

Inclusion or special education, or inclusive special education

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The inclusion issue is now urgent because of UNCRPD Article 24 General Comment #4 (2016) calling for an end to special education as we know it. An overview of the major concerns about the prospect of full inclusion will be presented, drawing on international literature.

I will then report on a case study of teenagers with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) that I taught in a secondary school special class in New Zealand in the 1970s, focusing on curriculum and outcomes. I will also report on follow-up research of young people with MLD in the UK and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (in NZ) who were included in mainstream schools after periods in special schools.

Results from both the above projects are very relevant to the inclusion issue, leading to a conclusion that effective instruction and appropriate curricula are of prime importance for optimising outcomes. Whereas, the setting, mainstream school or special school, where education takes place is of lessor importance.

The major implication of the above is that the theory and practice of both special education and inclusive education need to be combined in a comprehensive system of Inclusive Special Education, the key components of which will be outlined.