

Researching Secondary School Exclusion and Projects of Docility

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Abstract

This article describes a qualitative research pilot project involving pupils excluded from secondary school, carried out in England at the start of the century. The project was inspired by the idea that policies aimed at tackling secondary school exclusions were failing to incorporate children's own accounts of their everyday lives and experiences. Whilst the sample size was small, respondents to this research raise serious concerns about the capacity of the existing education system to be inclusionary and, consequently, to be socially just. Moreover, it is suggested that this failure can be conceptualised within the context of Foucault's observations on the utility of education systems for maintaining dominant power relationships. Those who dare challenge education's disciplinary regime – pupils, parents/carers and teachers alike – are potentially prone to victimisation by its strict practices. The implications of this analysis for social policy are discussed.

Introduction

While the number of permanent school exclusions in Britain is relatively small in relation to the overall school population - just 0.34 per cent - over the last ten years there has been a sharp increase. Survey figures on permanent exclusions reported 3,000 in 1990-91. By 1996-97 this had risen to an estimated 13,500. Moreover, a number of groups are disproportionately likely to be excluded including children with special needs (six times more likely to be excluded), African-Caribbean children (six times more likely) and children in care (ten times more likely) (Social Exclusion Unit [SEU], 1998). At the same time, New Labour has stated its commitment to social inclusion and social justice (SEU, 2001), particularly through education: 'To those who say where is Labour's passion for social justice, I say education is social justice' (Tony Blair, *Times Educational Supplement* 18 April 1997).

This paper describes a pilot research project exploring the nature of school exclusion from the perceptions of excluded pupils themselves. Central to its approach is the notion that children should be empowered to participate actively in the research process, reflecting the spirit of the 1989 Children Act and Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. More specifically in respect of school exclusion, it is argued that the meaningful participation of excluded pupils themselves has a crucial role to play in strategies designed to achieve their successful reintegration. As Thomas and O'Kane argue:

Rather than reinforce views of children's incompetence by portraying them as victims, we have to develop methods that allow us to explore children's capacities, needs and interests from their own point of view. (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998: 346)

While the government is committed to involving children in the design and delivery of its policies on social inclusion (Department of Social Security [DSS], 1999), children's involvement in schools remains a minority activity, especially for pupils with special educational needs (Lloyd-Smith and Davies, 1995). Moreover, there have been:

... few sociological studies based on children's accounts of their everyday lives and experiences, and sociologists and anthropologists are increasingly aware that there are large gaps in our understanding of children's perspectives ... This general lack of basic social research means it is difficult to incorporate children's perspectives in policy terms. (Morrow, 1999: 297-298)

This research, therefore, aimed to add to our understanding of school exclusion by exploring the lived realities of excluded pupils themselves.

Methodology

The research was conducted in a major British city experiencing significant rises in the number of exclusions. It involved a pilot study of eight pupils aged 11 to 16, all excluded from mainstream education. Five of the respondents were male (four White British, one African-Caribbean) and three female (two White British, one African-

Caribbean). All except one lived in social housing and half lived in households entirely dependent on benefits. The sample was not representative, as the study was partly to test whether the research technique was useful when working with pupils with 'difficult behaviour'. The research examined qualitative issues raised in focus group meetings held with four of the eight pupils. The issues raised informed the design of a schedule of questions used to explore in greater depth the perceptions, not only of the eight pupils and their parents/carers, but also those of teachers and behaviour support workers. This allowed the complex interplay between school factors and pupils' behaviour to be explored.

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The focus group meetings with the children were arranged with the help of one of the city's nine Behaviour Support Centres (BSCs). These provide education for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their chief aim is to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream school. They also offer mainstream schools in-school support such as preventative strategies for pupils at risk of exclusion. Eight pupils, with their parents'/carers' consent, agreed to help with the research. A leaflet entitled *School Exclusion: What do you think?* was prepared and sent with a covering letter to each pupil and their parent(s)/carer(s), thanking them for agreeing to help and explaining more about the project: who we were; how we planned to carry out the study; what would happen to the information collected; and the confidential nature of the findings. It was originally planned to hold four weekly sessions at the BSC covering four themes: schools and teachers; home and family; friends and community; and future aspirations. The first meeting with the eight pupils was arranged for a day in May 2000 - four pupils attended. The meeting started with personal introductions followed by an introductory talk explaining the nature of the research and the ethical issues involved. Group discussions, brainstorming and written tasks were used to explore the children's experiences of schools and teachers. At the end of the two-hour session all four pupils agreed to return the following week. We felt, however, that they might not wish to proceed with four sessions, so we incorporated the remaining three themes - home and family, friends and community, and future aspirations - into one final

session. All four pupils returned for the second week and similar methods were used to explore the remaining themes. At the end of this session the pupils agreed that further sessions would not be necessary. Additional information was gathered via an in-school support worker based in one of the city's schools. This included written work and drawings produced by pupils identified as having 'behavioural problems'. Next, schedules of questions were designed around issues raised by the pupils - to be used in one-to-one structured interviews with the same four pupils plus four others identified by another BSC, making eight in total, together with their parents/carers. The schedule of questions covered aspects of the pupils' and parents'/carers' experience of (a) school exclusion, (b) schools and teachers, and (c) neighbourhood, 'home', community, friends and future aspirations.

Letters were sent to the parents/carers explaining the purpose of the interviews and the way they would be conducted. Following their consent, taped interviews were carried out with all eight pupils and their parents/carers between June and August 2000. Following these, arrangements were made to interview eight teachers and eight support workers. Initial approaches (by telephone and letter) were made to head teachers in inner-city schools identified in the city council's school directory. Fifteen schools were contacted before eight teachers willing to be interviewed were identified - generally, they seemed less available (or willing) to participate than pupils and their parents/carers. Eight support workers were identified with the assistance of another in-school support worker and taped interviews were conducted with teachers and support workers between September 2000 and February 2001. Interviews with teachers covered themes connected with managing discipline in school, and teachers and schooling. Interviews with support workers covered themes connected with supporting excluded pupils, and teachers and schooling. The transcription of the taped interviews was completed by May 2001. The data analysis was conducted in two ways: the first compared perceptions of the four respondent groups, and common themes with implications for social policy identified; the second located school exclusion within a sociological context, offering a conceptually rich insight into

exclusionary processes within the education system. The final report is published as a book (Cooper, 2002), copies of which have been sent out to all respondents to feed back the findings and invite comments. Reflecting on the methodology and the rich data it produced, the approach seemed to work well and met many of the ethical principles of participatory research with children advocated by Thomas and O’Kane (1998) and others. In particular, adopting a flexible survey approach – including dialogue, written exercises, drawings, poetry and so forth – allowed the children to raise their concerns in ways they found appropriate and comfortable.

Common Themes

Several issues raised by the pupils were shared by parents/carers, teachers and support workers. There was a strong sense that the pupils’ exclusions had been unjust, and that ‘challenging’ behaviour needed to be understood in context – particularly in relation to child abuse, difficulty with schoolwork, boredom, peer-group pressure, and difficult home and neighbourhood circumstances. There was a feeling that schools were not prepared to respond to the different learning needs of pupils, and that some teachers were disrespectful. Of the pupil respondents, William had been ‘prodded and poked’. Jack felt one of his teachers ‘used to always pick on me ... She tries to discipline the class by making people look stupid’. Glen said he had been ‘blamed and criticised by teachers all the time’. In defining a bad teacher the notion of respect was often cited. Nancy described a bad teacher as one who ‘doesn’t listen to you. They don’t give you any respect’. Some of the teachers shared these concerns: ‘We can be extremely rude at times, yet expect pupils to be polite to us’.

A number of the teachers and support workers admitted that schools could no longer respond to pupils as individuals because of the constraints imposed on the teacher-pupil relationship by the system itself. The National Curriculum and standard assessment tests, the pressure to achieve A-Cs at GCSE, OFSTED inspections and league tables – imposed on schools since the 1980s - were seen as placing enormous pressures on teachers, undermining their ability to meet diverse needs and penalising pupils unwilling or unable to ‘fit in’. As

one teacher, Mr RR, suggested:

At the end of the day you are results driven - we are pushing, pushing, pushing for the improvement of exam results. And we get the improvement of exam results, but penalise the certain pupils who don’t fit in easily with the system.

Once a decision to exclude had been made, children and their parents/carers appeared to have been simply abandoned. Children remained outside a structured education programme for months without support, often exacerbating negative feelings. Many pupils feared this would prove a major barrier to their future success. Glen remarked: ‘They [the school] weren’t really bothered. They never phoned up and said “here you are, we’ll send you some work out for you to do while you’re not at school”’. He had felt ‘a failure ... demotivated. I feel that I won’t be able to do what I want to do in the future’.

Teachers and support workers expressed mixed feelings about New Labour’s policies on tackling exclusions. In the case of in-school support and mentoring systems, teachers felt that if these were organised effectively, with the right people in position, then they could contribute towards inclusion in the long term. Overall, however, there was a strong feeling that broader changes to the education system – such as less stringent standard assessment expectations and greater investment in resources – were needed.

Reflecting on the findings, a number of issues for social policy were identified. For instance, can an inclusive education system be realised in the context of competition between schools and narrowly focused criteria of success? As Tomlinson argues, ‘Education markets did not encourage social balance in schools, equalize opportunities or help the socially excluded’ (Tomlinson, 2001: 169). Teachers, and support workers in particular, found that markets in education were contributing towards exclusion. For instance, Mr MB, a support worker, argued that:

It is a mess. If I were to blame anybody, or look to see what's gone wrong, things like league tables haven't helped schools. Schools are aware that these will be published; they are aware that people will be looking at the percentage of A to Cs. If they've got students who are poor attenders or who disrupt the class they're not going to be sympathetic to that student. They are going to want that student out.

Another teacher respondent commented that the National Curriculum appeared to have the effect of turning a child into a 'commodity ... stuffed and packaged and set out into the world ... instead of looking at the child from the child's needs'. In attempting to understand why this is the case the framework of analysis chosen for this study was Foucault's observations on the utility of education for maintaining dominant power relationships (Foucault, 1977).

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Understanding School Exclusions

Whilst the research sample was small, respondents raised concerns about the degree of prescription and uniformity within the contemporary education system. Within this system, different ways of being (often seen as non-compliance) cannot be tolerated, intensifying risk of exclusion (and all the disadvantages that this brings) for 'recalcitrant' pupils – even where non-compliance may be a response to conflict situations or personal difficulties. While the concept of education as a mechanism for achieving social conformity is not new (see, for example, Corrigan, 1979), reforms since the 1980s appear to have intensified centralised control. In the immediate post-war period, the education system permitted some degree of professional judgement on what to teach and how. Today, the system is increasingly driven by the ideology of the 'new managerialism' (Clarke and Newman, 1997), a hegemonic project that relegates such ethical values as autonomy, criticality, care, tolerance, equality, respect and trust in favour of economic priorities (Bottery, 2000):

[I]n the last 25 years education has increasingly been defined by policy makers along the lines of its economic functions, with a reduced

emphasis on its cultural, social and political contributions, and these apply to organisational forms, processes and curricula. (Ozga and Deem, 2000; cited in Alexiadou, 2001: 414)

The imposition of quality assurance systems, quasi-markets, league tables, OFSTED inspections, and so forth, have turned teachers into production workers and children into 'raw material' for commodification. This is not simply placing enormous pressures on teachers and pupils (Chitty and Dunford, 1999; Bottery, 2000). It is exacerbating social disadvantage:

The league tables have a clear, built-in bias against schools in disadvantaged areas, where educational performance is lower because socioeconomic circumstances are worse. This bias is likely to increase inequality if schools adopt certain policies designed to try to push them up the league table. One way of doing this at the secondary level is for schools to concentrate their resources on pupils most likely to achieve exam success ... The pressures on school managers created by the league tables are not likely to be in the best interests of ... pupils in most need of extra attention. (Plewis, 2000: 91)

Unable to tolerate difference and diverse needs, the education system appears to increasingly pathologise different ways of behaving as 'abnormal' and in need of treatment. The argument here is that Foucault's notion about education's role in producing 'docile bodies', compliant with dominant societal values, remains a fruitful one for explaining school exclusions. This choice of framework came after considering the perceptions of the respondents to this research. It seemed that their insights mirrored Foucault's thesis on 'projects of docility' (Foucault, 1977).

One of Foucault's major contributions is his questioning of dominant ways of thinking that see historical development as a linear path directed towards greater rationality, human enlightenment and social progress. Foucault believed rationality today was not necessarily more enlightened or progressive than that of our predecessors. Indeed, he believed that it had potentially developed into a more limiting and inherently violent form of

rationality. He shows how the regulatory practices of contemporary institutions - although different from the past - are even more oppressive and cruel because they are subtler, hidden and all encompassing. In particular, contemporary state intervention has become a major tool of social control, asserting power over the body by:

... ordering, measuring, categorising, normalising and regulating. In disciplining the body, persons as subjects become governable, thus marginalizing the need for coercion in the regulation of populations. (Usher and Edwards, 1994: 92).

Foucault describes how, during the eighteenth century, physicians, politicians and technocrats became increasingly interested in what he termed 'projects of docility', ventures in creating bodies that could be 'subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault, 1977: 136). He identified a number of disciplinary schemes, including the organisation of individuals in space through enclosure (spatial confinement). For example, the Christian educator Jean-Baptiste de la Salle planned classrooms to distinguish pupils by their 'progress, worth, character, application, cleanliness and parents' fortune' (Foucault, 1977: 147):

'In every class there will be places assigned for all the pupils of all the lessons, so that all those attending the same lesson will always occupy the same place. Pupils attending the highest lessons will be placed in the benches closest to the wall, followed by the others according to the order of the lessons moving towards the middle of the classroom ... Each of the pupils will have his place assigned to him and none of them will leave it or change it except on the order or with the consent of the school inspector.' Things must be so arranged that 'those whose parents are neglectful and verminous must be separated from those who are careful and clean; that an unruly and frivolous pupil should be placed between two who are well behaved and serious, a libertine either alone or between two pious pupils'. (Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, 1783; cited in Foucault, 1977: 147)

Through ordering pupils in space, they could be classified, observed, supervised and regularized with relative economy and effectiveness. In respect of this contemporary study of school exclusion, de la Salle's system of ordering clearly applied to the pupil respondent Nancy who, on one occasion, had been placed in isolation daily for three weeks:

Isolation, it's where you're in a room on your own, and you get set work from all the teachers and you're not allowed to look out, and you're not allowed out. There's a toilet in the room, and they bring dinner to me.

Some schools use isolation as an alternative to exclusion:

... it's a sanction schools use as an alternative to a fixed-term exclusion ... They come down into this room and I do what we call a 'reintegration package' with them ... The idea being that you're offering some supportive measures to help them back into the classroom the following Monday ... A kid will sit behind the desk facing the front, work will be supplied, a senior member of staff will sit at the front and observe and give the kids no room to manoeuvre. They work solid. If they don't work solid, erm, they're observed and that is recorded and, unless they are 100 per cent compliant, then timeout might be extended, they might be sent home and ... we will use the fixed-term exclusion which we would have done had we not decided to give them this option. (Mr DR, support worker)

Another important development in the eighteenth century was the imposition of what Foucault termed 'disciplinary time' in pedagogical practice. Effectively, this involved greater specializing in education and training, including timed programmes of learning sequenced in different stages and separated from the other by examinations and grading. Individuals would be classified by the way they progressed throughout each programme. For Foucault, these developments made possible 'a detailed control and a regular intervention (of differentiation, correction, punishment, elimination) in each

moment of time' (Foucault, 1977: 160). Pupils who failed to achieve collectively useful aptitudes or acceptable ways of behaving at appropriate stages in time could easily be identified and thereby subjected to treatment. Within the context of this contemporary study, it was Jack's lack of aptitude that led him into conflict with his school:

Some of the work was hard and I used to get up and walk around and that, talk to my friends ... I used to ask them what they [the teachers] said ... I end up told off for asking questions and then ended up getting cheeky and I'd have to stand out the room and the head teacher would have to warn me. I'd have to go down to the office and stuff like that.

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It transpired that Jack had undiagnosed dyslexia.

For Foucault, disciplinary practice in schools aims to maximise the contribution of individuals to a collective project; effectively, 'composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine ... The body is constituted as part of a multi-segmentary machine' (Foucault, 1977: 164). Schools became machines for learning within which pupils, if correctly organised, would achieve the optimum results. Today, there is increasing pressure on schools to succeed in exam results, and pupils are expected to conform to the notion 'I am the teacher, you will follow' (Mr TH). It was the view of one support worker that the risk of exclusion was connected to an *ability* of a child to challenge:

If we're telling the truth about wanting to include the most challenging pupils we need to look at what we do about organising secondary schools in the future. The children who challenge because their behaviour doesn't fit the pattern, many are doing it because there are things wrong with the pattern. They are more able to reject, or not toe the line or take the standard route, and accept 'this is the way you've got to be'. Yes, some are disruptive. But some are the most intellectually challenging of the system and we should listen to what they're saying.

Another support worker shared this position. 'Some of these youngsters are voicing what the silent majority are not always capable of saying'.

However, despite conventions, legislation and policies on children's participation, it does seem, in practice, that children are not allowed to be critical of the school system or be involved in the process of managing their own learning or behaviour. They are not expected to have a 'voice'. As Nancy, a pupil, commented:

Well, you say something to the teachers and they say 'you're only 14, I'm not speaking to you'. But when I was speaking to them and they are talking, it doesn't make any difference. They say to 'respect your elders', but they don't give us respect. So why should we give them respect if they don't listen to you. And the other point was they all want to put you down and that. And they're butting in when I'm speaking. I get angry with it really. I just want to make them listen, and I used to shout at them and then just walk off. They just wind me up.

Those subordinated to the disciplinary regime of schooling continue to be regulated in space and time, socialised in an 'education machine' that rewards receptivity and conformity. In effect, schooling continues to reflect a 'military dream of society':

Its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility. (Foucault, 1977: 169)

Today, control over the learning attributes, knowledge and skills that the state considers collectively useful is exerted through the National Curriculum. A corollary of this is the regulation of the teaching of these attributes at the four key stages – 7, 11, 14 and 16 years of age – and, since the Education (Schools) Act 1992, the publication of league tables. By regulating standards in this way, failing pupils and schools can be identified and treated. During New Labour's first four years of government, this inspection regime for education was enhanced and extended. A new Standards and Effectiveness Unit was announced,

while the government's first White Paper *Excellence in Schools* proposed targets for improvements in performance alongside new targets for literacy and numeracy. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 gives schools two years to improve following a failed OFSTED inspection. Those that fail to improve sufficiently can be taken over and reopened as a 'Fresh Start' school (Kendall and Holloway, 2001).

Since the 1980s, the widespread use of school performance criteria has imposed a tighter disciplinary regime of judgement over teachers, enforced through the discourse of standards and quality assessment (Ball 1998). It has served to objectify the 'enemy within' the education system – 'unsatisfactory' or 'subversive' teachers and 'failing' schools. Performance indicators place teachers and schools within a system of individualising self-scrutiny. They:

'fabricate' an organisation ... for external consumption; they provide a focus for the gaze of quality and accountability; they are there to be viewed and evaluated and compared. (Ball, 1998: 196).

Pupils, parents, teachers and support workers alike singled out the dominance of the managerialist discourse in education as the most destructive element within the British schooling system. What the pupil respondent Glen most wanted to change about schools was 'the way teachers teach. What they teach [the curriculum] and the number of lessons. Lessons should be more fun and interesting'.

Jim, a parent respondent, observed:

There's certainly a lot of pressure on schools today to perform, and maybe that is negative pressure, if you like, on their relationship with the pupils. There is a pressure to perform with the league tables and pressures to perform financially. Those two alone mean schools maybe haven't got enough time for the problem children. They concentrate on getting them out of the way – 'let's get the good ones in, 'cos it will boost our school at the end of the year'.

Mr DR, a support worker, believed that there was insufficient time for schools to give to:

... the social development of the child ... [and that] ... you've got to point the finger at the government for having set up such massive bureaucratic systems ... which teachers are far too preoccupied with.

Instruments of control in education are not solely about regulating the 'recalcitrant' pupil or 'ineffective' teacher. They also extend to the judgement and disciplining of parents and carers, a continuation of what Foucault saw as the 'swarming of disciplinary mechanisms':

Thus the Christian School must not simply train docile children; it must also make it possible to supervise the parents, to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals. The school tends to constitute minute social observatories that penetrate even to the adults and exercise regular supervision over them: the bad behaviour of the child, or his absence, is a legitimate pretext ... for one to go and question the neighbours, especially if there is any reason to believe the family will not tell the truth; one can then go and question the parents themselves, to find out whether they know their catechism and the prayers, whether they are determined to root out the vices of their children, how many beds there are in the house and what the sleeping arrangements are. (Foucault, 1977: 211)

In the name of tackling social exclusion New Labour have introduced truancy sweeps, heavy fines and the threat of court action against parents and carers of pupils out of school. In May 2002 Patricia Amos, a mother of five, became the first parent to be given a custodial sentence for failing to stop two of her children from truanting. It could be argued, however, that truanting might be a symptom of ennui. For example, surveys show that half of all secondary school children are bored and fail to see the relevance of what they learn in school (Hendry, in Figs, 2002: 242). While the Education Bill 2001 (enacted 2002) proposes 'widespread reform of legislation, reducing the

amount of prescription and detail in law, and creating a more flexible structure', its main thrust appears more inclined towards allowing the 'best schools' to establish 'governance arrangements that suit them' (DfES, 2001: 11). The danger here is that many schools will continue to be left stranded in what Professor Tim Brighouse described, in his Caroline Benn/Brian Simon Memorial Lecture at the Institute of Education on 26 September 2002, as 'a "devil take the hindmost" competition of "beggar their neighbour"'.

The picture is one of an education system that continues to suffocate prospects for more liberating, innovative, dialogical pedagogical processes, tolerant of difference and diversity, while, as Michael Young suggested, perpetuating dominant power relationships in society:

Ability of a conventional kind ... has become much more highly concentrated by the engine of education. A social revolution has been accomplished by harnessing schools and universities to the task of sieving people according to education's narrow band of values. With an amazing battery of certificates and degrees at its disposal, education has put its seal of approval on a minority, and its seal of disapproval on the many who fail to shine from the time they are relegated to the bottom streams at the age of seven or before. The new class has the means at hand, and largely under its control, by which it reproduces itself. (Young, 2001: 17)

Alongside policies targeting rough sleepers, pregnant teenagers, the unemployed, 'bad' parents and 'neighbours-from-hell', New Labour's approach to education can be understood as one element in a broader strategy:

... about the pursuit of moral conformity and social order, presented as help ... Those who fail to fall in line with the dominant morality are stigmatised. (Levitas, 2001: 2)

It is within this wider context that the refusal of young minds to comply with the established norms of the education system can be more clearly recognised. As respondents to this piece of contemporary research suggest, it is a context

within which children, teachers, support workers and parents - and arguably all of us - are regulated and dominated. If this suggestion is correct, it is not too unrealistic to predict, as Tomlinson proposes, a broader reaction against the 'centrally imposed curriculum, the unfairness of inspection and assessment, control of educational institutions, contempt for local democratic input, and the narrow economic concept of education which dominated by 2000' (Tomlinson, 2001: 171). Crucial here is understanding 'the forces and discourse which discipline and direct' educators (Bottery, 2000: 156), and exposing the rhetoric behind the way they 'are evaluated, assessed and judged as part of a continuing auditing process' (Coffey, 2001: 21). We need to reclaim education as a:

... humanizing, liberalizing, democratizing force, directed, as the UN (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights put it, to 'the full development of the human personality and a strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'. (Tomlinson, 2001: 171)

Through reforming education in this way, we may develop a key building block of a more socially inclusive society.

Conclusions

Throughout its history, the state education system appears to have retained a role that has significant value for sustaining dominant power relationships in society. As a consequence, pupils who challenge this disciplinary regime are prone to victimisation by its strict practices. At the same time, teachers are increasingly colonised within the system, stripped of their professionalism and enforced to implement the state's bidding - the transmission of a highly prescriptive and largely questionable curriculum. Respondents to this research raise significant concerns about the value of this curriculum and how it is taught. These concerns also suggest that social inclusion through education in Britain, a policy New Labour is committed to, is not possible until the system itself adopts different pedagogical values that respect the learning needs of a diverse range of pupils. Such a shift would allow all pupils to be valued and allow

space for children to develop their learning around their own enthusiasms. It would also see teachers appreciated in different ways, such as their ability to relate and empathise with children and young people - in contrast to today's narrow obsession with academic criteria of success. Consideration needs to be given to the broader context in which children and young people live their lives in Britain – including support for families and genuine attention to poverty issues, difficult neighbourhood circumstances and unpromising futures. Most of all, in addressing these issues, children and young people themselves should be heard.

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