

RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR TEACHERS

Strategies and Resources for Teaching and Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

Paul Gardner

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David Fulton Publishers
London

David Fulton Publishers Ltd
The Chiswick Centre, 414 Chiswick High Road, London W4 5TF

www.fultonpublishers.co.uk

First published in Great Britain 2002 by David Fulton Publishers

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 85346 711 1

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Typeset by Textype Typesetters, Cambridge
Printed in Great Britain by Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow

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Introduction

'The world is in a terrible state of chassis.'

Juno and the Paycock

The final stage of this book was written against a background of international tension. It is post 11 September 2001, a date interpreted by different commentators as both a heinous crime against humanity and a symbolic challenge to the hegemony of the United States of America. The dominant political discourse of the day suggests that religious difference and ethnicity were at the heart of conflict. At a more parochial level, we have seen the eruption of riots and inter-ethnic gang fights in British towns and cities: Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. Fuelled by mistrust, prejudice and racism, racial attacks on Muslims and anyone who appears to be Muslim increased after mid-September. As Sean O'Casey's comic character, Jockser Daly, says, the world does indeed seem to be 'in a terrible state of chassis'. Given such a bleak scenario, it would be easy to fall into a pit of pessimism about the future of our multicultural society; but we should not give way to appearances, no matter how powerful they may be. There are alternative discourses, ones that offer hope. Imagine, a Christmas day, two children are about to open their presents, which lie under the Christmas tree in the corner of the room, glinting with tinsel. The television is on and morning prayers are read. There is nothing remarkable about this scene; it was the secular celebration of a Christian festival, and one that was being replicated in millions of homes across the country. But two things did make this scene different. One was the fact that the prayers being broadcast were on Panjab Radio; they were Sikh prayers. The other event was a phone call to the youngest child in the house. A classmate phoned her to wish her happy Christmas. Again, there is nothing remarkable about that, it is customary for friends and family to wish one another well at Christmas time. What made the phone call noteworthy was the fact that my daughter's friend is Muslim. So, here we have it, against a backdrop of apparent international and communal disorder an 11-year-old British-Muslim girl phones her British-Sikh friend to wish her well on the day of an important Christian celebration.

The scenario above did not make headline news and would not have come to the attention of anyone beyond my immediate family but for the fact that I am in the privileged position of being able to write for publication. In its own small way, this anecdote is a potent message for the future. It represents, if not a vision, then a glimpse of the potential for an inclusive society and inclusive world. At the heart of inclusion is the recognition that difference does not equal separateness and division. However, inclusion does not just happen: it has to be worked at, especially at times when world disorder suggests that it is an impossibility. Children, parents and

teachers, as much as politicians and self-styled terrorist leaders, are makers of social reality. Through word and deed, players on small stages can weave narratives that bind lives together and imbue them with the kind of positive meanings that challenge larger and more discordant scenarios. These small narratives need systematic articulation in many ways and in various quarters if they are to acquire permanence and the strength to rival the potency of the larger ones.

Apart from the family, one social stage where meanings are established and maintained is school. As an agency of enculturation, school is one place where complex societies teach the young about themselves as social beings. Children learn from their teachers and each other, firstly about what there is in the world that is worthy of viewing and secondly about appropriate ways of how to view the world. The kinds of knowledge, concepts and skills learned in school contribute significantly towards the meanings children attribute to themselves and others. Within school itself, the classroom is the daily focus where this social 'reading' is most intense. It was for this reason that in the introduction to *Teaching and Learning in Multicultural Classrooms*, to which this book is a more practical sequel, I wrote:

The classroom is a critical social arena where individual lives are shaped and influenced through attitudes and values, which are embedded in both the process and content of learning. High expectations, positive values and an inclusive ethos, that is, an acceptance and conceptual understanding of difference, are the guardians of success... They... influence self-worth, hope and optimism; the kind of emotional balance that leads to positive relationships built on empathy. (Gardner 2001: ix)

The imagery and language of the curriculum, the examples we use as teachers, the way we respond to the diverse interests, experiences and needs of our pupils, and the organisation of teaching and learning send powerful messages to pupils about what is valued and what is disregarded. Under the theme of inclusion, the National Curriculum establishes three principles to guide effective practice. These are:

- Setting suitable learning challenges.
- Responding to pupils' diverse needs.
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

(DfEE/QCA 1999: 32-9)

The first of these principles refers to the involvement of all pupils in learning and the use of strategies to enable them to achieve the highest possible standard in their education. The second acknowledges the diverse experiences and understandings children bring to school. Such experiences and understandings are influenced by gender, social class, ethnicity, disability, etc., which act as powerful mediators in children's learning. Pupils need to feel psychologically, as well as physically, secure in school if they are to learn effectively and achieve success in their learning. This means that such things as cultural identity, religious beliefs, language and the general life experiences of pupils need to be an integral part of the curriculum. The third principle involves the creation of supportive learning environments in which resources, the language of instruction and teaching and learning strategies are used to maximise pupils' access to the curriculum.

Despite the grand design underpinning the drive for equal opportunities in the National Curriculum, the inclusion of linguistic, cultural and religious diversity does

not appear to be a widespread feature of schools. Many teachers in exclusively white and predominantly white schools still appear impervious to the reality of multi-ethnic society (Gaine 1995; Jones 1999) and my own small-scale research suggests that the delivery of an inclusive curriculum is sparse even in some multi-ethnic schools (Gardner 2001: 27).

Following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry racial equality is on the agenda of every public institution. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a duty on every state school in the country to take action to eradicate racial discrimination. Inclusion, access and achievement are part of the armoury of key words in the drive towards equality of opportunity in education.

In order to meet the new 'standards' for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) published by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA 2002), students will need to be familiar with a repertoire of strategies for collaborative group work as well as to demonstrate their ability to enhance pupils' learning and achievement by means of collaborative working with other adults in the classroom.

Part One of this book addresses issues related to inclusion, equality of access and collaboration between adults in the classroom. A rationale for collaborative learning is made. By drawing upon my own practical experience of working collaboratively in multi-ethnic schools, primarily at Key Stages Two and Three, my intention in the second part of the book is to focus on the processes and content of learning that can form part of inclusive education. The strategies emphasise active and collaborative approaches to learning and draw upon the multicultural context of our society for their content. I acknowledge three major sources that have influenced their design. The first influence is the work of Douglas Barnes (1976), who drew attention to the educational benefits of exploratory talk through collaborative group work. The second is the work of Lunzer and Gardner (1979), who introduced Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) as a means of encouraging pupils to read for meaning. The third influence is Stuart Scott, Director of the Collaborative Learning Project, who promoted the use of well planned group learning activities that enabled pupils with relatively little English to access the curriculum.

Underpinning the resources included here are generic learning strategies, which make them applicable to most, if not all, Key Stages. The materials can be photocopied and used as they stand, but they are essentially ideas to be adapted to the particular needs of pupils and their teachers.

1

Principles of inclusion

According to statistics compiled by the Commission for Racial Equality (1998), Black pupils are five times more likely to be excluded from school than their White peers. Exclusion in the sense of physical removal from school is, however, only the tip of the iceberg. Some research suggests that prevailing attitudes and behaviour in some schools render Black and Asian children invisible. Based on extensive interviews with teachers, trainee teachers and lecturers in initial teacher education, Russell Jones (1999: 139–42) has devised a typology of disappearance, which describes the various strategies used to avoid 'race' and ethnicity in predominantly White schools. These strategies include the following;

- failure to see the 'race' or ethnicity of a pupil as a significant aspect of their identity;
- failure to address 'race' and ethnicity because it is someone else's responsibility or is covered by an official or quasi-official document;
- failure to recognise racism as a social problem because the problems faced by Black and Asian pupils are due to them as individuals;
- the view that issues to do with 'race' and ethnicity are of low priority in a teacher's work or that there is insufficient time to deal with them as issues;
- the view that to address issues of 'race', ethnicity and racism creates problems or only makes matters worse.

The conclusion is that some schools, notably those with relatively few Black and Asian pupils, whilst not physically excluding those pupils from school, in effect, symbolically exclude them by failing to recognise their ethnic identity. Issues and conflicts that arise in such schools linked to 'race' and ethnicity tend to be problematised around the individual rather than dealt with as socially constructed problems. In contrast, inclusive schools recognise the multiple identities of pupils and create school environments in which those identities are valued and respected. They offer support to those pupils who are harassed because of their identity and put in place strategies to challenge prejudice.

In contrast to Jones's work, Blair and Bourne (1998) identified ways in which 'race' and ethnicity are treated as transparent issues by successful multi-ethnic schools. The salient points emerging from their analysis show that effective schools have the following characteristics:

- headteachers who take a strong lead on equality issues;
- an emphasis on listening to, and acting upon, the experiences of pupils and their parents;
- strong links with parents and the local community;
- a concern for developing the 'whole' child, including the personal, social and

- emotional as well as academic potential of individual pupils;
- an inclusive curriculum – one that works within the parameters of the National Curriculum to include a recognition of diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic identities;
- clear practices and procedures for dealing with and preventing racist bullying and harassment;
- the application of strategies to prevent the exclusion of pupils from school for both fixed and permanent periods;
- high expectations of both pupils and teachers supported by clear systems for targeting and monitoring the progress of individual pupils and cohorts of pupils, such as ethnic groups, to ensure equality of outcome.

Blair and Bourne emphasise that successful attempts to create inclusive education depend upon the application of a raft of measures rather than being dependent upon a single factor. In addition to studies of schools and their perceptions and practices in relation to 'race' and ethnicity, educationalists in the field of 'special education' have also identified important features of inclusive approaches. Some of the inclusive approaches in special education are also applicable to inclusive approaches for cultural diversity, since the intention is to find strategies that involve the whole school community. Ainscow (1999: 149) draws attention to the Index of Inclusion, which was devised by parents, teachers and representatives of disability groups. The Index is based on two sources of information: one is evidence from research into methods of improving participation of pupils previously excluded or marginalised, and the other is evidence of effective methods of school improvement. The Index establishes definitions of inclusion which can be accessed on the website of the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (www.inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csiefaqs). In summary, the definitions state that inclusion

- involves the processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools;
- involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality;
- is concerned with the learning and participation of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures;
- is concerned with improving schools for staff as well as for students;
- views diversity not as a problem to be overcome, but as a rich resource to support the learning of all;
- is concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities;
- in education is one aspect of inclusion in society as a whole.

Further reading of the Index's three main dimensions reveals close parallels to Bourne and Blair's findings, which demonstrate the importance of drawing on all fields of research and practice in inclusive education. In essence, inclusive approaches begin with the recognition that our society and its schools are populated by people of diverse backgrounds and needs, and that historically some groups and some individuals have been excluded, either physically or symbolically. Inclusive approaches in education seek to change structures, practices and procedures as well

as behaviour to ensure that difference not only is accepted but is recognised for its educational value. As Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997: 43) acknowledge:

individuals who belong to divergent socio-economic groups can learn much from one another if provided the space to exchange ideas and analyse mutual difficulties. As such a powerful force, difference must not simply be tolerated but cultivated as a spark to human creativity.

Of course, this point applies equally to differences of gender, religion, culture and 'race' as it does to socio-economic status.

Features of inclusive classrooms

Whilst recognising that inclusion is a multi-dimensional issue that must operate at all levels of school, my intention in this book is to focus on inclusion at the level of classroom practice. More specifically, I want to look at curriculum content and the organisation of learning and especially the use of resources that encourage collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is important to inclusive classroom organisation because it increases the opportunities pupils have to share their knowledge, including specific cultural knowledge. When pupils work together to achieve a collective goal they utilise and develop important communication and social skills. If the materials they use reflect cultural, religious and ethnic diversity in appropriate ways, not just of pupils within the classroom or school but of society as a whole, then significant messages are delivered to pupils about the positive value attributed by school to social and cultural diversity. In turn, a classroom ethos that encourages pupils to share their thoughts, ideas, knowledge and skills, led by teachers who elicit and who genuinely value the contributions of all pupils, is likely to generate the kind of social relationships which make pupils feel psychologically secure in their learning. The Index of Inclusion referred to above identifies a comprehensive range of indicators of inclusive cultures and practices that schools can use to evaluate their own performance in relation to inclusive education. Listed below are some of the specific indicators from the Index that can be applied to classroom practice.

- Everyone is made to feel welcome.
- Students help one another.
- Staff collaborate with one another.
- Staff and students treat one another with respect.
- High expectations are set for all pupils.
- Students are equally valued.
- Staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation in school.
- Lessons are responsive to student diversity.
- Lessons are made accessible to all students.
- Lessons develop an understanding of difference.
- Students are actively involved in their own learning.
- Students learn collaboratively.
- Assessment encourages the achievements of all students.
- Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.
- Teachers plan, review and teach in partnership.
- Teachers are concerned to support the learning and participation of all students.

- Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning.
- Staff develop resources to support learning and participation.

One important feature of an inclusive classroom is the development of attitudes and cognitive resources that lead to open rather than closed perceptions of difference. In its discussion of 'Islamophobia' or anti-Muslim prejudice, the Runnymede Trust (www.runnymedetrust.org/beb/islamophobia/nature.html) has identified and contrasted eight sets of open and closed views of Islam. These views are set out in Table 1.1. Reactions following the events of 11 September 2001, which have led some people to conflate Islam with terrorism, give the discussion added significance and highlight the need for those with influence to model open attitudes to the religion and its adherents. What is stated under the heading of 'Open views of Islam' could be applied to any religious, cultural or ethnic group that is subject to prejudice and discrimination. Indeed, recognition that all groups are diverse within themselves must be a central concept in inclusion as is the acknowledgement that difference does not imply superior or inferior relations between groups and that different groups often share similarities, be those differences based on religion or some other marker of difference.

Table 1.1 Closed and open views of Islam

Distinctions	Closed views of Islam	Open views of Islam
1. Monolithic versus diverse	Islam is seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.	Islam is seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and developments.
2. Separate versus interacting	Islam is seen as separate and other, i.e. (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures; (b) not affected by them; (c) not influencing them.	Islam is seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures, i.e. (a) having certain shared values and aims; (b) affected by them; (c) enriching them.
3. Inferior versus different	Islam is seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.	Islam is seen as distinctively different, but not deficient or inferior and equally worthy of respect.
4. Enemy versus partner	Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in a clash of civilisations.	Islam is seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.
5. Manipulative versus sincere	Islam is seen as a political ideology used for political or military advantage.	Islam is seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents.
6. Criticisms of West rejected versus considered	Criticisms made by Islam of the West are rejected out of hand.	Criticisms of the West and other cultures are considered and debated.
7. Discrimination defended versus criticised	Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.	Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
8. Islamophobia seen as natural versus problematic	Anti-Muslim hostility is accepted as natural and normal.	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair.

2

EAL acquisition

The long-term needs of the EAL learner

Children who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) have already acquired comprehensive linguistic competence in a first and possibly second language before exposure to English. In the early years of EAL acquisition, English will be the child's weakest language, which is a problem for schools that are dependent upon achieving good SATs results, but in itself, the fact that English is the weaker language is not a problem. Providing the child has exposure to a rich, comprehensible diet of English, acquisition will occur. Cummins (1984) estimates that oral fluency in the social use of an additional language can be acquired within two years. However, it can take up to seven years for a child to become fully competent in the use of that language for cognitive and academic purposes. This time span has implications for the assessment of the bilingual child in English, which will remain her weaker language for a significant period of her school career. It also has implications for the duration and varying types of support needed by the child in order to achieve academic success through the medium of English. The Northern Association of Support Services for Equality and Achievement (NASSEA) has taken this into account in its assessment system for EAL pupils (see the Resources and Advice section). Reflecting Cummins's findings, this system incorporates the likelihood that the EAL learner may need additional support up to and including attainment at Levels 4 and 5 of the National Curriculum. When managing support, schools need to take account of the long-term needs of EAL learners in order to help pupils achieve their potential. Long-term support will be essential if schools are to realise their specific duties to achieve equality of opportunity under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The bilingual learner, language and education

It is estimated that 70 per cent of the world's population speaks two or more languages. A significant minority of the British population is either bi- or multi-lingual. But what does it mean to be bilingual? Some definitions of bilingualism imply the ability to speak two languages fluently. But it is probably quite rare for a speaker of two languages to speak them equally. This is because language use occurs in different contexts for different purposes. For example a British-Panjabi bilingual child who learns science in school through the medium of English is unlikely to use Panjabi to discuss scientific matters and concepts, but equally the same child may