaining Pupil Programme (LAPP). Although there was still a disproportionate number of minority pupils in special schooling, the Swann report of 1985, initially a committee of enquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups (DES 1985), made no specific reference to special education and the 1970s issues, but discussed at length the low achievement of minorities, and even commissioned evidence on 'The IQ question'. This report did mention the urban riots of the early 1980s in London and other cities, blaming poor education, unemployment, policing and racism as catalysts, but even after further disturbances in the 1980s there was not much evidence that education, training and employment for young black people had improved and black young people continued to be over represented in special education and as lower achievers.

An Education Reform Act in 1988 ushered in a national curriculum and various ways of giving schools more autonomy over their funding and management and a Special Educational Needs task group was convened, with the premise that "the majority of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) have difficulties of a mild, moderate or temporary kind" (NCC 1989:1). This

group accepted the principle that all pupils should have a broad and balanced curriculum and then set out ways for disapplying some pupils from the national curriculum or teaching at lower levels than other pupils, with the assumption that they were not being prepared for jobs requiring higher levels of education. Rising youth employment after the recession of the 1970s was dealt with by the creation in 1986 of a National Council for Vocational Qualifications, and the development of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) with lower levels designed for lower attainers whose learning difficulties were to be overcome by becoming competent in a workplace.

From the 1980s the origins of special education were coming full circle as a means of preparing part of the working classes in capitalist economies as lower level workers and controlling their behaviour, although it was conceded that there were some children who might never be self-sufficient. Successive governments over the next 20 years became adept at blaming schools, teachers, families and individuals who did not or could not develop their 'human capital' and find employment, rather than develop industrial strategies to make sure there were jobs. The economic imperatives of dealing with those who could not achieve ever rising 'standards' in mainstream education, became more important as market-oriented ideologies became widespread. Economies apparently could not grow with unprofitable groups who were less likely to contribute and more likely to claim resources. Inclusion was a contradictory if useful tool for a simultaneous expansion of special education services, and the increasing incorporation in mainstream education of more young people carrying labels of learning difficulties and disabilities, whose labour may or may not be needed. A history of most of the categories adopted over the years, statutory or simply descriptive is documented in an Appendix to this chapter.

## **Chaos and perversity**

The aims of a period of frenzied legislation during the 1990s was to consolidate a market ideology in education, establishing central control over curriculum and funding and eroding the powers of local authorities and teachers. The English education system had changed over the years to become a heavily centralised system. In this system schools were to compete with each other, failing schools were to be demonised and parents were to exercise more choice of schooling – a policy that certainly backfired. A 1992 White Paper *Choice and Diversity* (DfE 1992), quickly labelled Chaos and Perversity by civil servants, allowed schools to opt out of local control and receive funding centrally, although local authorities continued to be responsible for special education funding and placement. An immediate consequence of choice policies was that some schools increasingly sought to attract desirable pupils who would enhance published league tables of examination results, and get rid of potentially troublesome or lower attaining pupils, while schools that took in these children were demonised as failing. As more children now passed as 'included' in mainstream schools, and more parents pressed for statements of special needs with expensive resources, there was a need to

clarify what constituted a special need and whether the £2.2 billion spent on SEN in 1992 constituted value for money.

A 1993 Education Act introduced a Code of Practice for schools and local authorities, which suggested five stages of identifying children with SEN and that schools should keep a SEN register. It included a requirement that every school appoint a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) which allowed for some professional empire building of SEN departments in schools. The growth of what were referred to as Learning Support and Teaching Assistants has been exponential. By 2011, 43 per cent of the mainstream school workforce were support staff. The Act also formalised the setting up of Pupil Referral Units for disruptive and excluded pupils. Official Acts, Codes and Guidance continued to be ambiguous as to who the individuals and groups regarded as SEN, disabled, or disruptive actually were – a 1996 report for the government asserting that “A local education authority can and should make its own definition of SEN to suit its own particular circumstances” (Coopers and Lybrand 1996). Meanwhile, disability activists pressing for more legislation to protect disabled people, and government concern that disabled people should be employed if possible culminated in a Disability Discrimination Act in 1995, which applied especially to employment and education at all levels. Although it was not all that disability campaigners had fought for, the Act “still set a benchmark for how society should treat people with disabilities” (Brindle 2015).

## **Labour policy**

The Labour Party in opposition set up a working group to advise the Labour education team in 1989<sup>7</sup> and issued a consultative document in 1991 (Armstrong 1991). This document envisaged an Independent Education Standards Commission, which would work with local authorities, schools and parents on special needs policies. However, a New Labour government, elected in 1997, accepted the Conservative faith in choice and competition, with education developing as a market commodity driven by consumer demands and fuelled by league tables, school choice and failing schools. There was a continuous rhetoric of ‘raising standards’ and visions of ‘excellence’ via top down policies, and a weakening of commitment to end academic selection. Despite a rhetoric of *Excellence for all children* (DfEE 1997) policies for distinguishing between the more and less ‘able’ and the academic and vocational were developed. Investment in human resources, the subordination of education to the economy and the scapegoating of schools and teachers who failed to deliver high quality products underpinned New Labour education policies in the 1990s and beyond. Prime Minister Blair launched a Social Exclusion Unit in December 1997 with a speech declaring that he wanted a Britain from which no one is excluded from opportunity and the chance to develop their potential. In reality, choice policies – schools choosing pupils – had reached a point where children were being interviewed for entry even into comprehensive schools and often denied entry to their local school. As one journalist put it, “we were telling

children— face it kid, we don't want you here, it's not that you're stupid — which incidentally you are, you were nervous. What good it that, it's a global economy out there, nervous won't cut it" (Hardy 1997).

By 1999 New Labour policy indicated what was becoming familiar fudge — inclusion with exclusion. "We recognise the case for more inclusion where parents want it and appropriate support can be provided. We agree that special schools should continue to play a vital role in an inclusive education system" (Blunkett 1999: foreword) and offered £8 million via a Standards fund to both promote inclusion and develop special schools. But the costs of all this were worrying and there was to be another Code of Practice. Chapter 5 takes up the various ways in which a continued emphasis on raising standards and separating out the more and less able, became part of the strategies to maintain levels of ignorance in the society.

## Notes

- 1 Whatever our own personal experiences of disability, or human and professional desires to help others, any sustained historical and sociological approach must examine social structures, social, economic and political processes rather than accepting personal tragedy or 'doing good' at face value.
- 2 Down's syndrome is caused by an extra copy of genetic material on the 21st chromosome (causing 47 instead of 46 chromosomes on which genetic material is encoded). Geneticist Steve Jones reports that around 1–2 per cent of live births have a definable gene mutation causing defect, and about 0.6 per cent have a chromosomal abnormality. The most well-known is Down's syndrome, which appears in around one in 800 births, although now some 95 per cent of pregnancies with this extra chromosome are terminated.
- 3 The RCCCFM (1908) identified the pauper class as prone to the social evils of unemployment, crime, debt, educational backwardness, illegitimacy and alcoholism. The Centre for Social Justice Paper (2006) identified the pathways to poverty as family breakdown, economic dependency, worklessness, educational failure, addiction and personal debt.
- 4 A Department of Education and Science circular recorded in a 1969 paper that "educationally subnormal pupils include both children who are educationally backward i.e. their achievements are appreciably less than those of average children of the same age, whether or not they are mentally retarded, and also children of above average ability who for various reasons are educationally retarded" (DES 1969). Thus a child could be educationally backward with a high or low IQ and be of above average ability and still be segregated in an ESN school (see Tomlinson 1981:50)
- 5 Dyslexia was noted in the *British Medical Journal* in November 1896 as a congenital case of word blindness. In 1887 a German doctor, Rudolf Berlin, had referred to this as dyslexia, one Oswald Berkham apparently using the term in 1881. There are numerous definitions of dyslexia, usually described as a specific learning difficulty affecting the development of literacy and language skills, even if the individual has other well-developed cognitive abilities, and there is much literature linking dyslexia to brain dysfunction. The condition is presumed to be international. The popularity of dyslexia has been attributed to the assumption that it is not due to low IQ or other stigmatising conditions.
- 6 Autism was first described in 1908 as a form of childhood schizophrenia, and subsequently elaborated on by Dr Leo Kanner in 1943, closely followed in 1944 by Dr Hans Asperger who described symptoms of limited empathy, poor communication and social skills, which might interfere with educational

achievement. Dr Lorna Wing, a London psychiatrist, who had a daughter with the condition, popularised the notion of Asperger's syndrome, and helped set up a National Autistic Society in 1962. Autism, autistic spectrum disorders and Asperger's syndrome, linked to ADHD and other mental health conditions, are increasingly popular conditions notionally requiring forms of special education.

- 7 I was a member of this Advisory Group, which did not envisage the centralised policies, markets and competition among schools, and enthusiasm for selective policies that followed the election of New Labour, and the group had no influence on policy after 1994.

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## Appendix

Table 2.1 Statutory and non-statutory categories of special educational needs and disability 1886–2015

STATUTORY CATEGORIES (1)		Classifications of 'need'					
1886	1899	1913	1945	1970	Post-1981	1990s–2000s	2015–
Idiot	Idiot	Idiot	Severely Subnormal (SSN)	Educationally Sub-normal (ESN-S)	Child with Learning Difficulty (severe)	Severe learning difficulties	Severe learning difficulty
Imbecile	Imbecile (educable imbecile, feeble-minded)	Imbecile Moral Imbecile (moral defective)	Blind	Blind	Profoundly Handicapped	Profound learning difficulties	Profound and multiple learning difficulty
Blind	Blind	Blind	Blind	Blind		Multiple handicap	Multi-sensory impairment
Deaf	Deaf	Deaf	Deaf	Deaf			
Epileptic	Epileptic	Epileptic	Epileptic	Epileptic			
Defective	Defective	Mental Defective (Feeble-minded)	Educationally Sub-Normal (ESN)	Educationally Sub-normal (moderate ESN-M)	Child with Learning Difficulty (mild or moderate)	Mild or moderate learning difficulties	Moderate learning difficulty

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

STATUTORY CATEGORIES (1)		Classifications of 'need'					
1886	1899	1913	1945	1970	Post-1981	1990s–2000s	2015–
			Maladjusted	Maladjusted	Emotionally and Behaviourally Disturbed (EBD)	Behaviour, emotional and social difficulties BESD	Social emotional and mental health
		Physical Defective	Physically Handicapped	Physically Handicapped	Physically Handicapped Disabled	Physically disabled	Physical disability
			Speech Defect	Speech Defect	Speech Defect	Speech and language disorder	Speech, language and communication disorder
			Delicate	Delicate (discontinued)		Attention deficit disorder	Attention deficit disorder (ADHD)
				Dyslexic Autistic (2)	Specific learning difficulties	Specific learning difficulty	Specific learning difficulty (dyslexia)
					Autistic	Autistic	Autistic spectrum disorder

(1) All statutory categories were abolished via the 1981 (Special) Education Act. Children and young people had “Special Educational Needs”.

Descriptive categories continued to be used.

(2) Recognised as statutory categories in 1970 under a Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE EMERGENCE OF SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION USA

Special education is the dark side of public education, the institutional practice that emerged in twentieth century industrial democracies to conceal the failure to educate all citizens to full political, economic and cultural participation in a democracy.

(Skrtic 1991b: preface)

Although education systems differ between countries in terms of their histories, values and practices, there are many similarities between England and the USA as to how they have elaborated their systems to incorporate the special and lower attainers. A major difference between the education systems is that while the English system is now heavily centralised, in the USA a Federal government sets an agenda within which the 50 states function. The educational control is delegated to states, school districts and school boards. A major similarity is that both countries have embraced neo-liberal policies in education, with a competitive ethos between individuals and schools, marked by constant central exhortations to raise standards for all students, and a heavy emphasis on the likely deficiencies of students, families, schools and teachers, if there is failure to achieve higher standards.

The history, policies and practices that emerged as education for the disabled, disruptive, less able and special, have been documented more thoroughly in the USA than England, as from the nineteenth century the country used education more extensively as a means to create a nation from disparate groups inhabiting wide geographical areas (Sarason and Doris 1979; Chambers and Hartman 1983; Richardson 1999; Osgood 2009; Danforth 2009; Powell 2011). Legislators and educators aim was to create a common school out of disparate migrant groups and social classes, while retaining a white middle class norm of what constituted acceptable social and cultural behaviour (Tulkin 1972). When states from the later nineteenth century began to enact compulsory attendance laws, the enforcement of these laws “threw a new burden on public schools. Not only have the truant and incorrigible been brought into schools, but also many suffering from physical and mental defects as well as those of low mentality” (Wallin 1924: introduction). An influential special education profession emerged earlier than in England and the plethora of literature on emerging policies and

practices continues to be marked by antagonisms between those supporting special education as a sub-system in its own right and proponents of inclusion. As Osgood noted “stakeholders in special education have become more vocal about the issues, with their views reaching a much wider and more attentive audience than ever before” (Osgood 2009:126). As in the previous chapter, this chapter briefly covers the origins and emergence of special and inclusive education in the USA over 150 years, in the light of prevailing social, economic, political and administrative interests.

In contrast to England, there was less stress on ideologies of benevolence and more punitive concern about the problems troublesome children caused to a developing public schooling system. There was also more overt concern with the future careers of the young people, either vocational training and low paid jobs, or reformatories and prisons (Richardson et al. 2017). In one of the few commentaries comparing ‘British’ special education with the USA Kirp (1983), took the view that special education in the UK had been largely left to medical and psychological professionals, with minimal government interference, whereas in the USA there was more bureaucratic concern for control and legislative accountability, and special education was placed in a wider political and legal framework. The history of special education, disability and inclusion is related to a racialised history of education. In the USA, at all levels of education beliefs, policies and practices are bound up with the early exclusion and then the negative incorporation of African-American, Latino and Native American students in particular, in public education systems. Kirp noted that the major English report on special education in the 1970s (DES 1978) had no non-white person on its committee, or lawyer who might voice concerns about the disproportionate number of non-white children identified then as educationally subnormal or maladjusted (Kirp 1983:90).

## **Public and private troubles**

Through the nineteenth century the USA went through massive social and economic changes. While slavery, exploitation and indentured labour had fuelled early population numbers, the immigration of millions of people from Europe, Mexico, Caribbean countries, East Asia and other parts of the world ensured a massively expanded population. Movement from rural to urban areas contributed to urbanisation, and as in England, large cities quickly developed slum areas and exploitative factory conditions for men, women and children. Child labour, youth vagrancy, and poverty were common and the need to use education to improve economic progress, and some charitable concern led to public laws on child labour and compulsory education. The state of Massachusetts established the first Board of Education in 1837 and passed compulsory education laws in 1852. Massachusetts was also the home of social reformer Samuel Gridley Howe, who convinced the state to support the first schools for the blind, deaf and ‘feeble-minded’, while from France Edward Seguin brought methods for teaching mentally deficient children. Once public elementary and secondary education schooling developed and became more bureaucratic and regimented, children who were troublesome

in intellectual, physical and behavioural ways needed attention. The city of Boston had created Schools for Special Instruction as early as 1838, mainly for non-English speaking immigrants. These filled quickly up with children regarded as problems for teachers in the developing mainstream schools.

By 1900 schools and classes for intellectually backward, recalcitrant, incorrigibles, truants and low achievers, were set up in other East Coast states (Tropea 1987), and as in England, children who impeded the progress of others, were candidates for removal. Upper class parents with defective children made private provision, while children of the poor and immigrants were public responsibility in the expanded public school system. By 1915 over 19.7 million children were enrolled, class sizes increased, and as Lazerson noted, elaborate and hierarchical modes of operating while attempting to keep costs down, meant the rapid creation of classes for the retarded, rebellious and deviant children (Lazerson 1983:23). Many of the 'defects' discovered by schools boards such as dirty unkempt children with speech defects, hearing and sight problems and inability to adjust to the behaviours required in schools, were problems of poverty and slum living, and the insults heaped on the children and families were numerous. Wallin wrote that

in regular grades, the feeble-minded and sub-normal represent as it were, an unassimilable accumulation of human clinkers, ballast, driftwood or derelicts which seriously retards the progress of the entire class, and which constitutes a positive irritant to the teachers and other pupils.

(Wallin 1924:94)

Sarason and Doris noted the economic arguments presented to the tax-paying public that the presence of defective children interfered with the education of the more capable (Sarason and Doris 1979:263). Unlike England, there were no aristocrats to chair Commissions and Committees and policy was influenced more directly by state legislators and administrators, by medical and psychological interests, school heads, directors of other institutions, religious bodies and charitable reforming groups. As in England, economic arguments were always present in the US systems, with early arguments that the rate of return by employing the specially educated might be worth the outlay on some education.

## **Compulsory ignorance**

The developing special education system in the USA had its share of individuals with sufficient power and authority to influence its development as a mechanism for social control of potential deviants who might 'pollute' the society. Henry Goddard, Director of the Vineland School for the Feeble-minded in New Jersey was the first to use the newly created intelligence tests to separate out the mentally defective, having also claimed in his book on the Kallikak family (Goddard 1912) that mental deficiency was a hereditary characteristic, and the public needed protection from this social menace. Lewis Terman, revising the first Binet scales for separating out children in

need of special education (see Chapter 4 for details on early testing and eugenic influence), was also convinced that feeble-mindedness was

a serious social menace to the social economic and moral welfare of the state .... It is responsible for one fourth of the commitments to state penitentiaries and reform schools and for the majority of cases of pauperism, alcoholism, prostitution and venereal disease.

(Terman 1917:161)

Goddard set out the case for a science of “mental levels” by associating lower mental levels with manual work and asked “how can there be such a thing as social equality with this wide range of mental capacity?” (Goddard 1920:99) – an argument that resonates to the present day. He further added that workers, especially (low paid) coal miners, had only themselves to blame if they did not spend and save wisely. Robert Yerkes, chair of a committee on the inheritance of mental traits in the Eugenic Research Society, also thought that psychological tests were of great value in placing less able people in suitable low level occupations, again a view that still resonates. As Powell has noted, when special educators elaborated their profession, they drew on test statistics and psychometrically derived definitions of abnormality and intelligence (Powell 2011:5). While beliefs in normal versus not normal supported the exclusion of troublesome children from mainstream schools – thus creating levels of ignorance – there were even worse fates for some whose defects were regarded as hereditary. Michigan introduced a castration bill into its legislature in 1898, and although the Bill was not passed, “twenty-four male children were castrated because of epilepsy, imbecility, masturbation and weakness of mind” (Floud 1898).

By the 1930s special education with its separate classes had become, according to a report on Chicago public schools, places that cast a stigma on anyone associated with them, and Lazerson documented the comments from officials in other cities that “special classes were dumping ground for children who are trouble-makers in their regular classes” and “cripples do not belong in our schools” (Lazerson 1983:39–40). However, by the 1960s while the system of special education was larger than it had ever been it was subjected to more criticism. A well-known article by Dunn in the journal *Educational Researcher* (Dunn 1968) questioned the numbers of children, especially minorities, labelled as educably mentally retarded, and in 1973 Jane Mercer’s influential book (Mercer 1973) also criticised the development of this EMR category. The attempts to create common public schooling which were from the outset dependent on the exclusion into separate classes and schools of disparate groups of troublesome children were now being questioned by human and civil rights groups, by academics and by parental groups, especially African American parents. For government though, as Sarason and Doris noted, “it seemed reasonable not to make any fundamental changes in the school system, but to build an auxiliary system – the special education programmes designed for the defective or incapable child” (1979:334) and they were clear that this was mainly about the removal of the large number of

children regarded as mentally retarded<sup>1</sup> the “schooling for kids no-one wants” (ibid:376) and the elimination of these young people from the possibility of a mainstream curriculum. Where they remained in mainstream, the Federal government had early on encouraged state school systems to include vocational education, rather than provide a separate vocational system, and it became the norm for lower attaining and minority children to be tracked into vocational programmes (Weiss 1990).

## Compulsory racial ignorance

Historians of public education in the USA are generally agreed that from the first it was built on “a system of compulsory ignorance for black children” (Weinberg 1977:11) and deliberate attempts at “darkening the mind” (Crummell 1898:11). Ignorance was a primary instrument in enslavement in America, despite the fact that West Africa, where most slaves were seized, had existing kinds of formal education. Early in the nineteenth century states passed laws outlawing gatherings of Black people for educational purposes and schools for Black children established in northern states were often attacked and burnt by white groups. In 1846 an article in the Boston newspaper *Liberator* asserted in an editorial that “the physical, mental and moral structure of the black child requires an educational treatment different from that of white children” (*Liberator* 1846). After the Second World War racial discrimination and segregation persisted in education, employment, and other institutions, although by this time the NAACP<sup>2</sup> and its lawyers led national demands for equal treatment, a classic case being *McLaurin* (1950) when a Black student was admitted to an all-white university but forced to sit outside the lecture rooms. In May 1954 the US Supreme Court made the unanimous decision in the case of *Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka* that “in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (Brown 1954:1). Despite this, desegregation proceeded slowly and with much white violence against Black families and children. The passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 resulted in slow desegregation with often reluctant administrative enforcement of legislation and the decision to bus children around cities to end segregated schools became a major point of opposition to desegregation. As Blanchett (2010) pointed out the sorting practices in schools were in any case intentionally designed to prevent the integration of Black and white children, and special education practices became a way to ensure they were not in the same classrooms. Ferri and Connor also described ways in which the Brown judgement had been subverted over the years, to ensure that segregation persisted (Ferri and Connor 2004).

A US Commission on Civil Rights 1969–72 found that, as with Black children, those of Mexican–American origin were also subject to high levels of segregation with low academic achievement and poor English language teaching (Weinberg 1977). A 1970 court decision *Diana v the State Board of Education*, decided that as ‘intelligence’ tests were being given in English to Spanish speaking Mexican–American children, they could not be assigned to

classes for the educationally mentally retarded. While it might have been reasonable to assume that the long-term denial of education and a grudging acceptance of shared educational institutions might lead to Black and minority children getting equal treatment in schools, a report commissioned by the Federal government in 1966 (Coleman et al. 1966) reinforced what became an orthodox belief – that it was deficiencies in families and children, embedded in their lower socio-economic status, that created failure in schools – a social determinism that continues to resonate in both the USA and England. This led to continuing assumptions that it was acceptable for disproportionate numbers of lower class and racial minorities to be relegated to special education classes and low achievement groups, although this was not without continual opposition. In 1972 in the case of *Larry P v Riles* the California court ruled that African-American children could not be classed as EMR as the tests given were based on middle class cultural assumptions and the case *Mills v the Board of Education* decided that the exclusion of students for behavioural and emotional problems, and mental retardation was unlawful as the students had a right to an ‘appropriate education’.

## **Integration for disability**

A legal high point appeared to be reached in 1975 when the Senate approved the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (PL 94-142) preceded by a 1973 Act outlawing discrimination against handicapped people. At this time around 8 million young people were estimated to have a disability or handicap that prevented them receiving ‘appropriate education’. The Act, taking effect in 1978, was intended to integrate as many students as possible in mainstream education, with zero reject – no child to be excluded because of handicap, non-discriminatory evaluation with culture fair test materials, appropriately designed education programmes with an IEP (individual education programme) for every child, education to be given in the least restrictive environment and all to be subject to due process of law. At this time the categories of handicap included 32 per cent of students in the developing category of learning disabled, shortened to LD, 22 per cent in the category of Educationally Mentally Handicapped, 22 per cent in the speech impaired category, 30 per cent described as emotionally disturbed, 8 per cent deaf or hard of hearing, 2 per cent visually handicapped, 1 per cent visually impaired and 3 per cent in another health impaired category.

Long before England had developed the idea of Alternative Education, mainly for the disruptive, in the USA there were numerous alternative schools for disruptive or non-conforming students, faith and ethnic schools, career schools, performing arts schools, community schools, skill-training schools and many others (Ysseldyke and Algozzine 1982). Ysseldyke and Algozzine documented the subsequent ways in which state agencies and schools coped with troublesome students. These included denying that students were not being served, exclusion of the disruptive, ability grouping in regular schools, and more special education classes for the dull and retarded (Ysseldyke and Algozzine 1982:36–44). They also made a study of the ‘testing industry’ that

developed over the years with the professional interests of psychologists in mind. Of the tests developed to that time by joint committees of the American Psychological Association and the American Educational Research Association they identified 24 tests with inadequately constructed norms. These included the famous Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, 13 tests with inadequate reliability data, some 50 tests used that had questionable reliability, and 15 with questionable validity (ibid: 139–145). Nevertheless, testing children remained the major method of ensuring that some children were consigned to what in effect was levels of inability, and an education deemed ‘appropriate’ for them. By 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children was amended to become an Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Autism and brain injury were added to categories of disability and more services were mandated. An interesting judgement was given in 1993 in *Oberti v the Board of Education Clementon* that a disruptive child with mental retardation could be placed in a regular class as a child did not have to earn such a place, it was a right rather than a privilege, which could be regarded as a victory for social justice.

### **Subsuming race**

The pressure to recognise the rights of the disabled and all those in special education followed the Brown decision, civil rights legislation and the IDEA. But it soon became evident that there had been a shift from race to disability to undermine minority gains. Using a discourse of low ability greatly affected racial groups. The disproportionate identification of minority students as disabled or ‘special’ meant that racial discrimination was easily transposed into disability discrimination. As Beraton pointed out (2008:349), discrimination against disabled people is scrutinised far less than racial discrimination, and acceptance of disability legislation enables the acceptance of otherwise illegal racial discrimination, as many academics and practitioners since the 1990s have noted. Artiles (2011) described how those with a variety of disabilities benefited from the civil rights legislation racial groups had demanded, but which worked for the greater benefit of the disabled through the IDEA. The historical connections of race and disability created the paradox that a victory for one group – the disabled – became a potential source of inequality for racial groups, despite a shared history of struggles for rights. His view was that in the early moves towards an inclusive education there had been no attention paid to the issue of the over-representation of minorities, 41 states reporting in 2009 that there was no change in their disproportionate racial identifications for special education and 31 reporting no change in identification in disability categories (Artiles 2011:439).

While for years African-American children and other minorities had predominantly been labelled as educationally mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed, the category of Learning Disability gradually became the label most frequently applied to minority students, although ironically, as Sleeter pointed out, it was white middle class children who populated the LD programmes over the first years of the recognition of the category (Sleeter 1986, 1987). An Action for Excellence Task force, reporting on ways to raise

achievement in American schools in 1963, described children unable to achieve required literacy standards as Learning Disabled. In 1969 legislation provided funds for research into the causes of Learning Disability, as this was now an official handicapping condition whose growth has been exponential. In the first year of the label existing over a million children had been identified as LD. Sleeter examined the construction of this category dating it back to the early nineteenth century when medical research suggested links between brain damage and slow learning. Subsequent psychological and neurological studies suggested a notion of minimal brain dysfunction, but the children were regarded as coming from “normal” (white) families (Strauss and Lehtinen 1963). As Sleeter pointed out, failures of poor and minority students were regarded due to their low IQ, social and cultural maladjustment, inner city living, and poverty while “white middle class parents and educators who saw their failing children as different from poor or minority students pressed for the creation and use of this category” (Sleeter 1987:50).

The situation did not appear to improve over the years. Losen and Orfield, in a third edition of their book, which first appeared in 2002, wrote that

Evidence suggests that black over representation (in special education) is substantial in state after state. The studies reveal wide differences in disability identification between blacks and Hispanics and between black boys and girls that cannot be explained in terms of their social background or measured ability.

(Losen and Orfield 2010:xvii)

From the 1990s a developing Disability Studies movement attempted to explain the intersections of race, class, disability and gender more clearly and the persistence of inequalities in education that led students of colour into special education programmes, low achievement and a school to prison pipeline. Linking Disability Studies to the field of Critical Race Theory, writers (who were also practitioners) were developing an area that further attempted to explain the legacy in which historical beliefs about race and ability are still present in both policy and practice, resulting in minority students’ experience of disability and learning difficulty being very different from those of white students (Gillborn 2012; Connor et al. 2016). Some academics, however, persisted in attempts to demonstrate that there was no over-representation of minorities in various categories of special education (Morgan et al. 2015), a view that was difficult to substantiate.

## **Initiatives and resistances**

After the 1975 legislation via the EHA numbers of educators and academics encouraged by what appeared to be Presidential support for organisational and curriculum reform in schooling, proposed a Regular Education Initiative (REI) which might address social and racial issues in really extending rights and resources to all students and including them in regular classrooms. By 1991, as Skrtic documented, there were over 4.5 million children classed as

needing special education services, and two-thirds of these were labelled as Learning Disabled, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded, with the familiar associations with lower class and minority status. In an influential article in the *Harvard Educational Review* (Skrtic 1991a) he described the clash between the proponents of the REI, who supported an end to separate classes and more assistance in mainstream classes for a majority of students, and the opposition to these proposals. He proposed that in a post-industrial era, educational equity was a pre-condition for educational excellence, and segregation, ability groupings and tracking had no place in excellent schooling. Among critics of reform James Kauffman emerged as one of the most vocal and consistent critics of the REI, and of subsequent initiatives to include students in regular classrooms (Kauffman 1989; Kauffmann and Hallaghan 1995). Kauffman argued that special educators did not believe the REI would work, and that a whole profession of special educators (who had vested interests in continuing their practices) were against changes. From this point continuing arguments over mainstreaming, integration, and inclusion have continued on political, administrative, organisational and educational levels, often, as noted, becoming acrimonious. Ballard, for example, documented the way in which his support for inclusive education in New Zealand in the 1990s, earned him labels of zealot, biased, and ideological, with others supporting inclusion being labelled as politically correct bullies who demonised special schooling! (Ballard 2004). Ellen Brantlinger took up the claim that those supporting inclusion were ideological, demonstrating the ways in which supporters of traditional special education “are quick to see ideology in others but do not turn the gaze inwards and recognise it in their own practice” (Brantlinger 1997:448). She pointed out that special education was infused with a bureaucratic belief in ideologies of professionalism and expertism that the ‘experts’ believed should not be criticised (see Chapter 6).

An expansion of candidates for special education provision was ensured by the curiously named *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) signed into law by President Bush early in 2002. The Act was a result of pressure from policy-makers and private corporate influence, who wanted standardised testing of all children, in order to hold teachers more accountable for low performance and further an agenda of marketisation in schooling. All states were to carry out standardised tests, in reading and maths, later in science. Schools had to make ‘adequate yearly progress’ (AYP) in tests scores or be taken over as privately administered charter schools. The Secretary of State for Education claimed that in particular

We have an educational emergency in the USA. Nationally blacks score lower on reading and maths tests than their white peers ... we have to make sure that African-American parents understand how this historic new education law can specifically help them and their children.

(quoted in Hursh 2005:610)

The arguments for increased testing were similar to those made in England, that more testing, and blaming schools if more children did not pass tests,

would somehow close achievement gaps between poor and minority children. The resulting educational efficiency would increase national economic competitiveness. Ladson-Billings (2005) commenting on this ‘achievement gap’ that always seemed to exist between poor and minority students and their more advantaged peers, suggested that in the light of the poor quality education offered to these disadvantaged groups, the gap should be renamed the ‘educational debt’. Ending the denigration and deficit assumptions about these groups and actually offering good quality education might do much to close achievement gaps. The results of high stakes testing, while opening up elements of a marketisation of education, did not reduce differences in educational achievements between advantaged and disadvantaged students, whether minority or not, and encouraged cheating strategies in states in order to claim that indeed no child was being left behind (Hursh 2005). Teacher student relations were not improved as Valli and Buese (2007) documented, when students in low-performing schools were shuffled through the school day between remedial programmes and interventions in attempts to increase their test scores.

Further initiatives included a Response to Intervention (RTI) whereby, in an echo of the English 2001 three levels of support, students moved between two Tiers depending on their responses to more intensive teaching intervention, ending up in Tier 3 – special education, which, as Artiles noted led to some schools “referring students to RTI” (Artiles 2011:438). A policy initiated by President Obama in 2009, was a ‘Race to the Top’ programme that offered financial incentives to states to further judge teachers’ performance if their students did not perform well in tests, and in a Common Core of Standards students were expected to achieve in academic subjects, all of which led to more young people designated as failing in schools. While Obama’s Secretary of State Arne Duncan in 2016 was recorded as regretting blaming teachers and wishing he had advocated paying them more, he also made the admission that the \$4 billion spent on Race to the Top had not improved standards any more in states that did take the money, than those that did not (Duncan 2016).

As continuing pressure to raise standards persisted, many parents, especially more vocal middle class parents, became increasingly anxious that their children with various learning difficulties, might not achieve the standards required and pressed for more special education resources and services, with a consequent expansion of a ‘SEN industry’. There was an expansion of claims via old and new categories of disability: ADHD, dyslexia, autism and autistic spectrum disorder being the most common. An example of this was provided in 2012 by the Division of Education in the Los Angeles Unified District, which served some 680,000 students, with around 80,000 students (12 per cent) assessed as having special educational needs, plus those classed as delinquent, at-risk, homeless or teenage pregnancy. The Unified District in 2012 spent around \$1.3 million on special education services and a large proportion of this money went on litigation instigated by parents demanding and defending placements and services. The administrators noted with some amusement that autism in one district “nearly bankrupted us” (Tomlinson

2013:81). Although California, with Transitional Services and a Department of Rehabilitation worked hard to help all those with “physical and mental impairments” find vocational training and employment, middle class parents, as in England, were reluctant to have their children placed on vocational courses. The District was concerned that “there is no let-up in testing and assessment ... and the punitive strategies on schools and teachers” (ibid:81) and the demand for special educational services was an inevitable consequence of policies to raise standards and pressure schools into credentialing more children at ever higher levels.

## **Comparing countries**

In both England and the USA, as public school systems were developing to meet the needs of employers in an industrial revolution, and reinforce social order, schooling was organised as factories on mass production principles with products meeting uniform standards or being rejected. The current focus in both countries on raising standards is premised on making the systems more efficient and accountable. In the twentieth century public education worked for many, but many suffered in what Skrtic called ‘the dark side’ of this mass bureaucratic sub system in which school failure was deemed pathological, whereas an unchanged school system was taken as rational (Skrtic 1991b). In the USA regular (mainstream education), with its pathological extensions of testing and accountability was and is taken as normal, even though, as in the UK, this manifestly does not prepare all young people for political, economic and social participation in what notionally is a democratic society. Federal, state and local governments and policy-makers analyse the failings of public education as individual and schools failures, which bolsters the perpetuation of a separate administrative and organisational system of special education, in which practices claimed as inclusion becomes “inclusive service delivery models” (Menzies and Falvey 2008:92). Special education practices continue to treat the disabled, difficult and troublesome differently and the aim of the whole system is not to produce democratic citizens but to enhance test scores.

The ideology behind policy is adherence to an economic model that links higher test scores to economic competitiveness on a global level. On international comparisons this does not appear to be working well for the USA or the UK. At the end of Chapter 8 in this book some graphs are reproduced to illustrate that countries that have wide income inequalities also have students who overall do not achieve well in basic education. The graphs are from an OECD survey (OECD 2015) showing overall the skills of students aged 16–24 in maths, literacy and problem solving in 17 developed economies. The USA now has the greatest level of income inequality in the developed world, and in maths, the country comes bottom of the league table, with the UK second from the bottom. Japan and Finland, countries with the least income inequality and more egalitarian and inclusive school systems, come top. In literacy levels, the USA and UK are second and third from the bottom and in problem solving both are at the bottom of the table.

This might suggest that both countries could do well to examine their whole education systems rather than developing sub-systems and practices that actually sustain failure. The following chapter documents the history and current beliefs in the ongoing attempts to present large numbers of children and young people as having less ability, ‘intelligence’ (as measured by IQ scores) and capabilities, rather than examining the capabilities of the whole education system.

## Notes

- 1 Sarason and Doris pointed out that in a society like the USA where a high value is placed on ‘intelligence’ those who are considered to have less of it (whatever it is) are devalued. As soon as a child was diagnosed as ‘mentally retarded’ the social, educational and productive worth of the child was seen as minimal, even less so than children given labels of emotionally disturbed or ‘learning disabled’ (Sarason and Doris 1979:277; Sleeter 1986).
- 2 The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) is an African-American civil rights organisation set up in 1909 to work for the social, political, economic and legal rights of all ethnic minority groups. It has a headquarters in Baltimore, with regional organisations and an annual conference.

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## CHAPTER 4

# IQ, ABILITY AND EUGENICS

While all of you are brothers, we will say in our tale, God in fashioning those who are fit to rule mingled gold in their generation, for this reason they are most precious, but in the helpers are silver, and iron and brass in farmers and craftsmen. You are all kin, but for the most part you will breed according to your kind.

(Plato: *Republic bk3:415a*)

Genes, intelligence and education: a heady brew of issues. Add class, race and gender, as has happened many times over the past 100 years and you have a simmering mixture ready to boil over at any moment.

(Stephen Rose 2014:27)

Plato's views sounded like the perfect justification for an harmonious society, in which everyone happily knew their place, apart from slaves and women who did not get a mention. But even Socrates called this myth of the metals a 'noble lie'. It was a political legitimisation for an inequitable society and it is unfortunate that the idea that people differ from each other as much as metals has resonated down the centuries, providing an ideological justification for class, race, gender and disability divisions, for imperial conquests and subjugation of whole populations. It is a myth still resonating in schools and classrooms today, that children are born with the potential to be very able, less able, unable or disabled. Behind the current mantra from all political parties that children should be educated to reach their 'potential' lies the myth of some kind of fixed ability, defect or disability. A major task in the sociology of education has been to demonstrate the ways in which inequalities in education and life chances – particularly by social class, race, gender and disability, have been created and recreated by policies and policy-makers rather than defective populations. Inequalities are underpinned by ideological beliefs in the different abilities and potential of different groups.

From the mid nineteenth century, the long-term justification for the treatment of those designated as defective has had a profound effect on education systems globally. Rationalisations for the treatment of those regarded as low attainers, under-achievers, special, or 'not normal' was provided by eugenics. Views of genetic inherited difference, combined with psychometric theories of measurable intelligence contributed to the denigration of these groups. It is a difficult task to turn a century-old set of beliefs around and ask why it became so important to rank children and adults by their mental worth and use biological determinism to treat people unequally.

The completion of the human genome project, advances in genomics, behavioural genetics and the neurosciences have led to some researchers, who still use ‘intelligence’ as measured by IQ tests, to search for ‘intelligence genes’, and to argue that there are groups of genes underpinning ‘intelligence’ but so far there is a failure to find them – the ‘missing heritability’ position (Joseph 2015). In addition, the English Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has developed a framework to enable biosocial research linking the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council with the social sciences. A strategic advisor to the ESRC programmes has written enthusiastically about the ability to demonstrate that negative life experiences, such as poverty and bad parenting, can lead to lasting epigenetic changes, and lasting links between environmental experiences and brain development (Hobcraft 2016). While genomic and neuroscience research can claim to enhance understanding, the history of eugenics and assumptions of the inferior genetic inheritance of some social and racial groups raises concerns that it may all continue to provide legitimation for unequal treatment of these groups.

It was not accidental that early industrialising countries, notably the USA and UK, needed to rationalise the unequal treatment of urban slum, immigrant, and potentially economically ‘useless’ populations, and these were the countries that initially developed and popularised notions of genetic inherited differences between social and racial groups. Indeed it was not accidental that as soon as the development of secular mass education for the working classes became a possibility, that the upper classes found ways of denigrating the educational possibilities of the minds of the lower classes and minorities. If, as Ann Morning wrote in the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies* “you thought we had moved beyond all that” (Morning 2014:1676), the belief that differences in ‘ability’ is largely due to genetic inheritance, again appears to be influencing policies supporting selection and separation of young people in schooling. Some behavioural geneticists have claimed that “the ability to learn from teachers is, we know, more influenced by genes than experience” (Asbury and Plomin 2014:7). Herrnstein and Murray’s thesis that “the twenty-first century will open on a world where cognitive ability is the decisive dividing force” (Herrnstein and Murray 1994:25), seems to be a belief embraced by many governments committed to improving the achievements of their populations and searching for ‘better brains’. The rationale for this seems to be to enhance national economic competitiveness, although it could be claimed that the supposed high cognitive ability of politicians, and their advisors, financiers, bankers, global business leaders and others, has not been conspicuously demonstrated so far in the twenty-first century. While for over a hundred years there has been a plethora of writing on ability, intelligence, mental measurement and eugenic influences, this chapter reviews the history and development of the science, pseudo-science, and political and educational implications of past and current developments.

## Eugenics and mental measurement

It was Francis Galton, second cousin to Charles Darwin, who set himself the task of providing a ‘scientific’ base for selective breeding to improve the genetic inheritance of the human race, worried that the lower classes with their ineducable minds were overbreeding and producing defective people who were a danger to the (British) race. In his books on *Hereditary Genius* (1869) and *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (1883) he advocated selective reproduction and used the term eugenics – derived from the Greek eugenēs ‘a person hereditarily endowed with noble qualities’ as a science that would preserve the best inborn qualities of the population. He argued, as did other medical and political interests at the time, that just as genius and talent were inborn, and confined largely to privileged families, so low abilities, mental defects, delinquency, crime, prostitution, illegitimacy and even unemployment were the product of inherited tendencies in the lower classes. Eugenic theories were taken up by the political left and right<sup>1</sup> and an Eugenics Education Society was founded in 1907 (later simply the Eugenics Society). The Society became an influential pressure group, concerned to promote the fitness of the Anglo-Saxon race and worried that mass education was indicating the presence of large numbers of defective, feeble-minded, delinquent and sub-normal children. Similar claims are being made in the present day, one economist suggesting that “in the case of England, some groups are so elite, that it would take 25 generations for them to become average” especially as elites marrying other elite members would pass on their genetic traits conferring high status and that “it’s a dismal discovery that genetics could actually influence what people’s outcomes will be” (Clark 2016: 95). As no one has data on 25 generations it is safe to say Clark did not discover this, he assumed it, on the same basis that the early eugenicists made assumptions about genetic inheritance between the privileged and paupers.

Galton was credited with the introduction of correlation, and one of his protégés (and later biographer) was Karl Pearson. As a mathematician Pearson produced numerous statistical techniques, multiple correlations, biserial correlations, chi-squared tests, goodness-of-fit tests, techniques that were adopted by the developing science of psychology, followed by other techniques, notably Spearman’s use of factor analysis in developing a measurement of general intelligence (Spearman 1904). To understand the persistence of links between eugenics, psychology and its mental measuring techniques and the persistent denigration of lower social classes and their possible dangers, the views of these influential men (hardly any women) must be studied.<sup>2</sup> Although their beliefs have to be viewed as historical expressions of their time, the outcomes and persistence of the views over the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century are less excusable. Pearson had strong views on ‘degenerates’ affecting what was commonly termed a ‘race’. “No degenerates or feeble-minded stock can ever be converted into healthy and sound stock by the accumulated efforts of education, general laws or sanitation” (Pearson 1892:32), and he believed with other Social Darwinists,

that life was “a struggle of race by race for the survival of the physically and mentally fitter race” (ibid.).

Pearson was interested in statistical probability and in the 1890s collected data on the geographical distribution of paupers (those receiving basic poverty ‘outdoor’ relief) and actually drew a graph (Figure 4.1 as redrawn by Dorling 2015:117) implying that the distribution of paupers around the country followed some natural distribution, purporting to show by a bell-shaped curve this distribution.

He inferred that some areas had more paupers because of genetically inferior people clustering there and reproducing. Dorling (2015:116) has pointed out that, apart from other explanations for areas of poverty the data for this graph were almost certainly fabricated. It was Pearson who first referred to this bell-shaped curve as a normal distribution,<sup>3</sup> and this is crucial to understanding the now century-old assumptions of a ‘normal’ bell-shaped curve of the spread of human abilities. Pearson was one of the founders of the Eugenics society, and eugenics as Dorling has noted “had become almost a religion by the 1920s, it being an article of faith that some were more able than others and that the differences were strongly influenced by some form of inherited acumen” (Dorling 2015:121). The pioneers of mental measurement, a group of like-minded privileged men working mainly in London and Oxford, but with visits to German universities, thus combined eugenic beliefs with the development of those tests of mental measurement. Intelligence tests, purporting to assess levels of cognitive ability, have continued to be relied on as ‘scientific measurements’ to correlate with individual and group performance in schooling, and eventually to predict not only individual futures but futures for whole societies. This allows for example, some economists to claim that studies in labour economics find that one IQ point raised for the whole population corresponds to an increase in wages to the order of 1 per cent (Zax and Rees 2002) and there are even those studying the possibility of genetically interfering with human embryos who claim that

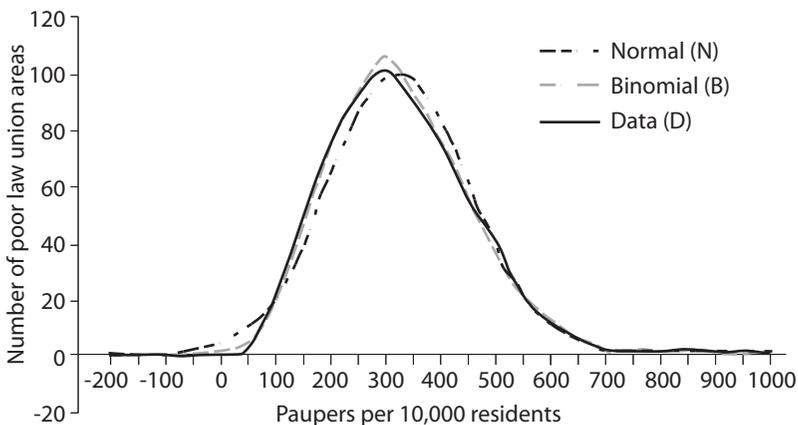


Figure 4.1 Geographical distribution of paupers, England and Wales, 1891

an “individual increase in earnings from a genetic intervention can be assessed in the same fashion as pre-natal care and similar environmental intervention” (Shulman and Bostrom 2014:86).

## **Uses and abuses of mental measurement**

In 1905 the French Minister of Public Instruction asked Alfred Binet to produce a test to help find children of low ability who should be placed in special schools. He obligingly did this but never believed that “the intelligence of individuals is a fixed quantity, we must react against this brutal pessimism” (Binet 1913:40). In England there were no such reservations, and in 1905 a committee of the Anthropological section of the British Association, which was originally chaired by Galton, set up a sub-committee to gather psychological measurements of the British population. Oxford Professor William McDougall recruited several of his students, which included Cyril Burt, to assist him in constructing tests. In keeping with a prevailing view that the level of national intelligence was decaying due to high levels of reproduction of the ‘genetically unfit’ (Heron 1906) in 1907 the Board of Education<sup>4</sup> approved the observation and testing of children, and tests duly showed a difference in performance between pupils in elementary schools and those in private preparatory schools with suggestions that this was innate (Hearnshaw 1979:26). In 1911 William Stern coined the term IQ as an index of general intelligence with an assumption that a normal distribution of this intelligence as measured by tests could be plotted via a bell curve graph, with 100 being the mean and standard deviations of 15 points purporting to show levels of intelligence. Subsequently, many thousands of psychologists, educationalists and the general public became acquainted with a graph showing the very dull (initially labelled as idiots and imbeciles) with an IQ below 70–75, dull between 75 and 90, normal between 90 and 110, bright between 110 and 125 and very bright up to 150 (see Herrnstein and Murray 1994:120–121 for this graph, which they equated with social class) and people also became acquainted with the notion of fixed intelligence, which the points on the graph showed. The persistence of beliefs in the fixed points of an IQ scale were illustrated in 2016 by the eminent evolutionist Richard Dawkins who used a tweet to assert that “living in a university it is easy to forget that the mean IQ of the population is 100, and 50% of them are in the bottom half” (Dawkins 2016). Indeed the persistence of what was called the nature–nurture debate, the relative contribution of genetic inheritance or environmental conditions, appears to be a permanent fixture in economically unequal societies. As Liam Hudson pointed out much of the debate centres on a single technical device – the IQ test – and the use of IQ tests has taken on many of the qualities of a mystic rite, “to have a low IQ is seen as the equivalent of having a low caste” (Hudson 1972:14–15). As IQ testing is the major rationale for the profession of educational psychology, further discussion of this is found in Chapter 6.

The obsession with the assumed innate inferior qualities of the poor, as previous chapters have noted, has been well documented by historians. Hurt

(1988) wrote that beliefs in the hereditary nature of defects or deviance from what was regarded as acceptable social and economic behaviour reached a peak by the time of the First World War. One report, noted in Chapter 2, illustrated the anxiety of governing groups that there were large numbers of a dull and defective population who should be discovered and dealt with. This was the Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, set up in 1904 and reporting in 1908 (RCCCFM 1908, 8 vols). Chaired by an aristocrat, it included one woman among its members, and all were strongly of the hereditarian view that mental defects and attendant ills were caused by defect in the parents and near ancestors. Echoes of current twenty-first century views of the poor were contained in the introduction, which asserted that

the mass of facts we have collected compels the conclusion that there are large numbers of defective persons over whom no sufficient control is exercised and whose wayward and irresponsible lives are productive of crime and misery ... causing much expenditure wasteful to the community.  
(*ibid.* 1908, vol 1:1)

The committee assiduously sought to count numbers of defectives over the whole of England, seeking them out in existing special schools, Poor Law institutions, reformatories, asylums, prisons, homes for inebriates and other places. One commissioner, a Dr Potts (sent to the Potteries area in Staffordshire), actually put a notice in the local paper asking people to nominate any defectives they knew, which yielded a number of names! Potts was the member quoted in the introduction to this book who thought as did the other commissioners that women giving birth to degenerate children was the major problem, give or take tea, alcohol and lazy men (RCCCFM 1908, vol 8). One of his recommendations, which chimed with widely held views, was that the solution to the problem was segregation in institutions or 'colonies', sterilisation of women, and finally 'the lethal chamber' (i.e. killing people).

A visit made by committee members to America also led to the view of women as the main danger to the well-being of the nation, although some states had already passed laws permitting sterilisation and even castration of male 'idiots', and noted that segregation, prohibiting marriage and turning troublesome immigrant children out of schools might solve problems of deviant behaviour (RCCCFM 1908, vol 2). In the USA dismal conclusions to studies of defective families (Dugdale 1877; Goddard 1912) reinforced notions of the danger of defectives 'breeding' and in England fear of delinquent girls becoming slaves to their 'animal spirits' and giving birth to illegitimate children led to their segregation to prevent them 'producing other lives' (Hurt 1988:128). Young women continued to be presented as a moral danger and economic concern by sexual activity. In the 1930s a 'colony' for defectives in the north of England incarcerated feeble-minded women who were "a source of moral corruption for men as there is a danger that men will gratify themselves upon them" (Langley 1988: 36). There was no record of the offending males being removed from the community.

The abuses by those who believed in biological determinism and the dangers of defective populations were commonplace in the early twentieth century. In England, Winston Churchill, Home Secretary in 1912, believed that segregation in labour camps, sterilisation and even euthanasia were suitable ways of dealing with defectives, although by 1932 a report of a Departmental Committee on Sterilization, while conceding that the ‘selective mating’ of poor with poor might lead to defect, took the view that social and economic conditions might have something to do with the problem and came out against the practice. Eugenics operated, as Barker (1983) noted, with the clear assumption about the relationship between social class and eugenic worth. Advocates were convinced of the innate inferiority of the lower working classes. An influential woman from the 1920s was Marie Stopes, well known for advocating contraception. Less well known is that she too believed fervently in curtailing the reproduction of the working classes, setting up her family planning clinics in areas of poverty, and leaving a large amount of money to the Galton Society.

In the State of Victoria, Australia, a eugenics society continued to lobby in the 1930s for sterilisation of the unfit (Lewis 1987) and in Sweden and the USA the sterilisation of women usually without their consent, continued into the 1970s and beyond. It took the practices of the Nazis from the 1920s to the 1940s to bring about a general revulsion to practices of incarcerating, killing or sterilising anyone considered defective and a danger to an ‘Aryan race’, although Lowe (1980) has commented that the concentration on the Nazi regime has drawn attention away from other countries’ practices. The Holocaust Education and Archive Research team have documented the systemic killing of the disabled, Sinti and Roma (gypsies), Black people and Jews as ‘racial inferiors’, with trials of gas to kill the disabled, and persecution of gypsies preceding the full Nazi regime of killing Jews. Robert Ritter, a German psychiatrist who had attempted to find links between heredity and criminality, was largely responsible, with two women anthropologists, for the elimination of large numbers of gypsies from all over Europe. One woman, Eva Justin, studied gypsy children raised apart from their families. At the end of the study she had the children deported to Auschwitz and killed. Both Ritter and these two women were employed after 1947 in the Frankfurt Health Office in West Germany (HEART 2010), although the employment of former Nazis was not unusual post-war. The company who marketed the drug thalidomide, which caused birth defects and deformities, was run by Hermann Wirth – a former Nazi.<sup>5</sup>

## **The eternal influence of Cyril Burt**

The work and influence of those who Jay Gould called the “Great Men” who combined eugenic beliefs with mental measurement have been well documented and critiqued (see especially Kamin 1974; Hearnshaw 1979; Gould 1981; Rose et al. 1984; Montague 1999; Chitty 2007; Gillborn 2008, 2016 and others), with often enraged replies and defence from those who continue to believe in the ‘truths’ of inferior and superior human differences

produced by these men. Cyril Burt is an especially important figure in England as from 1920 he was advocating a treble track system of secondary education and an annual examination taken at 11 by every child in the country to determine their schooling, the ‘most able’ of the working class to progress via a scholarship to grammar schools (Burt 1920 and see Chapter 2). The shadow of the 11+ examination, used in the formalised tripartite system of schooling after 1945, has blighted the lives of hundreds of thousands of people into adulthood, who were told they had ‘failed the 11+’ and thus could not attend the academic grammar school. Versions of the 11+ are still in use in 2016 in some 36 local authorities in England that retain grammar schools, with an extension of such schooling looked on favourably by the current Conservative government.

By 1913 Burt was influencing legislation via a Mental Deficiency Act which excluded children with ‘mental defect’ from elementary schools after testing and in 1937 when he wrote his influential book on *The Backward Child* he was concerned to separate out the mental and moral ‘subnormals’ likely to be found in London’s elementary schools, almost all coming from lower working class homes. He was influenced by a woman, Mary Dendy, who having given evidence to the 1904 Royal Commission on the evil of feeble-mindedness, suggested a category of ‘moral imbecile’ in the 1913 Act. This was primarily young women who had illegitimate children. Burt agreed with her that the feeble-minded and moral imbeciles should not be taught to read and write as they might write letters to each other while segregated! Burt’s interest in delinquent children overlapped with his interest in mental and moral subnormality, and his book on *The Young Delinquent* (1925) led to the opening of the first London Child Guidance clinic. Although he was aware of poverty and environmental handicaps he could still refer to “the slum child’s (facial) profile as a Negroid or almost simian outline” (Burt 1937:186). Later, he chaired a working party on ‘maladjusted’ children that reported to the Underwood Committee (1955) from which sprang subsequent descriptions of maladjusted, disruptive, emotionally and behaviourally disturbed and other labels for young people who would not subscribe to prescribed social behaviour. Delinquency and subnormality, as Richardson et al. (2017) have observed, were officially joined early on.

Burt was brought up in the village of Snitterfield near Stratford on Avon, and his father, the local doctor, introduced him as a boy to the aging Galton, who lived nearby, and influenced him in his life-long belief in the influence of heredity on intelligence. At Oxford, Burt studied classics, philosophy and the emerging ‘science’ of psychology, which included visits to German universities. In Wurzburg his landlady apparently fed him well and even ironed his trousers (Hearnshaw 1979:13)! Burt’s career included a lectureship at Liverpool University, 20 years as the official psychologist at the London County Council, a prestigious Chair in Psychology at University College, London and a long retirement during which he continued to assert the links between heredity and intelligence via his studies of twins. As editor of the Statistical Section of the *British Journal of Psychology* he published 63 articles in 17 years under his own name and several under pseudonyms or with two co-workers

who may or may not have existed (see Hearnshaw 1979:190). His views on the inheritance of intelligence never wavered throughout his career. He buttressed his views with studies of identical twins reared apart and eventually claimed 53 pairs of twins studied, the numbers increasing in subsequent publications, but all claiming a high heritability as shown by high correlations of IQ scores of identical twins. His data were first questioned as fraudulent by Kamin (1974), and despite accusations that it was ‘left-wing environmentalists’ trying to discredit Burt, his official and careful biographer, Hearnshaw, concluded that his post-war data on twins were invented and “nearly all Burt’s work during his period of retirement was mainly of a defensive kind, designed to uphold the Galtonian standpoint against environmentalists” (Hearnshaw 1979:241). In 1976 the medical correspondent of *The Sunday Times* repeated the charge that much of Burt’s data was faked arguing that this was a matter for political and public interest, given the influence Burt had had on the establishment of secondary education (Gillie 1976). Many psychologists sprang to Burt’s defence, among them J. Phillippe Rushton, a Professor at the University of Western Ontario, who argued in support of his correlations. Rushton was himself a strong supporter of inherent racial differences, who did much research comparing not only IQ scores between ‘Mongoloids, Caucasoids, and Negroids’ but also compared the size of their genitalia and frequency of intercourse, asserting that mothers of identical twins had a greater frequency of coitus (Rushton 1990).<sup>6</sup>

## Do we take Eysenck seriously?

Hans Eysenck, a student and later colleague of Burt’s at University College, was a fervent supporter of Burt against his critics, despite Burt’s sometimes cursory and devious treatment of him. He, too, was a life-long believer in heredity being the major influence on intelligence as measured by mental tests asserting that “there is no doubt that a close relationship exists between high IQ and success in schooling. Pupils with high IQs tend to gain high marks and stay longer at school, those with poor IQs tend to do poorly in their class work and drop out early” (Eysenck v Kamin 1981:29). He believed that the average IQ of members of different occupations could be assessed, accountants and lawyers with an IQ of 128, farmhands and miners down to 91, but there are occasions when this congruence breaks down, and “there are groups of people whose earnings bears no relation to their intelligence, actors, tennis players, prostitutes, TV personalities, royalty, gigolos and golfers” being among these fortunates! (Eysenck *ibid.*:36). There are also more high and low IQs among males and here environmental causes are noted. Women have to undertake child-bearing and traditional female tasks, which impedes their pursuit of scientific or artistic pursuits, although “mentally defective women may have been able, *if at all attractive*, to escape institutionalisation by marrying” (Eysenck *ibid.*:42).

Eysenck’s views of race and intelligence were especially important in England as he was writing at a time when immigration from former colonial countries was at its height, bringing not only necessary workers, but also a

reassertion of imperial views of the biological inferiority and cultural deficiencies in ‘other races’, especially those from slave ancestry. He wrote a paper in a series of Black Papers produced by traditionalists in which he criticised comprehensive education and a supposed reduction in standards (Eysenck in Cox and Boyson 1977). Then in 1971, surprising for one who was himself a refugee from Nazi Germany, produced a book that reproduced a now familiar bell curve purporting to show that ‘Negroes’ always scored 15 points below white children in IQ tests. He also lamented the low scores of a white lower class in Britain, concluding that “a considerable proportion of this difference is genetic in origin”, and that environmental differences failed to explain the better scores of ‘Orientals’ as he termed Chinese, Japanese and other Asian children”. He did, however, suggest that social and economic pressures on Black people “make it highly likely that their gene pools differ in some genetically conditioned characteristics” including intelligence (Eysenck 1971:20). He concluded with the astonishing comment that as compensatory education had failed, and Black Power in the 1970s was on the rise, “a solution is only possible in terms of the general abolition of the proletariat – both black and white” (ibid.:151), although he thought that politicians, rather than psychologists, ought to undertake this task!

## **Enduring racial views in the USA**

Gould has suggested that “The hereditarian interpretation of IQ arose in America largely through the proselytization of the three psychologists, Goddard, Terman and Yerkes” (Gould 1997:29). In the first edition of his book in 1981 Gould had noted that while there was a resurgence of biological determinism and its racial assumptions every few years, “the Great Men quickly become forgotten .... the hot topics of 1981 becoming legless history” (ibid.:23). He was right in that biological determinism and a seeming determination to prove the inferiority, in particular, of African Americans endures, but wrong that the influence of men regarded, and who regard themselves, as producing ‘scientific truth’ disappears. In 2007 Nobel-Prize winning geneticist James Watson claimed in a lecture that “all testing shows that African intelligence is not the same as ours ... and people who have to deal with black employees” find this the case (Hunt-Grubbe 2007). His subsequent forced ‘retirement’ from his academic post, and ‘retirement’ of another academic who took the view that “today’s immigrants are not as intelligent on average as white natives” (Richwine 2009) led to a long debate in the prestigious journal *Nature* as to whether scientists should study race and IQ (*Nature* vol 457 Feb 2009). It also led to a spirited defence by Charles Murray that Watson had only made a factually accurate remark about low IQ scores among African Blacks. From around 2000 a whole new ‘scholarship’ developed asserting that in the light of new findings in human genetics and widened genomic knowledge, the search for biological underpinnings in race and class should continue (Shiao et al. 2012; Wade 2014).

The story of the pioneers of eugenic thinking and IQ testing, while producing much literature, was particularly well documented by Kamin

(1974). He noted that Lewis Terman at Stanford, Henry Goddard, whose own book on the degenerate Kallikak family had photographs altered to produce an appearance of evil or stupidity (see Gould 1981:202), and Robert Yerkes at Harvard were the main pioneers in mental testing. These were all men who, no doubt as a product of their times, held elitist and racist socio-political views. Terman, who standardised Binet's tests to produce the much used Stanford-Binet tests in 1916, thought that

in the near future intelligence tests will bring tens of thousands of high-grade defectives under the surveillance and protection of society. This will result in the curtailing of reproduction of feeble-mindedness and the elimination of an enormous amount of crime, pauperism and industrial inefficiency.

(Terman 1916:6)

He also thought that "low-level IQ deficiency was common among Spanish-Indian, Mexicans and Negroes ... whose dullness appears to be racial ... the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew" (ibid.:91–2). Furthermore, he wrote that children of this group should be segregated in special classes as "they cannot master abstractions, but can often be made efficient workers". Terman, like Eysenck later, was even-handed in that the poor of all colours were a problem, and there was a need to prevent the reproduction of mental degenerates "thus curtailing the increasing spawn of degeneracy" (Terman 1916:92). Terman, whose own PhD was a study of seven bright and seven stupid boys, began a study in the early 1900s of 1,500 supposedly highly gifted children, following those who did not drop out from the study, through their lives (Terman and Oden 1947). These fortunate people had successful lives and professions. It later transpired that the sample were white middle class children chosen initially by teachers as gifted! This spurious study continues to be quoted (see Herrnstein and Murray 1994:57, and see below by Cummings 2013).

Robert Yerkes, President of the American Psychological Society when the US joined World War I, suggested that all soldiers should be given mental assessment tests to determine their classification. The Army tests included Alpha tests and Beta tests for illiterates, and for non-English speakers test instructions were to be given 'in pantomime'. The mental age of white draftees turned out to be 13, and Black soldiers scored much lower. Post-war, Yerkes and his associates formed a Galton Society, whose purpose was to provide scientific advice to government agencies (Kamin 1974:35) and a committee on the Scientific Problems of Human Migration was formed under Yerkes. The committee supported the research of Carl Brigham, whose influential book *A Study of American Intelligence* had been published in 1923. This book reanalysed the army data on immigrant groups and calculated the amount of different immigrant intelligence. At this point, Poles, Italians and Russians scored below the Negro average but later he blamed a decline of American intelligence levels on "incorporating Negroes into our racial stock" (Brigham 1923:210). Further research work apparently proved the

intellectual inferiority of immigrants by country and by blood type (Hirsch 1930). Dr Hirsch also undertook a study of twins which led him to conclude that “heredity is five times as potent as environment” (ibid.:148).

As noted, suggestions of mental inferiority between groups died down somewhat after World War II, as the appalling consequences of these beliefs became apparent and the United Nations, through UNESCO, commissioned biologists and social scientists to study the concept of race and group distinctions made on the basis of phenotypical and cultural characteristics (see Rex 1986). The 1960s onwards saw a resurgence of often bitter debate about race, class and intelligence. Arthur Jensen, a former research colleague of Eysenck, was the protagonist with a 123-page article in the *Harvard Education Review* initially complaining that compensatory education programmes designed to alleviate poverty and narrow achievement gaps between minority and majority children had failed through not being able to overcome innate factors, although he ended with a plea for schools to find ways of “utilizing other strengths in children whose major strength is not of the cognitive variety” (Jensen 1969:202; Jensen 1973). Jensen was a fervent admirer of Cyril Burt, corresponding with him and dedicating a book to him. He and Eysenck vigorously defended Burt against the accusations of fraud. Jensen argued that very severe mental retardation was caused by gene defects, and that higher grade defectives were at the lower end of a normal curve of IQ distribution. He stated that the upper classes rarely had children with low IQ scores, apart from the occasional pathological defect; it was lower class parents who had children at the lower end of normal variation. As Kamin commented, “The upper class child stands a better chance of having his stupidity attributed to his asthma or diabetes rather than to his genes” (Kamin 1974:185).

Jensen’s work caused some bitter dispute<sup>7</sup> and even more dispute followed the publication in 1994 of *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994). This book of 845 pages was “about differences in intellectual capacities among people and groups and what these differences mean for America’s future” (ibid.:xxi). The book meticulously documented almost every study carried out over the century on the mental measurement of populations and groups, and although noting that IQ testing had become a controversial product of science denied that “no-one of any stature was trying to use the results to promote discriminatory, let alone eugenic laws” (ibid.:7). It was unfortunate that major conclusions to the book were so negative as regards Black Americans, lower socio-economic groups, and women. Writing that an emerging white underclass was developing as “the dry tinder for the formation of an underclass community is the large number of births to single women of low intelligence concentrated in a spatial area” (ibid.:520) and linking Black single parentage, welfare payments, and Black crime statistics to low intelligence was not likely to endear the authors to many Americans, however wrapped up in disclaimers. Although those eager to apportion blame for lower attainments to lower class and Black groups found the ideas appealing. *The Bell Curve*’s conclusion was that public policy assuming that interventions can overcome both genetic and environmental disadvantage was “overly

optimistic” and that “cognitive partitioning will continue” as “inequality of endowments, including intelligence, is a reality”. The suggestion that “it is time for Americans once again to try living with inequality” (ibid.:551–2) rings somewhat hollow in 2016, as the USA is already one of the most unequal societies in terms of income distribution. The book had ardent supporters. Professor Linda Gottfredson wrote an article in the *Wall Street Journal* supporting the notion that the IQ of Black people always worked out 15 points below whites, and that *The Bell Curve* conclusions were congruent with mainstream views on IQ and intelligence. Fifty-two other professors signed in support of her article, among them Plomin (see below). Jensen never moderated his views. Giving an interview in 1999, aged 77, he again reiterated his beliefs in the predominance of hereditary factors in learning and the failure of compensatory education, and in 2005 collaborated with J. Phillippe Rushton (Rushton and Jensen 2005).

### **A new eugenics?**

As Gould and Stephen Rose had forecast, there is again a resurgence of biological determinism and an emergence of more (mainly) men deemed to be important in the field of genetics. From the turn of the century and the completion of the mapping of the 23,000 human genes in the human genome project, a new ‘scholarship’ has developed asserting that in the light of new findings in human genetics and widened genomic knowledge, work on the biological underpinnings of groups differences, especially by ‘race’ should continue (Shiao et al. 2012; Wade 2014). Although contemporary work using genome wide studies makes no claims that genetic make-up significantly determines the educational or social destiny of children, belief in the inherent ability of children is again being reinforced and is underpinning the selection and separation of young people in schooling. It appears that the early twentieth century popularity of eugenic theories and resulting nature-nurture debates, are now being resurrected via advances in human genetics to support notions of the bright and the dull, the academic and the practical mind, and in England the grammar school, the secondary modern and the special needs student.

Since both England and the USA already have well-segregated education systems as regards race and class, questions must be asked as to why there is a resurgence of eugenic explanation for educational achievements. These questions are not merely ‘academic’. Influential political elite thinking in England was demonstrated by the then Mayor of London and an MP who aspired to be Prime Minister. In the third annual Margaret Thatcher memorial lecture in November 2013 Boris Johnson claimed that “human beings are already very far apart in raw ability... as many as 16% of our species have an IQ below 85 while about 2% have an IQ above 130”. He also claimed in this lecture that “greed is a valuable spur to economic activity” (Johnson 2013). One reason for such biological determinism may be a search for legitimization of increasing economic inequality, especially in the UK and USA, which both now have grossly unequal labour markets that give rise to very high (often

obscene) levels of remuneration to a few, and low wages or unemployment to the many. Low educational performance followed by low wages can be falsely legitimated by claims of intrinsic ability when economic inequalities are high. Eugenics was last at its height of popularity when countries were as unequal economically as at present. It seems that one project of neo-liberal governments and its elites has for the past 35 years attempted to denigrate social-democratic attempts to value the capabilities of all citizens.

The ‘long revolution’ described by Raymond Williams (1961) of the attempts from the industrial revolution onwards to gain opportunity, voice and justice for ordinary people who were constantly regarded as inferior members of the society was, according to one commentator “halted or in ruins” by 2012 (T. Clark 2012). Major tools in the structuring of inferiority have been the propagation of beliefs that there are such strong differences in the educational potential of children, often passed on to students on teacher education courses and their training schools, by continued IQ and other assessments, and currently by a new eugenics movement and as in the past, those with lower abilities turn out to be racial minorities, the manual working classes and, in particular, people living in poverty.

Into the twenty-first century debates have been infused with new life by the completion of the first stage of the human genome project, the creation of massive DNA biobanks and an expansion in behavioural genetics and the neurosciences. While eminent geneticist Steve Jones has noted that “the hubris which accompanied the Human Genome project has stalled” and “what genes can activate depends on the environment in which they find themselves” (Jones 2013:109) there are, in addition to the geneticists, numbers of sociologists, political scientists, labour economists and others, who are enthused again for study of ‘race’ and class differences, cognitive enhancement for better brains, or linking raised IQ scores to improve the economy. The question of ‘who owns the human genetic code?’ caused much debate from 2000, and although there were some attempts to ensure that genetic information did not impinge negatively on minority groups a Human Diversity Project in the USA targeting specific indigenous groups led to accusations of racism and ‘genetic colonisation’ (Ammons 2000). Heritability studies in criminology expanded, with dubious attempts to separate out genetic and environmental effects, complex social questions being reduced to simple numbers. Indeed, some criminologists have called for an end to these studies, which once again target poor and minority groups negatively (Burt and Simons 2014).

## **Influence on education policy**

No such qualms have yet affected the education scene and currently in England some research appear to be influencing government education policy. Robert Plomin, an American behavioural geneticist currently working at King’s College London, and as noted above, a supporter of the *Bell Curve* thesis, was closely connected to former Minister of Education Michael Gove. Plomin has gained millions of pounds of research money to carry out his

long-term twin studies (James 2016). Although post-Burt twin studies, purporting to measure the respective influence of genetic heritability and environment had a bad press, Plomin's twin project had been described as "leading an international research effort" (Geake 2009:88). His work was given prominence in late 2013 when an adviser to Gove produced a 237-page paper for his Minister claiming on the first page that

the education of the majority even in rich countries is between awful to mediocre ... in England, less than 10% per year leave school with formal training in basics such as exponential function, normal distribution (the bell curve) and conditional probability.

(Cummings 2013)

Oxford educated Cummings had never taught, although his mother was a special needs teacher. Cummings claimed that Plomin had shown that the largest factor accounting for variation in children's school performance was accounted for by genes, scores in national curriculum tests showing 60–70 per cent dependence on heritability. Cummings also quoted Lewis Terman's spurious "high ability studies" in defence of his thesis and echoing Jensen, claimed that money spent on programmes such as Sure Start, were useless. Plomin and his colleague Katherine Asbury, had just published their book *Gifted for Genes* (Asbury and Plomin 2014), which made some sweeping claims such as "the technology will soon be available to use DNA 'chips' to predict strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and use this information to put personalized strategies in place for them" (ibid.:12), and recommended that teachers use IQ tests and other assessments to check whether pupils are making progress towards fulfilling a potential fixed by their genes. They also suggested that horse-riding should be encouraged as a school activity in case a child turns out to "have the potential to be a jockey" (p. 172). The horse fraternity actually know that a major genetic component necessary for becoming a jockey is height! However, Plomin was invited to meet Government Ministers and in December 2013 gave evidence to the Education Select Committee in the House of Commons on the 'under-achievement' of working class children.

While a mild media furore surrounded Cummings paper (Helm 2013), Plomin, who has never disavowed his support for Herrnstein and Murray's book, claimed that he preferred to 'keep his head down' and take a 'softly softly approach' to racial issues (Gillborn 2016). Dorling, reviewing the Asbury and Plomin book, commented that "it may serve as a source of many examples of why modern day geneticism is often little more advanced than its precursor eugenics" (Dorling 2014:4). Nevertheless, Plomin continues to be newsworthy. An interview with him published in the *Times Educational Supplement*, a paper widely read by teachers, claimed that his research shows that "IQ – a flawed but handy measure of general intelligence – is around 70% heritable" (Arney 2016:27). The conclusions seem to be reasonable – that more money should be spent on the disadvantaged, as these will be the children whose genetic deficiencies show up most and need help so that their

“brains can flourish and develop and they can express their full genetic potential” (ibid.:29). Spending money to overcome the plight of disadvantaged genes may be kinder than the historical treatment of the defective, but the eugenic messages are still present.

## **The Flynn effect**

While much of the more recent work reported above was in progress, the academic world was treated to the publication of James Flynn’s work indicating that from the 1930s in each decade, there had been an increase in scores in traditional IQ tests (Flynn 1987, 2009). This led to such questions as “Are you smarter than your granny” and even “Are you smarter than Aristotle?” The spate of publications discussing and attempting to explain this often appeared to run parallel to the heritability debates reported above, although neuroscientists figured prominently in explanations for ‘better brains’. Explanations varied from suggestions that children were better trained to pass tests, and thus had better test-taking skills, improved health and nutrition, smaller families, more stimulating environments, and improved schooling. Geake (2009) checked the tests given and concluded that it was abstract problem solving that had improved, and not general intelligence. He put this down to technical developments in ITC and computing, which had apparently improved the part of the brain (parietal cortices) that was responsible for memory and mathematics and spatial organisation (ibid.:92).

This chapter has reviewed major writings and debates over a hundred or more years, which purport to claim scientific backing for differences in the educational capabilities of lower class and ethnic minorities, especially Black people. IQ is still the ‘mismeasure of man’ and old and new versions of eugenicism continue to have influence, although currently much is coded and inexplicit. Genetic heritability is claimed once more to take precedence over environment, despite claims that the IQ of whole populations is improving. Although there are few politicians who unlike Johnson would claim in public their beliefs in the natural stupidity of some groups, whose ‘potential’ is unfortunately less than others, this ideology is currently shaping education policy via moves to more high stakes testing, and separation of the ‘bright’ and the less able. Underlying current beliefs and policies though, there is also a fear that the stupid may not be as dull as supposed. This is taken up in the next chapter, which takes on the story of English developments in special and inclusive education, and notes the strategies that attempt to manufacture inability.

## **Notes**

- 1 Members of the Eugenics Society included poets T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats, writers Aldous Huxley, George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, and psychologist Raymond Cattell who in 1933 congratulated the Hitler government for passing laws enforcing the sterilisation of the unfit. Writer D. H. Lawrence was also a supporter, admiring the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who wrote that education should remain a privilege for ‘higher beings’. Lawrence was in favour of working

- class boys only attending craft and gymnastics classes and girls only being taught domestic studies.
- 2 Liam Hudson pointed out the research on human intelligence had long been dominated by ‘men of statistical flair’, which meant that many people felt they were not qualified to intervene (cited in Kamin 1977:11). This is similar to the present day when those not expert in genetics feel they are not qualified to debate genetic propositions. Yet as the mental testers and their beliefs that tests accurately measured intellectual capacity have given so much ammunition to racists and political reactionaries (especially in the USA supporting racist immigration policies), mental testing and arguments over genetic heritability must be entered into.
  - 3 Pearson was apparently trying to end an argument over whether this curve should be called Gaussian or Laplacian by calling it a ‘normal’ curve, thus influencing generations of psychologists and educationalists in an assertion, not a ‘truth’.
  - 4 The Secretary of the Board of Education from 1902 to 1911 was Sir Robert Morant, an elitist who wrote of “the need of submitting the many ignorant to the guidance and control of the few wise ....” (Allen 1934:125) and in his Board of Education report of 1906 wrote that “the majority of children must be educated to be efficient members of the class to which they belong”. He also had a distain for technical and vocational education.
  - 5 Grunenthal, later bought by the firm Distillers, was the firm that marketed thalidomide and other employees included Otto Ambrose, credited with developing the nerve gas Sarin used in the war. He ran a work camp at Auschwitz and served some time in prison before his employment. The drug, never trialled, was marketed for morning sickness and some 20,000 babies with deformities were born to women who took it.
  - 6 Rushton (1995) claimed a gene-based evolutionary theory of differences between ‘races’ – Mongoloids, Orientals, Caucasoids, Negroids – with the last at the end of the spectrum. Brain size, intelligence, reproductive behaviour, family stability and law-abidingness were some of the attributes of different races. He drew on an analysis of the Kinsey study of sexual behaviour (Kinsey et al. 1948) to make claims about differences in genitalia, menstruation and sexual behaviour. He was sanctioned by his university for some of his research methods.
  - 7 Peter Medawar, distinguished geneticist, wrote that “Jensenism grows naturally out of...the phoney science of IQ with psychologists who maintain that ‘intelligence’ can be measured by a simple scalar ratio and that by applying certain formulas from a science-genetics – which they do not understand – it is possible to attribute a certain percentage of intellectual prowess to the effects of nature, and the balance to nurture” (Medawar 1977:13).

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## CHAPTER 5

# A STRATEGIC MAINTENANCE OF IGNORANCE

Nervous disorders have taken root among the poorer classes as well as the middle orders of society...this is due to too much intellectual education above what is suitable and adapted to their station in life.

(Maddock 1854:introduction)

The strategic maintenance of ignorance amongst vast tracts of a relevant population is regarded as a better method of securing socio-cultural order, than intensive indoctrination.

(Archer 1988:190)

If, as the Flynn effect suggested, we are all getting smarter, and if school enrolments to ever later ages is legislated for, and if attainment in tests and examinations and achieving places in higher education are rising, why no congratulations to teachers and parents, and why the renewed attempts to cut out large swathes of young people from gaining required qualifications or more than basic education and training? We are back again to the realisation that mass education was never intended to serve the common good, and interest groups need to preserve their own privileges and status. But the problems are much wider than denial of opportunities to large numbers of young people. Governments have no solutions to the unintended consequences of a more literate and demanding population and are unsure what to do in a world of global recessions, disappearing jobs, and racial and ethnic antagonisms. For most of the twentieth century, governments, embracing the notion of expanding formal education for their populations, intended to provide a stable workforce, and socialise working class populations into their place in the social order, enabling the middle classes to keep the place they regarded as rightfully theirs through an academic education and places in universities. In these terms, up to the early 1970s in England, schooling could be regarded as reasonably successful, with those who were problems in ordinary schooling categorised out, and found work if possible. But neither educational demands nor the state of the economy are static. The expansion of a literate population encouraged by comprehensive education, and demands for more inclusive education policies, created wider expectations with regard to rights and entitlements.

Globally, after a crisis in oil supply in the 1970s, economies went into recession, jobs disappeared, and hostility spread between immigrant groups

who had come to developed countries with high expectations of education and white working classes who resented ex-colonial and immigrant labour. What followed was an erosion of location in a traditional social order, with an expanding middle class anxious that their more privileged positions were being contested. In England there were continual efforts by government ministers, to blame inadequate schools and students and families for their low attainments and lack of skills, rather than developing any coherent vocational training or industrial strategies to provide work.<sup>1</sup> An elaborate system of special education was incorporated into structures for dealing with young people who were regarded as lower achievers and the expanded sub-system gradually encompassed over a quarter or more of school populations. This development was a way of accommodating to expanded mass education while retaining a more privileged education for professional and elite groups. But in addition to the usual intentions to control disruptive social and racial groups, this mass sub-system also encompassed some middle class parents who were concerned that in the competitive test-oriented systems, their children could not compete or succeed. There were also the relatively small groups of parents whose children would need life-long care to be accommodated, and these groups accounted for much of the increased special education and disability expense. Governments faced an expansion of the familiar problems of how to deal with troublesome lower social groups while keeping costs of provision low, training them for some kind of work if possible, and now how to deal with articulate parents adept at attempting to gain resources. In all this, strategies for maintaining levels of ignorance and assumed inability among large sections of the population were evident.

In the USA issues of expanding special education within inclusion were predominantly racial, as white areas and schools continually developed strategies to distance themselves from minorities, despite notional racial integration, but many minority parents demanded the same rights for resources as whites. Requiring constantly raised levels of achievement, with schools, students and families still the scapegoats for failure to reach these levels, was as effective as any overt race discrimination. This chapter follows the English story of dealing with the special and low achievers up to the present, notes strategies for separating out those of supposed high ability, the influence of neuroscience in helping along myths of deprived brains and other strategies for legitimising ignorance. As there is continued confusion as to which populations all these policies and practices are aimed at, the chapter includes information from three countries where descriptions of these groups were offered.

## **Excellence for some**

In England, what had once been a decentralised system had become centralised with amazing speed, accelerating from the 1980s to the present. While market choice and individual preferences were notionally devolved to consumers, the State took tight control of funding, curriculum, examinations, teachers and their training. Local authority powers were largely removed,

except where there was likely to be dissent, which helped explain why special education funding remained with local authorities. Between 1997 and early 2010 under a New Labour government a deluge of initiatives, papers and guidance emerged from the variously named Department for Education<sup>2</sup> referring to aspirations for excellence, success, competition and reaching potential, and in a determinedly class-bound society, supposed strategies for achieving social mobility through education. All young people must aspire to excellence in education, and ‘learn to compete’ in a developing knowledge economy (DTI 1998). These initiatives referred to national aspirations, while an inclusive ‘education for all’ was being advanced globally by UNESCO, the World Bank, the OECD, the European Union, and especially by the United Nations who in 2006 ratified a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, stressing global human rights for inclusion in all aspects of life. This was partially recognised in England by the 2001 Special Needs and Disability Act which, incorporating the 1995 Disability Act, outlawed discrimination against disabled children and adults. An Equalities Act in 2010 drew together legislation outlawing discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, religion, gender, gender reassignment and pregnancy, although lawyers for an Education Rights Alliance have drawn attention to the inspectorate Ofsted giving schools an ‘outstanding’ label despite admissions policies that discriminate against children with special educational needs (Santry 2016).

By the later 1990s in England some 3 per cent of children had Statements of SEN, and schools were claiming well over 18 per cent of those without Statements as having learning and behavioural difficulties – some 1.6 million in all. Local education authorities were allocating around a seventh of their budgets, £2.5 billion annually to SEN provision, and up to 2003 there was a 1 per cent increase in Statements. The ‘modernised’ comprehensive school system, with its intense focus on test and examination scores encouraged selection and competition within and between schools and 164 selective grammar schools remained in 36 local authorities. The education market continued to encourage schools to avoid or exclude children who were difficult to teach, or to demand funding and resources via Statements if they had to include these children. It was actually quicker to remove some troublesome children by excluding them from schooling and over 10,000 children were permanently excluded from schools each year. This was despite provision in the 1998 Education Act limiting the powers of head teachers to exclude pupils and the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit laying down procedures to be followed before fixed term or permanent exclusions. More parents were now claiming extra support for their children, increasingly for dyslexia, which included dyscalculia and dysgraphia – basically problems with reading, writing and numbers, for autism, and for ADHD, and all this extra expense was worrying. There was a need to “shift resources from expensive remediation to cost-effective provision” (DfEE 1997:5). This was to be helped along by a revised Code of Practice issued in 2001, which created two non-statutory stages, School Action and School Action Plus. The first stage involved recognising pupils with a variety of learning, communication and

behavioural problems and drawing up an Individual Educational Plan to be implemented by the school. School Action Plus required external help from educational psychologists, social services, and others. The final stage involved a formal assessment to obtain a Statement of Special Needs, with statutory placement and resources either in a special school or mainstream with help. Rather than reducing expense all this helped create more demand.

Following child abuse inquiries the category of ‘vulnerable child’ appeared, described in the paper *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury 2003) followed by a Children Act which was to bring together services for children under a Director of Children’s Services in each local authority, who would oversee educational, social welfare and child protection services. In turn this was followed by a *Strategy for SEN* (DfES 2004), which firmly linked special educational needs to the ‘vulnerable’ – who were mainly poor children. The language of social and economic disadvantage provided a convenient euphemism for worries over how to deal with the large swathes of the population at the receiving end of economic failures which created poverty. “Our commitment to reducing child poverty, investing in early years education and childcare, and targeting areas of social and economic disadvantage, will enable us to address the causes of children’s difficulties” (DfES 2004:8). As Derrick Armstrong pointed out (2005:145), the ideological claims made here are that as poverty is a cause of educational disadvantage the effects of poverty can be transformed through social and educational interventions aimed at these poor lower classes. This was to be helped along by listing categories of disadvantaged children in order to identify those who were from poor families causing problems to schools and youth justice organisations. By 2007 the DCSF had lists of 12 categories of special needs, and nine categories of those with additional education needs, which included learning English as a second language. A Common Assessment Framework was developed to assist the multi-disciplinary teams dealing with disadvantaged children, which identified 13 problems that needed attention by professionals.<sup>3</sup> Inclusive education had become a useful notion to justify the identification and management of those who fall outside the boundaries of ‘normal’. To be poor or disabled is not normal in an aspirational society.

Despite presiding over an economic system that created the largest inequalities in the society since the 1930s, and developing a divisive school system including Academies,<sup>4</sup> modelled on the Charter Schools in the USA, the New Labour government exhibited concern that although there had been many initiatives aimed at improvement, poor children and those with special needs were still not measuring up to expected levels of achievement in tests and public examinations. Excellence was certainly not trickling down to the disadvantaged. In 2009 the Education Minister deplored a situation where the poorest children were only half as likely to obtain good GCSE scores as the non-poor and more rigorous approaches to teaching and learning were needed to break links between poverty and low attainment (DCSF 2009). A year later the Minister was deploring the gap in attainments between children with and without SEN and set out strategies for *Breaking the link between special educational needs and low attainment*. An immediate promise

was to train four thousand more “specialist dyslexic teachers”, as the foreword to this publication put it (DCSF 2010). If anything this paper demonstrated the enthusiasm of civil servants for producing tortuous data describing well-known situations, for example, in explaining why some ethnic minorities still did not achieve well this paper included a Venn diagram showing percentages and numbers of minority children who were also poor and had a SEN label. It asserted that “The sum of the percentages in each circle in the Venn diagram is the proportion of that disadvantaged group – in the KS4 cohort – who achieved 5ACEM in 2009” (DCSF 2010:11), which could be gobbledegook to the uninitiated. The paper also reported that while the exclusion of children with SEN has dropped over a 10-year period, “Children with SEN account for 71 per cent of all permanent exclusions and 59 per cent of fixed term exclusions from secondary school. They are eight times more likely to be permanently excluded than the rest of the school population” (DCFS 2010:34). Improving their behaviour was noted as a key means of keeping children in school.

### **Excellence is too expensive**

Worried by the growing expense of the special needs industry, and aware of much parental dissatisfaction the New Labour government commissioned both a survey of parents and a review by Ofsted to find out what was going on (Ofsted 2010). Reporting after a change of government to a Coalition, the review noted that far from excellence being achieved, the progress of school-aged children with SEN labels – now some 1.7 million – had not changed much, and too many pupils were on the School Action programmes who were simply low attainers in need of better teaching. In a nod to Max Weber and his writings on the expansion of bureaucracy, the report found that “legislation, guidance and systems around special education have become very complex” (ibid.:8) and the language of special needs had become contentious and confusing, especially as health, education and social care used different labels. The term “special educational needs” was used too widely and Ofsted was surprised that many schools were using low attainment and slow progress as a special educational need! This report included some information on young people with special needs post 16 who were in Further Education Colleges, but appeared oblivious of a report also published in 2010 on young people not in education, employment and training (NEET), which noted that many of these young people had a disability and were from disadvantaged areas (House of Commons 2010). In January 2010 children in all primary, secondary and special schools in England in Schools Action Plus and with Statements totalled 717,300 (Ofsted 2010:79). The rest were labelled as at School Action level. In familiar descriptions, 26.3 per cent were labelled as having behavioural, social and emotional difficulty, 26.8 per cent as having moderate learning difficulty, 13 per cent with specific learning difficulty (dyslexia), 17.6 per cent as having speech, language and communication needs, 3.5 per cent as having autistic spectrum disorder, 2.5 per cent as having physical disability and smaller numbers with severe learning

difficulties, profound and multiple difficulties hearing, visual and multisensory impairments and other disability unspecified at 5.6 per cent. The majority of the 18 per cent of presumed low attainers were being dealt with at School Action level in SEND departments, with learning support from teaching assistants. This was inclusive education in practice.

The new Education Minister, Michael Gove, was certainly determined on reform, inventing yet another kind of school, Free Schools, of which some could be Free and Special, and presenting a Green Paper early in 2011 (DfE 2011), which promised a radically different system to support the apparently now two million young people with SEN, give parents more confidence, and promised more power to professionals. Indeed, the Paper promised to “strip away unnecessary bureaucracy so that professionals can innovate and use their judgement”. Schools were blamed for having a culture of low expectations, and the Paper promised both to “remove the bias towards inclusion” – a nod to those parents demanding separate schools or facilities, and also remove the “perverse incentives to over identify children as having SEN”, a concern with the costs (*ibid.* 2011:5). Parents were to have more choice through a diversity of state-funded schools; Special Schools, Academies, and Free Schools were noted, but not schools still maintained by local authorities. By 2012 eight Free special schools had been approved including a school for ‘vulnerable pupils’ run by Everton Football Club (later turning into a post-16 facility, and training some potential footballers) and four more were to be housed in disused court houses. A slight rise in the number of places in special schools was due to the creation of Free special schools. In the Green Paper parents were promised powers to take over existing special schools threatened with closure, although no information was provided as to which schools or how many were thus threatened. Much of the Paper was indicative of pressure from parents with children with more severe disabilities and parents of those with ‘learning difficulties due to dyslexia’. The problem of young people who “do not achieve well at school” was noted as bad for the economy. Apparently men with at least four passes in the GCSE could be expected to earn £85,000 more over their working lives than those without them; women, alas, would only earn £60,000 more (*ibid.*:23). It could be argued that well-educated men such as Tom Hayes, who was responsible for helping to manipulate the LIBOR rate (the interbank lending rate used to set interest rates), caused misery for millions of people. He was sentenced to 14 years in gaol but appealed against his sentence on the grounds of having Aspergers syndrome (Topham 2016).

The Paper promised to end the School Action and School Action plus categories; schools would identify and support children with SEN. Those who currently held a Statement would be transferred to a single ‘Education, Health and Care Plan’, a statutory agreement after assessment by education, health, social services and others and extending from 0–25 years. Arguments over who should receive a Plan benefited legal services, as parents increasingly turned to litigation if denied a Plan and resources. Local authorities were expected to set out a ‘local offer’ of all the services available to support those assessed, and there was to be the option of a personal budget for parents to

decide which services they wanted. A Children and Families Act in 2014 set the statutory duties and regulations, and all this was confirmed in yet another Code of Practice (DfE 2014). The first Code of Practice in 1994 was 32 pages long; this 2014 Code totalled 281 pages. It covered the 0–25 age range and included guidance relating to disabled children and young persons and those with SEN. It claimed high aspirations for all, more power to parents and young people themselves, demanded co-operation between Education, Health (NHS and Local Health Boards), Youth Offending Teams, the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for hearing complaints and appeals and others. It covered early years, schooling, further education and included references to the 2005 Mental Health Act. This last was important, as mental health had increasingly been regarded as a special need, and in 2016 the descriptive category of Behavioural, Social and Emotional difficulties, was replaced by Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties. As Allan and Youdell (2015) noted, “Every Code requires a decoding of what has come before it”, and a noticeable feature in this Code was its continued confusion about who was to be included as having special educational needs, disabilities or difficulties, the definition of special educational needs being the same tautological definition as in the 1980 White Paper preceding the 1981 Special Education Act. “A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her” (DfE 2014:15).

By now even supporters of Academy schools, run as businesses and allowed to form chains of schools run by Multi-Academy Trusts with CEOs, were concerned at the number of children labelled as having special educational needs. The Chair of one large chain of academies edited a book (Marshall 2013) in which he deplored the numbers of children thus identified in England, pointing out that other European countries do not label children in this way, Sweden for example, only classified 1.5 per cent of children as having forms of special needs. However, the discovery of the wheel was evident in the book, as contributors were apparently surprised to note that pupils from poor backgrounds, troubled families, exhibiting bad behaviour and lack of achievement were likely to be regarded as having special educational needs. His chain of schools had reduced numbers with special needs after being turned into academies, by offering intensive support, and he wanted more recognition of this and even more of the resources that academies benefited from. But by 2015 the government could claim that it had succeeded in reducing numbers identified as having special educational needs. Apparently only 15.4 per cent of children were so identified, down from the 21 per cent in 2012.

## **The ins and outs of inclusion**

The complex elaboration of the organisation, funding, specification and bureaucracy of this expanded special education sub-system, offered no overt recognition that it was all embedded in the schooling of the mass of lower attainers in the education system as a whole. Schools in England were by the second decade of the twenty-first century examination factories. Schooling

was synonymous with testing and examinations, with constant assertions that all must achieve in an academic curriculum. In effect, the constantly raised 'standards' were a useful tool for manufacturing the inability of large numbers of young people. Gillborn and Youdell, reporting research in 2000, showed how education was rationed, by the decisions of schools not to enter poor or Black students for the higher tiers of the GCSE examination at 16. This was also reported by Strand in a 2013 Paper in which he was explaining achievement gaps in secondary schools between white British and minority groups. It was Black Caribbean students who were less likely to be entered for higher levels in examinations (Strand 2013). The higher the required standards, the more failure is created, but not to allow even the opportunity for achieving higher levels is a particularly insidious way of ensuring ignorance.

What passed as education by 2016, and fuelled by terrors of dropping down in international league tables, was an elaborated system of tests and examinations in a government-decreed subject centred curriculum. From phonics tests and early years assessments for children as young as four, to the endless presentation of information as to who was failing to obtain required passes in GCSEs at 16 in academic subjects. From 2014, vocational qualifications, which counted as equivalent to these, were, gratuitously, discounted. Schools and teachers were expected to overcome their 'low expectations' and credential all the children and young people to higher levels in prescribed subjects. Those schools that could not or would not do so were threatened with take-overs and special measures. The post of head teacher became a dangerous lottery, and institutions were ranked according to the performance of the pupils. All this was an invitation to schools to use strategies to exclude students both inside and outside the school if possible.

The over-representation of working class and racial and ethnic minority students in the various categories of special education continued apace into the twenty-first century. Strand and Lindsay (2009) analysed the 2005 Pupil Level Annual School Census for 6.5 million students in England aged 5–16 and adjusted the findings for ethnicity, age, gender and poverty. Unsurprisingly, and similar to evidence from the USA, there was what is politely called 'ethnic disproportionality', with Black Caribbean, mixed race Black and white students most likely to be in categories of learning difficulties and behavioural and emotional difficulty, and who are also likely to be male and poor. In further studies of achievement by ethnicity gender and class using a longitudinal national sample again it was low social class boys and Black boys in particular who achieved less well (Strand 2014). Strand had a problem in interpreting why Black students in both the USA and UK fail to achieve as well as other minorities. He quoted Ogbu (1978) who made a distinction between migrant groups with high aspirations and 'caste-like' groups such as African Americans or Black Caribbean students in England, who apparently had lower aspirations. The notion of 'model minorities' has been critiqued since Ogbu wrote and the negative treatment of even middle class Caribbean students and their families for several generations in English schools (Rollock et al. 2015) is more of an indication why these students are candidates for a manufacture of inability than others minorities.

The easiest way to ensure ignorance though was simply to exclude students from schools either for what is called fixed term periods, or permanent exclusion, especially as the rules on exclusion were relaxed by 2010. As in the early twentieth century, pressures on teachers made this an acceptable strategy. As one teacher put it “Ordinary schools and teachers are under too much pressure to produce acceptable results and too afraid of appearing to lack control or ability, to engage hard-to-reach students” (Gedge 2015), and there was no bar on those already labelled as having special needs and disabilities from being forced out of classrooms.

The numbers for 2013–2014 excluded from both primary and secondary school in England were:

### **Primary**

6,510 pupils with Statements of SEND  
30,230 pupils with SEND but without Statements  
8,280 pupils with no SEND

### **Secondary**

13,340 pupils with Statements of SEND  
96,750 pupils with SENDs but without Statements  
100,490 pupils with no SEND

(DfE 2014: permanent and fixed term exclusions)

By July 2015 the DfE were recording that pupils with SEN, with or without Statements, accounted for 7 out of 10 permanent exclusions and 6 out of 10 fixed term exclusions. Excluded pupils may be transferred to Pupil Referral Units or other forms of Alternative Provision.<sup>5</sup> Others might end up in youth offending institutions. No other European country excludes its children from mainstream schooling in this way, and as Dorling has pointed out (2016) this is extremely cruel and unusual compared with what happens elsewhere. Being ostracised is one of the most severe punishments humans can inflict on each other.

### **Bad behaviour**

The whole development of special education was and is permeated by the need to control the behaviour of large groups of lower class young people in ways distinctly more punitive than benevolent but to find ways of doing this as cheaply as possible. Deprived of the option of sending disruptive and disaffected young people to the colonies, policies for dealing with them are still strongly related to exclusion from mainstream schooling and to the costs of subsequent behaviour. A House of Commons report on *Disaffected Children* in 1999 regretted the links between low attainment, truancy, and school exclusion, the costs to the public purse being the £1 billion spent on youth offending, and large sums spent on alternative education provision and

social services costs. The disaffected were listed as predominantly male, Black, from difficult and disrupted families, likely to be in local authority care, and having few basic skills (House of Commons 1999). In what can be found in numerous policy and guidance documents, the assertion is that low attainment, bad behaviour, school exclusion, and youth offending are linked mainly to boys, and Black and lower class young people from poor homes. Girls get the usual historical mention as having teenage pregnancies and becoming single mothers.

Over the past 60 years, those deemed to be badly behaved in schools have been excluded via ESN, later MLD schools and schools for the maladjusted, which became schools for emotional and behavioural difficulties, then behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. By 2016 behaviour had disappeared from the categories of special needs being replaced by social, emotional and mental health. Bad behaviour was now to be mainly dealt with by straight exclusion from mainstream schooling. Alternative provision for the badly behaved, usually in buildings leased from local authorities and run by private companies, had been increasingly used from the early 2000s. Unsurprisingly, it was mainly lower class boys who were to be excluded. It had become a truism, as *Every Child Matters* reminded that “the socio-economic position of parents affects young children from an early age” (HM Treasury 2003:18), and much has been made of research demonstrating that at 22 months there are large gaps in the development of children in different socio-economic groups (Feinstein 2003). The sad imaginary case of a child aged 5, on a trajectory of being oppositional and defiant, to being an unemployed offending drug-user at 17, was documented by a Home Office civil servant in the *Every Child Matters* paper (HM Treasury 2003:19). Apart from creating such insulting myths, there is seldom any link to the nature of the job market, or the low wages and benefits the ‘low socio-economic groups’ live on. Neither are there policy links with research into the issues of males, especially Black males, growing up in hostile post-colonial stratified societies. There is no recognition of work critiquing the popular understandings of male and minority underachievement (Epstein et al. 1998; Archer 2003), showing the ways the presentation of lower class and black families and individuals as deficient and disruptive is perpetuated.

### **More alternative provision**

In a White paper published soon after the Conservative-Liberal Coalition came to power in 2010, the Prime Minister and his Deputy announced in a foreword that undergraduates considering teaching as a career, were put off by “fears of bad behaviour and violence in the classroom” and with some hypocrisy noted that poor children of poor families should not be allowed to fail at school and “too long we have tolerated the moral outrage of an accepted correlation between wealth and achievement at school” (DfE 2010:4). The peak of achievement, repeated in a number of government papers, was apparently reaching the hallowed universities of Oxford and Cambridge, only 40 out of the 80,000 poor children eligible for free school

meals in 2010 achieving this. A Pupil Premium to be given to schools with poor and deprived children from 2011 was intended to help the young people on their way to higher achievements, although this and other funding streams for the deprived had a chequered history (Tickle 2016). A whole chapter of the 2010 paper was taken up with 'Behaviour', which noted that both Black boys and pupils on free school meals (the proxy measure for poverty) were three times more likely to be excluded from school for bad behaviour. Policies for improving this situation included giving teachers more power to search students for weapons, pornography, tobacco and fireworks, giving head teachers more power to exclude students, and reducing the rights for appeal against exclusion. Pupil Referral Units were to have the status of Academies and there was to be an opening up of the alternative provision market to new, mainly private, providers. Schools would be able to exclude pupils but be responsible for paying for "the alternative provision which they think will best suit disruptive children" (DfE 2010:39). Rather than reducing cost, all these removals, special units, intervention programmes, and alternative provision meant that costs increased.

Manufacturing the inability of badly behaved pupils through placement in alternative provision was noted with regret in a 2016 Education White Paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, "Pupils who have spent time in Alternative Provision do considerably worse than their peers" (DfE 2016:102). The remedy was to be more Alternative Provision out of school but with the sending schools now accountable for the education of the students. The White Paper noted that "Mainstream headteacher will commission expert provision for pupils with needs and behaviour that have become unmanageable in a mainstream setting.... and local authorities will ensure sufficient AP in their area" (ibid). Academy chains of schools were now claiming that they included alternative provision, and one chain, set up in 2013 as a DfE approved Academy chain by private and business people with charitable status, claimed to "deliver excellent alternative provision across four London boroughs and in Cambridgeshire, as well as via our innovative educational residence in Crawley and a new 16–19 Academic AP Academy in Fulham" (TBAP Trust 2016). Schools were also to have help through a government appointment of what inevitably became labelled as a 'behaviour tsar' to offer tips in classroom control (Bennett 2015), but increasingly attempts were made to present these separate schools for children excluded from mainstream schooling and separated from their peers, as positive ways of improving behaviour and attainment of students who were a trouble to schools and lowered exam results and league table comparisons.

## **Deprived brains**

While much political and policy understandings of lower schools achievements and the need for special education were based on eugenic notions of lower IQ, and assumptions about lower socio-economic behaviour, a more recent development that contributes to the manufacture of inability is the emergence of an educational neuroscience which attempts to link brain functions to

educational outcomes. There are a growing number of research centres and organisations concerned with educational neuroscience,<sup>6</sup> and apart from national university based centres, the OECD has produced reports, and governments especially in England, the USA, Germany and Japan have been interested in linking brain development to education. An International Mind, Brain and Education Society was created at Harvard University in 2006. Amongst the hundred or so questions that Geake (2009) listed as legitimate neuroscientific research questions about education were “How are brains of high ability students different from the brains of normal students?”... “Are the neural dynamics of competence in children with identified learning disabilities different from those of normal children?” ... “Is ADHD due to a lack of neural connections?”. He even asked, “Are there performance enhancing drugs to be recommended?” (Geake 2009:17–19).

Although much attention is given to brain developments connected to ADHD, dyslexia and autism, it all appeared too good to miss for some politicians who were concerned with the economic consequences of the persistence of poverty in lower social groups. To be able to link defective brain development to poor parenting and subsequent poverty seemed a positive development to some. The *Centre for Social Justice* (see Chapter 7) created by the then shadow Conservative Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan-Smith in 2004, presented papers on ‘Fractured families’, ‘Breakdown Britain’ and ‘Broken Britain’. Some politicians and civil servants were keen to present the problems of the poor as related to poor parenting and deprived brains. A number of papers had referred to an article by Perry (2002), which included a picture of a brain scan of two three-year-old children, one of which was described as a normal brain, and one the brain of a child who had suffered extreme neglect (ibid:93). The paper was actually discussing extreme neglect as found in a boy raised in a dungeon in the 1830s, children in Lebanese orphanages and studies of children in Romanian orphanages during the Ceausescu regime. Two examples from this paper of a supposed normal brain, and a shrivelled brain deprived of material and emotional attention have been reproduced in various newspapers and journals to supposedly illustrate the perils of poor maternal functioning. A Paper produced by the British government Cabinet Office on social mobility (Cabinet Office 2008) actually included Perry’s scans and linked them with supposed adverse effects of poor maternal care, low achievement and lack of social mobility.

A report from the CSJ in 2008 also included the two brain scans (Allen and Duncan-Smith 2008) and it also appeared on the cover of further report by Graham Allen MP on *Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings* (Allen 2011). This report actually had “costs to the taxpayer” by the side of the deprived brain! The not so subtle text in these and other papers was that brains are formed by early experiences, and poor dysfunctional families are unable to supply the right early experiences. Intervention in these families is needed at an early stage to prevent social and economic costs. The proposals in the paper were endorsed by business including Goldman Sachs, Pricewaterhouse Cooper, Portland Capital, Green Private Equity Foundation, the Metropolitan Police and others. While Chapter 7 in this book discusses

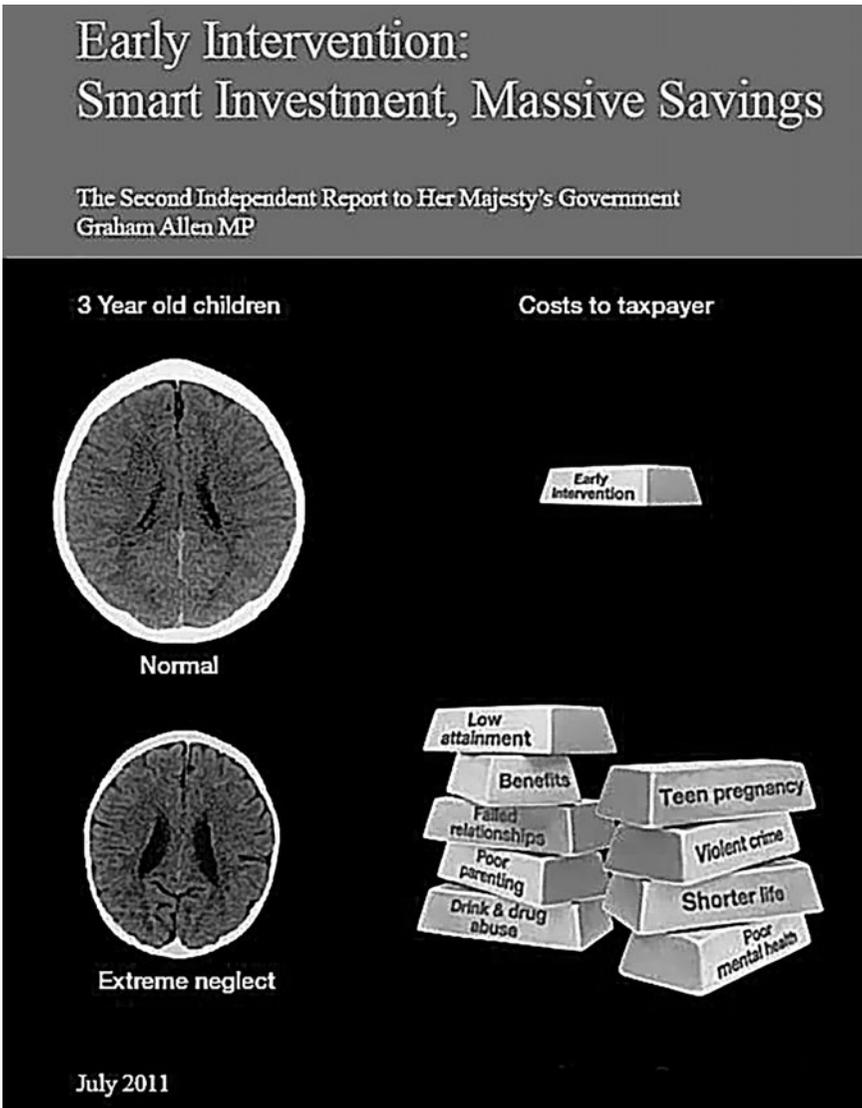


Figure 5.1 Cover of report: “Early intervention: smart investment, massive savings”

the focus on parenting further, one comment was that “The fetish for brain images can best be thought of as a version of nineteenth century phrenology with its ideas of what can apparently be told about character, from examination of head shape and size”! (Lee 2011).

An interesting development was that while a government Early Intervention Team was thinking up interventions to improve parenting, the same government was in the process of closing down many of the very successful Sure Start Centres that focused on 0–3-year-olds’ health, education and parenting.<sup>7</sup> Dyslexia, meanwhile, was being given more positive treatment by

claims that magnetic sound imaging could show differences in the brains of those diagnosed with dyslexia. Frederickson and Cline, in their 652-page book on *Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Diversity*, reproduced a picture of a dyslexic brain versus a typical readers brain (Frederickson and Cline 2009:356). This was taken from an article by Goswami (2006) which has also been reproduced a number of times in other work.

## High ability

The assumptions about low ability have always been understood in relation to the assumptions about high ability. While a number of countries now search for exceptional talent or high abilities in their young people, the notions that education systems should separate out their high and low ability students is strongest in the USA and the UK. The early eugenic studies of the supposed brilliance running in upper class families were presented as a sharp contrast to the studies of low attaining, supposedly defective families. Despite much evidence in unequal societies that school abilities are related to persistent economic, social and educational inequalities, the notion persists that positions of power and influence and wealth are related to the higher abilities of the individuals. Just as a special needs industry emerged over the past 40 years (Tomlinson 2012), a similar high ability industry developed (Tomlinson 2008) with centres, journals, and handbooks dedicated to discovering the traits that lead some individuals to have gifts, talents and genius proliferating.

Zeigler (2004) has pointed out that while terms such as gifted, talented, genius and even wisdom are used, there is actually little empirical evidence for their existence. The terms originated from mythological, theological and metaphysical traditions. Stories of ‘the wisdom of the Gods’ equate with scientists examining slices of Einstein’s brain to check for evidence of genius. However, scholars argued seriously for “differential models of giftedness and talent” and ways of separating out the extraordinarily gifted from the merely gifted (Baer and Kaufman 2004:150), in much the same way as nineteenth-century scholars argued over gradations of mental defect – the idiot merging into the imbecile into the feeble-minded. In the USA attempts to identify the gifted who might be an asset in a competitive global economy were adopted early. In the 1980s a centre for gifted students opened at Western Kentucky Campus with the aim of ‘helping gifted learners discover their potential’. A *Journal of High Ability Studies* appeared in 1996, with a proliferation of other journals for the gifted. Since then, every aspect of the achievement, emotional and social growth of high achievers appears to have been studied, with fee-paying centres and courses promising to help students ‘achieve their full potential’ and gain access to the most prestigious colleges and universities. In 2015 the Indiana State Office for High Ability Education required all schools to identify such students and provide them with a differentiated curriculum.

In the UK Benn and Chitty (1996) reported that a giftedness movement had developed during the 1960s with the assumption that a small number of children needed extra provision. They noted that it developed at the time when arguments over comprehensive versus selective schooling were ongoing,

and it appeared that ‘giftedness’ was another way of justifying some form of academic selection. By the later 1990s an *Excellence in Cities* programme, intended to improve urban schools, was initiated by the New Labour government, which included separating out slower learners into Learning Support Units and setting up programmes for the gifted and talented. This was intended to reassure middle class parents in inner cities, including minority parents who for years had been vocal critics of their children’s education, that there would be provision for ‘brighter’ children. In 2005 a £50 million grant was given to schools to support what had become known as G and T students; by 2007 all schools were required to identify 5–10 per cent of their gifted or talented pupils and a National Register was set up. A National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth was set up at Warwick University, partnered by the charity the National Association for Gifted Children. Eventually there was concern that schools were using their G and T programmes to attract middle class pupils, and Gillborn (2008) noted that while one in 10 white pupils were so identified, only one in twenty-five Black pupils were chosen, and they were more likely to be talented at sport. By 2010 the Warwick Centre was closed and as one newspaper put it “Farewell to the gifted and talented scheme” (Murray 2010).

Although missing a funding stream, most school heads and teachers did not miss the scheme, especially as selecting the able and less able was generally accepted as normal practice. Schools were further tasked with identifying children who might have DME or Dual Multiple Exceptionality. They were to recognise ‘High Learning Potential’ in children who might also be badly behaved in schools. While it could be argued that schools had been dealing with such children for years, recommendations for dealing with them now involved help and advice from the expanded professions of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and a ‘gifted and talented co-ordinator’ if the school still had such a post (Yates 2016). In a further twist to the expansion of alternative provision for troublesome pupils one potential sponsor of a Free School claimed that his proposed “Ideas College” would call its pupils ‘gifted’ and remove the stigma attached to alternative provision (Dickson 2016). Whether this would lead to an end to the assumption that young people regarded as troublesome in schools are always low attainers is debatable, an individualising of success and failure due to high and low ability could be regarded as an inevitable outcome in systems where education and economies are permanently competitive. Another view is that it is actually unreasonable to create stratified education systems with competitive policies that leave large numbers of young people regarded, and regarding themselves, as either gifted trouble-makers or ungifted losers, as this may not improve the system and its outcomes as a whole.

## **Who are the included or excluded?**

The theme of this book is that mass elementary education from the nineteenth century led to the exclusion of large numbers of young people from developing western style mainstream education and their placement in subsystems of special education. The expansion of education systems over the twentieth

century, with a variety of interests and ideologies, notably the belief that more education for all would serve global economic competitiveness, led to the incorporation of all those variously regarded as lower attainers, having learning difficulties, disabilities and/or special educational needs into what is described as inclusive education. Special and inclusive education are conjoined in lengthened formal systems, usually at lower levels of schooling, but with ideological assertions that the objective is “Educational Excellence Everywhere” (DfE 2016). Continual debate about who has a special educational need, or who is to be included in this expanding system continues, with confusion still apparent. In research asking School and College Heads and Principals, teachers and administrators, who they would include as lower attainers, and with special needs, the following definitions were offered from England, the USA and Germany (Tomlinson 2013, see also Chapter 8).

### **England**

- not able to achieve five A\*–C in the GCSE examination at 16
- unable to achieve in a purely academic curriculum
- have mild learning problems
- exhibit behavioural problems in school/class
- would achieve in a more vocational curriculum
- have a Statement/Plan of disability or special need
- have parents who press for a ‘diagnosis’ of special education
- come from poor homes

### **USA**

- cannot attain a regular high school Diploma
- may not be able to take post 18/19 college courses
- cannot achieve in standardised tests
- assessed as in current categories of SEN
- assessed as Learning Disabled
- exhibit behaviour problems
- at risk of dropping out of school or college
- have parents who press for a ‘diagnosis’, preferably medical or therapeutic
- come from poor and disadvantaged homes
- come from minority homes

### **Germany**

- leave the (lower level) Hauptschule without a certificate
- leave special schools without a certificate
- unsuitable for the dual system of apprenticeship
- on transitional courses in college
- migrant and minority students, especially with poor language skills
- from poor and disadvantaged homes
- those leavers unable to find work due to market deficiencies

<i>Reasons for Special Needs</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>USA</i>	<i>Germany</i>
No certification	+	+	+
From poor family	+	+	+
Behavioural problems	+	+	
Assessed as LD	+	+	
Can't achieve in academic	+	+	
Would achieve in vocational	+		

In all three countries the respondents put the percentage of children and young people they were referring to as between 25 per cent and 30 per cent. Unsurprisingly, low attainments and inability to pass required examinations or gain certificates figure large in identification of the 'special' and low attainers in all three countries. Coming from a poor and disadvantaged home is also a common strand. Some differences are that in the UK and USA parents want a diagnosis, or label for their children, while this does not appear to be so much of a problem in Germany and bad behaviour is not used as a reason for special education in Germany. The USA and Germany also mention minorities and migrants as more likely to be in need of special education, while in England minorities are assumed to be part of the problems specified. While these views are further discussed in Chapter 8 of this book when discussing the likely futures of young people, it was of note that only respondents in Germany mentioned the economy as contributing to definitions of who were lower attainers. The following chapter discusses the professionals who over the years, have come to diagnose, assess and control these large number of young people who are not likely to succeed to expected levels in the current education systems.

## Notes

- 1 In October 1976, Prime Minister James Callaghan made a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, attacking what he called 'the education establishment' for not preparing young people for the world of work. He called for a 'Great Debate' on education, which resulted in a series of conferences described by one commentator as 'not a debate and not very great'. Publicity was given to employers and business people who claimed that comprehensive schools did not serve the needs of industry.
- 2 After 1997, the Department for Education (DfE) became the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), then the Department for Education and Skills (DFES), then the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), before returning in 2010 to being the DfE.
- 3 While local authorities and agencies were undertaking reorganisation under the *Every Child Matters* agenda, the DFES drew up a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to assist multi-disciplinary teams notionally working together, from education, social services, health including mental health services, housing and voluntary groups. CAF suggested 13 needs or problems to be addressed: disruptive and antisocial behaviour; parental conflict/lack of support; lack of boundaries; offending risk; school exclusion/bullying; SEN and disability; disengagement/NEET at 16; poor nutrition; ill health; substance abuse; anxiety/depression; housing issues; teenage pregnancy; other complex needs.

- 4 The full story of Academies has yet to be written. Initially, they were to be schools in disadvantaged areas funded from central government, with no input from local authorities and with sponsors offering £2 million, who would appoint a majority of governors. Education advisor Andrew Adonis claimed he was an architect of the Academies programme together with Minister of Education, David Blunkett (Adonis 2013). By 2005 some 17 were open, with Tony Blair holding breakfast meetings in Downing Street for potential business sponsors (Tomlinson 2005:128). From 2010, the Coalition government, enthusiastic for the Charter Schools programme in the USA, made Academies a central plank in their school reforms. They promised that eventually all English schools would become Academies. This was legislated for by the Conservative government in 2016 when over 50 per cent of secondary schools (20,700) and around 20 per cent of primary schools were already Academies. Following criticisms there was some back-tracking on the proposal. Michael Gove introduced a policy of Free Schools in 2010. These were to be tax-payer funded schools, including special schools, to be opened by parents, religious or community groups. To date (2016) the Free Schools numbering over 300 (19 of them Free special schools) have a contentious history.
- 5 Alternative Provision, first mentioned officially in a 1996 Education Act, was described in a DfE Guidance paper as “education arranged by local authorities for pupils who because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, could not receive suitable education: education arranged by schools for pupils on fixed period exclusions and pupils directed to off-site provision to improve their behaviour” (DfE 2013:1–2). By 2016 head teachers were to take the lead in provision for excluded pupils.
- 6 Organisations concerned with neuroscience and education include The Brain; Neuro-Science and Education Special Interest Group (American Education Research Association); The British Educational Research Association Special Interest group in Neuro-science and education; The Oxford Cognitive Neuro-Science Education Forum; and the Institute for the Focus on the Mind at Oxford University, and others.
- 7 Sure Start was one of a range of policies produced by New Labour post-1997 targeting groups and areas where inequalities were most evident. In 1999, partly modelled on the Head Start programme in the USA, a £425 million project offering health, education and social services for 0–3-year-olds, began with 60 pilot projects. Sure Start centres were established nationwide. A Treasury deputy director, Norman Glass, took a particular interest and possibly ensured its funding. However, by 2005, he was concerned that the aim of the programme had been subverted, becoming part of a government agenda to provide childcare while poor mothers went out to work. Half of all Sure Start centres were closed by the Coalition and Conservative governments after 2010.

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## CHAPTER 6

# PROFESSIONAL AND POLITICAL INTERESTS

They knocked his knees and measured his head and told me there was nothing wrong with him but his brain.

(Mother, interviewed about the assessment of her son judged to be educationally subnormal) (Tomlinson 1981:272)

From the nineteenth and into the twenty-first century professionals have been granted unprecedented powers to affect, control and regulate the lives of large numbers of people in developed societies. Professionals base their claims to authority on the practical claim that modern society needs ‘experts’ to solve its problems. They also make the political claim that they will use their expert knowledge in a disinterested manner that will serve the common good. Every area of social life considered to be problematic is now subject to professional scrutiny – especially poverty, crime, disease and education. These areas are now unimaginable without the presence of professionals to explain, alleviate, solve or control. Functionalist sociologist Talcott Parsons regarded professionals, with their special status and prestige as essential to maintaining a social structure with an occupational division of labour. Medicine, law, technology and teaching were his choice of institutional structures which demanded professional skills that lay people did not have (Parsons 1954). Parsons also claimed that professionals work with a scientific rigour that the uninitiated did not possess. Max Weber, however, saw professionals as occupational groups controlling access to scarce, highly marketable skills and situated in the middle and upper levels in stratified societies – a major characteristic of professionals being relative superiority over and distance from the working classes (Weber 1954).

The image or model of professionalism that is commonly held incorporates the nineteenth-century assumption that a ‘service ideal’ of true professionalism will ensure that the needs of the client will take precedence over the needs of state bureaucracies, and this assumption softens and rationalises the control exercised by the professional. Where issues of disability and special education are concerned, a whole range of professionals and semi-professionals, now earn a living assessing, diagnosing, discovering, treating, teaching and caring for large and larger numbers of children and young people who are regarded as legitimate targets for separate provision – special, inclusive, alternative – and thus help maintain levels of inability. It is also the case, as Larson suggested in 1977, that in the wider perspective of occupational and class

structures, professionals influence the links between education and the economy, and thus help justify inequalities of access to jobs and status (Larson 1977:xvii). The link between special educational and vocational status has been especially documented by Richardson and his colleagues, who have noted that assumptions in western systems have always been that the specially educated and lower attainers will only be capable of vocational training and low level employment (Richardson et al. 2017).

A majority of professionals are now employed as experts within state bureaucracies, although some, due to state-funding cuts or a market for private provision have now reverted to the nineteenth-century model of private professionals, medical, psychological and private tutoring being examples. Administrators within bureaucracies increasingly regard themselves as professionals, and ‘organisational professionals’ in both state and private business and bureaucracies have expanded. Organisational professionals are a consequence of an expansion of state bureaucracies such as social workers, child-care specialists, and behaviour ‘tsars’. Wardens of youth offending institutions and prisons, and Regional Schools Commissioners in England are examples of organisational professionals. Central and local authority administrators may regard themselves as professionals although ‘techno bureaucrats’ may be a more apt description as they rely on professional judgements and collections of data in order to distribute funds and resources. In England cuts to local authority funding had, by the second decade of the twenty-first century, reached epic proportions, and councils were being encouraged to commission cheaper private services. Worcestershire County Council announced that it aspired to be an excellent commissioning council, and passed over its Learning and Achievement service to a private provider, which happened to be a branch of Babcock International, a multinational firm specialising in defence contracts and services to the nuclear industry and airports. This firm, taking £3.2 million from the County over five years had moved into support services via Babcock Training Ltd and promptly removed 103 out of 391 professional staff in the services (Worcestershire County Council 2015).

In both the UK and USA there has been an increase in what has been termed educational para-professionals, just as in other professions there have been similar trends – paramedics and paralegals for example. While traditionally professionals claimed a service ideal and caring for clients, indifference to clients may be one developing aspect of organisational professionals, who demand the deference and compliance that old professions commanded, but without this ideal. This chapter explores the issues and conflicts that arise when professionals are employed in educational bureaucracies with the specific task of dealing with the disabled, disruptive, special and lower attainers in early years, schools and post-school institutions. In particular, psychological, medical, neurosciences, teachers, teaching assistants and SEND professionals, and others are discussed. It also notes the increasing privatisation of services to support learning and families.

## **Who are the professionals?**

Although medical and psychological professionals dominated special education for over a hundred years, more and more professionals have joined the old established groups in claiming legitimate involvement in dealing with the expanded groups troublesome in current education systems. Indeed, these groups are now the province of the government and professionals, almost immune from the alternative discourses and views of other groups such as parents or civil or activist groups. In 1996 I drew a figure that included some 40 possible professional groups offering to help ‘Johnny and Jill’ with their difficulties (Tomlinson 1996:176). It is reproduced below with additions and more could be added if post school assistance and voluntary organisations are introduced. Each professional group has its own ‘culture of professionalism’, which includes specialised training, an esoteric language, and claims to ‘expertism’ and they expect their judgements to be respected and accepted by clients – children and parents – and other professionals. As noted in the Introduction to this book, professionals largely regarded themselves as working within an ideology of benevolent humanitarianism, which for many years imbued those working with the special and disabled with a semi-religious sanctity. This obscured the reality that the ideology is more of a punitive benevolence, professional expertise being used by governments and state bureaucracies to control troublesome groups, preferably at the least possible expense. In a study of children being moved into schools for the educationally subnormal in the 1970s, I wrote

The professionals were performing the social service of legitimating the exclusion of numbers of children from the education system and recommending them for an education, which fits them for low-status, low-paid occupations in times of economic stability, unemployment in times of recessions.

(Tomlinson 1981:25)

This situation has not changed much apart from a ramped up rhetoric that professional and government interventions are designed to overcome disadvantage and improve the lives of vulnerable and unfortunate children and young people.

Skrtic pointed out that, “A profession is an insulated, self-regulating community whose members share an image of the world based on strong socialisation and a common exposure to communally-accepted definitions of valid knowledge” (Skrtic 1995:8) and a major characteristic is that they not only claim expert knowledge to know better than others what is wrong with their clients, they do not expect to be questioned in their judgements. They also define the standards by which their superior competence is judged. This can sometimes have very negative consequences, the claims of a ‘cause’ of autism which resulted in a number of child deaths in the 2000s being one example.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the lengthy training, under the auspices of professional bodies, creates a ‘professional mystique’, an aura of mystique around their

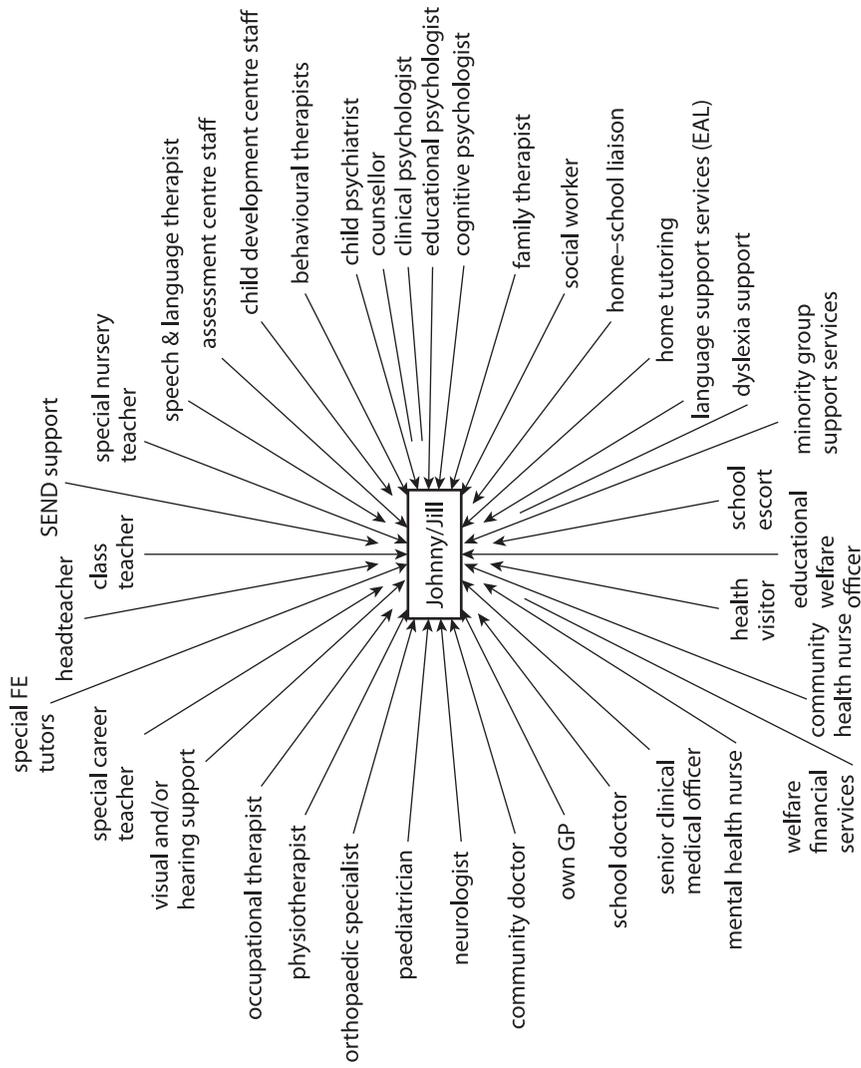


Figure 6.1 Possible professional help for Johnny and Jill

work and language, which plays an important part in the deference expected and given. Habermas (1974) examined in some detail the way language is used to dominate and control weaker groups. In special education the use of a diagnostic and ‘treatment’ language, derived from medical discourse, is a powerful tool for professionals.

Kirp, as previously noted, in comparing British and US special education, wrote that “the model of professionalism in the UK is essentially an humanitarian welfare model which contemplates professionals and administrators working together on behalf of an ever expanding clientele towards agreed common goals” (Kirp 1983:83). He recorded that the Warnock Committee visited the USA for their report and were ‘horrified’ by the American reliance on administrative hearings and litigation, and Warnock herself declared that “there is something deeply unattractive about the spectacle of someone demanding his own rights” (ibid.:95). Fulcher, in 1989, produced a stringent critique of the way these views operated in the special education area. While a claim for rights is the most obvious and progressive strategy for those excluded from full participation and citizenship, the incorporation of professionals and the bureaucratic practices of control and regulation actually assist in the process of marginalising the disabled and special and denying their rights (Fulcher 1989). It is also more difficult to claim rights if a professional mystique is accompanied by a denial of information. In 1980 a government White Paper advised that when a child was to be recorded as in need of special education, “it would be wrong to require full disclosure to parents of the professional reports lying behind the record. Professional reports must remain confidential” (DES 1980:18). Despite subsequent government assertion of empowering parents and creating partnerships, it is still the case that many families feel inadequately informed and consulted and denied full information.

## **The ‘psy’ sciences and psychological influence**

In both English and American school systems, in the progressive removal or differentiation of the special, disabled, and troublesome, educational psychology achieved a particular dominance. The first text-books on educational psychology were produced in America well before mental measuring techniques emerged. Darwin’s discoveries in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) were incorporated into studies of the human species that led to a Social Darwinism, with sociobiological assumptions underpinning hereditarian beliefs in individual, family and racial deficiencies. But hereditarian arguments about the transmission of social deficiencies had been around from the 1840s (Rosenberg 1974). These early beliefs did not necessarily have a malign intent, as there were also moral and ethical beliefs that ‘higher mental processes’ contributed to social progress by more cooperation between people (Baldwin 1899). It was, as Richardson and Bradley suggested, beliefs that education and teaching could be improved by pedagogy grounded in ‘scientific’ principles of psychology – principles that incorporated eugenic thinking – that needed to be questioned (Richardson and Bradley 2014).

It was unfortunate, in retrospect, that the knowledge base of psychology came, during the early twentieth century, to be grounded in eugenic theories of notions of human degeneracy and the deviances of crime, pauperism, physical and sensory impairment, insanity and mental retardation. E. L. Thorndyke's prolific writings, especially his volumes on educational psychology, stressed the idea of individual differences. In common with other early psychologists, he believed strongly that these were measurable (Thorndyke 1913). The rise of the mental testing movement came to demonstrate and justify highly debatable claims of individual difference, with resulting often degrading treatment of many children. The 'psy-sciences' as Rose designated psychology, psychiatry and other areas with the prefix 'psy' are not without mixed histories of their development, but current practitioners are keen to ratify any respectable traditions and disassociate from a disreputable past (Rose 1998:42). Thus, some psychologists are eager to dismiss the history discussed in Chapter 4 of this book as no longer important, and see no connection between newer eugenic theories of genetic heredity, and test measurements that almost always seem to be detrimental to the working and non-working classes, the poor and disadvantaged.

The embrace of psychology to support state power, as Foucault's writings testify (Foucault 1991), has been used at various times to support theories of female inabilities and dependencies, potential criminal minds, the lower capacities of Black and minority children, and the inevitable lower place of the labouring classes. Empirical 'proof' that lower class minds were less capable of education and higher level skills was reassuring to the expanding middle classes, especially those without property and on salaries, who worried about their own economic futures and those of their children (Richardson and Bradley 2014). Why educational psychology became so influential in the twentieth century, and the mental measurements, the deference to IQ tests, and the reproduction of a bell curve of supposed intelligence, were accepted into the twenty-first century, remains a matter for debate. But the idea of a structure of intelligence that mirrors the social and economic structure is fixed in the public imagination and in the beliefs of elites. The publication of textbooks such as Philip Carter's book *IQ and Psychometric Tests* (2015), now reprinted some seven times since 2002, and which contains a number of errors,<sup>2</sup> is one response to public demand to know more about the esoteric mysteries of testing and how it can supposedly explain more about themselves, their children and their place in the social hierarchy. As Nikolas Rose wrote

The conduct of persons becomes remarkable and intelligible where ... displayed on a psychological screen, reality becomes ordered according to a psychological taxonomy, and abilities, personalities, attitudes and the like, become central to the deliberations and calculations of social authorities and psychological theorists alike.

(Rose 1998:60)

In practical terms that can mean the school and local authority 'knowing' that a child has an IQ of 95, has learning and behaviour problems and must be

excluded from mainstream schooling, moved to the special needs department in the school, or be excluded into a Pupil Referral Unit, and subsequently into possible unemployment and a low social status in the eye of authorities, fellow citizens and him/her self.

The role of the educational psychologist has, over the past half century, developed from individual testing of children to a wider remit. In 1965, 150 local authorities employed 414 educational psychologists and a 1968 report (Summerfield 1968) recommended one psychologist for 10,000 children, noting their involvement with children's services, juvenile courts, probation and pre-school services as well as schools. Educational psychologists interviewed in a study of the referral of children for ESN schooling did emerge as crucial figures in the transfer of a child from mainstream to special schooling, although school head teachers expected that their role was to justify the removal of disruptive and slow learning children from their schools (Tomlinson 1981). By 2000 a report for the DfEE calculated that there were over 1800 educational psychologists whose work was valued by local education authorities not only in statutory assessment for special education but also for other school and pre-school support (Kelly and Gray 2000). Testing had become more acceptable and the often bitter arguments over culture fair testing for minorities and second language testing in the 1960s had largely been forgotten, and assumptions were made that tests were now fair.

## **Testing and mindsets**

Accompanying traditional psychological testing, has been an increase in the use of testing in schools in England, not only through government insistence on standardised tests at Key Stages, eventually reaching down to pre-school levels, measurement of schools by test scores and public examinations, but also through the development of the cognitive sciences and the embrace of cognitive testing within schools. As one journalist noted in 2002

Cognitive assessment is booming, and around one and a half million pupils sit tests each year and numbers are rising. Originally tarred with the brush of traditional IQ tests cognitive assessment fell out of favour in the wake of comprehensive schooling and associations of determinism and narrow cultural bias. But it is now back in force schools are using tests in setting and streaming, to set targets for pupils and staff, to rescue under-achieving pupils and measure the value they have added to pupils.  
(Kirkman 2002)

Secondary schools, for example, now separate pupils using two major tests, the MidYis, a non-verbal test that purports to test underlying ability, reasoning and problem-solving and the Yellis tests, which are accepted as a predictor of GCSE grades. The point about tests that purport to predict has always been that teachers then teach to these assumed levels.

Testing in schools in both England and the USA had by the second decade of the twenty-first century reached such disproportionate levels that teacher

and parent campaigns against tests were developing (Ward 2015; Marcus 2016; Adams 2016). In a few schools in England, there were attempts to move beyond fixed ability thinking and encourage principles of ‘learning without limits’ (Bragg 2015). In Wroxham School in Hertfordshire, the head, who became a government advisor, pioneered a curriculum and organisation that approached learning with the intention of reducing beliefs in intelligence as fixed, measurable and innate and abolished ability groupings associated with prior attainment (Peacock 2015). A school in Devon gave up teaching discrete subjects and pioneered what they defiantly called an Lbacc – Learning Baccalaureate (Stanier 2015). The popularity of notions of a ‘growth mindset’, a concept developed by American psychologist Carol Dwek, appeared to challenge beliefs in fixed intelligence (Dwek 2006, 2012). Proponents have claimed that children’s brains are influenced by low expectations of teachers and attitudes to learning, which can be changed to become more positive. The government-funded Education Endowment Foundation awarded a £290,000 grant for research into whether ‘Changing Mindsets’ could improve test results at eleven. A private company Positive Edge was involved in developing videos and materials for this study and its chief executive claimed that changing brains to become more resilient could boost exam results and shrink attainment gaps between wealthier and poor pupils. Along with resilient brains the current Education Minister, Nicky Morgan, has given money to programmes designed to build ‘grit’ – a notion developed by an American psychologist (Duckworth 2016) who claims that determination and self-control improves tests scores. American historian of education Diane Ravitch (2016) has criticised the assumption that teaching resilience and ‘grit’ can improve test scores as ‘sheer nonsense’ and grading schools and teachers by their students’ grit borders on lunacy, and is another way of individualising failure by blaming children for not changing the way they think. Psychological notions of grit, character and resilience are popular with policy-makers who are not interested in structural explanations for inequality.

## **Medical influence**

In both the USA and England from the nineteenth century the medical professions enhanced their prestige and spheres of influence by claiming to diagnose and treat disabilities and defects. In England medical men dominated the commissions and committees on defective children and devised clinical definitions of various types and grades of defect. A medical superintendent at one of the first asylums for idiots devised a test for feeble-mindedness that included checking for “A V-shaped palate, large coarse outstanding ears, a fixed stare and a curved little finger” (Pritchard 1963:137). School medical officers were required by Education Acts in 1913 and 1944, to ascertain children who were considered to be defective. School medical officers, first appointed in 1907, were to play a primary role in the assessment and subsequent certification process. After 1944 the requirement for a medical examination to determine handicap continued to be statutory, the Principal School Medical Officer being responsible to the local authority Chief

Education Officer, and it was a doctor who signed the final form assessing a child as having ‘A disability of body or mind’. Parents were often confused by assessment processes, but understood medical involvement more clearly, deference to the doctor being important. The mother quoted at the start of this chapter was impressed by the doctor’s check up but confused when a diagnosis of ‘something wrong with his brain’, resulted in his move to a special school. Confusion persisted after a 1981 Act when a ‘multi-professional assessment’ of candidates for special education was advocated, professionals being jealous of their own expertise and unused to sharing their knowledge.

Campaigners against a medical model of disability found that a medical clinical approach – stressing that their impairments could not be remedied – prevented their access to opportunities and participation. Confusion over medical involvement continued largely because of the conflation of normative and non-normative conditions (Tomlinson 1982:65). Normative conditions are when there can be some agreement about the existence of certain kinds of disability such as physical and sensory problems, speech defects, severe and profound learning difficulty (those in the USA termed low incidence categories). But the majority of children and young people who are designated as having special needs, or having learning difficulties or low attainments, being disruptive and troublesome in schools, are in non-normative categories (high incidence in the USA). There are no adequate measuring instruments in either the medical or the psychological world, to ‘diagnose’ them. Judgements depend on the values, beliefs and interests of those making decisions rather than any qualities intrinsic to the child. This was illustrated in interviews for the study published in 1981, when medical doctors used social judgements on ‘rough’ children, psychologists used learning teaching and problems to explain attainment, and teachers referred to statistical IQ measurements (Tomlinson 1981:10). The expansion of the newer categories, for example, dyslexia, ADHD, autism and autistic spectrum, created more confusion as medical and neuroscience interests in these categories appear to span the normative and non-normative.

Constant reorganisations of Health Services, including school health services, did not enhance co-operation and the smooth teamwork between professionals that the Warnock Committee envisaged in 1978. Those trying to understand rights and duties under the English 2014 Code of Practice may struggle to follow the directive that “Section 25 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to ensure integration between educational provision and training provision, and health and social care provision .... Local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) must make joint commissioning arrangements for education, health and care provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities.” Furthermore,

Joint commissioning should be informed by a clear assessment of local needs. Health and Well-being Boards are required to develop Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Well-being Strategies

to support prevention, identification, assessment and early intervention and a joined up approach.

(DfE 2014:38–39: sections 3–3 and 3–4)

It is tempting to remark ‘well good luck to them’ in response, but lawyers, head teachers and parents found that requirements were, as the Chief Executive of the Independent Parental Special Education Advice Panel noted “causing absolute chaos: Most of it stems from misinformation going to local authorities which is then passed on to schools which is then passed to parents and carers” (Harris 2015). The 2014 Code of Practice is mainly concerned with the minority of children and young people with more easily recognisable normative disabilities and difficulties, fewer than 3 per cent in old categories of special educational need. There is little discussion or direction for the 18–30 per cent non-normative, regarded as ‘having SEN’, or simply being lower attainers, and included in, or excluded from, mainstream schools.

## **Neuroscience and better brains**

If ‘something wrong with your brain’ resulted in admission to an ESN school in the 1970s, where will advances in the neurosciences lead? As Hilary and Stephen Rose pointed out, now that our biomedical data and DNA can be collected by governments, the neurotechnical sciences are not far behind. “Enthusiasts claim that windows into the brain provided by the electroencephalograph (EEG) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) can identify psychopaths, criminals and terrorists before they have committed a criminal act” (Rose and Rose 2012:22). The cognitive sciences claim a global search for understanding how the human brain works, and educational neuroscientists claim they will benefit from large data sets of information about the developing brain – although there is currently no such data base (Geake 2009:21).

Despite this, a major problem, as indicated in Chapter 5, is that politicians and some educationalists are happy to draw conclusions about deprived and neglected brains, once again to the detriment of the lower social classes and the poor. The presentation of ‘deprived brains’ linked to a lack of social mobility in England, as a Cabinet Office paper did in 2008 is an indication of the dangers of uncritical acceptance of these ideas (Cabinet Office 2008). This assertion and others depended on the 2002 paper by American academic Bruce Perry, the subtitle of his paper being “What childhood neglect tells us about nature and nurture” (Perry 2002). The paper pointed out what is not exactly unknown – that all children benefit from stable, loving environments – but the examples he used are those of animal studies, of feral children, and orphanage children in war zones. Page 93 of his article showed two brain scans that were reproduced on the cover of Allen’s report to the government (Allen 2011) which is reproduced in Chapter 5 of this book. Many subsequent derogatory articles reproduced these pictures of a ‘normal brain’ and ‘extremely neglected’ brain. In 2014 Perry lectured in London to the government funded Early Intervention Centre, with the then Work and

Pensions Minister Iain Duncan-Smith in the audience who introduced Perry as an inspiring and influential figure. Perry again referred to orphanages and feral children. The presumptions have been subject to criticism, especially the examples which encourage “a policy leap from orphanage to council estate” and implicit assumptions that growing up in poverty damages children’s brains irreversibly (Butler 2014). John Bruer had argued in *The Myth of the First Three Years* (Bruer 2002) that the money spent on neuroscience interventions could be better spent on actual teaching and life-long learning.

Other neuroscientists have argued that the application of ‘brain-based’ tools and teaching approaches reveal loose and factually incorrect links, and Smeyers has analysed a number of research studies that use a rhetoric of neuroscience to make exaggerated claims about brains and education (Smeyers 2013). Some articles continue to suggest that *Poverty shrinks brains from birth* (Reardon 2015). Neuroscientist Stephen Rose has pointed out that little is known about the subtle changes that occur in childhood up to puberty and adulthood as the brain continues to respond to internal and external environmental changes (Rose 2005), and he has long been concerned with the abuses possible via the neurosciences. He especially noted the rise in the ‘diagnosis’ of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), this being a classic case of defining what is ‘normal’ behaviour in a statistical sense against what is a value judgement on how children are expected to behave. He noted that the profits made by pharmaceutical companies marketing drugs to control behaviour have increased exponentially. Ritalin, marketed by Novartis, is a profitable drug used both in the USA and UK (Rose 2005). Research studies claiming that children ‘diagnosed’ with ADHD have been identified with genetic variants linked to autism and schizophrenia have led to views that it should be regarded as a developmental disorder rather than bad behaviour, but again, the missing gene has not actually been identified (Boseley 2010).

Where socio-biology might lead in the future was discussed by Meloni and his colleagues, who were concerned that governments could use claims that the deprived environments of some social groups can leave them damaged and even transmit damage to future generations, as some epigeneticists have claimed (Meloni et al. 2016). Resurgent socio-biologically based class and race studies could lead, as historian Katz pointed out, to recurring beliefs in “The biological inferiority of the undeserving poor” (Katz 2014:359). Of particular importance for teachers was that a paper produced for the Royal Society by eminent neuroscience professors and experts recommended that neuroscience should be used as a tool in educational policy, and that “Teacher training providers for special educational needs across all ages should consider including a focus on the neurobiological underpinnings of learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and ADHD” (Royal Society 2011:19).<sup>3</sup> Surveys of teacher attitudes towards disabilities have however, tended to show that teachers prefer teaching pupils with physical disabilities to those diagnosed as ADHD or autistic spectrum disorder. This is understandable as the ‘bright brave child in a wheelchair’ has been more acceptable than the behaviourally troublesome.

## From bad behaviour to mental health

Following the English 2014 Children Act and Code of Practice, those who study the changing labels and categories in special education were surprised to find that disruptive behaviour – for over a hundred years a major reason for the exclusion of children from schools and even from special schools, had disappeared from formal English categorisation, as shown in the DfE statistical table below (DfE 2015 – additional table B1).

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) had been replaced by Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Where have pupils with behaviour considered disruptive or troublesome in mainstream and even special schools gone? The answer was that a majority had gone or would be going into expanded Alternative Provision, Pupil Referral Units (now to be known as Alternative Provision), Free special schools, and other – often unspecified – provision run by local authorities or private providers. Their removal would be, as noted in Chapter 5, enhanced by head teachers taking advice, then excluding them but paying for their exclusion from their school budget allocation. This would reduce the worrying numbers being excluded from mainstream with no provision. Teachers in mainstream could be ‘seconded’ to teach in this provision, which would soften the exclusion from actual mainstream classes.

The category of autistic spectrum disorder, covering a multitude of both recognisable normative conditions and those dependent on value judgements, had expanded exponentially, and covered much behaviour troublesome in schools and homes. There is a large literature attempting to explain the expansion of autism and autistic spectrum labels. A book examining the social

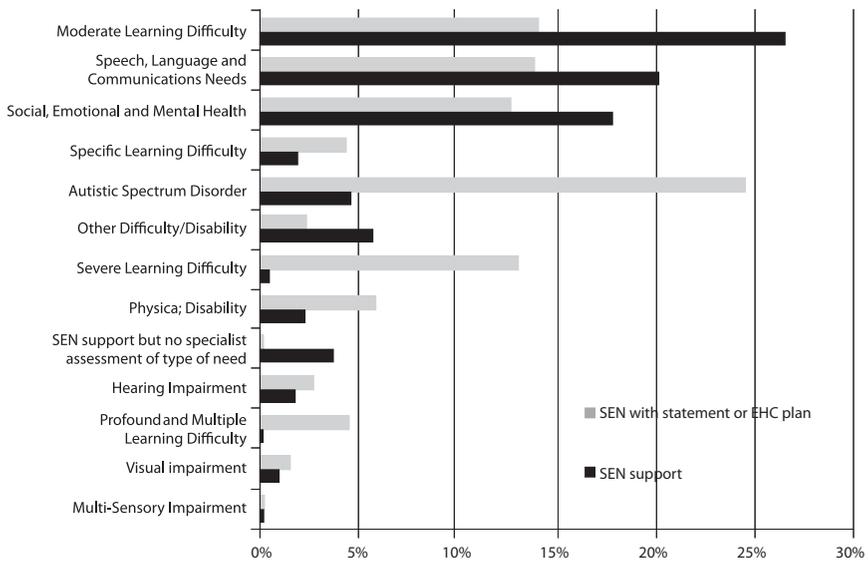


Figure 6.2 Proportion of pupils with statement/EHC plans and SEN support by primary type of need January 2015

origins of autism, written by sociologists, suggested that the categories were cultural constructs, stemming originally from the eventual unacceptability of labels such as mental retardation, and argued that the popularity of the condition was that it did not label children as either mentally retarded or mentally ill (Eyal 2010). By 2015 this condition now embraced the largest number of school pupils receiving Plans and resources either in or out of mainstream classes. The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee had, some years previously, devoted a whole session to reporting on people with autism and defined autism as “a life-long developmental disorder which affects the way people interact with the world” especially via social communication (House of Commons 2009:1). Diagnosis of autism and the autistic spectrum has expanded, with claims that 1 in a 100 young people are so affected, with a preponderance of boys (Lee 2016). Several Free schools for autism had been set up or were in preparation. There was also a preoccupation in the media – one comment being “You can’t move for autists on TV these days” (Hattenstone and Hattenstone 2016).<sup>4</sup> Much aggressive behaviour has also been ‘diagnosed’ as autistic. Diagnosing autism, developing behavioural programmes and opening special schools for autism has demanded an increase in professional services, medical, psychological, educational, and personnel. The Public Accounts Committee were concerned to make sure that careers staff, Job Centre and Benefit staff were informed of the condition and other disabilities, to prevent unemployment or benefit claims. Claims of autism are more prevalent from middle class young people and families, articulate enough to claim resources and many with the ‘diagnosis’ eventually succeed in education. Working and non-working class children are more likely to be candidates for exclusion without labelling into Pupil Referral Units and other alternative provision and, as noted, do not generally do well in their schooling.

Mental health is an increasing preoccupation in government and public awareness, demanding an increase in professional groups to deal with expanding assessments and treatments. The *Every Child Matters* Agenda in 2003 required ‘safe-guarding’ of children, to include their social and emotional well-being, and a Parliamentary group on Well-Being in Schools was formed. Ecclestone and Hayes were concerned with this *Dangerous Rise in Therapeutic Education* (2009), which had led to a deluge of interventions through the education system to assess the emotional needs and perceived vulnerability of children, young people and adults (ibid.:ix). The DfE produced lists of some 40 tests for assessing emotional competence, and thousands of teachers, learning assistants, disability liaison officers, learning support managers and therapists of all kinds were to be employed to improve children’s emotional well-being. Since Ecclestone and Hayes wrote there has been a further explosion of demands for resources and therapy to deal with children and young people ‘damaged’ by depression, school bullying and harassment – especially via social media, anorexia and self-harm specially in girls, and an increase in suicides of young men. Tragic life stories of celebrities – politicians, entertainers, sports people and others – sell well, and it has been argued that this was positive as such public disclosure provided relief to others

who could now admit to depression, self-harm and stress. However, Furedi analysed in some detail the popularisation of emotional and social vulnerabilities and the therapeutic response to it all (Furedi 2004) and concluded that it exacerbated professionals' low expectations of children. The stresses of modern life impinging on children and adults has certainly not gone unnoticed by government. Proliferating lists of disorders and syndromes, surveys of 'unhappiness' in children, a literature on emotional intelligence and emotional literacy, programmes for social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), and National Healthy Schools, plus the therapeutic industry, has led to an expansion of people in work who claim a professional status to deal with the problems.

At issue here is that while the government professes concern at the unhappiness of young people, education policies have actually increased stresses and tensions, by insisting on a narrowed subject centred 'academic' curriculum and also the ubiquitous use of testing, measurements, and competitiveness at all levels of the education system, which at the present time appear to be increasing. A rhetoric that educational qualifications must improve to compete with other countries to attain 'world class standards', disguises the reality that tests are devised to select and exclude, and create failure. The mental health of children tutored and trained to pass or fail the 11+ for the remaining grammar school places in England, is a continuing issue. The National Foundation for Educational Research and the Durham University Centre for Evaluating and Monitoring (CEM) continue to produce 11+ tests, and CEM sells copies of "A parent's guide to coping with the 11+" and samples of 11+ papers and even how to behave on "Results and allocations day" (CEM 2015). The new policy for measuring schools, via pupil attainment in the GCSE at 16, in eight subjects, with headline performance being success in five 'academic' subjects,<sup>5</sup> the 'English Baccalaureate' is accompanied by assertions that this will help chart the progress of disadvantaged children. In reality the raising of the bar on what counts as success in each subject will lead to more failure on the part of more disadvantaged pupils and more fears of failure in competitive schooling.

The Director of the Bristol University Centre *Mind World* noted that "we hope the government will become aware of the consequences of an overly academic agenda", which has consequences for all young people's mental health and subsequent success in wider life (Walker 2016:17). He could have added that countries where young people are so pressured by exams that they kill themselves – South Korea being a country with high scores in international tests, but with the highest number of youth suicides – might be an indication that unrelenting competitive pressure is not good for either the advantaged or the disadvantaged. The government while notionally committed to improving mental health could not apparently accept that the competitive pressure of tests and examinations was contributing to a rise in mental health and anxiety issues even among very young children. The government appointed a 'Mental Health Tzar', Natasha Devon, in 2015. Although she is a woman with much experience of mental health issues, she was unceremoniously sacked less than a year later for drawing attention to these

pressures. As she explained to a journalist, when she tried to open a dialogue with Ministers about “what is going on in education that is actually causing these mental health issues, it was like talking to a brick” (Aitkenhead 2016). Ecclestone and Hayes concluded their book with the forthright opinion that

the authoritarian tendencies of therapeutic education are taking root because many educators and policy-makers have given up on what state-funded education means because they no longer believe in it, and they cannot articulate the diminished dehumanising idea that lies behind this abandonment – namely that no child or young person is capable of education... and there is a loss of belief in human potential.

(Ecclestone and Hayes 2009:161)

## **Teachers and the school workforce**

Many may have given up hope but the majority of teachers still enter what is a teaching profession, increasingly described by government as a ‘schools workforce’, although it retains a major aspect of professionalism, that of a service ideal. Despite assertions of ‘bad teachers’ who must be discovered and sacked, few teachers actually stay in the profession if they find it difficult and are not suited to it, but there is a constant churn of staff, especially in ‘challenging’ schools, and there is currently a teacher shortage in England. Teachers certainly had functionalist sociologist Talcott Parsons on their side in the 1950s in regarding teaching as a profession that demanded training and pupils who would defer to authority. In his discussions of teaching being an important agent in socialising children and young people into acceptable norms and behaviour, and into acceptance of an achievement pattern of ‘knowing your place’ through competition with fellow students, he assumed that teachers will be admired for their professional competences. He also noted that even though women teachers had comparable competences they could be paid less to “save economy-minded school boards and taxpayers money” (Parsons 1954:240), a situation now resolved, apart from women being less likely to be in the more highly paid areas.

Conflict theorists have regarded teachers as ‘professional ideologists’ inculcating the ideas and beliefs of the ruling elites (Althusser 1972) or as symbolic agents of social control and cultural reproduction (Bernstein 1977). Gerald Grace (1978) described nineteenth-century elementary teachers as both agents of control of urban masses – often through a missionary ideology of ‘doing good’ and transmitters of a ‘high culture’ to the unwashed. But at the same time they were constrained by social and political and moral expectations of what constituted a ‘good teacher’, by examination boards and by what constituted current valid knowledge. Towards the end of the twentieth century, a majority of teachers in England were educated to degree level and ‘trained’ in university departments of education, although from the 1990s other entries to teaching developed, notably direct training by schools and a Teach First programme inherited from America, by which graduates were recruited to teach a minimum of two years in difficult schools, under

supervision. More recently the employment of untrained teachers in Free Schools and Academies has been allowed. It is not clear how this fits with a government initiative in 2016 to set up a College of Teaching, an independent chartered professional body for teachers, intended to raise professional standards. A previous General Teaching Council set up in 2000 lasted 10 years before it was abolished. No government over the past 30 years has been interested in cooperating with teacher unions, apart from, occasionally, state and private head teacher associations.

By the later twentieth century in both England and the USA, government and political respect for teachers as professionals had collapsed into a continuing ‘discourse of derision’, particularly aimed in England at teachers in comprehensive schools, as Stephen Ball noted (Ball 2003). Schools and teachers were expected to conform to and carry out central government directives, initiatives, and reforms with minimal, if any, consultation or agreement. Teachers including head teachers, or ‘School leaders’ as they were increasingly described, were largely ignored in educational decision-making, and parents were encouraged to criticise and police teachers, ‘holding schools to account’ as the rhetoric went. In 2015 there were some 440,000 full-time teachers (in terms of full-time equivalents) in English schools, but a YouGov poll of teachers reported that 53 per cent of teachers were planning to leave teaching, and government statistics showed that 4 out of 10 newly qualified teachers leave after one year. Reasons for this were given as low morale, excessive workloads, worry about pupil assessment and a narrow curriculum and among older teachers anxiety that the retirement age had been raised.

## **TAs and SEN support**

In 1990 David Hargreaves at Cambridge University, suggested a tiered profession of career teachers, assistant and associate teachers – the latter people with particular skills who might come into schools on a part-time basis (Hargreaves 1990). In the event a sub-profession of teaching assistants (TAs) developed, and by 2014 there were 255,000 full time equivalent TAs working in schools, predominantly employed to assist with special needs and lower attaining pupils and often not paid for holidays and out of school work. With TAs and other support staff, which could include those teaching English as an Additional Language, representing over a third of the school workforce debates arose as to whether they were simply para-professionals or semi-professionals, as many of the other ancillary workers and newer professionals have been described. Teachers’ aides in the USA were similarly described as para-professional. In England from the 1940s secondary schools of all types had mainly streamed and tracked pupils into different curriculum levels, with remedial departments being a feature until the later 1980s. The 1993 Education Act, as noted, introduced the first Code of Practice on SEN and required every school to appoint a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Pupils from special school closures being included in mainstream schools were to be the responsibility of the SENCO, as were lower attaining pupils. The SEND Department (the D being added after the 1995 Disabilities

Act) rapidly became an important feature in schools. The ability to ‘empire-build’ in secondary schools became irresistible, especially as other teachers, pre-occupied with credentialing as many of the high and middle ability pupils as possible to satisfy demands of the central government inspectorate, were happy to pass over low achieving or special needs pupils to SEND departments and teaching and learning assistants. In some schools departments renamed themselves as Learning Support Teams with Learning Support Managers controlling the workloads of TAs.

Teaching assistants, as research subsequently demonstrated, were primarily responsible for pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties and those not making adequate progress (Blatchford et al. 2012). This study noted that this was actually a profound change in schools, although “one which has to a large extent occurred with little debate or public discussion” (ibid.:6). Initially described as a ‘Mum’s Army’, TAs eventually received patchy training via local authorities or colleges, and their qualifications varied from those at GCSE level to those with a degree. From 2006, with the completion of a National Agreement on a remodelled teaching force, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) were included, with the government producing a set of competencies for their deployment. Although TAs were not intended to ‘teach’ pupils, but to work under a qualified teacher direction, in reality TAs have become the primary educators of pupils with SEN labels and lower attainers, and it is questionable whether TA support has a negative effect on pupil progress, especially if they are substituting for trained teachers. By 2015 the government funded *Education Endowment Foundation* produced guidance on the deployment of TAs, also noting that in mainstream schools they were regularly the primary educators of pupils in most need (EEF 2015).

## **Professional influence**

The huge expansion of professional and ancillary professionals employed in schools and colleges to deal with the increasing numbers of children and young people regarded as having special educational needs, of being of low ability or disruptive, is a necessary development in a mass education system. Reasons for this include: parental demands for resources and schools given they were promised ‘choice’; fear that without extra help their children will not keep up in the education competition and the expanding number of organisations dedicated to claiming recognition and support for newer ‘conditions’. There was also a realisation by the government that they would have a surplus population to deal with in the economy unless more resources for basic levels of education were provided, but this was accompanied by a rationing of superior kinds of education via wealth – a necessity for private schooling – and testing, to produce hierarchies of schools and children.

Of note is the extraordinary resilience of the psychological profession over the past 150 years in influencing the perceptions and beliefs of policy-makers dealing with the young people. Assumptions are that neuropsychology will show how better brains can be produced, providing the upper and middle classes are not shown to have ‘deprived’ brains. Psychologists and allied

professions are also expected to mitigate the stresses of modern life, which include the competitive testing regimes, and improve deteriorating mental health. The movement to discover ‘resilience’ and character building is also a psychological province. Teachers, far from being the admired professionals Talcott Parsons envisaged, are subject to a relentless ideology of constant school and pupil improvement via higher test scores, with frightening penalties if judged inadequate. Sub-professions of teacher assistants have developed to deal with lower attainers and the ‘special needs’. Teachers in alternative provision, schools and units dealing with disruptive students who interrupt the smooth process of credentialing in mainstream classrooms, are fast becoming another important sub profession. Willard Waller’s (1932) assertion that teachers and parents are usually in conflict may still resonate, as the next chapter discusses the parental views and grievances concerning the education of children and young people with special needs, disability and poor attainments. The chapter also discusses the negative ways in which the general public are invited to view those with disabilities and special needs.

## Notes

- 1 One disastrous consequence of such an uncritical acceptance of supposed medical knowledge was the claim in a 1998 paper by medical researcher Andrew Wakefield that the MMR vaccine (against measles, mumps and rubella) caused autism and bowel disorder. This led to a reduction in take-up of the vaccine and resulting illness and deaths from these diseases. The British Medical Council conducted an inquiry of fraud and misconduct against Dr Wakefield and he was subsequently struck off the Medical Register, although he has continued to claim his research was valid.
- 2 Philip Carter’s book (2015) has chapters covering verbal and non-verbal ‘culture fair’ intelligence tests, tests of calculation and logic, technical aptitude, mental ability, IQ tests creativity and personality tests. He wrongly attributes the first use of the term ‘intelligence quotient’ to Lewis Terman (p.103) and asserts that “Because IQ is hereditary it is not possible to increase your actual score” (p. 106). He has presumably not come across Flynn’s work. He notes that “intelligence tests only measure one’s ability to reason” (p. 107). Alfred Binet in 1905 defined intelligence as the ability to reason well, to judge well and to comprehend well.
- 3 Examples of studies purporting to be of use to teachers are Rosemary Sage’s claims that children can be taught to use the two halves of their brains more effectively (Sage 2009). She was invited to lecture in the House of Commons in 2009, and a reply to her lecture was given by Professor Peter Chatterton, who at the University of Hertfordshire had developed a change management programme, “Change Academy for Blended Learning Enhancement” (CABLE), which aims to improve student learning. Kate Arney, in the *Times Educational Supplement*, recently reported on work by neuroscientist, April Benasich, who claims that her work with baby brains allows prediction of which ones will have language problems by three and struggle with literacy later on (Arney 2016). Possible users might be alarmed at the accompanying picture of a baby with its head wired up.
- 4 The Hattenstone article was written by a father and his autistic daughter who had ‘struggled’ through school and university to acquire a degree.
- 5 The schools journal *Schools Week* (2016) produced a guide to the complex changes in the tests for young people at KS4 (the GCSE, and tests post-16). As the Head of Policy at the Oxford and Cambridge and RSA Exam Boards noted in the introduction “This year’s performance tables will be the first in which all education

providers for pre-16 and 16–19 will be measured on a new set of incentives” (*Schools Week* 2016:4). The number crunching by administrators in schools, local authorities, Academy chains and the DfE would not be possible without vast numbers of computers and people to operate them. It could be argued that all this is a waste of time and money and, as many have suggested, abolishing the examinations at 16 and offering a Diploma from 14–19 might actually improve teaching, learning, behaviour and retention.

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## CHAPTER 7

# PARENTAL INTERESTS AND GRIEVANCES

Local Authorities must ensure that children, their parents and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.

(Code of Practice. DfE 2014:20)

Who gives a damn about intellectually disabled people and their families?

(Chrissie Rogers 2015)

In western countries parents are subject to a constant stream of advice on how to bring up their children. Governments, an array of professionals, media ‘experts’, and journalists, are eager to turn parents into anxious subjects, unsure of their capabilities, and there is a large parenting literature, much of it with a psychological focus. Parenting has become ‘psychologised’ with advice on child rearing and education, expressed in a language of psychology, and parents are expected to learn how to develop parenting skills following the disciplines of psychology, including neuropsychology, which will now tell parents about their child’s developing brain (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012). In official publications parents are usually lumped together as a homogeneous mass. In reality, in England in 2015, of the 13.8 million households living with dependent children, ‘parents’ included married, cohabiting, single, divorced, carers, white, Black, migrant, minority, straight, gay, older, younger, working class, middle class, upper class. Depending on all these attributes, parents will have different experiences in different parts of the education system and receive different treatment from central and local government, schools, professionals and the media. On encountering the childcare and education system they will receive different treatment according to whether their child is regarded early on as able, less able, disruptive or disabled.

In England, what parents with children identified as having some sort of special educational need or disability have in common is that over the years they have been largely treated in cursory and patronising ways, and despite a rhetoric of parents as partners, have often been inadequately involved and consulted, misinformed and overwhelmed by claims of professional expertise. As the two contradictory quotations above illustrate, while official literature and guidance stresses concern for the involvement of parents as partners in decision-making about their children, the reality can be very different. In

particular the working class parents of difficult and lower attaining children have often been derided and insulted, and parents of severely disabled children received very little sympathy from the government or general public. Although official publications address ‘parents’, most attention, programmes, advice and admonishments are aimed at mothers. In 2013, the blogging site *Mumsnet* set up a space for special needs and disabilities labelled “By Parents For Parents” but most of the information is aimed at mothers (Moorhead 2013; Rogers 2011). As other chapters in this book have indicated, mothers have usually taken the blame for the production of children regarded as impaired, less worthy or troublesome. Mothering of such children has always been a matter for public scrutiny and strictures by governments, health, educational, psychological and other professionals, in ways that fathering never has been.

## **A rhetoric of parental involvement**

In England the number of school aged pupils with SEN labels has gone down from around 21 per cent in 2010. This is largely due to a decrease in those labelled in schools as having some sort of special need but without Statements/Plans, the School Action Plus category having disappeared to cut costs. Of the 15.4 per cent pupils identified as ‘having SEN’ in 2015 (1,301,445), it can be assumed that they have or had two parents. This means 2,602,890 parents, 472,330 of them being parents of the 2.7 per cent children with a disability serious enough for a Plan, are coping with the SEN system. If over two and a half million parents are officially parents of children and young people with recognised learning difficulties and disabilities, when parents of lower attaining children and disruptive young people are added there are possibly over a third of households in England coping in various ways with an education system that regards them as particularly difficult. In the USA the US Bureau of Statistics has reported that one in nine students under 18 have some kind of a disability or special need and over 20 million families have a family member with a disability. But there is never a special parental population that can be identified at any one time as recipients of government, administrative or professional attention. There is rather a category of shifting composition, size and definition, although the main permanent characteristic is that any current members are regarded as deficient in not producing young people who can accommodate to current definitions of normality and social behaviour. Exceptions to this may be upper and upper middle class parents who have usually made private arrangements for any ‘defective’ children, or whose behaviour is often tolerated as eccentric.<sup>1</sup> It was noted in Chapter 2 that feeble-minded gentlefolk were kept at home to carry on the ordinary amusements of their class (Tredgold 1908) and in the USA Lazerson (1983) had noted that as special education expanded it did not incorporate the children of wealthy or even middle class parents at that time.

The increasingly competitive nature of education systems, and insistence of success in test and higher levels of qualifications, has led many middle class parents to demand labels and resources to help their ‘less able’ children

achieve. The expansion of a ‘SEN industry’ (Tomlinson 2012) has largely been due to middle class and aspirant parents who fear the consequences if their children do not do well in schools, and the proliferation of categories and labels is one consequence of parental demands. The English school choice policies created by successive governments, plus the developing diversity of schools have, as Ball pointed out, increased the possibility of the middle class to use strategies and ‘opportunistic behaviour’ to use social skills and capital advantages to have their children placed in desired schools, whether in or out of mainstream schooling (Ball 2008:132). The recent creation of Free special schools for dyslexia and autism are examples of middle class educational entrepreneurialism.

There is also evidence that many parents prefer to claim that their children have medical, neurological or therapeutic conditions. One Special Educational Needs co-ordinator in a large English city noted that “some parents are quite vociferous in their demands, they are often quite receptive to their children having a mild learning difficulty as they know it will bring in extra resources” and with behaviour issues some want their children labelled as ADHD and given medication. The pattern is similar in the USA where whole families claim to be suffering from various ‘conditions’ especially autism and anxiety. Teachers are often sceptical about these claims (Tomlinson 2012:278). But generally parents are expected to acquiesce and be grateful for any professional help or resources they receive. Max Weber noted that as powerful interests permeate education systems a key concept in domination of one group over another is authority (Weber 1972). It is an acceptance of legitimate authority, as well as outright coercion, that ensures the compliance of some groups to others. This is important in explaining why parents come to accept or contest professional judgements on ‘what is best’ for their child. Parents are not supposed to ‘know best’ about their child’s difficulties and those who question their inferior power position can easily be labelled as a problem family or a pushy parent (Vincent et al. 2010). Furedi has forcefully pointed out that the politicisation of parenting is a disturbing element in British society. It is a colonising of people’s private lives, with the assumption that all of society’s problems are caused by poor parenting (Furedi 2010). This, as documented below, is increasingly the case for working class parents of children with learning difficulties and lower attainments.

## **Parental rights**

Relationships between parents and schools may have moved on somewhat since Willard Waller wrote that in the USA “parents and teachers usually live in a condition of mutual distrust and enmity” (Waller 1932:68), although distrust has more recently been actively encouraged in England via choice and competition between schools and ‘accountability’ of teachers. From the 1970s in England there was more concern both with home school relationships and with parental rights. A Green Paper on Education in 1977 declared that “The government are of the view that parents should be given more information about schools and should be consulted more widely” (DES 1977:5) and a

report from the Taylor committee that year also stressed that parents should have a commitment to the school, and recommended at least two parent governors per school (Taylor 1977). The Warnock Committee included references to parental involvement in their report and concluded that “We have insisted throughout this report that the successful education of children with special needs is dependent on the full involvement of their parents” (DES 1978:150). But there have always been problems bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality, and there is no democratic process in the English education system that actually legitimates parents as equal partners in education. The partnership envisaged is more a marginalising and controlling of parents masked by a rhetoric of congeniality (Vincent and Tomlinson 1997). More recently, Gedge, a primary teacher with specialist SEND knowledge, who writes supporting parents, has noted that the dialogue between schools and parents of children with SEND continues to be one of conflict (Gedge quoted in Hughes 2016). From the early 1990s parents, under a rubric of choice and competition between schools, have been encouraged to become vigilantes, policing and criticising schools and teachers, rather than becoming co-partners in the education of their children. Parents were to be regarded as consumers and clients but still had some involvement in governance of schools. By 2016 a White Paper suggested removing parents as school governors. Governing bodies should now “seek out people with the right skills for governance” and there will be no requirement to reserve places for elected parents (DfE 2016:51). Parents can be encouraged to serve on Governing Boards but their role is to ‘support their child’s learning and demand more from schools’ (ibid.:65), and of course to be ‘customers’, threatening to complain and move their children if not satisfied with the product.

Legal rights for parents of children regarded as having special needs or disabilities have always been ambiguous. A 1921 Act created a certification process by which reluctant parents could be compelled to send their children to special schools – a requirement not technically removed until 1981. Parental rights under subsequent Education Acts have amounted to a grudging appeals system to local authorities, to tribunals, to Health and Well-being Boards and occasionally to the courts. It is still the case, as Sewell noted in 1981,

Parents who are trusted to be ‘intelligent’ and not make a fuss, are offered ‘performances’ in the name of partnership. Those who are not to be trusted can often be persuaded, those who object are subjected to forceful and articulate members of the gate keeping professions.

(Sewell 1981:170)

The confusions created by the expanded number of professionals, who, as documented in the previous chapter, may all claim to be making decisions on a child, and the complexities of multi-agency workings, can negate the claims that professionals are working in partnership. Parents still experience fragmented provision from the practitioners they work with (Stone and Foley 2014). While statements of special need (now Education, Health and Care

Plans) are legally enforceable documents specifying provision children are entitled to, local authorities who are responsible for the Plans have developed a reputation for obstruction and misinformation. The 2014 Code of Practice was intended to make clearer what provision was a legal requirement and what was ‘on offer’ to parents and continued the rhetoric that the involvement of parents in decision-making processes about their children is important. Whether this makes clear what the parental rights are is questionable. The Code specifies that local authorities *must* ensure that parents and young people are informed enough to participate in decisions about them, whereas early years providers, schools and colleges only *should* ensure they are actively supported. The Code noted that in drawing up Plans “Parents views are important ... but at times parents, teachers and others may have differing expectations of how a child’s needs are best met ... sometimes these discussions can be challenging” (DfE 2014:21). This may be an understatement as decisions on who gets Plans and who is involved in decision-making are actually creating unhelpful and stressful situations for many parents (Nettleton and Friel 2015).<sup>2</sup> It is, however, more difficult for professionals to regard middle-class parents as deficient or incompetent and these parents have been more active in forming or joining pressure groups and associations.

An early journal, *Parents Voice*, in 1978 recommended that parents should “Challenge the system, challenge the resources, question the professionals and set your sights on the provision you want” (*Parents Voice* 1978:10). While this kind of advice may be possible for some middle class parents, especially those determined to find places for their children in ‘good’ inclusive schools, it is mostly impossible for working class parents. But it is also difficult for all parents with children with severe disabilities who are less likely to be heard sympathetically (Rogers 2016). The contempt with which parents can be treated was illustrated by the intention of an Academy trust in the north of England to bus children with special needs and disabilities to another school than the one they attended, without parental consultation. As one mother commented, “It’s discriminatory, they want to keep all the clever children at Ashton ... and put children like my son into a less highly achieving school” (Perraudin 2016). Although this case gave rise to a legal challenge, it may be difficult for parents in the USA to understand the lack of legal involvement and rights given to parents in England, especially where special education is concerned. It has already been noted in Chapter 3, that legal challenges and procedures concerning special education placements, funding and resources have long been a feature in the USA. All those involved in special and inclusive education must be aware of the legal rights and protections for young people with disabilities and all professionals must have knowledge of both Federal and State law and the resolving of disagreements between parents, professionals and administrators (Umpstead et al. 2015).

## **Dysfunctional families and the educational underclass**

Government involvement in parenting accelerated under the New Labour government, with assumptions that the social contract between state and

citizens was breaking down and parents in particular needed both more regulation to encourage personal empowerment, and checks on the irresponsible parenting behaviour on the part of lower social classes. A Crime and Disorder Act in 1998 introduced Anti-Social Behavioural Orders (ASBOS) for unruly children, and by 2005 Prime Minister Tony Blair was announcing parenting orders and behavioural contracts to enforce acceptable social behaviour (Blair 2005). A 2007 paper *Every Parent Matters* explained state intrusion into parenting in terms of the complications of social and economic life, changes in family structures, links between lower class family life, poor educational achievement and consequent minimal social mobility. While middle class parents were to assist policies of choice and diversity in schools, lower class parents were to be improved and helped to be responsible parents producing respectful, well-behaved young (DfES 2007). As Ball noted, “feckless parents” were to be separated from the well-behaved by expert help and intervention (Ball 2008:201). A committee, chaired by Liberal MP Norman Lamb (also Chair of the Special Educational Needs Consortium), was appointed to investigate ways in which the confidence of parents in the SEN system could be improved. It received 1,941 replies from parents, again treating ‘parents’ as a homogeneous group, and the comments were largely from knowledgeable parents interested in claiming Statements of Special Need (Lamb 2009). The Education Secretary replied to the committee that the government was working to ensure parents had confidence in the SEN decision-making system while at the same time producing yet another Paper claiming that it was concerned to ensure parents face up to their responsibilities (DCSF 2009). For the working classes help via parenting classes and home-school contracts to ensure good behaviour in schools was to be provided. As Gerwitz pointed out, the New Labour policies were part of a long history of state-sponsored attempts to transform the parenting behaviour of the working classes and conform to an ideal-type of middle class family life (Gerwitz 2001). The ideal did not include families with children with disabilities, learning difficulties or troublesome behaviour.

By the early twenty-first century the nineteenth-century perceptions about the behaviour and deficiencies of lower social classes had been resurrected and reestablished, especially by a language of dysfunctional families. After street disorders and rioting in August 2011 in London and other towns, by both white and minority young people, after the police shooting of an unarmed young Black man, Tony Blair again returned to the theme of responsible behaviour. He dismissed explanations of growing income inequality between rich and poor for any disorders, and blamed rioting on “people from families that are profoundly dysfunctional, operating on completely different terms from the rest of society ... many of them shaping up that way by the time they are in primary school or even nursery” (Blair 2011). Later, it transpired that a third of the young people involved in the rioting had special needs or had been excluded from school. A persistent political assumption is that deficient parenting is responsible for a range of social and educational problems, and there is a refusal to consider the economic and social policies that lead to poverty and structural inequalities.

The Conservative government possibly had an even worse record than Labour in terms of handing out blame for social and economic problems, although in 1974 Keith Joseph lost a chance for leadership of the Conservative party, by a speech in which he claimed, in a throw-back to earlier eugenic views, that the degeneration of society was caused by “a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world .... some are of low intelligence, most of low educational attainment” (Joseph 1974:3). It was lower class single mothers in particular who were producing “the problem children, the future unmarried mothers, the delinquents, the denizens of our borstals, subnormal educational establishments, prisons and hostels for drifters” (ibid.). This was blame too far for some members of the Party and they elected Margaret Thatcher as their leader instead.

### **Minority parents**

While it is clear that ‘parents’ are not the homogeneous mass addressed in English governments reports, commissions and policies, it often suits policy-makers to elide groups as though class, gender and race did not exist. This was made clear in the UK, as Chapter 2 noted, when it was African Caribbean boys who were major recipients of special education labels, especially educational subnormality, but parental concerns were ignored (Tomlinson 1981). Despite the voiced objections of parents, the placement of Black children – especially boys – in schools, classes and units for learning and behavioural issues continued. Crenshaw in 1995 used the term intersectionality to describe how different forms of inequality intersect and impact on groups (Crenshaw 1995). Class, race, disability and special education systems intersect in ways that have impinged on the lives of black parents in both the USA and England for years. They have been the target for accusations that their parenting is to blame for the ‘underachievement’ of their children, their presence in special education, and their progress into unemployment and delinquency. Former Black Chief Education Officer Gus John noted that in England

When black youths read about themselves, it goes something like this. You are a persistently underperforming group, you are six times more likely to be excluded from school, you may be in a gang or about to join one. The likely cause of your condition are absentee fathers and the absence of male role models, and being surrounded by women who cannot control or motivate you.

(Foreword in Byfield 2008:ix)

While lower class black boys have always been the recipients of labels and exclusions, the black middle classes in England are just as likely to encounter low expectations in schools and Black parents “are only too aware of the potential dangers of being negatively labelled in schools” (Gillborn et al. 2016:40) and some parents avoid claiming a formal assessment for a Plan. In both the USA and England it is minority students, especially Black males,

who are more likely to be in lower sets/tracks and or “handed a third-class education on the basis of pseudo-medicalized labels” (ibid.:54).

After years of attempting to explain inequalities in educational achievement as due to low aspirations low expectations and delinquent behaviour, governments of all parties in England eventually became notionally committed to closing achievement gaps between social and ethnic groups. This largely consisted of funding research and data collection to show the lower attainments of black, mixed race and other smaller minority groups, the Roma from Eastern Europe, perhaps understandably, being persistent lower achievers in literacy, numeracy and examination passes. Political concerns were to compare ‘model minorities’, for example, Indian and Chinese groups, with lower achieving groups and also to complain that some minorities were higher attainers than white working class boys. The boys in question were largely those on free school meals and thus in poverty. As noted in the previous chapter, the current government also requested researchers to explain why some individuals had more ‘resilience’ to the effects of deprivation than others (Strand 2015). Trying to find what makes some young people, marked by poverty and race resilient in a society that is increasing the gap between rich and poor, the highly educated and the specially educated, could be dismissed as laughable. But it could be an acknowledgement that the governments have given up any attempts to pursue any policies over the redistribution of wealth and incomes, and improve housing and economic policies.

## **Conservative policies**

The Conservative views on the dysfunctional poor whose failings lead to educational and economic failures, and which underpinned many of the subsequent punitive policies impinging on poor people and the disabled, continued to resonate with nineteenth-century views. It is now a well-known story in the UK that in 2002 during his short term as Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan-Smith visited the Easterhouse area in Glasgow, an area of deprivation and poverty, which other politicians and celebrities had visited on “fleeting stints of hand-wringing poorism” (Gentleman 2010:8). He was so alarmed by the bleakness that he began a moral crusade against ‘Broken Britain’. His major concern was the “growing number of dysfunctional families who are progressively cut off from what you or I might consider the norms of society – the normal process of education, aspiration, work, and of balanced families that are themselves generally productive” (ibid.:11). There was no mention of the economic policies that had caused the poverty due to, for example, the closure of Glasgow shipyards and subsequent unemployment, deficient housing policies, or the lack of any industrial strategies that might have alleviated the poverty. Instead, he opened an ‘independent’ think-tank, the *Centre for Social Justice* to build an alliance of organisations that would reverse a social breakdown in Britain. The Centre subsequently produced a series of reports on *Breakdown Britain* (Duncan-Smith 2006, 2007) and *Breakthrough Britain* (Duncan-Smith 2009) and a paper on the family (Centre for Social Justice 2010), this last insisting that marriage was a solution

to family problems. The Centre identified five ‘pathways to poverty’, which as noted in Chapter 2 of this book, were similar to the social problems identified by the 1908 Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded. Family breakdown, educational failure, economic dependence, debt and addiction caused a social breakdown apparently costing the state £102 billion a year – a statistic with no apparent source. Duncan-Smith was familiar with Perry’s 2002 article showing ‘normal’ and ‘deprived’ brains and in an interview in 2010 again suggested that what he considered the abuse of some children, which included mothers having different partners, affected brain development (Gentleman 2010). He also suggested limiting child benefit to a family’s first two children, to encourage ‘behavioural change’, a cut due to take place in 2017. As Toynbee pointed out this appeared to be a plan “to control the lower orders, stop them breeding” (Toynbee 2014), although middle class families with more than two children would also lose out.

Perry’s brain scan picture had, as noted in Chapter 5, been used by Duncan-Smith and MP Graham Allen to link maternal neglect to enduring social problems and has led other commentators to suggest, as one did, *Chilling Brain Scan Shows the Impact of a Mother’s Love on a Child’s Brain Size* (Hsu 2012). The impact of such views has reaffirmed a popular and government view that there is a persistent educational underclass, in which “children from the poorest homes risk becoming an educational underclass starting school in nappies and behaving like toddlers” (Williams 2013). The negative view of the lower class poor was again reinforced by a *Troubled Families* programme instigated by the Coalition government after 2010, which claimed that there were 120,000 troubled families in England costing £9 billion a year. Levitas examined these claims, found the figures and costs to be spurious and noted that such policy encourages public hostility toward the poor as well as justifying punitive policies (Levitas 2012).

At the same time that governments were blaming poor families for their educational and social failings, they also claimed that they were producing policies to alleviate educational disadvantage and in a familiar rhetoric – breaking the links between family poverty and educational disadvantage. In England in 2011, the then Minister of Education, Michael Gove, inspired by a visit from the US Education Secretary, Arne Duncan (a strong supporter of Charter Schools in the USA) and President Obama’s ‘Race to the Top’ legislation, gave £135 million to an Education Endowment Foundation<sup>5</sup> intended to support research studies discovering effective strategies to raise the achievements of the disadvantaged and low attainers. To date some 100 studies by educational researchers have involved over 700,000 pupils and one in four schools, and the Foundation has produced ‘toolkits’ of teaching approaches, with claims that high quality research evidence can support schools to improve educational outcomes. The Department for Education also funded Parenting Support programmes, one being a Parenting Early Intervention programme aimed at low socio-economic parents of children exhibiting or at risk of behavioural difficulties. Unsurprisingly, 62 per cent of the children in this research group were boys, 49 per cent taking free school meals, 12 per cent with statements of SEN, and 56 per cent exhibiting a

range of behavioural difficulties (Lindsay 2015). Disadvantaged children have, since 2011, been the recipients of some £2.4 billion of Pupil Premium funding, and schools are urged to use the Education Endowment Foundation toolkit to spend this money wisely. Claims that these interventions are ‘closing the gap’ between the poor and the richer children, are actually closing the gaps between the poor and the slightly less poor. All this is a depressingly familiar story of attempts to alleviate the effects of policies that sustain a highly and increasingly unequal society.

## **Punishing the poor and disabled**

The importance of the views and beliefs of Iain Duncan-Smith is that under the Coalition and then the Conservative governments from 2010 he was appointed the Work and Pensions Minister and instigated a series of reforms to reduce social benefits for the unemployed and particularly for the disabled. The policies were accompanied by government, and media denigration of benefit claimants and developing hostility to disabled and special needs claimants. It is now well known that from 1979 a radical restructuring of public welfare in Britain had taken place. Reforms towards a market-oriented economy in public services – health, education, housing and other social services – were undertaken from all governments from that time. The reforms included the farming-out of services to agencies, and private companies, often with little scrutiny. The ideology of both the Labour government up to 2010 and the subsequent Coalition and Conservative governments, was that all young people and adults must work, whether work was available or not, and welfare benefits must be reduced to a minimum. Scrutiny must be made of those claiming disability benefits or those unable to work, and they should be subject to the same market competition as the able. Thus in 2008, under Prime Minister Gordon Brown, some *Remploy* factories, which had been set up specially to employ disabled people, were closed down despite trade union protests (Davies 2008). By 2012, all these workshops, which provided a workspace for severely disabled people, were closed.

The Coalition government in 2010 set out to reduce numbers of people claiming a disability, sickness or incapacity benefit, including those with mental health problems. Claimants for an Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or a Disability and Living Allowance (DLA) were subject to a fitness for work tests with the threat of loss of benefits, a frightening prospect for the parents of disabled young people. In an extraordinary move the assessment process was outsourced to a French firm ATOS and there was immediate concern over their assessments, which awarded points for ‘wellness to work’. Eventually, the Chief Executive of the panel responsible for monitoring this resigned, claiming that the “Department for Work and Pensions was committed to pushing 11,000 people a week through a flawed system” (Gentleman 2012). ATOS was notionally sacked and the giant firm Capita appointed but ATOS was then reappointed to assess claimants again for a Personal Independent Payment (PIP), which was to replace the DLA. By 2015, payments of PIPs to disabled people had been delayed for over a

year, with consequent poverty for individuals and families. Assumptions that many claimants were fit for work gave rise to public hostility with abuse directed at claimants of all ages, and charities warned that even young people with disabilities were being portrayed as workshy scroungers claiming benefits fraudulently (Walker 2012).

As Minister responsible for benefit reductions, Duncan-Smith explained welfare sanctions on a BBC programme in 2010 claiming that it was ‘a sin’ if people failed to take up work (BBC Radio 4 2010), and in 2012 he changed the definition of child poverty, claiming once again that a source of such poverty was worklessness and welfare dependency, addiction, educational failure, debt or family breakdown (Ramesh 2012). He introduced the idea of a universal credit system, rolling up benefits claimants received into a single benefit, a scheme that has not to date proved a success. He also warned that “giving money to the poor does not help them take responsibility for their lives”, once again using his well-worn reasons for the causes of poverty (Bingham 2012). In March 2016, in a surprising move, he resigned as a Government Minister, after the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced a further £1.3 billion of cuts to benefits for the disabled, claiming that the cuts were “morally indefensible” (Helm 2016).<sup>4</sup> Whatever the reasons for his resignation, the reforms had done harm to poor and disabled young people and their families. The theme of blaming the poor, in language very similar to the reports documented above, were present in the Queen’s speech to Parliament on 18 May 2016 that in the coming year “My government will tackle poverty and the causes of deprivation, including family instability, addiction and debt”. The speech also promised the government would introduce new indicators for “measuring life chances” (Stewart and Asthana 2016).<sup>5</sup> How measuring life chances will be developed and impinge on poor families, and what measures will be taken that would actually improve life chances, is unclear. What was clear was that parents and families were once again regarded as creating their own deprivation rather than any structural policies concerning the economy or widening income inequalities.

## **Hate and abuse**

In England the lives of poor and disabled children and young people and their parents, have been severely affected by a programme of austerity and benefit cuts and there is little evidence that governments are sympathetic. In a Parliamentary debate in 2014, a Minister and former investment banker Lord Freud was reported as claiming that the disabled were “not worth the minimum wage”, although Prime Minister David Cameron suggested he apologise for this. While there have been tax cuts for the wealthy, the lives of those with disabilities have been affected by continuous cuts, and also by vilification of those on any kind of benefit as a scrounger. Hate crimes against people with disabilities have been rising year on year. In 2009 Fiona Pilkington killed her disabled daughter and herself, after what a coroner described as ‘years of torment’ from local youths. A report from the charity Mencap estimated that up to 90 per cent of disabled young people and adults have

endured verbal harassment or violence. They also found that police officers were often patronising or dismissive when such crimes were reported, and one officer took the view that “Disability hate crime is often the poor relation of racist hate crime” (Walker 2011). The Equality and Human Rights Commission also set up an inquiry into disability hate. A lead commissioner in the study, and a wheelchair user, noted that he too had suffered abuse, with ‘Kripple’ daubed on his walls. The Commission recorded that disabled people were four times more likely to be victims of crime than the non-disabled (Ramesh 2010). Variations on abuse continued – either overt – in 2016 two soldiers being jailed for assaulting two disabled teenagers (Quinn 2016) or covert – the dating site *OkCupid* asking in its screening process for would-be partners “Would the world be a better place if people with low IQs were not allowed to reproduce” (Meikle 2016). Although there are very few public objections to such behaviour, there is an occasional attempt to educate a wider public into the realities for parents of bringing up severely disabled children. A BBC Four programme followed the upbringing of children who need care for life – the parents being probably the best examples of love for children ever seen on TV (BBC 4 2016).<sup>6</sup>

Parents of children and young people with severe learning difficulties and disabilities are aware that that abuse and unacceptable treatment is not confined to individuals. State and private institutions, entrusted with the care of young people, can be uncaring and abusive. In 2011 a BBC *Panorama* programme filmed abuse and neglect of learning disabled patients at Winterbourne View, a private establishment taking NHS money supposedly to care for young people (Tregelles 2016). While promises were made to close such establishments, in 2016 many were still open. In 2013 an 18-year-old young man, diagnosed with epilepsy and autism, was admitted to a unit run by the NHS Southern Health Trust. Left unsupervised he was found drowned in the bath. His mother, Sarah Ryan, a sociologist working at Oxford University in health sciences, raised the issues of abuse via blogs, a Justice Campaign, and in other ways, but has noted that despite the reports and promises, little is done to protect the rights of people with severe learning difficulties and their families (Ryan 2016).

## **Parental expectations**

Over 30 years ago, when the integration and inclusion of all children and young people into mainstream education began to take place, a major argument presented to parents was not only that the education of those with difficulties and disabilities would be improved, but that the education of the non-disabled and so-called normal would be improved by helping them grow up and create a society knowing about and accepting of difference. But as the abuse and hate documented above indicates, this has not happened. While there is undoubtedly an increase in acceptance of some groups, helped on by the Para-Olympics, and disabled veterans organisations, there is no general acceptance of those regarded as ‘not normal’. As Davis noted in 1995, being normal is effective because it appears invisible, “Normalcy is the degree zero

of modern existence” (Davis 1995:170). The rhetoric of benevolence attempts to cover policies and attitudes that are tolerant of difference, but the reality is the implementation of policies that are the opposite of inclusion and acceptance. Rogers has forcefully pointed out that while claims that tolerance of difference of the ‘non-normal’ has accompanied legislation and there has been some change in cultural perceptions, this is not acceptance. “Tolerance, ideologically, is the dark side of diversity, as neoliberalism utters empty rhetoric” (Rogers 2016:5).

If parents of low attaining young people from Black and other minority groups, all those with labels of special educational needs and disabilities and that intractable group the disadvantaged lower attainers are added together, then, as noted earlier, over a third of all households are, to turn the understanding around, struggling with a dysfunctional education and welfare system and the policies that sustain it. To the paternalistic views that these parents and families must be helped to improve themselves and overcome their problems, via expanding professional assistance that ‘knows best’, have been added newer punitive beliefs in poor quality genes, mothering behaviour that stunts brains, a general public encouraged to view resources and benefits for disabilities as unnecessary expense, and attempts to find ‘resilience’ among the poor. What is at stake is actually the situation of individuals ‘educated’ as special or lower attainers in a competitive global capitalism. The following chapter examines the vocational training and placement of the young people in assumed knowledge economies and the social inclusion that is the supposed goal of educational inclusion.

## Notes

- 1 There is almost no scrutiny or information on upper class dullness and disability or behaviour that might merit censor if performed by lower social classes. For example, the present Queen’s grandmother (Queen Mary) gave birth to a boy with epilepsy and learning difficulties, who was sent away to private provision. The late Marquess of Bath, owner of an hereditary estate, had a life-style that included eccentric dress, pornographic murals and 75 ‘wifelets’ and might, if he had been living on welfare benefits, have attracted media and public condemnation.
- 2 In 1992 a House of Commons Select Committee consulted on the ‘statementing’ process. In my submission to the Committee I wrote that “The statementing process has developed as an expensive and contradictory rationale to exclude children who are regarded as troublesome to mainstream education. There are discrepancies in numbers of children statemented in different areas of the country and contradictory pressures will intensify. The effects of testing and league tables will encourage schools to seek a means of excluding those who interfere with good results...articulate parents will press for named provision and specify schools... parents will use litigation and Tribunals more” (Tomlinson 1992).
- 3 The Education Endowment Foundation was created in 2011 out of two existing education charities, the Sutton Trust and the Impetus Trust. The Chief Executive of the Foundation is currently Sir Kevan Collins, formerly Chief of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and a literacy expert. He believes ‘disciplined innovation’ and randomised controlled trials in research will improve the schooling of all pupils, especially the disadvantaged.
- 4 In his resignation letter to the Prime Minister Duncan-Smith wrote that “I have for some time and rather reluctantly come to believe that the latest changes to

benefits to the disabled and the context in which they are made are a compromise too far". Others have suggested his resignation came about over disagreements with conservative colleagues about the campaign to leave the European Union (Asthana 2016).

- 5 Her Majesty the Queen makes a speech (written for her by the government) every year at the end of every parliamentary session outlining the government plans for legislation for the following session.
- 6 Five children, documented in the final programme "Born to be Different", followed from birth to age 16, had the various conditions. One young man with achontroplasia (dwarfism) eventually took part in the New Zealand Para-swimming team. Others were a young man with tuberous sclerosis, a girl with spina-bifida and one with arthrogryposis (eventually voted deputy head girl at her school), and a profoundly disabled girl, whose parents cared for her and five other children.

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## CHAPTER 8

# VOCATIONAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

While a number of government programmes have been trialled with the aim of increasing academic achievement and degree qualifications, policy response to the problems of low attainment, early school leaving and subsequent unemployment are becoming increasingly punitive.

(Graham et al. 2015:2)

The hooligan, defective, feeble-minded and delinquent loafers of 1910 have become the jobs, chavs, NEETS and scroungers of 2010.

(Tomlinson 2013:1)

This final chapter asks the question seldom asked in all the literature on special and inclusive and alternative education – what will happen to the young people when they have experienced what is offered as their education? What emerges from the policies and practices is that in all the various separations from mainstream or attempts to ‘include’, young people have experienced a manufacture of their inability. Despite all the rhetoric in England of “Investing in Potential” (DCSF 2009) and “Educational Excellence Everywhere” (DfE 2016), the result is that most of the young people have emerged as mainly only fit for low-level vocational courses, sporadic employment or unemployment, and in some cases, non-employment, dependency or youth offenders’ institutions. The belief that all children are born with a potential to learn without limits is lost in ideological adherence to beliefs that higher levels of education and training are necessary for successful competition in knowledge-driven economies, and only a few can achieve this. Traditional assumptions that lower social groups are not capable of learning to useful levels for the economy, underpinned by social class hierarchies in which upper and middle classes have little intention of giving up their assumed rightful privileges, ensures unequal education and outcomes. While the relatively recent assumption that education is a basic human right has led to political acceptance that schools must be more ‘inclusive’, the expanding population of low achievers and ‘special’ students, has led inexorably to their future via a curriculum that assumes their low-level abilities, to low-wage, low-skill, exploitative jobs or unemployment. This is all now exacerbated by the disappearance of many jobs via further automation and robotics. As always there are exceptions and they may again be

class-based. The many claims and adjustments that children 'have autism' or Asperger syndrome from middle class families, do not necessarily preclude higher levels of education and gaining employment.

Governments that have embraced educational expansion now face the problem that it has all been too successful. What to do with an 'over-supply' of graduates at the top end, and what to do with the 'included' at the lower end are increasingly issues to which there are no apparent answers. In developed and developing economies major challenges centre round job creation and the social and economic inclusion of all young people. But increasingly in the global economy governments have little control over the workings of their own national economies, particularly as transnational companies can move or remove their workforces around the world.<sup>1</sup> While this does not bode well for all those who have reached higher education levels, it is of even more concern for those with few, none or devalued qualifications. The "spectre of uselessness" described by Sennett (2006:86) can apply to those educated to higher levels, but especially applies to those struggling through low level courses with low-wage low skill jobs, if any, at the end. Economies may not be able to employ all their highly educated young people, and for the lower achievers the possibility of becoming part of a surplus economic population remains a possibility.

## **Human capital theory**

Neo-liberal beliefs in the workings of free markets still dominate in England and the USA. Assumptions are made that if businesses and employers are free from state interventions, they will be productive and economies will grow. Governments should only intervene to make sure there is a supply of educated and trained workers, and encourage individuals to invest in themselves in life-long learning and 'upskilling' themselves regularly. It is further assumed that the more young people invest in themselves through education, the more successful they will be in job seeking and rising income. Neo-liberal beliefs also assumed Marxist interpretations of labour markets, that the poor and unqualified would provide a 'reserve army of labour', threatened by the removal of welfare benefits (pauperism) if they did not constantly seek or take low-paid work (Goodwin 1967). This is certainly the model adopted by UK and USA governments, along with the faith in a global knowledge-driven economy that there will be high skill and high wage jobs for those who invest in their human capital. Post-welfare societies in this scenario are market states, with public institutions required to deregulate, privatise, or contract out services (Tomlinson 2005). Much of education in both countries now has been reconstructed into a series of private businesses, and political claims are made that economic development and competition in a global economy requires flexible enterprising workers. Education is still assumed to be a route to secure employment and social mobility and all groups need more of it, although some hypocrisy is necessary to explain away the influence of family wealth, social networks and nepotism in obtaining a superior education and higher level employment.

In reality, as many young people are now realising, it does not work like this. Brown and his colleagues graphically explained the breaking of the ‘opportunity bargain’ in western countries that investing in education would ensure prosperity and a comfortable life (Brown et al. 2011; Brown et al. 2014). Giving all young people more education and employability skills was intended to make them part of a world class workforce. Policies encouraging more young people into university and expanded degree courses, along with moving payments for this to individuals from the state, were intended to improve individual and national prosperity. The model failed to understand the emerging economies’ dedication to expanding the numbers of higher educated young people who would work for lower wages around the world. China has more students in higher education than the USA, and India supplies graduates working for low wages in call centres and other businesses. What has been called a Digital Taylorism<sup>2</sup> now covers many jobs that can be exported around the world, making profits for multinational business. In the global auction for jobs, some with a graduate education will be rewarded with jobs; others with the same qualifications will struggle to find the kind of graduate work they thought they were promised. What counts as a ‘graduate job’ is problematic (Naidoo and Jamieson 2006) and there are complaints that graduates take the low-level jobs formerly taken by the less well educated. Nevertheless, beliefs in the power of higher education to transform the lives of the poor persists, with assumptions that if only the lower aspirations of the poor can be overcome, a more equal society will emerge. A recent suggestion from the Sutton Trust, an organisation dedicated to improving social mobility, made by its Chair, Sir Peter Lampl, was that disadvantaged students should be bussed out of their areas to attend ‘good’ state schools so that they can benefit from a better education (Whittaker 2016). Those familiar with the bussing of children around cities in the 1960s in both the USA and UK might find this suggestion curious.

## The precariat

While the numbers of middle class people with secure jobs and those with good pensions provide a decreasing segment of the population, many of the middle class young have now joined the traditional working class as a precariat (Standing 2011). This is characterised by a churning in and out of low-paid, short-term, insecure jobs, often on zero-hours contracts, with no union or other workers’ rights as protection. The fear of falling into the precariat is partly what fuels the abuse of the disabled, documented in the previous chapter. Government anxiety centres round the larger numbers who are lower attainers or special education leavers with few qualifications, and who may claim social security benefits if there is no work. These groups had been the recipients of many and varied insulting labels over the years. Charles Murray, co-author of *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994) discussed in Chapter 4, produced a pamphlet in 1990 describing *The Emerging British Underclass* (Murray 1990), a section of the working class who supposedly had no intention of working, although the concept of the

deserving and undeserving poor had long been a duality in both England and the USA. It has already been noted that policies directed at the potentially workless lower attainers have become more punitive and reminiscent of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century views. This is the case in a number of competitive market economies. The quote from Graham at the start of this chapter actually refers to the Australian government response to work and lower attainers. The feeble-minded, dull, delinquents and hooligans who worried respectable citizens and governments over a hundred years ago, have become, as Jones (2011) graphically documented, the yobs, chavs, louts, scum and workshy scroungers demonised in much of the media and increasingly influencing public views in the twenty-first century. The nineteenth-century links between assumed low mental levels, disabilities, low attainments, poverty, unemployment and possible criminality continue to be made. The International Labour Organisation in 2010 forecast that “an inability to find employment creates a sense of uselessness and idleness among young people that can lead to increased crime, mental health problems, violence, conflict and drug-taking” (ILO 2010:introduction). In reality, the crime that devastates large swathes of the economy – white collar crime, usually carried out by well-educated people – is estimated to cost the USA \$300 billion a year, and drug-taking is the recreation of choice for large sections of the ‘respectable’ population. In London in 2015, levels of cocaine traces found in the sewage from the City of London were second highest to Amsterdam (Spiller 2015).

Governments in England from 2010, while asserting their concern for the poor and disadvantaged, appeared to be producing policies to increase the numbers. Outside school, benefits cuts, a ‘bedroom tax’, social service cuts and personal tax reforms are estimated to increase child poverty from 2.9 million in 2015/16 to 3.3 million by 2020/21 (Institute for Fiscal Studies 2016). Inside schools and Further Education Colleges, there was the removal of an Education Maintenance Allowance, which encouraged poorer young people to stay in education, the closure of Connexions, a careers advice service valued by schools, the removal of vocational qualifications in schools and an emphasis on academic subjects, changes to GCSE grading making it harder to achieve higher levels, plus cuts to school staffing and reduced funding and required mergers of colleges. All this was not likely to improve the achievements of the disadvantaged. As Ainscow and his colleagues have recently observed, while more and more children are growing up in poverty or enter school speaking English as an additional language, schools are deprived of the expert guidance they need to support them and social service cuts have also deprived vulnerable families of support (Ainscow et al. 2016).

Meanwhile, the income distributions in the UK and the USA continue to grow wider, more than any other developed country (Dorling 2014, 2015; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). It is becoming clear that being in poverty and in (or the children of) the precariat affects the whole well-being and life chances of millions of children and young people. It not only affects their educational and work experiences and prospects, it affects their mental and physical health more than any other social groups in societies. The appendix

to this chapter (taken from Stotesbury and Dorling 2015) illustrates that countries that have an unequal income distribution do not do well in basic education in literacy, maths and numeracy. The information is taken from the most recent publication of results in the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). The USA comes bottom of the league table in the performance of its young people aged 16–24 in literacy, maths and problem-solving tests, with the UK just marginally behind in the low attainment competition. Spain and Italy, recently becoming more unequal, are also near the bottom. Japan and Finland, the countries with the least income inequalities, have young people doing best in these tests. Governments tend to panic over the performance of their samples of 15-year-olds taking the international PISA tests if they fall down in the comparisons, blaming ‘long tails of low achievers’, but probably more accurate comparisons are from comparisons via these PIAAC tests. It is these skills, after all, that employers assert are the most important. The message is clear that the UK and the USA, the two countries with the largest income inequalities, have young people aged 16–24 at all levels not doing well in international comparisons. This should indicate to the policy-makers that, overall, education policies, especially those attempting to find ‘what works’ to improve lower attainments, could be remedied more easily by fairer income distribution and coherent employment policies. Instead, the focus on blaming young people for their lack of qualifications and skills continues. Welfare-to-work programmes, adopted by the New Labour and subsequent governments over the past 20 years, continue to stress that the unemployed have the major responsibility for tackling their own unemployment (Newman 2011)

## **Being NEET and unemployed**

When the term NEET was used to groups of special education administrators in the USA, they assumed it was a Disneyland character along the lines of Mickey Mouse (Tomlinson 2013:80–81). It had to be explained that this was an acronym that has been in use for some 20 years in England to describe young people aged 16–19 who were not in education, employment or training, and presumed to have little intention or capability of acquiring any. The Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit was credited with inventing the term in 1997, and it has remained a description for these young people aged 16–19 years, although officially all young people in the UK from 2015 are required to stay in some form of education or training until 18. A House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, reporting on NEETS in 2009 noted that “it’s use as a noun can be pejorative and stigmatising, and one witness to our inquiry suggested it turned young people into an alien species” (House of Commons CSFC 2009:8).

Media accounts of NEETS usually connected them to an underclass, and a film *NED* (Non-Educated Delinquent) was released in 2010. In fact, a study of young people who were not in some form of education and training demonstrated that there were large variations at local levels in who was NEET, and many so described had been excluded from school, had been

labelled as ‘having SEN’ or were alienated from the school system (Hayward et al. 2008). Although around 10 per cent of the post-16 population of young people continue to be regarded as not in education or employment, they are not a static population and may drop in and out of casual employment or college courses. The Hayward study noted that some were on courses that did not engage them and some would stay in casual work or post-18 claim job-seekers allowances sporadically. It also pointed out that the issues surrounding the NEETs were as much a product of long-term structural and economic changes and loss of jobs, rather than about education, training and lack of skills (ibid. 2008). This was repeated again by a Commission on Youth Unemployment who reported that any crisis in youth unemployment was driven by low levels of demand for labour rather than lack of skills (ACEVO 2012). The OECD adult skills survey noted above pointed out that in the UK young people regarded as NEET were placed last out of 22 countries in terms of literacy and numeracy. The government response was that it had a “relentless focus on standards that would ensure more young people were able to read, write and add up properly” (Adams 2015). Actually, most of the young people could read, write and add to some level but there were few jobs around or planned training programmes for them.

Historically, as previous chapters have noted, having large numbers of young people out of work has long been a focus of economic fears and about the social control of groups with no work or income. Over the past 40 years youth unemployment for those aged between 16 and 24 continued to increase. While even in countries with stronger economies, youth unemployment is high, in England the International Labour Force Surveys, UK Labour force surveys, Office for National Statistics and Department for Education counts have all recorded increasing numbers without work. Whereas in 1973 only 30,000 young people were recorded as unemployed, by 2015 nearly 16 per cent of all unemployed people were in this youth age group. The pivotal moment when youth unemployment became a government priority came after an oil supply crisis and a recession in 1973, which led to labour market unrest and the disappearance of jobs. Despite a lack of planning for education and training for the majority of young people, in the post-war period from 1945 jobs of all kinds were available, including jobs for special school leavers and low attainers. A careers report from the City of Birmingham in 1977 noted that:

The majority of school leavers up to 1974 found employment with comparative ease. Those from schools for slow learners had jobs before the term ended. They entered a variety of occupations such as polishing, assembling, machine work, warehouse work, building, packing, canteen and occasionally office work for girls. But by 1975 many special school leavers were affected by the recession.

(City of Birmingham 1977:4)

Fast forward to the twenty-first century and there is a plethora of literature in western countries describing the changes in occupational structures, the

decline of manufacturing, the dominance of financial services, the rise of new technologies, and the disappearance of much employment at middle and lower ends (see for a succinct discussion Allen and Ainley 2013; Ainley 2016; Gautie and Schmitt 2010). Despite claims that new technologies will expand employment possibilities, any new jobs created are likely to be at the lower end. The Trades Union Congress reported that between 2010 and 2014, 80 per cent of jobs created were low pay, and low skill, for example, sales and retail, hairdressing, residential and social care, food outlets and waitressing (Hudson 2014). Unemployment was highest for those with few or no qualifications, young men were more likely to be unemployed than women and the most obvious losers were young people from minority groups. In 2010 the Institute for Policy Studies recorded that 48 per cent of young Black people, 35 per cent of mixed race and 31 per cent of those of Asian origin were unemployed (Harker 2010). The remedy for unemployment continues to be more education and training, with reduced funding, and along old style models of selection for academic study or vocational training. Vocational routes are still regarded as inferior options and despite the introduction of new kinds of technical and vocational education (see below) there are no coherent plans for vocational education and training linked to employment. At the European level there has been more activity in promoting inclusion into training and higher level work for people with disabilities. A European Network on Inclusive Education and Disability set up in 2010 and funded by the European Social Fund, the Spanish Organisation Fundacion ONCE and others, works as part of the European Commission Life-Long Learning programme, and includes digital education to give those with disabilities more skills ([www.include-ed.eu](http://www.include-ed.eu)).

## **A binary code – inclusion and exclusion in England**

As this book has noted, the expansion of education from the nineteenth century in western countries led to the exclusion of large numbers of young people from mainstream systems and their placement in subsystems of special education, but moves to inclusion accompanied an expansion of systems over the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. This has all been underpinned by a variety of beliefs and interests. The belief that more education for all would serve national economic competitiveness led to the incorporation of those variously regarded as disadvantaged lower attainers, those having learning difficulties, disabilities, and a myriad of special educational needs, into lengthened formal systems. Who was to be included in expanding systems and at what level and where, continues to be argued over. As Richardson and his colleagues have noted there is no escaping a binary code, inclusion is inescapably twinned with exclusion (Richardson et al 2017). While attempts are made to include all groups previously excluded from the mainstream, persistent beliefs in the idea that young people have fixed levels of ability and limits to their potential remain. Those regarded as having lower potential or disabilities and fit only for lower level education continue to be defined by class, race and gender and their future is largely exclusion from

higher levels of education and placement in vocational education and training, low-level employment or unemployment.

In one attempt to clarify which groups were being discussed Chapter 5 briefly described research asking school and college principals, administrators and teachers, in five countries, who they would include as lower attainers or with special needs (see Tomlinson 2013 for the full study). Responses from three countries, England, the USA and Germany, were presented, to give some idea of the percentage of children and young people who respondents thought they were dealing with. In all three countries they put the percentage at between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of their school or college population.<sup>3</sup> This was a figure near to the suggestion in Chapter 6 that getting on for a third of all households in England are coping with an education system that they find difficult, and that regards their children as only suitable for a lower level education and lower status vocational training. Thus, to recapitulate, in England definitions of lower attainers were: students not achieving the require examination passes at 16 and not able to achieve in an academic curriculum; those with mild learning problems; those exhibiting behavioural problems; those who would achieve in a vocational curriculum; those with a Statement/Plan describing their disability; those whose parents pressed for a 'diagnosis' of special educational needs, and those from poorer homes.

Common to all respondents was the understanding that the majority of low-attaining students came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, either from working or non-working households, although they were realistic that many lived in areas where employment was scarce or non-existent. They also took the view that if families were not in work this was likely to be caused by wider economic conditions and not by deficiencies in the young people. Here the views of politicians and policy-makers, who focus on deficits and low aspirations, were at odds with the people who actually teach and train the young people. Schools and colleges in this research were taking seriously the task of socialising the young people into a work ethic and preparation for low-level work, which included social skills in self presentation, time keeping and obedience. Many young people, brought up in a climate where leisure and a social life were as important as work, were vague about the connections between work and money, but the claims that they had 'low aspirations' were not borne out. If anything, they aspired to 'good jobs with high pay' but did not know how to achieve this. The respondents were dubious about the rise of a SEN industry and the expansion of labels and newer 'conditions'. They were also aware of parental pressures from all social classes for extra resources for low-achieving children in the competitive educational climate, and were concerned that governments set an ever changing agenda for schools and colleges that had to be adhered to in order to obtain funding and satisfy inspection. There is no democratic influence to counter all this as England now has an education system intensely centralised, with a Secretary of State for Education ceded more powers than at any time in the history of education in the country.

## **In- and exclusion in decentralised countries**

In the decentralised structure in the USA a Federal government sets a framework in which 50 states function but largely delegates educational control to the states, districts and school boards. This provides a contrast to England where local authorities have progressively lost decision-making and funding powers. Nevertheless, the history and treatment of lower attainers and the special have been remarkably similar. Although most states have an official leaving age of 16/17 the norm is for most students to stay in public or private schooling to 18/19 with the expectation that apart from drop-outs and removals, all young people, including those who have been in special education programmes, will progress to a two-year or four year college/university course. Major anxiety centres round possible school drop-outs and those potential delinquents on a school-to-prison pipeline (Kim et al. 2010).<sup>4</sup> Vocational education was introduced into public schools early on, via the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, by which the Federal government provided money for vocational courses, which were to be in schools, in an attempt to prevent an academic-vocational divide. In 1984 a further Act (Carl-Perkins Act) extended Federal support for vocational education and School to Work programmes in schools, but numbers on these courses declined. Benavot referred to a 'death of vocational education' in schools from around 1950 when the idea of training for specific jobs was at odds with a global culture valuing higher levels of education (Benavot 1983) but where they continued, the tracking of low attaining working class and minority students into the programmes has been well documented (Weiss 1990; Lipman 2004). As noted, the USA is strongly influenced by beliefs that minorities, especially Black and Latino students, are likely to be less educable to higher levels and there is a large literature indicating that such students are considered as potential lower attainers, drop out of school more and receive a less equitable education (Blanchett 2008). There is a wider separation of general and special education, with the Learning Disabled emerging as the largest group of named lower attainers, around 20 per cent overall in all states but respondents in the study defined all lower attainers and special needs students as around 25 per cent of all students.

Definitions given by respondents as to who fell into the category were: those could not attain a regular high school Diploma; may not be able to access regular Community College courses; could not achieve well in standardised tests; fell into named categories of special educational need especially labelled as learning disabled; exhibited behaviour problems; were at risk of dropping out; those whose parents press for a 'diagnosis' preferably medical or therapeutic; and especially those students coming from poor and minority homes. States vary in the number and kinds of students regarded as needing special education, and the post-school arrangements made for them. In New York the largest group receiving special education were classed as learning disabled, and this included middle class students. Respondents believed that neuroscience claims concerning brain development absolved parents from guilt about parenting and middle class white parents especially

used mandated city services to have their children ‘diagnosed’ as LD or having an autistic spectrum disorder. The city paid for private assessments, and sometimes for private schooling and most of these young people went on to good college courses. The Black and Hispanic students with LD and other disabilities were more likely to stay in public school and only gain a Certificate of Attendance rather than a regular high school Diploma. There was general agreement that minority low attaining students were only prepared for the five Fs – low paid, undesirable jobs as detailed by Moxley and Finch (2003). These were Food: fast food outlets, cafes and restaurant work; Filth: cleaning in streets, hotels, offices; Folding: laundry work; Fetching: messenger work; Filing: low level office work.

But school and college personnel, as in England, took it for granted that exclusion from training and work was not acceptable and in both countries lower level vocational courses and work experience had expanded. In the USA the individualist work ethic and minimal welfare benefits have led to more focus on transitions from education into training for some kind of low level job, although cuts in funding to Community Colleges have affected minorities, disabled and poorer students more than others (Bohan et al. 2013). As in England, there is no evidence that the middle classes are enthusiastic about their children training for or taking up vocational jobs. And as in England the demands for special education services and resources is an inevitable consequence of governments insisting that competitive economies demand ‘higher standards’, leaving larger numbers of young people unable to achieve the standards.

## **Inclusion and exclusion in Germany**

For comparative purposes, a brief discussion of policies and practices concerning low attainers and special students in Germany is included here, as there is less stress on the inabilities of children and more positive consideration given to the likely futures of the young people, despite policies of selection from 10/11 and separate special schooling for around 6 per cent of children. Germany is a social democracy, with a successful economy and less adherence to notions of neo-liberal competitive markets. There is less stress on a ‘knowledge economy’ and it is taken for granted that the economy needs a highly skilled workforce at all levels. While post war the economy benefited from migrant labour, especially Turkish,<sup>5</sup> much of the strong economy has been credited to a dual system of apprenticeships in which until recently, it was possible to offer vocational training to a majority of young people not going into higher education. There were apprenticeships for lower attainers, and vocational training was always accompanied by some academic courses. The contrast with the UK and USA was that the notion of ‘Beruf’, the trade or occupation which vocational training prepared young people for, was respected and included the notion of the full development of all young people. But as in other countries there are an increasing number of lower-attaining young people, who now cannot find a place in the dual apprenticeship system and are taken onto ‘transition courses’ in colleges which may not lead

to employment. Ertl (2009) pointed out that despite policies to deal with unemployment “transition to where” had become an issue, and Kupfer (2010) suggested that with a decline in good apprenticeships, middle class children with higher school leaving certificates are replacing working class and lower attaining young people on these apprenticeships. Migrant and minority young people, always over represented in the lower levels of schooling, were also less likely to find good apprenticeships or work.

In common with the USA, Germany illustrates a decentralised education system, with 16 Lander (states), five being former East German states, functioning independently but under a wider Federal jurisdiction. Education is the responsibility of Lander but there is legislation and guidance from the Federal government and a conference of 16 Lander ministers to coordinate policies. As in England, the German school system developed from the nineteenth century catering for a clear social hierarchy. The Gymnasium, with a classical curriculum, was for the upper and middle classes, the Realschule and early trade schools offering industrial and scientific training, and the Hauptschule, offering a basic general education leading to vocational training. Some states have incorporated comprehensive schooling – Gesamtschule – into their systems (the five East German states had comprehensive schools before unification but chose selection after 1989) and selection is still the norm at 11. In Hamburg there was a parental vote to keep selection, due to “a furious middle class reaction” to egalitarian proposals (The Economist 2010). As elsewhere, the middle classes are struggling to defend their children’s position in society and the economy and more social inequality is a result. A special school teachers’ union, together with parents of more severely disabled children, ensures that separate special schools are kept open despite calls for inclusion, and the Standing Conference of Ministers worries about the future of young people who leave the special schools without certificates (Pfahl and Powell 2011).

The German respondents in the research study were reluctant to put a number on who they considered lower attainers or having special needs, but defined the groups as follows: students who leave the Hauptschule without a leaving certificate; students who leave the special schools without a certificate; students on the transitional courses in colleges, students not suitable for good apprenticeships; migrant and minority young people, especially those with poor language skills; children and young people from poor, disadvantaged and minority homes; and those unable to find work due to labour market deficiencies. As in all European countries and the USA it is racial, ethnic, migrant and minority young people – especially boys – who are more likely to be lower attainers or special school leavers, entering low level vocational courses and filling low-level work or unemployed. More positively than in other countries, the government and those working with the young people, are more inclined to make links with a shrinking labour market and the whole economy rather than regarding the young people and their families as deficient.

## **Incoherent post-school policies**

The recommendations of Bernard Mandeville, a seventeenth-century philosopher, that for the labouring classes “All should be set to work that are in any ways able and scrutiny should be made even among the infirm” (Mandeville 1714/1988:267) could be taken as the current government philosophy towards the workforce in both the UK and the USA. A difference was that Mandeville and his contemporaries did not believe the labouring poor needed any education – it led to them being insolent and insubordinate – now governments expect minimal levels of literacy, numeracy and some technical mastery in all workers. Potential workers, including those from special education programmes and low attainers in qualification stakes, are expected to be trained for some kind of work in post-school institutions – in England in Further Education Colleges, by private organisations or by employers – the latter having a history of reluctance to train young workers while complaining about their low skill levels. At least beliefs have moved on from Lewis Terman’s 1923 assumption that IQ levels could determine people’s employment possibilities. He drew the inevitable bell curve that purported to show that unskilled labourers would have IQs of between 55 and 70, semi-skilled labour 70–85, skilled and clerical labour (which now included women) 85–100, semi-professionals 100–115, and professional and business people apparently had IQs of 115–145 (Terman 1923:27–28). Nevertheless, the beliefs that some kind of underlying ability determines the occupational outcome, rather than educational or training opportunities, remains fixed.

A long-term problem in England is that there has never been any coherent planning for the kinds of technical and practical training that young people need for employment in various jobs, along the lines long developed by Germany, Finland and other European countries and which incorporate all students. Politicians and policy-makers mainly understand improved education as leading to an expanded university sector – Tony Blair when Prime Minister declaring his ambition for 50 per cent of young people to attend university. There is limited understanding of what is still designated as technical and vocational education, although an eminent educational journalist has suggested that the term vocational – now irrevocably associated with low status, should be abolished (Wilby 2016). In England a Technical Instruction Act of 1889 allowed local authorities to establish what became technical colleges to offer general education with practical experience in crafts, trades and industry (Summerfield and Evans 1990). Grammar schools and universities resisted association with technical education until the 1980s when technical colleges and polytechnics began to be incorporated as universities. Technical schools, intended as an arm of the tripartite system in 1945, never developed as intended and vocational education and training, associated with secondary modern schooling in woodwork and domestic science, remained as Alison Wolf noted “for other people’s children” (Wolf 2002: 91). The alphabet soup of courses and qualifications appearing and disappearing over 30 years, from the creation of a Manpower Service

Commission in 1986, was intended to tackle the problems of youth unemployment and training. Some intended solutions were YOPs, YTS, TVEI, NVQs, GNVQs, New Diplomas (Pring et al. 2009; Tomlinson 2013), but they actually increased confusion. The popularity in schools for qualifications developed by occupational groups – the BTEC first and national diplomas in particular, were always anathema to Conservative Education Ministers who still revered the traditional academic grammar school curriculum developed in 1902.

There had long been a series of suggestions for a unified curriculum for all students at all levels from 14–19, but a review of qualifications for young people by Lord Dearing appeared to cement the academic-vocational divide (Dearing 1996). Former Chief Inspector Mike Tomlinson produced a further report supporting a coherent 14–19 curriculum, but this was immediately repudiated by Tony Blair and his Ministers (Tomlinson 2004). There was support from the New Labour government for the creation of new kinds of school, apart from their original creation of Academies. Studio Schools were primarily intended for disaffected students from 14, with a practical curriculum including the skills of plumbing, engineering, hospitality and catering, business studies and art and design, in the school brochures. By 2010 around eight schools were in operation supported by the incoming Coalition government, with Education Minister Michael Gove declaring he was an enthusiastic supporter of Studio Schools. Technical education was to be advanced by university technical colleges, an initiative devised by Lord Kenneth Baker and Lord Ron Dearing, who set up a Trust to develop 14–19 technical schools to specialise in skills such as laser and fluid mechanics, optics and engineering. Although around 40 of these colleges had been set up by 2015, several had quickly closed, competitor schools being reluctant to lose students and funding to new types of school, and UTCs were not primarily intended for lower attainers or those from special education programmes. The creation of Free Schools has also added to the competition, schools run by the police and other interest groups now proposed.

Further Education Colleges, the major destination for low attainers and special education leavers, were criticised by Alison Wolf in 2011, appointed to review vocational education, as offering low-level courses that were of little market value (Wolf 2011). While this was taken by the government as a green light to castigate both the colleges and the supposed scandal of vocational courses in schools being ‘equivalent’ to academic GCSEs, a large study linking information on lower level qualifications found that most courses did bring significant returns in job possibilities and income and “we found returns even higher for those from deprived backgrounds” (Exley 2015:44). Wolf then commented that “It beggars belief to think that all qualifications are pointless ... my concern was that young people were taking qualifications simply to hit government targets ... we are now getting some concrete proof that low level qualifications bring some benefits” (ibid.: 45). Despite this Education Minister Nick Boles announcing plans for new technical and professional education for colleges to start in 2017, claimed that government, in response to the “trail blazing Wolf report of 2011” had stripped thousands

of low level qualifications not valued by employers from league tables. He then referred to courses in marzipan modelling and balloon artistry (Press Release DfE 2016), which if they existed, were not likely to be taken up by low attainers or special students.

## **Apprenticeship promises**

Confusion has continued over the place of apprenticeships in training young people at all levels for employment. Apprenticeships, dating from the fourteenth century and the earliest form of craft and skill training for young people declined over the post-war years in England. A revival of modern apprenticeships was undertaken in 1994 by conservative John Major's government and apprenticeships again formalised as a route to employment. The New Labour government passed an Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act in 2009 and announced the creation of a National Apprenticeship Service. The incoming governments from 2010 promised more apprenticeships, but constantly referred to the higher level apprenticeships offered by large firms such as Rolls Royce or BAE Systems. Fuller and Unwin (2009) pointed out that modern apprenticeships were in fact stratified in terms of social class, gender and ethnicity, and some employers had questionable practices. A well-know hotel group and some supermarkets were claiming state money for a 12-week 'apprenticeship' or for training existing staff (Murray 2012). By 2015 the government ministers were congratulating themselves that they had increased apprenticeships to a record number. Prime Minister Cameron speaking in February 2016 claimed that by 2020 three million more apprenticeships would be created and "This means three million more engineers, accountants and project managers". Apart from this being a flight of fancy, special school leavers and low attainers would not be considered for these jobs under present arrangements. Cameron added that they would be paid for by reducing the cap on benefits for whole families to £23,000 (Cameron 2016). This is in contrast to Germany where completing an apprenticeship is regarded as a civic entitlement and a form of entry into adult life (Ainley 2016:112), and payment for apprenticeships is certainly not dependent on reducing benefits for poor families.

## **Special destinations**

So where are those young people in England deemed lower attainers, and/or having some kind of a special educational need or disability ending up in the post-school education and training *mêlée*? What sort of jobs are they actually entering, how many are unemployed or drop in and out of employment, and how many remain in family or institutional dependency? Much of this must be guess work as the large amounts of data collected on shifting and changing populations cannot easily be coordinated.<sup>6</sup> The information on NEETs and the unemployed young does not refer to the same population year on year, as there is movement in and out of education and jobs. In England the Colleges of Further Education educate and train the majority of leavers from special

education departments or programmes in mainstream and special schools. The Association of Colleges reports that some 15 per cent of the students in all colleges 'have SEND', although once in a college and over 16 it is up to the young people themselves to declare that they have a Learning Disability or Difficulty (LDD). The colleges also report around 30 per cent of students on lower level courses, but the aim is that they will progress to higher levels.

Further Education Colleges can take in young people from 14 if schools are willing to release them, and together with the 16–19-year-olds form part of the two and a half million students Wolf reported in 2011 who were on mainly vocational courses. She did produce a figure of 350,000, who were apparently lower attainers on low-level unsuitable courses (Wolf 2011:21) and noted that the term vocational education was applied both to highly selective apprenticeships and programmes for disaffected young people with extremely low academic achievement. A small number of young people with severe physical and learning disabilities may attend specialist Further Education Colleges – the National Star College in Cheltenham being an important destination for young people aged 16–24 – but local authorities are reluctant to fund places at specialist colleges if there are local colleges available to take students. Officially it is local authorities who have responsibility for young people aged 0–25 with Statements/Plans (and it was noted earlier that at any one time they constituted some 2.7 per cent of all students with SEND labels). There is much dissatisfaction with the lack of support for students with complex problems if their special school cannot provide for them after 17, and this has been described as “The SEN cliff edge” (Lee 2012). For the small number of young people with very severe and complex difficulties, some families continue to struggle with their care. Otherwise, there is the possibility of institutional care, and it has been noted that some of this continues to be problematic.

Over the past 150 years there has been a massive expansion in human knowledge and many of those classed as illiterate, lower attainers, or disabled had a specific place in the production and development of this knowledge. Historically, much unskilled and labouring work underpinned the Industrial Revolution. In the twentieth and into the twenty-first century a global motor industry, aviation and aircraft industry, mining industries, space exploration, military and warfare technologies, satellite technology, vaccination, pharmaceutical, biogenetic and medical technologies, food and agricultural technologies are a few of the industries that have demanded manual and lower skilled workers as well as the highly skilled. It is not the case that manual and lower skilled workers will all be redundant in a 'digital economy'. What does matter is how young people in lower skill jobs will be treated in terms of job security, wages and status. The conclusions to this book recapitulate the many ways in which the inability of many young people has been manufactured over the years, and whether the free market capitalism the UK and US governments are wedded to, could give way to a more humane social capitalism that does not depend on degradation of large numbers of citizens.

## Notes

- 1 A recent example in England was the Global Tata Steel Company who sacked employees in their steel works in Yorkshire and Wales in 2015/16 claiming profits were eroded through Chinese competition, and also that making steel overseas was cheaper.
- 2 Digital Taylorism is a system of supposed ‘scientific management’ whereby tasks are broken down and specify to workers exactly what they are to do. Call centre workers are a classic example of this method of organising work but some schools adopt standardised curriculum models based on Taylorism (Au 2011).
- 3 Further Education Colleges in England take in students from 14 to 16 to any older ages. At any one time they cater for around three million students, offering vocational education and training and also academic courses. In 2012 there were around 345 colleges, but through recent mergers due to funding cuts mean that there are now only around 250. There were around 94 sixth form colleges offering academic courses, but they too have suffered mergers and closures. In the USA Community Colleges, taking students post 18 on two or four-year courses are a major form of post school education for lower attainers, plus private vocational colleges and some trade and technical schools. In Germany the Berufskollegs offer craft, technical and vocational courses at all levels.
- 4 In the USA in 2010, some 2.3 million people were in prison, 61 per cent Black or Latino, and school drop-outs eight times more likely to be in prison than other young people. The prison population is now approaching the 3 million mark.
- 5 German post-war reconstruction depended heavily on Turkish ‘Gastarbeiter’ (guest workers) most of whom are now German citizens. But the children of newer migrants – Turkish, Kurdish and other minorities are mostly in the lower levels of schooling and vocational colleges. In the 2015–16 ongoing refugee and migrant ‘crisis’ Germany has been foremost in incorporating these recently arrived groups.
- 6 A review of routes into work set up in November 2015 by Skills minister Nick Boles, was set to recommend Diplomas in Technical and Professional Education with colleges working with employers. Members of the review include Lord David Sainsbury, Professor Alison Wolf, a college principal and a company chairman and a university vice-chancellor (Sainsbury Review 2016).

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## Appendix

The figures and tables below are taken from Stotesburg and Dorling (2015) “Understanding income inequality and its implications: why better statistics are needed” *Statistics View* 21 October. [www.statisticsviews.com](http://www.statisticsviews.com).

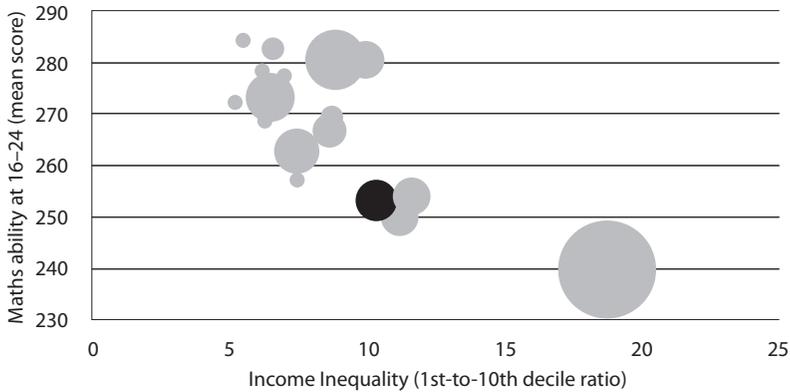


Figure 8.1 Income inequality and 16–24-year-olds’ maths ability

Table 8.1 Income inequality and 16–24-year-olds’ maths ability

Country	1st to 10th ratio	Population	Mathematical ability at ages 16–24 (mean score)
United States	18.75	320,050,700	240.0
Italy	11.23	60,990,300	250.8
United Kingdom	10.37	63,136,300	253.1
Spain	11.62	46,927,000	254.3
Ireland	7.44	4,627,200	257.6
France	7.44	64,291,300	262.9
Canada	8.64	35,181,700	267.1
Australia	8.71	23,342,600	269.0
Norway	6.24	5,042,700	269.2
Denmark	5.20	5,619,100	272.5
Germany	6.53	82,726,600	273.9
Austria	6.97	8,495,100	277.4
Sweden	6.26	9,571,100	278.2
Japan	8.84	127,143,600	280.5
South Korea	9.95	49,262,700	280.9
Netherlands	6.59	16,759,200	283.0
Finland	5.51	5,426,300	284.8

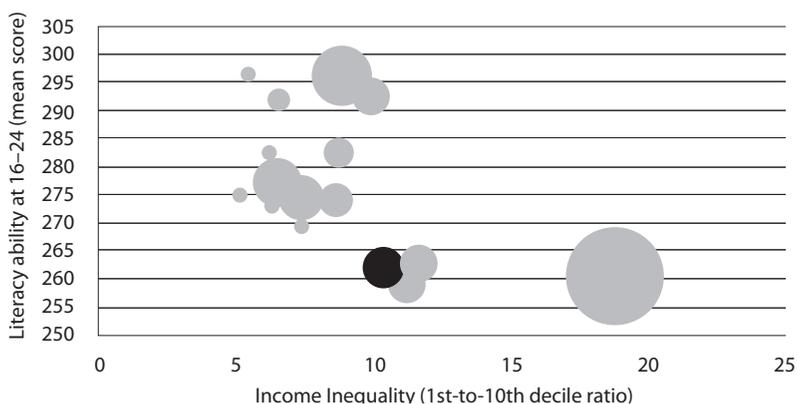


Figure 8.2 Income inequality and 16–24-year-olds’ literacy ability

Table 8.2 Income inequality and 16-24-year-olds’ literacy ability

Country	1st to 10th ratio	Population	Literacy ability at ages 16–24 (mean score)
Italy	11.23	60,990,300	260.2
United States	18.75	320,050,700	260.9
United Kingdom	10.37	63,136,300	262.1
Spain	11.62	46,927,000	263.0
Ireland	7.44	4,627,200	270.2
Norway	6.24	5,042,700	273.3
Canada	8.64	35,181,700	274.4
France	7.44	64,291,300	274.6
Denmark	5.20	5,619,100	275.4
Austria	6.97	8,495,100	275.9
Germany	6.53	82,726,600	277.7
Sweden	6.26	9,571,100	282.8
Australia	8.71	23,342,600	282.9
Netherlands	6.59	16,759,200	292.1
South Korea	9.95	49,262,700	292.9
Japan	8.84	127,143,600	296.5
Finland	5.51	5,426,300	296.7

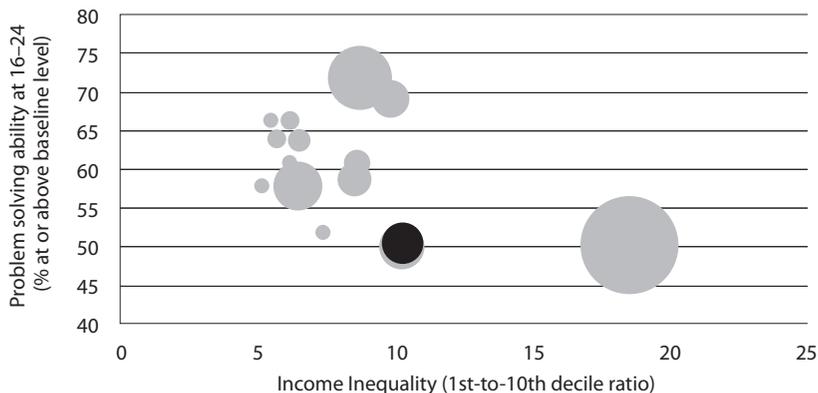


Figure 8.3 Income inequality and 16–24-year-olds’ problem solving ability

Table 8.3 Income inequality and 16–24-year-olds’ problem solving ability

<i>Country</i>	<i>1st to 10th ratio</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Problem solving ability at ages 16–24</i>
United States	18.75	320,050,700	50.5
United Kingdom	10.37	63,136,300	50.5
Ireland	7.44	4,627,200	52.3
Germany	6.53	82,726,600	58.1
Denmark	5.20	5,619,100	58.2
Austria	6.97	8,495,100	58.9
Canada	8.64	35,181,700	59.0
Australia	8.71	23,342,600	61.1
Norway	6.24	5,042,700	61.1
Netherlands	6.59	16,759,200	64.1
Belgium	5.78	11,104,500	64.3
Sweden	6.26	9,571,100	66.5
Finland	5.51	5,426,300	66.7
South Korea	9.95	49,262,700	69.5
Japan	8.84	127,143,600	72.2

The source for this information is OECD (2013) Adult Skills (PIACC) (2012)

# CONCLUSIONS

The nature of our world has to be discovered by empirical and historical study, and if we are to change the world wisdom dictates that we should first seek to understand it.

(Rex 1974:22)

This book has used critical sociological perspectives to try to understand why, as mass education systems have developed and expanded, there has been a structural expansion of arrangements for dealing with the large numbers of children and young people included at the lower end under the rubric of having special educational needs, disabilities, and lower attainments. Much literature has been generated mainly from psychological, medical, administrative and technical perspectives, joined more recently by the neurosciences, socio-biologists, epigeneticists and others, to explain deficiencies in children and young people in their ability to learn, and argue over categories, placements and programmes. Explanations are based on beliefs in the dichotomies of able/less able, able/disabled. The beliefs include notions that ‘ability’ to learn and work can be measured via IQ, cognitive testing and competitive school testing, and that there is a limit to the ‘potential’ of every child. Projects and funded programmes now search for the production of ‘better brains’ and improved test outcomes, while schools and teachers continue to be blamed if there are no improvements. Governments in modern capitalist nation states believe all young people should become economically productive and not reliant on welfare benefits and they believe higher levels of education and training are necessary for national economic competitiveness. In England, the USA and other countries embracing competitive market capitalism, governments are encouraging an expansion of education and training, and groups who were previously excluded or received minimal attention are now included in formal schooling, although there are no clear ideas about what to do with these young people after schooling. Groups who previously monopolised privileged kinds of education leading to

guaranteed employment now face competition with larger numbers who have been encouraged to aspire to higher levels of education. Paradoxically, the fears of early nineteenth-century members of parliament, that it was dangerous to educate the labouring classes,<sup>1</sup> may now be realised, as mass education has been a slow and partial success. Governments may now be worried that too many young people are capable of being educated, but if economies cannot employ them there will be consequences.

## **A sociological deficit**

However sociologists define themselves, a major task in sociology has been to describe the range of social structures, with values and beliefs embedded in them, which have developed historically and in which individuals live out their lives. They try to explain how these structures, whether they be market economies, or education systems, are in conflict or crisis, and whether the social hierarchies within structures are unbalanced by special interest groups or the dominance of powerful elite groups. They also try to explain what actions weaker groups have taken or could take to redress the balance and question individualistic explanations of private troubles, and show that most of these are public issues.<sup>2</sup> In discussions about the numbers of young people included in the lower parts of mass education systems, and what happens to them, there is a distinct sociological deficit. Individualistic psychological explanations continue to dominate and explanations for lower attainments are presented that ignore wider social, economic and historical contexts. Sociologists, although preoccupied over many years with studying inequalities by class, race, gender and disability, have found difficulty in producing coherent social analyses of education systems that now incorporate mass separations and schooling for a third or more of young people regarded as ‘special’, less able or disruptive. There continues to be minimal study of the historical and current schooling of these young people, any vocational training they receive, and their subsequent life chances.

The insights of a number of eminent critical sociologists have been noted throughout this book, which helped to describe the social structures, the policy goals and beliefs that sustain them, and the effects on the social participants of these goals and beliefs. In common with some economic and political theorists (Ha-Joon Chang 2010; Piketty 2014 ) the background understanding to the book, is that the free market policies pursued over the past 30 years, especially in the USA and UK, and applied to education, have increased inequalities in wealth, income, and employment opportunities. Inequalities are especially serious for those with few or no educational qualifications; ‘educapital’ is now a necessity in addition to economic and cultural capital. Current capitalist economies, dedicated to privatisation, de-regulation, global trade and investment, reduction in income taxes and welfare benefits and driving down wages for profit, cannot provide security for all citizens. Indeed the notion of labour market flexibility ensures job insecurity and, as noted, many young people, even educated to higher levels, have been forced into temporary and insecure work. The promise that the

democratic state, financed by taxes, would provide education, health and unemployment benefits, and offer some kind of industrial strategy that would employ lower attainers and care for the weaker members of society is increasingly under attack.

Education has become an intensively competitive enterprise, influenced by the assertive strategies of competing interest groups, some being education ministers returning to traditional views of education, private business taking over state-funded schools, expanding professional groups seeking influence, and parents desperate for their children to succeed in the competition. It was noted in the introduction that literature and research on special and inclusive education, disability studies, race, psychological, medical and other interventions plus vocational and employment futures, publish in different journals while dealing with the same clientele. The same is true for policy intervention. In England, reports, guidance and conferences are held on SEND, on alternative provision, on low attainment and assessment, on ethnic and working class achievements, on provision in schools and colleges and on the vocational courses and employment or unemployment of the 'disadvantaged'. With some exceptions, these are dealing with the same clientele, and illustrate the dilemmas for governments and policy-makers how to deal with the children and young people in an expanded education system.

## **The manufacture of inability**

A major theme of the book is that governments are continuing to produce policies that separate children and young people on the basis of 'ability', and are in the business of manufacturing inability. In both England and the USA, the expansion of testing and an emphasis on 'raising standards', especially in urban schools, creates more failures. Despite ameliorative projects and funding in England, the Pupil Premium for 'disadvantaged' students being one, many schools have neither the resources nor the historical capabilities of accommodating to continual raised performance levels. Tests and examinations are a technical means of perpetuating a system still anchored in a hierarchical class structure and culture of privilege. The majority of young people whose failure to achieve well in tests and whose relegation to lower levels of schooling helps create ignorance, continue to be mainly from lower social classes, some racial and ethnic minorities, and more males than females.<sup>3</sup>

Governments and elite groups in the nineteenth century openly manufactured the inability of the working classes and racial groups by denying them education, but in the struggle for working class education that followed, the troublesome, slow learning children of the poor were separated out into a special type of education that more or less guaranteed levels of ignorance. In England and the USA politicians, administrators, aristocrats and academics were happy to denigrate the minds of lower class children and the lives of their families. Eugenic beliefs in the inherited lower capacities of the poor and the mental measuring techniques that developed, structured the inferiority of lower class minds. In the USA, and later in the post-colonial UK, racial minority minds were also structured as inferior and after some education was

grudgingly permitted, only deserving of an inferior type of education. Schools developed systems of streaming, tracking, and segregating children regarded as slow learners, disabled or troublesome.

By the late twentieth and into the twenty-first century global movements to include all young people in mainstream education posed problems for governments and educators. Economic recessions and the disappearance of jobs meant that education had become more important on a variety of levels. Extended schooling for lower class children was dealt with by including them in schools and colleges at lower levels of the curriculum, and subsequent varieties of vocational training. In England, a perpetuation of the kind of 'academic' curriculum intended for the private and grammar schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ensured that large numbers of young people would be unable to perform in this without the accompanying social and cultural background. A resurgence of biological determinism and eugenic theories, as noted in Chapter 4, underpinned continuing claims that general intelligence is largely heritable. Claims are made via neuroscience that various techniques can produce 'better brains', or 'resilience', and by politicians that lower social groups may have 'deprived brains'. Beliefs in the natural stupidity (or more politely – lower ability) of some groups, whose 'potential' is unfortunately lower than others, continued to shape education policy. Economic austerity policies and welfare benefit cuts, especially affecting the working class, led to more hostility and suspicion of those with disabilities or severe learning difficulties. Beliefs still resonating in schools, universities, with politicians, policy-makers and the general public are that children are born with the potential to be very able, less able, average or disabled and have to be treated differently and unequally. These beliefs contribute to a perpetuation of structures of inequality in the whole society.

As noted in previous chapters, assumptions were made that parents of children who were candidates for exclusion into unequal and inferior kinds of education would be lower class or inarticulate in the face of professional expertism. But over the past 30 years the needs of middle class and aspirant parents have provided a major explanation for the expansion of a "SEN industry", the creation of new kinds of disability and claims for resources, funding and new special schools. Up to the 1980s middle class parents rejected their children acquiring stigmatised labels and avoided schools associated with lower attainments, maladjustment, or subsequent vocational courses. More severe disability of the body or mind was acceptable to the parents, and although contested increasingly by litigation, in England arrangements for the young people via EHC Plans, existing special schools and Free Schools, continue to be funded and resourced. Those middle class parents who are driven by fears that their children do not appear to be performing well in competitive schooling will be relegated to inferior education and employment possibilities, are developing strategies to avoid this. Middle class young people will, on the whole, avoid the labels of 'less able' or disruptive and will function at lower levels under an acceptable label plus some economic and cultural advantage.

## The promise of social mobility

The ability to do well in tests, have high potential, and brains fortunate enough not to be deprived, are consistently identified with the upper and middle classes, within a hierarchical social class structure. Politicians and policy-makers eschew historical debates about class and class conflict, and economic concerns about the wide and growing income and wealth inequalities. Having set in train market policies and competition that exacerbated class divisions and created large numbers of poor families, mainly segregated by housing, schools and failed industries, policies in England focused on the notion of social mobility, moving aspirant working class individuals into the middle class via the education system. Although Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced at the 1997 Labour party conference that ‘we are all middle class now’, by the 2008 conference Prime Minister Gordon Brown was claiming that social class background was a predictor of a child’s future. Education was to be the means by which a few young people from disadvantaged backgrounds could achieve qualifications and make themselves competitive in the labour market. The meritocracy was to be revived, whereby bright and aspirant young people could be helped to achieve qualifications that would help them especially into a university education, leaving behind the non-aspirant and less able.

A Social Mobility and Poverty Commission (the poverty part was later removed) was created in 2010, chaired by former Labour MP Alan Millburn, and a Social Mobility Foundation endowed.<sup>4</sup> The Deputy Prime Minister’s office was to report on indicators of disadvantage that prevented social mobility, one indicator being a disadvantaged pupil attainment gap index, gaps in GCSE scores being the main indicator. In 2011, after an election defeat, politicians dedicated to reviving Tony Blair’s New Labour produced a ‘Purple Book’ (Philpot 2011), which lamented the plight of the squeezed middle class but promised more social mobility. A chapter by Milburn noted that the pursuit of social mobility had become the holy grail of public policy and that “each individual, regardless of background should have an equal chance of progressing in terms of income and occupation” (Milburn in Philpot 2011:116). He used Leon Feinstein’s (2003) work to regret that the ‘bright’ deprived child was overtaken in schooling by the not-so-bright middle class child. One policy suggested was that parents whose children were in low-achieving schools could be given vouchers – education credits – to “persuade a better-performing school to admit their child” (ibid.:127) leaving behind the low performing children in the schools labelled ‘failing’.

Apart from any moral objections to this mode of separation of children, John Goldthorpe, a long-time researcher into social mobility, had pointed out that in the post-war period to the 1980s, upward mobility into professional and white-collar occupations increased because there were more jobs. Since then, while jobs disappeared and the labour market changed there has been no downward mobility, parents being more concerned that their children stay in middle class positions. “Parents in more advantaged class positions will respond to any expansion or reform of the education system by using superior

resources – economic, cultural or social, to retain a competitive edge” (Goldthorpe 2016:36). Others have pointed out the duplicity of austerity policies impinging heavily on disadvantaged young people, especially cutting funding and grants for their education. The shadow minister for further and higher education noted that “Learners from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are being hung out to dry by a government that promised increased social mobility but continues to cut vital funding for those who need it most” (Marsden 2016 :53).

### **Low attainers, the special, and the labour market**

So, where does this leave the mass of young people who have been the recipients of labels of disability, special educational needs, disruptive, low attainers, or a mixture of all these? As noted a number of times, these constitute around a third of all young people in the education system who will now be in some form of education or training to 18 (25 for those with a Education, Health and Care Plan). What kind of future can they expect as the twenty-first century progresses? Economic policy and practice in the UK and USA has been driven by a competitiveness agenda and a rhetoric of a knowledge economy, which resulted in minimal interest in vocational education and in those who take lower level courses and unskilled work. While there are signs that the talk of knowledge economies is more muted now in developed economies, there is no shortage of information on low wage work. Farrell, in the USA claimed 45 per cent of the US workforce were in low-wage jobs, with a dramatic split between the ‘haves and have-nots’ (Farrell 2010) and in England some 22–24 per cent of jobs were deemed low wage, with one study noting that those taking these jobs had few or no qualifications and negative experience of schooling (Shildrick et al. 2010). There will always be a small number of young people who will never take up paying work but who could live independent lives, and an even smaller number who may need permanent care, but it was noted in Chapter 7 that austerity policies on unemployment and other benefits have led to public hostility to claimants for disability benefits.

How low attainers are fitted into local and national economies is rightly a major issue in the twenty-first century, given that social hierarchies and beliefs in ability and inability are likely to continue unchanged for some time. Governments have produced arguments that promoting employment in some areas is pointless if skills are not available, whereas evidence indicates that lack of local jobs and employer participation in training were the main problems. There are also arguments that advances in robotics and automation will reduce the need for low-skill labour, although the jobs more likely to disappear are in the middle skill range. Some economists and others argue that the evolution of capitalism now needs to incorporate social solutions. Flaschel and his colleagues believe that free market capitalism need not be accompanied by the degradation of parts of a workforce by unemployment or alienating work (Flaschel et al. 2012).<sup>5</sup> They envisage a flexicurity system of the kind originally suggested in Denmark in the 1990s, where partnerships

between employers, the state, unions and workers resulted in working practices that gave security and a basic income for all. The model assumes that the state is an ‘employer of first resort’ that provides jobs for those not in private industry, the unemployed and those retired but still wishing to work. Although the Flaschel model assumes a competitive environment it also notes that the “current situation in world-wide capitalism ... is characterised by a massive failure in elite behaviour” (ibid.:18). The failures include the advantages grabbed by global elites, and the greed of financial elites, which contribute to the degradation of many. A Labour party group has also revived the idea of a universal basic income as a way of protecting all citizens whatever their skill or potential, and preventing the current growing levels of poverty in major developed economies (Reed and Lansley 2016).

Education for the working class has, in the long term, been a slow and partial success in developed countries and will continue along the lines of credentialing more young people to higher levels, although policies continue to manufacture the inabilities of a mass of young people who are actually capable of much more learning. It will also continue to manufacture elites who believe that they really are intellectually superior. The consequences of these educational divisions will continue to be played out in a grossly unequal society. The rhetoric that children are deficient, that schools and teachers are failing, that social mobility has stalled, and that lower attaining young people are demotivated, disruptive and lacking skills, is a consequence of Government policy rather than individual deficits. Positive policies could centre round developing an economy and society that finds work for all, despite levels of attainment, respects workers at whatever level work is carried out, pays decent wages and arranges to care for those who may not be capable of employment but are still worthy citizens. When governments and their advisors claim they want to create ‘world-class education systems’ the question must be, whose world would that be for?

## Notes

- 1 In opposition to a Bill to establish parish schools for the poor, a Tory MP argued that “giving education to the labouring classes of the poor ... would teach them to despise their lot in life ... enable them to read seditious pamphlets and vicious books, and render them insolent to their superiors” (David Giddy. Parliamentary Debates. Hansard vol. IX 798 July 1807 in Simon, B. (1960:132).
- 2 The question of structures versus the agency of people is a permanent sociological issue. C. Wright Mill’s widely quoted book (1959) endorsed the notion that private, individual troubles are actually public (structural) issues and debated what actions individuals could take within the structures. It could be noted that in the whole of his well known book there are no references to women and no woman writer is quoted in his references.
- 3 With Savage (2015) I am one of “a group of sociologists who have insisted over recent years that class remains central to sociological analysis” although race also remains central to sociological understanding (Tomlinson 2008).
- 4 An advertisement in 2016 for Head of Strategy and Communications at the Social Mobility Commission, wanted a person to work to maximise the Commissions impact, ensuring its activities got extensive media coverage and maintained a high media profile stressing the impact of the Commission’s publications.

- 5 The Flaschel model also assumes a comprehensive school system with highly trained teachers, an advanced public health and medical care system, a system of care for the elderly staffed by educated and trained people, and a baseline pension system.

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