



**The Cost of Inclusion:
The Warnock Report 40 Years On**

Dr Noel Purdy
Stranmillis University College, Belfast

2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the publication of, arguably, the most significant report ever written in the UK in relation to special educational needs: the *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*, more commonly known as the *Warnock Report* named after its chair, Mary (now Baroness) Warnock.

Let me remind you of just some of its findings and recommendations. The Warnock Report was the first concerted attempt in the UK to move beyond the prevailing medical model of disability (an exclusionary, deficit model) and towards a social model of disability. Towards this end it set out two long-term goals of education: first, to develop a child's knowledge, experience and imaginative understanding, leading to greater awareness of moral values and capacity for enjoyment; and, second, to prepare the child to become an active participant in and contributor to society, living as independently as possible. With these common aims in mind, the new approach aimed to remove any remaining systemic barriers or "obstacles" facing children with SEN:

The purpose of education for all children is the same; the goals are the same. But the help that individual children need in progressing towards them will be different. Whereas for some the road they have to travel towards the goals is smooth and easy, for others it is fraught with obstacles. (§1.4)

The Warnock Report was influential in many respects: in coining the very term "special educational needs"; in asserting the principle that "education, as we conceive it, is a good, and a specifically human good, to which all human beings are entitled" (§1.7); in advocating an enhanced role for parents as "equal partners" in the education of their children; and in developing the "statement" which helped safeguard appropriate educational provision by local authorities for those children with more severe or complex learning difficulties.

Moreover, the tri-partite framework of integration proposed in the Warnock Report still has relevance to today's policy context in Northern Ireland. The first form of integration, *locational integration*, refers to the existence of special units or learning support centres in mainstream schools, or where a special and mainstream school share the same site. As the report suggests, this "may be the most tenuous form of integration" but can represent "a first stage towards full integration" (§7.7). The second form of integration, *social integration*, marks a progression in that children from the special unit or class "eat, play and consort with other children, and possibly share out-of-classroom activities with them" (§7.8). The third and most advanced form of integration is referred to as *functional integration* where locational and social integration lead on to "joint participation in educational programmes", the particular demands of which are highlighted:

It is the closest form of association, where children with special needs join, part-time or full-time, the regular classes of the school, and make a full contribution to the activity of the school. Functional integration makes the greatest demands upon an ordinary school, since it requires the most careful planning of class and individual teaching programmes to ensure that all the children benefit, whether or not they have special educational needs. (§7.9).

The report itself notes that this triad of forms of integration provides a framework for the planning and organisation of the education of children with SEN, but also for assessing “how effectively it has been achieved” (§7.10). It also acknowledges that mainstream schools will require “ready access to other supporting services, particularly the school psychological, health and social services”, but acknowledges the provision of therapies within all mainstream schools must be a long-term aim until sufficient resources are available.

Crucially, in terms of cost, the report makes it clear that integration (now referred to as *inclusion*) “is not a cheap alternative to provision in separate special schools, and there is no short cut” and indeed the report suggests that the dispersal of services currently concentrated in just a few schools “will be considerably more expensive” (§7.56).

In short, the principle of integration (now more commonly referred to as *inclusion*), as set out by the Warnock Report, takes the form of a continuum, the success of which depends on careful planning, training AND CRUCIALLY adequate financial resourcing from the very start.

Move forward 40 years and actually the challenges we face today in Northern Ireland are remarkably similar. We have, quite rightly, a pro-inclusion legislative and policy framework enshrined in regional, national and international legislation and agreements (from the UNCRC to SENDO), and no one could reasonably argue against the spirit of inclusion. However Mary Warnock herself in 2005 came to criticise her own policy of inclusion which she referred to as a “disastrous legacy” (p.20) and she recommended we give up “the idea that SEN is the name of a unified class of students at whom, in a uniform way, the policy of inclusion can be directed” (p.38). For Warnock inclusion has gone off track so that “in many cases” inclusion “is experienced as a painful form of exclusion” (p.39) by children who are placed in mainstream settings without any of the careful planning, training and adequate financial resourcing required to make this work. This failure, I would argue, is due to a misunderstanding of inclusion, a fundamental misunderstanding of the uniqueness of children and their learning needs, and a failure to invest adequately in staff and resources.

This is why I would prefer the definition of inclusion by Lorraine Petersen, former CEO of NASEN, who writes that inclusion is where “the child or young person receives an education that best suits their needs at any particular time. It does not mean that everyone has to be in the same building, but that there is the staffing and the resources to meet their needs” (Petersen, cited in Tutt, 2016, p.10).

The 2006 Ofsted Report *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* is often quoted and misquoted to support a mainstreaming at all cost agenda. The report found that the most important factor in determining the best outcomes for pupils with SEN is not the type but the quality of the provision, and found that there was more good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools than elsewhere. However the report also found that schools where pupils made outstanding progress in all three areas assessed (academic, personal and social development) were good or outstanding in all of the following: ethos, provision of specialist staff and focused professional development for all staff.

For inclusion to work, significant investment is required in terms of relationships, understanding, staffing, professional development opportunities and resources – and this undoubtedly comes at a cost. Forty years after the publication of this seminal report, it is clear that we can still all learn much from the Warnock Report.

References:

HMSO (1978) *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (The Warnock Report), London: HMSO.

Ofsted (2006) *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught? Provision and outcomes in different settings for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.*
www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/HMI-2535.doc.

Tutt, R. (2016) *Rona Tutt's Guide to SEN and Inclusion*. London: Sage.

Warnock, M. (2005) *Special Educational Needs: a new look*. London: Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain.

Get involved on twitter: @WeLearnNI

How well is inclusion working where you are?

What steps need to be taken to ensure meaningful, manageable inclusion?

What do teachers need to support SEN?

#Warnock40 #WeLearn

