

Time to end the bias towards inclusive education?

Katherine Runswick-Cole

The UK coalition Government's call to end the 'bias' towards inclusion represents a shift in 'policy speak' as the new administration attempts to re-narrate special education by putting forward a 'reasonable and sensible' solution to the 'problem of inclusion'. However, implicit in the call is the assumption that there has, in fact, been a 'bias towards inclusion' in education policy and practice; here, that assumption is challenged. Using a critical disability studies perspective, Katherine Runswick-Cole, who is a research fellow in Disability Studies and Psychology in the Research Institute of Health and Social Change at Manchester Metropolitan University, draws on the concept of ableism and critiques of neo-liberal market systems in education to reveal and explore the persistent barriers to inclusive education embedded within the education system. It is argued that although there may have been an inclusive education policy rhetoric, this rhetoric is rooted in conceptual incongruities which, rather than promoting inclusion, undermine an inclusive approach to education.

Key words: inclusion, critical disability studies perspective, ableism.

Introduction

'We believe the most vulnerable children deserve the very highest quality of care. We will improve diagnostic assessment for schoolchildren, prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools, and remove the bias towards inclusion.'

(Cabinet Office, 2010)

This article responds to the UK coalition Government's call to 'end the bias' towards inclusive education. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, who was then leader of the opposition, set out his intention to 'end the bias towards inclusive education' in the Conservative election manifesto for the 2010 General Election. This commitment was adopted by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition Government that was formed, following the election, in their programme for government (Cabinet Office, 2010), and has been reiterated in the recent Special Educational Needs and Disability Green Paper, *Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability – a consultation*,

which promises to 'remove the bias towards inclusive education' (DfE, 2011). The Green Paper proposes that:

'No one type of school placement (such as full inclusion in mainstream provision, special schools, or specialist units in a mainstream setting) is the most effective at meeting children's SEN [special educational needs]'

(DfE, 2011, p. 20)

David Cameron's call to end the 'bias' towards inclusion represents a shift in 'policy speak' (Ball, 2009) as he attempts to re-narrate the special education agenda by putting forward a 'reasonable and sensible' solution to what is seen by some to be the 'problem of inclusion' (Warnock, 2005). However, implicit in Cameron's re-narration of the policy is the assumption that there has, in fact, been a 'bias towards inclusion' in education policy and practice; here, that assumption is challenged. Using a Critical Disability Studies perspective (Goodley, 2011), this article draws on the concept of ableism (Campbell, 2009) and critiques of neo-liberal market systems in education (Apple, 2001) to reveal and explore the persistent barriers to inclusive education embedded within the education system. The article argues that although there may have been an inclusive education policy rhetoric, this rhetoric is rooted in conceptual incongruities which, rather than promoting inclusion, undermine an inclusive approach to education.

In addition, the complexities of the 'inclusion' agenda are illustrated within the article by the views of children/young people, parents/carers and professionals who participated in a recently completed Economic and Social Research Council funded project: 'Does Every Child Matter, post-Blair? The interconnections of disabled childhoods' (RES-062-23-1138). The project broadly asked what life is like for disabled children in England in the wake of the change in policy and practice for children under the *Every Child Matters* agenda. Over a period of 32 months, the research team spoke to children/young people, their parents/carers and professionals about their lives in health, social care, leisure and education. Not surprisingly, experiences of 'inclusion' in the education system were key concerns for the participants.

What is inclusive education?

The key difficulty in talking or writing about inclusive education is that there is much confusion about what 'inclusion'

is (Barton, 1997). According to the Centre for the Study of Inclusive Education, inclusion means:

- Valuing all students and staff equally.
- Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.
- Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.
- Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.
- Improving schools for staff as well as for students.
- Emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

(CSIE, 2011)

The CSIE sets out what it sees as the key principles underpinning the notion of inclusive education. Inclusive education is conceptualised as being about more than the simple geography of where a child is educated – in mainstream or special school – rather it is concerned with education for all and the benefits of an inclusive approach in the wider society. Crucially, inclusion is not just about children 'with special needs', but is about schools and professionals changing to ensure that no one is left out (Allan, 2006). As a result, inclusion is increasingly seen as being as much about race, gender and poverty as it is about dis/ability (Culham and Nind, 2003). The focus of inclusion is on the need for schools to change their cultures and practices in order to achieve enabling education for all (Barton, 1997). As Barton (1997, p. 234) tells us:

'inclusive education is not about "special" teachers meeting the needs of "special" children in ordinary schools . . . It is not merely about placing disabled pupils in classrooms with their non-disabled peers; it is not about "dumping" pupils into an unchanged system of provision and practice. Rather, it is about how, where and why, and with what consequences, we educate *all* pupils'.

There have, of course, been heated debates about how inclusion might be achieved in practice – including discussion about how far and how fast to go and how to get there

(Culham & Nind, 2003). Yet, despite these debates, there is general agreement among those who advocate for inclusion that inclusion is best conceptualised as a 'journey' or a 'process' (Culham & Nind, 2003). Inclusion is not a 'destination' because the aim of achieving equity is always ongoing rather than realised (Naylor, 2005). The process of inclusion is about moving towards equity for all while recognising and supporting the richness of social diversity, and challenging narrow cultural parameters of normality (Armstrong, 2005).

International law

Inclusion has become a 'global agenda' (Pijl, Meijer & Hegarty, 1997) and international law makes reference to many of the principles of inclusion. Indeed, the UK is currently a signatory to a number of international conventions and statements that assert the principles of inclusive education. These include the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) which states that inclusive education should be the goal for the education of 'children with disabilities'; the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994), which requires signatory nations to ensure that all their educational policies stipulate that disabled children attend the neighbourhood school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability'; and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006), ratified by the UK Government in 2009, which requires state parties to ensure that there is an inclusive education system at all levels (Article 24).

The UK Government is, then, bound by international law to promote an inclusive education system. What is not clear is if the coalition Government intends to withdraw from these international commitments in order to pursue its goal to the end of the bias towards inclusive education. Crucially, these legislative changes were made during both the previous New Labour and the previous Conservative administrations so David Cameron's intended policy shift is a move away from both his predecessor's international legislative commitments and, thus, marks an ideological split between the coalition Government and the Opposition in the UK, where, at the level of international law at least, there was agreement. While there has been apparent political unity at the level of international law, nationally in the UK, as we shall see, the process of inclusive education has been a highly contested issue, the promotion of which has been widely associated with the New Labour Government (1997–2010).

National law

In the UK, the post-war era has seen significant changes in attitudes to disabled children and children with special educational needs, resulting in parallel changes in education legislation, policy and practices (Runswick-Cole, 2007). Under the 1944 Education Act a small number of disabled children were considered to be 'ineducable' and local education authorities had no responsibility for their education; the responsibility remained with the health service (Runswick-Cole, 2007). However, by the 1960s and 1970s attitudes to special education in general started to change

(Evans & Varma, 1990). Behaviourist initiatives made the teaching of children with special educational needs seem more accessible to teachers in mainstream schools which, in turn, promoted the idea of the inclusion of 'handicapped' children (Runswick-Cole, 2007). By 1970, the Education (Handicapped Children) Act brought all children, including those who had previously been described as 'ineducable', under the responsibility of a local education authority. Changes in attitudes led to pressure for a committee of enquiry into the education of 'handicapped' children (Evans & Varma, 1990).

So, in 1974, the Warnock Committee was set up to look at the educational provision for 'handicapped' children in England, Scotland and Wales. The report (DES, 1978) resulted in a number of key changes: firstly, 20% of children were identified as having special educational needs (Croll & Moses, 2004); secondly, it was suggested that special education should 'wherever possible' occur within mainstream settings; thirdly, the report insisted on a key role for parents of children with special educational needs, stating that:

'The successful education of children with special educational needs is dependent upon the full involvement of their parents: indeed, unless the parents are seen as equal partners in the educational process the purpose of our report will be frustrated'.

(DES, 1978, p. 150)

The 1981 Education Act, which enacted many of the Warnock Report's recommendations, marked a key policy shift. Under the 1981 Education Act the expectation was, for the first time, that special education provision should be in mainstream rather than special schools (Runswick-Cole, 2007).

Further legislative developments from 1981 onwards appear to support Cameron's claim that there has been a bias towards inclusion. In 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act was passed which required *all* schools to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled pupils; not to treat disabled pupils less favourably than non-disabled pupils; and to draw up plans to increase access for disabled pupils. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (2001) also strengthened the rights for children with special educational needs to be educated at a mainstream school (Runswick-Cole, 2007). SENDA was a significant move by the New Labour Government, as it seemed to link the politics of special education to the politics of disability, something that previous Governments had shied away from (Armstrong, 2005). In 2005, the Disability Equality Duty placed a general duty on schools to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people; to eliminate disability discrimination; to eliminate harassment of disabled people; to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; to encourage participation by disabled people in public life; and to take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment. Despite New Labour legislation to support the 'inclusion' agenda, the disability legislation they

introduced has been criticised for focusing almost exclusively on issues of physical access to public spaces. This suggested a naive approach to inclusion implying that the removal of physical barriers alone would ensure disabled children's access to education (Armstrong, 2005).

At first sight the commitments, made by successive UK Governments at national and international level from 1944 to 2010, seem to confirm Cameron's claim that there has indeed been a 'bias' towards inclusive education; indeed it could be argued that there has been a 'policy overload' (Ball, 2009) in favour of inclusion. However, while the language adopted by New Labour had an inclusive rhetoric, this rhetoric was underpinned by conceptual incongruities that ultimately undermined the process of inclusion. In fact, as Armstrong (2005) points out, the New Labour vision of inclusion was located within the traditional framework of special education that included 'a deep epistemological attachment to the view that special educational needs are produced by the impaired pathology of the child' (Slee, cited in Armstrong, 2005). Since 1997, inclusive education policy has been firmly tied to the view that inclusion is a response to the difficulties in learning experienced by individual children and young people, rather than a focus on the need for schools to change their cultures and practices (Barton, 1997).

Failure by successive Governments to link the politics of special education to the politics of disability (Armstrong, 2005) resulted in an 'inclusive education' system in which individual pupils with special educational needs continue to be defined, not in terms of the barriers they face in the education system, but by their individual pathology and 'within-child' deficits. The Education Act 1996 exemplifies this deficit model approach to children with special educational needs, defining pupils who have a learning difficulty as:

- have a significantly *greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of their age*
 - *have a disability which either prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities of a kind generally provided for pupils of the same age in schools within the area of the local authority.*
- (emphasis added)

Furthermore, while the CSIE (2011) suggests that differences between children offer opportunities for learning, the 1996 Act suggests that the presence of children with special educational needs might, in fact, be damaging to the education of non-disabled children in schools, as it states that a child who has 'Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities' must be educated in a mainstream school unless this would be incompatible with:

- the wishes of the child's parents
 - *the provision of efficient education for other children.*
- (Education Act 1996, emphasis added)

What the New Labour policy and the 1996 Education Act reveal is that when Cameron talks of the 'bias' towards

inclusive education, he does so in a context where disabled children/children with special educational needs are characterised in policy and in law as both deficient and potentially dangerous. The next section turns its focus onto how the policies for inclusion have been experienced by children/young people, their parents/carers and professionals.

Inclusion in practice

The discussion of inclusion in schools, as experienced by children and their families, is informed by the views of children/young people, their parents/carers and professionals collected as part of a recently completed Economic and Social Research Council funded project, 'Does Every Child Matter, post-Blair? The interconnections of disabled childhoods' (RES-062-23-1138). The project broadly asked what life is like for disabled children in England in the wake of the change in policy and practice for children under the *Every Child Matters* agenda. Over a period of 18 months, the research team spoke to children/young people, their parents/carers and professionals about their lives in health, social care, leisure and education. Experiences of education were a key area of discussion with children, parents/carers and professionals. The participants included parents of children and children who attended both mainstream and special schools as well as practitioners who worked in mainstream and special provision and had experienced the New Labour policies on inclusion 'in practice'. The children involved in the study had been given a range of impairment labels including cognitive and physical impairments. (For further information about the project visit: <http://post-blair.posterous.com/>.) The article also draws on a period of ethnographic study where two members of the research team spent three weeks in schools (three special schools and one mainstream) as participant-observers. To protect the participants' confidentiality and anonymity, the names of all participants have been changed. Detailed discussion of the methods used is available elsewhere (see Goodley & Runswick-Cole, forthcoming; Runswick-Cole, forthcoming a, b).

The participants' experiences of the inclusive education system have revealed two key barriers to the process of inclusion: the impact of 'ableism' on the lives of children and families and the policy of the neo-liberal marketisation of schools.

The requirement to be 'able'

While the national and international policy context seems to echo the principles set out by the CSIE in their definition of 'inclusion', we have already seen that children who threaten the education of other (normal) children are characterised as being problematic within the present 'inclusive education' system. It remains the case that for disabled children/children with special educational needs to be included in the mainstream, children must fit in and not disrupt the education of the majority. While disablism has often been the focus of research (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, under review), Campbell (2009) argues that the requirement 'to fit in' reflects the ableist assumptions embedded within society.

Ableism is:

'a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then, is cast as a diminished state of being human.'

(Campbell, 2001, p. 44)

Campbell (2008) argues that in ableist societies there is a preoccupation with the production of abledness, and the perfectible body, so that any falling short of abledness is disability. Indeed, the 'ableist project' views impairment as inherently negative and as something to be 'ameliorated, cured or indeed eliminated' (Campbell, 2009). Embedded within ableism are '*the notion of the normative* (and normate individual)' and '*the enforcement of a constitutional divide* between perfected naturalised humanity and the aberrant, the unthinkable, quasi-human hybrid and therefore non-human' (Campbell, 2009). Yet ableism remains a determinedly nebulous concept that is 'often referred to in a fleeting way with limited definitional or conceptual specificity' (Campbell, 2008). The intrinsic ambiguity of ableism means that disability becomes the focus of attention. A fuzzy category, ableism is sustained not by declarations of what it is but by assertions of what it is not, and thus it is necessary to hunt down and name disability in order to maintain 'ableism'. In education, teachers and researchers play their part in maintaining ableism by seeking out disability and difference (Baker, 2002) with the (perhaps unintended) consequence of reproducing tacit acceptance of 'special' professional expertise and practices (Slee, 1997).

As the 1996 Act definition of children 'with a learning difficulty' reveals, the education system in England is predicated on ableist assumptions. In contrast to the principles of inclusion that assert the opportunities that difference brings for all children, the education system is underpinned by a view of disabled children as failing to match up to the 'perfectible body'. Imperfect bodies are not only at risk of exclusion, but they also pose a threat to the economic progress of the wider community. As a result of the preoccupation with 'economic progress', New Labour's inclusive educational policy forced assimilation based upon a view of 'normality' structured by the values of 'performativity that legitimate state regulation and control' (Armstrong, 2005). The aim of assimilation, *for the sake of us all*, has been reiterated by the new coalition Government, as the 2011 Green Paper (DfE, 2011, p. 23) reminds us:

'[i]f more effective support of disabled children and children with SEN prompted greater achievement, it could result in higher productivity gains and growth for the economy, thereby benefiting both the individual and society'.

Imperfect bodies are then a threat to themselves, to their family and to a productive society.

Ultimately, the ‘imperfect’ and ‘unruly’ bodies of disabled children that continue to resist assimilation are at risk of exclusion as they are subjected to a form of ‘diagnostic apartheid’ (Campbell, 2009) that place them outside mainstream provision. Alex, a mother, told us about her visit to a secondary school when she was looking for a school for her disabled son:

‘[The disabled children] had to stay in the same area [of the playground], there’s a sort of outside area, at the back of the school, sort of shaped like a triangle and so they were allowed in that bit, but everybody else is allowed outside the triangle, if you like’.

In ‘inclusive schools’ disabled children are sorted and categorised and their movements are restricted to certain parts of the school buildings and access to the educational and social worlds of their non-disabled peers is denied.

A practitioner, Faith, told us about her non-disabled son’s school where, despite school policy commitments to inclusion, this form of apartheid of disabled pupils was a mundane occurrence:

‘They have a very good inclusive policy at [my son’s] school, but there’s this room that they all go to and, I mean he calls it “101”, but it’s not it’s room 134 or something – he says “it’s alright mum, they’re [disabled children] all in room 101” [laughs] . . . I mean they [the school] can say, “Oh yes, we have so many percent of our young people who have special educational needs”. However [my son] said . . . yeah, but they’re not in the yard messing about, they’re whisked off at dinner time by their [personal assistants] and they were in room one oh – they may have their dinner in a corner and then they all go to room 101. And he says “I dunno what they do with them in there, I’m going to sneak in one day and find out”’.

The stories demonstrate that disabled children and young people are, despite the policy ‘bias’ towards inclusion, regularly excluded from places, peers and activities in schools. In education, psychology represents a key mechanism for the identification of disability and difference and, thus, for the creation and maintenance of ableism in the lives of disabled children. Critics of child development (Walkerdine, 1993; Burman, 2008) have urged us to move away from the prototypical child as the developmental subject and talk instead of diversity (Burman, 2008). Yet in England the education system is premised on the view that the child must be measured to ensure ‘normal’ development and when ‘abnormal’ or pathological development is observed this must, wherever possible, be classified and corrected (Walkerdine, 1993). The curriculum for babies and young children – the *Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum* (DfES, 2007) – tracks each stage and area of development for babies, toddlers and young children against expectations for normative development (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2010). From the earliest possible moments, children are tested and disability and

difference are revealed with the aim that ‘standards’ can be maintained or raised.

Markets and standards

While Pijl et al. (1997) recognise inclusion as a global phenomenon, Apple (2001) identifies the turn to ‘neo-liberal market solutions’ to answer educational problems as another ‘truly global’ occurrence. Neo-liberal approaches to education are based on an unquestioning faith in the operation of the market with the consequence that schools are in competition with each other for pupils and resources as their test results are published, and ranked in league tables. Schools are subjected to a rigorous inspection regime where narrowly defined academic attainment is *the* marker of a ‘good school’. Clearly, the marketisation of schooling is intertwined with the standards agenda – an approach to education that seeks to raise standards of attainment in school with the aim of improving workforce skill levels and national competitiveness in a globalised economy while at the same time endorsing a narrow curriculum which promotes a ‘common culture’ (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006; Apple, 2001). The standards agenda has led to a tightening of the curriculum, not only with the aim of promoting a ‘common culture’, but also through the development of a narrow view of attainment focusing on literacy, numeracy and science tests. Increasingly narrow models of curriculum, pedagogy, organisation, and, indeed, schools’ clientele are fuelled by the standards agenda (Apple, 2001).

The standards agenda and the inclusion agenda make uneasy bedfellows. On the one hand, the standards agenda masquerades as an attempt to de-politicise education as those opposed to market systems must, by default, oppose effort and merit which are depicted as natural and neutral phenomenon (Apple, 2001). This attempt at de-politicisation contrasts with the inclusion agenda which is characterised by being unashamedly political. The inclusion agenda does not rest on ‘natural’ and ‘neutral’ concepts of ‘effort’ and ‘merit’ but is concerned with the ‘socially constructed’ concepts of ‘equality, politics, power and control’ (Barton, 1997).

In practice, the standards agenda conflicts with the inclusion agenda as schools are simultaneously required to ‘drive up’ their academic results while at the same time they are required to ‘include’ children whose achievement falls outside the spheres of literacy, numeracy and science test scores. Indeed, students who demand high levels of teacher support and other resources, along with students who fail to meet behavioural and cultural norms in the classroom, become unattractive clientele for schools struggling to improve standards. The pairing of markets with the publication of league tables has meant that schools are increasingly looking for ways to attract ‘motivated’ parents with ‘able’ children (Apple, 2001).

Sadly, when the standards agenda meets the inclusion agenda in schools, the competing policy demands are all too often translated into the exclusion of children, as one teacher’s experiences reveal:

'One teacher told us that she was working in a school where they had been inspected by Ofsted, the school inspection body in England, and the inspection had gone badly. The inspectors were "wavering" about whether to put the school in "special measures" – in other words to label the school as a failing school. The response from the school was to focus on raising the children's test scores and to do this by focusing on the children who had the cognitive ability to reach Level 4 [the average attainment grade for an 11-year-old]. The result of this was that children with special needs were taken out of the classroom by a teaching assistant while the teacher focused on the children who could achieve a Level 4. The school also had a policy that "new arrivals" in the school, children mainly of Pakistani origin, were taken out, regardless of their "cognitive ability", because they would not "count" in the test score for the school as they had not spent enough time at the school to qualify'.

(Researcher's notes from a focus group)

This startling account illustrates the point that the problem of inclusion in education is not just a 'problem' for disabled children, but for any child that is perceived to deviate from the 'norm' or who fails to fit within the standards-driven marketised education system. The rise of marketisation has seen a concurrent rise in the levels of 'surveillance' and 'tracking' of all children, with the result that children who do not or cannot fit the system are pushed out of mainstream environments. Teachers must deliver 'best practice' to shape children to fit the system. Parents must track progress, attend appointments, do homework and commit financial and other resources to mould their child (Douglas, 2010). The vignettes above are representative of the many stories we have collected in schools and from teachers, parents/carers and professionals, in which children have experienced 'inclusion' as 'exclusion'.

Inclusive exclusion?

Paradoxically, perhaps, while 'inclusion' was experienced as 'exclusion', 'exclusion' was also experienced by some disabled children as 'inclusion' (see also Runswick-Cole, 2008). As Richard (aged 15) told us:

'I like my new school it is much better than my old school. It is a special school and much better than a mainstream school. I'm not for inclusions because it doesn't work. I got bullied there. They used to call me "dot to dot" and laugh at my spots'.

His mother, Anne, told us that *'inclusion damaged my child'*. For Richard and Anne the call to end the 'bias' towards inclusion must seem a welcome policy shift. And yet, as successive governments' policies for inclusion have been predicated on ableism and marketisation, it is possible that the inclusive school that damaged Richard bore little resemblance to the type of education in which school cultures are challenged and diversity is seen as an opportunity, rather than a 'difficulty' located within a child.

It is not surprising that segregated spaces offer a sanctuary for children and families from the demands of the current 'inclusive system'. Indeed, Campbell (2009) reminds us that it is important to value 'separate' spaces that can act as a sanctuary from the omnipresent ableist gaze and offer opportunities for disabled children to recoup. However, the fact that children and parents/carers seek respite from an 'inclusive' education system predicated on ableism and marketisation is as much an argument for making renewed efforts in moving towards equity for all in mainstream schooling as it is for the removal of the 'bias' towards inclusion.

Conclusion

David Cameron's call to end the 'bias' towards inclusion will doubtless re-ignite the debates surrounding inclusive education. The aim of this article has been to question his original assumption that there has been a bias towards inclusive education in England. Certainly, the UK Government is signatory to a host of international commitments to 'inclusion' and yet at the level of national law the inclusion agenda has been compromised by successive Governments' failure to cement the link between the politics of special education and the politics of disability and to focus on the school cultures and practices which exclude poor, non-white and disabled children. The attachment of successive Governments to the view that inclusion is a response to the learning difficulties experienced by individual children and young people, rather than understanding inclusion as being fundamentally about equity and recognising and supporting the richness of social diversity (Armstrong, 2005), has fundamentally compromised the inclusion agenda.

Children's, parents'/carers' and professionals' experiences reveal that schools remain exclusionary spaces for disabled children. It is not surprising that for some children and families a call to end the bias towards inclusion seems to offer a welcome respite from the harsh realities of the current 'inclusive' system as successive Governments' confused and compromised policies for inclusion have hindered rather than helped the process of inclusion. It is important to recognise the value of separate spaces while at the same time advocating for a cultural shift to promote inclusion in education.

Finally, to return to the question at the start of this article: is it time to end the bias towards inclusion? No, it is time to *try* inclusion.

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Address for correspondence:

Katherine Runswick-Cole
Research Fellow in Disability Studies and Psychology
Research Institute of Health and Social Change
Manchester Metropolitan University
Elizabeth Gaskell Campus
Hathersage Road
Manchester M13 0JA
Email: k.runswick-cole@mmu.ac.uk

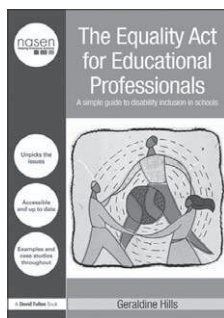
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