
Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion

Mel Ainscow, Tony Booth and
Alan Dyson

with Peter Farrell, Jo Frankham, Francis Gallannaugh,
Andy Howes and Roy Smith

Part I

What is the issue?

Chapter 1

Improving schools, developing inclusion?

In this chapter we examine what we brought to the research from our own knowledge and experience, and from examining the thinking of others. In so doing, we explore the ways in which inclusion has been and should be understood before beginning, in the next chapter, the process of analysing the resources for, and barriers to, the development of inclusion within government education policies. Within this overall context, we define the main agenda for the book, namely that of determining ways in which inclusive school development can be encouraged.

The title of this book is intended to provoke thinking about two questions: When and how do improvements in schools become inclusive development? How can inclusive school development be best supported? In so doing, we draw attention to the highly contentious nature of improvement in schools. One person's view of an improving institution may be another's vision of educational hell. This means that we cannot understand improvement in education without considering the values underlying the changes we would like to take place. For us, inclusion is fundamentally about the specification of those values and how they can be put into action.

The English educational policy context makes the study of inclusion particularly interesting. Since 1988, both Conservative and Labour governments have introduced a series of policy changes which have encouraged competition and accountability regimes as the means for driving up 'standards' in state education (Ball, 2001). Yet since the Labour government came to power in 1997, this agenda has been combined with an unprecedented emphasis on inclusion.

On the face of it, inclusion and the standards agenda are in conflict because they imply different views of what makes an improved school, different ways of thinking about achievements and different routes for raising them. How would schools in this period make sense of such competing pressures? The research we report also attempts to provide some answers to this further question.

Building on experience

The three co-directors of the network brought with them many years of experience in studying the issues of inclusion and exclusion in education. Alan Dyson had previously carried out a series of detailed studies of processes of inclusion in schools. Some of his early work was based on what he has referred to as an 'optimistic view', in which radical change to education seemed possible, particularly in terms of overthrowing established and discredited categorical approaches to children who experienced difficulties in schools (Dyson, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). Together with his colleagues, Dyson spent some time working with schools which reconstructed their 'special educational needs' systems in favour of more flexible, non-categorical responses to a much wider range of student diversity (Clark *et al.*, 1995a; Dyson *et al.*, 1994). They noted that these schools seemed to be bucking the trend of how schools understood and responded to students who experienced difficulties, to be locating the source of those difficulties in their own systems, structures and practices and, to that extent, to be pointing the way towards an unequivocally more inclusive future. However, as they studied these schools more closely, they came to the conclusion that all was not as it seemed (Clark *et al.*, 1995b, 1997, 1998, 1999; Dyson and Millward, 2000, 2001). Developments in these schools, they concluded, were full of contradictions: the rhetoric of radical approaches was not shared by some – or, in some cases, by most – of their teachers; radical aspects of practice and provision were commonly accompanied by other aspects that were far less radical and some way from being 'inclusive'; and even the radical policies which they espoused were ambiguous and contradictory.

Much of Mel Ainscow's previous work, too, had focused on processes of inclusive development within educational systems. This had also shown that such changes are far from straightforward, not least because they challenge so much of existing attitudes and practice, and the current use of resources (Ainscow, 1999). Other research had focused on classroom processes (e.g. Ainscow, 1999, 2000; Ainscow and Brown,

2000), school development (e.g. Ainscow, 1995; Ainscow *et al.*, 1998; Hopkins *et al.*, 1994, 1997a, b), teacher development (e.g. Ainscow, 1994), and systemic change (e.g. Ainscow and Haile-Giorgis, 1999; Ainscow *et al.*, 2000), particularly in respect to the role of LEAs (e.g. Ainscow and Howes, 2001; Ainscow and Tweddle, 2003). Members of the Manchester group had also carried out a series of research reviews in relation to the research described in this book (e.g. Ainscow, Fox and O’Kane, 2003; Howes *et al.*, 2002). Much of their earlier research had been influenced by Kurt Lewin’s dictum that ‘you cannot understand an organisation until you try to change it’ (Lewin, 1946; Schein, 1992), and so it had led the Manchester group to position themselves as agents for development alongside their partners in the field.

Tony Booth came to the research with an involvement in developing ideas about inclusion since the 1970s (Booth, 1981a; Booth and Potts, 1983). While some people now wish to draw a clear line between the meanings of integration and inclusion, Booth and his colleagues always saw the notion of integration as carrying an approach to school and social reform (Booth, 1988, 1999). Views of integration and then inclusion were linked to a notion of comprehensive community education from nursery, through the years of compulsory education to higher or lifelong education (Booth, 1983, 1996a). Inclusion was connected to a principle of equality of value of all students and staff within education (Booth, 1981b). Inclusion was seen to involve schools in recognising and valuing the diversity of their students and thus arranging for them to learn together in mixed collaborating groups. The process of inclusion involved schools in extending this diversity to include all students within their communities and to counter all forms of selection and exclusion (Booth, 1996b, 2003a and 2003b). From early on, accounts were gathered about the implications of an inclusive approach to the development of practice and policy within education systems (Booth and Coulby, 1987; Booth and Swann, 1987; Booth *et al.*, 1987, 1992a, 1992b). Such implications were set out in most precise detail, for schools, and for early years and childcare settings, within versions of the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Booth *et al.*, 2004). These placed a new emphasis on the role of cultures in creating and sustaining development.

Some previous work had involved the three senior authors in working together. In what turned out to have been a pilot for this book, in the mid-1990s they carried out a series of studies of processes of inclusion and exclusion in an urban secondary school (Ainscow *et al.*, 1999; Booth *et al.*, 1997, 1998; Dyson *et al.*, 1999). The experience of working

collaboratively in the context of that school pointed to the benefits of researchers with different points of view exploring a common context. It also drew attention to the value of working in partnership with practitioners in order to make sense of such experiences.

In researching areas in which we had already done a considerable amount of work, there was the obvious danger that we would look for, and then find, only what supported our preconceptions. In the event, we set out to challenge our previous ideas, not least by challenging one other. We added to the theoretical resources available by creating teams of researchers in each of the participating universities, the members of which also brought their own experiences and perspectives. In addition, we were helped considerably by the astute questioning from those with whom we researched in schools and LEAs.

Defining inclusion

Inclusion may be defined in a variety of ways. Often, however, explicit definitions of the term are omitted from publications, leaving readers to infer the meanings it is being given for themselves. Definitions can be descriptive or prescriptive. A descriptive definition of inclusion reports on the variety of ways 'inclusion' is used in practice, whereas a prescriptive definition indicates the way we intend to use the concept and would like it to be used by others. Both kinds of definition are important to us.

Experience had taught us that many different views of inclusion exist in the field (Ainscow *et al.*, 2000) and that there is no one perspective on inclusion within a single country or school (Booth, 1995; Booth and Ainscow, 1998). Consequently, we felt it was important within our research to find out more about how policy makers, local authority staff and teachers in schools talked about inclusion. However, in order to be able to assess and comment on the extent to which 'inclusion' was occurring in the schools we had to decide how we thought the term should be used.

While we were keen to bring a degree of coherence to our own thinking, we also felt it important to map the complexity of the contexts in which we were to work. In particular, we wanted to be clear about the strands of thinking about inclusion within government policies, not least because we assumed that these influenced schools and LEAs which we set out to understand. Indeed, our previous work had led us to anticipate that such separate strands might in themselves act as barriers to the development of coherent change.

With this in mind, we developed a typology of six ways of ways of thinking about inclusion:

1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
2. Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion.
3. Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.
4. Inclusion as developing the school for all.
5. Inclusion as 'Education for All'.
6. Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.

In what follows we outline these six approaches and offer a commentary on them.

Inclusion as concerned with disability and 'special educational needs'

There is a common assumption that inclusion is primarily about educating disabled students, or those categorised as 'having special educational needs', in mainstream schools. Inevitably many of the participants in the research started out with such an assumption. This is also true of several government documents. Thus, for example, the government's programme for action on special educational needs referred to inclusion as 'the keystone' of its educational policy (DfEE, 1998b). Yet this was a reference not to general educational policy but to policy concerned with children categorised as 'having special educational needs':

We want to see more pupils with SEN included within mainstream primary and secondary schools. We support the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Salamanca World Statement on Special Needs Education 1994. This calls on governments to adopt the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise. That implies the progressive extension of the capacity of mainstream schools to provide for children with a wide range of needs.

(DfEE, 1997, p. 44)

We question the usefulness of an approach to inclusion that, in attempting to increase the participation of students, focuses on a

'disabled' or 'special needs' part of them and ignores all the other ways in which participation for any student may be impeded or enhanced. The Index for Inclusion dispensed with the use of the notion of 'special educational needs' to account for educational difficulties. Specifically, it proposed the replacement of notions of 'special educational need' and 'special educational provision' with those of 'barriers to learning and participation' and 'resources to support learning and participation'. In this context, support was seen as all activities, which increase the capacity of schools to respond to diversity (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Such a shift complements the ideas of others, such as Susan Hart in her 'innovative thinking' (Hart, 1996, 2000), and in 'learning without limits' (Hart *et al.*, 2004).

Yet in rejecting a 'special educational needs' view of inclusion, we would not wish to deflect attention from the continued segregation of disabled students, or, indeed, students otherwise categorised as 'having special educational needs'. Inclusion may be seen to involve the assertion of the rights of disabled young people to a local mainstream education, a view propounded vociferously by sections of the disabled people's movement (see e.g. Lipsky and Gartner, 1997; Peters, 2003). Where people see placement in special schools as a neutral response to 'need' they may argue that some children are best served in special settings. However, a rights perspective invalidates such arguments. Thus, compulsory segregation is seen to contribute to the oppression of disabled people (Abberley, 1987), just as other practices marginalise groups on the basis of race, gender or sexual orientation (Corbett, 1995).

We are also concerned about the significant effect that categorisation has on the education system as a whole. The practice of segregation within special schools involves a relatively small number of students (approximately 1.3 per cent in England – Norwich, 2002), yet it exerts a disproportionate influence within the education system. It perpetuates a view that some students 'need' to be segregated *because* of their deficiency or defect. In this way it legitimates a ladder of increasingly specialised support within the mainstream for children seen to 'have special educational needs', which may lead eventually to special school placement. It also reinforces a mistaken connection between special provision and special placement.

The conception of children as 'having special educational needs', backed up by the revised Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), undermines a transformative view of inclusion, in which diversity is seen as making a positive contribution to the creation of responsive educational settings. At the same time, it limits notions

of 'support' to work with particular categorised students, rather than the inclusive development of all aspects of a school.

The special educational needs view of educational difficulty is deeply entrenched within English national and local educational policies, and practices in schools. It also remains the dominant perspective in many other countries (Mittler, 2000). It absorbs difficulties that arise in education for a wide variety of reasons within the frame of individual defect. When, as is sometimes the case in England, 40 per cent or more of students may be thought, in a particular school, to 'have special educational needs', this weights discussion of inclusion through force of numbers, dragging it away from a broad conception concerned with developing schools for all students and staff, to a narrower view. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many see inclusion through this lens.

Such a view is further reinforced when the deployment of additional resources, particularly the allocation of teaching assistants, is related to the categorisation of students. This growing body of support staff, who are usually drawn from their surrounding communities, and may move on from a school less frequently than teachers, may carry in the school cultures the default position on inclusion. Hence, they may convey a view of educational difficulties as created through student deficits to new members of staff, and to children and their families, even where this is countered by the perspectives of some teachers.

It is our view that categorisation processes, and the practices and language associated with them, act as barriers to the development of a broader view of inclusion. Understanding these processes, their effects, and ways of replacing them with alternative responses to educational difficulties, are of critical importance to research on inclusion. We note, for example, that there remains a massive over-representation of working-class boys in those categorised as having special educational needs, and a particular over-preponderance of African-Caribbean boys in those categorised as 'having emotional and behavioural difficulties' and in those subjected to disciplinary exclusion (Blair, 2001).

The legacy of such categorisation, and the way the term 'special educational needs' obscures such over-representation, means we still have limited understanding of how perceptions and constructions of gender, class and ethnicity contribute to the difficulties children and young people experience in schools. Yet it is more productive to explore the barriers to learning and participation that arise in education as a result of the way boys and girls, or children from different class and ethnic groups, are treated within and outside schools, than to categorise

them and then explore their 'special educational needs' (see e.g. Epstein *et al.*, 1998).

Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusions

If inclusion is most commonly seen as associated with children categorised as 'having special educational needs', then its connection to 'bad behaviour' comes a close second. This arises in part because of the particular meaning given to exclusion within the 1986 Education Act, which used the term to refer to the temporary or permanent exclusion of children from school premises for disciplinary reasons. Thus, at the mention of the word 'inclusion', some within schools become fearful that it means they are to be immediately asked to take on disproportionate numbers of behaviourally 'difficult' students.

Although the number of students permanently excluded from schools for disciplinary reasons in England may be high by European standards (currently running at about 9,000 nationally), this is very few in any one area (there are 15,000 schools in England). We draw attention to this fact in response to commentators such as Garner and Gains (2001), who appear to exaggerate the numbers of children viewed as having difficulties in behaviour who are currently outside mainstream schools as a way of encouraging opposition to inclusion.

Just as in the case of 'inclusion', we prefer to define 'exclusion' for ourselves rather than follow a definition in a government document, and to see the two terms as inextricably linked. Inclusion involves the overcoming of exclusionary pressures; reducing exclusion involves finding ways to increase participation. Instead of seeing exclusion as a state of being barred from a school, we see it as concerned with all the discriminatory, devaluing as well as self-protective processes that go on within schools and society. Exclusion in this broader sense is pervasive and elusive, permeating our cultures and society, the institutions in which we work, and the aspirations which shape our identities. It can involve discrimination that may be personal or institutional, both local and global. Thus, inclusion may be viewed as being about reducing discrimination on the basis of gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith and family background.

Disciplinary exclusion itself cannot be understood without being connected with the events and interactions that precede it, the nature of relationships, and the approaches to teaching and learning in a school. Even at the level of simple measurement, the figures for formal disciplinary exclusion mean little when separated from numbers for

informal disciplinary exclusions, for example, by sending children home for an afternoon, truancy rates, and the categorisation of students as having emotional and behavioural difficulties. In this respect the informal exclusion of school-age girls who become pregnant, who may be discouraged from continuing at school, continues to distort perceptions of the gender composition in the official exclusion figures.

Inclusion as about all groups vulnerable to exclusion

There is an increasing trend for exclusion in education to be viewed more broadly, in terms of overcoming discrimination and disadvantage in relation to any groups vulnerable to exclusionary pressures (e.g. Campbell, 2002; Hayton, 1999; Mittler, 2000). This is evident even in governmental and quasi-governmental usage. For instance, teachers are required by the statutory inclusion statement within the National Curriculum to be concerned with overcoming all forms of discrimination in their school (DfEE/QCA, 1999). Guidance to school inspectors requires similar vigilance (Ofsted, 2000a). Likewise, the government's early years initiative, Sure Start, has an inclusion theme, which explicitly links issues in access to services for children with special educational needs and disabilities with issues for a range of other disadvantaged groups (see <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/inclusion/>).

This broader perspective is often associated in government documents with the terms 'social inclusion' and 'social exclusion'. Sometimes, these terms are given broad meanings, as in a series of documents produced by the Social Exclusion Unit, attached to the Cabinet Office, where social inclusion refers to interventions to reduce poverty and renew run-down neighbourhoods. (SEU, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2001). When used in an educational context, *social inclusion* tends to refer to issues for groups whose access to schools is under threat, such as girls who become pregnant or have babies while at school, looked-after children (i.e. those in the care of public authorities), and travellers. Yet commonly, the language of social inclusion and exclusion comes to be used more narrowly to refer to children who are (or are in danger of being) excluded from schools and classrooms because of their 'behaviour'. This is reflected in government circular 11/99, *Social Inclusion: Pupil Support*, concerned with attendance and disciplinary exclusion (DfEE, 1999b).

The broader use of the language of inclusion and exclusion is therefore somewhat fluid. It seems to hint that there may be some common processes which link the different forms of exclusion experienced

by, say, children with disabilities, children who are excluded from their schools for disciplinary reasons and people living in poor communities. There seems, therefore, to be an invitation to explore the nature of these processes and their origins in social structures. However, this invitation is rarely, if ever, accepted in government texts. Instead, we commonly get a listing of vulnerable groups (see Ofsted, 2000a) or a litany of the risks to which groups are subject (DfES, 2003). As a result, 'social inclusion' and 'social exclusion' become catch-all terms which may be applied to widely differing groups with very different experiences in widely differing contexts. We find the addition of 'social' to some discussions of inclusion and exclusion but not others, unhelpful. It seems to imply that there are forms of exclusion which are not social and perhaps, therefore, natural.

Inclusion as the promotion of the school for all

A rather different strand of thinking about inclusion relates it to the development of the common school for all, or comprehensive school, and the construction of approaches to teaching and learning within it. The term 'comprehensive school' is generally used in England in the context of secondary education and was established as a reaction to a system which allocated children to different types of school on the basis of their attainment at age 11, reinforcing existing social class-based inequalities (Benn and Simon, 1972; Floud, 1961; Floud *et al.*, 1956). We argue that the idea of the comprehensive community for all children may be applied throughout the school years.

While there were moves away from such selection at secondary level to an extent in the 1970s and 1980s, some selective schools remained and selection has returned in a new form through the creation of specialist schools which can select up to 15 per cent of their pupils by so-called aptitude (see Docking, 2000; Walford, 2000). At the same time, the government's emphasis on giving parents a choice of schools based on the publication of examination results has led to an element of 'selection by estate agents', as families seek to move house in order to be in a more favourable position to gain a place in their preferred school.

Another type of school appeared in the early 2000s. Called city academies, their introduction was portrayed by government as a response to the difficulties that have been experienced in raising standards in economically poor urban contexts. These schools, which are in part privately funded, are exempt from LEA control and freed

from adherence to the National Curriculum. Several such schools are funded by fundamentalist Christian sponsors and concern has been expressed about their practices of exclusion (Harris, 2005).

Interestingly, little attention has been given by those supporting inclusion to selection by religion, although one-third of schools in England remain attached to a particular religion, mainly Church of England or Catholic, but with a few Jewish and Muslim schools (Booth, 2003b). Reports of a wave of ethnic disturbances in northern cities in England in 2001 saw such religious segregation as contributing to ethnic disharmony (Home Office, 2001a, 2001b) but government support for schools attached to a particular religion remain firm and the numbers seem set to increase. Equally, the fact that approximately 7 per cent of pupils attend private schools, which segregate on the basis of wealth, is also largely omitted from the inclusion debate (see Potts (2003) for a discussion of some of the varieties of educational selection that take place within one English city).

The comprehensive school movement in England, like the *Folkeskole* tradition in Denmark (Hansen, 1992) and the 'common school' tradition in the USA (Franklin, 1994; Richardson, 1994), is premised on the desirability of creating a single type of 'school for all', serving a socially diverse community. However, the emphasis on one school for all can be double edged. In Norway, for example, the idea of 'the school for all' was as much about creating an independent singular Norwegian identity as it was to do with the participation of people within diverse communities. So while, in Norway, the strong emphasis on education for local communities facilitated the disbanding of segregated special institutions, it was not followed by an equally strong movement to reform the common school to embrace and value difference. As in some other countries, there was an emphasis on assimilating those perceived to be different into a homogeneous normality, rather than transformation through diversity (Haug, 2003). For us, the notion of the school for all is about a mutually sustaining relationship between schools and communities that recognises and values diversity.

Inclusion as 'Education for All'

The issue of inclusion is increasingly evident within international debates. The 'Education for All' (EFA) movement was created in the 1990s around a set of international policies, mainly coordinated by UNESCO, to do with increasing access to, and participation within education, across the world. It was given impetus by two major

international conferences held in Jomtien in 1990, and Dakar in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). While many within this movement appear to identify education with schooling, the focus on education within some of the poorest regions of the world provides an opportunity to rethink schools as one among a number of means for developing education within communities.

In response to the failure of many countries to meet the targets set a decade earlier, the organisers of the Dakar conference sought to emphasise particular areas where progress might be made, and focused attention, in particular, on the disproportionate numbers of girls around the world denied educational opportunities. Yet, while overcoming the exclusion of girls should be prioritised in many countries, in our view, setting global targets to be applied for specific groups has limited value because exclusion always occurs locally. Consequently, the priorities which need to be addressed are the barriers that need to be overcome within particular countries, regions and communities.

Disabled people and their allies, for example, were very concerned about the way they appeared to be pushed down the priority order for participation in the 'Education for All' declaration (UNESCO, 2000). This was despite the apparent progress that had been made in drawing attention to the possibilities for an education system inclusive of all children, specifically including disabled children, within the Salamanca Statement sponsored by UNESCO in 1994. Alur (1999) has documented (for India) the way disabled people are omitted when policies with apparently inclusive wording come to be implemented. We argue that the broad formulation of inclusion to which we subscribe may be used to reinvigorate the 'Education for All' movement so that it is genuinely concerned with the participation in education of all within their local communities.

Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society

The previous five ways of thinking about inclusion indicate meanings given to 'inclusion' by different people in different contexts. Sometimes, particular authors propose the general adoption of their particular definition of inclusion. We certainly differed between ourselves about the value of formulating prescriptive definitions of this sort, and this tension is evident in this and other chapters as we try to steer a path between our disparate views. On one side, it was argued that we should keep an open mind about what we meant by inclusion as we engaged

in our research. On the other side, it was suggested that without a clear view of what we mean by inclusion we had no way of knowing how to support it, or of forming a judgement about when the actions of ourselves or others increased or decreased it.

We faced this tension directly as we began our work with schools. Moreover, we were entering the territory of English schools trying to develop inclusive practices in the context of a centrally driven 'standards' agenda, which had been only partially explored (for example, in our earlier study: Booth *et al.*, 1998). We wished to examine this terrain in greater depth and, in particular, to explore what inclusive practices might look like in this context and how such practices might be developed and sustained. While a detailed exploration of what inclusion might mean for a school's cultures, policies and practices had been set out in the Index for Inclusion, this did not mean that we knew in advance what actions should be taken. Barriers to learning and participation, and resources to support learning and participation, can only be uncovered and prioritised within a particular school. This implied, however, that our emphasis should be less on what inclusion might look like and more on how it might be developed with schools.

We took as our common starting point a view of inclusion which involved a broad articulation of the values to which we saw ourselves as committed and which inclusive practices, we believed, should attempt to embody. Values underlie all actions and plans of action, all practices within schools, and all policies for the shaping of practice. All actions, practices and policies may be regarded as the embodiment of moral arguments. We cannot do the right thing in education without understanding at some level the values from which our actions spring. The development of inclusion, therefore, involves us in making explicit the values that underlie actions, practices and policies, and learning how to better relate our actions to inclusive values.

Of course, we do not imply that making our values accessible is unproblematic, or that doing so is all that is necessary for us to act in accordance with them. We also require knowledge and skills, though the knowledge and skills we need to acquire are dependent on the values we wish to put into practice. Further, there has to be the opportunity for us to act, and actions are always more or less constrained by circumstances.

We articulated inclusive values as concerned with equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for diversity, sustainability and entitlement. This list is in a state of perpetual development. What of honesty, freedom, achievement, spirituality? To what extent may these

further issues be derived from other concerns already on the list? For example, true participation may imply freedom to participate and perhaps not participate. However, in setting out a provisional list of concerns we invite others to think about the basis of their actions and the directions in which they would like to see the development of education.

We recognise, too, that the articulation of such principles invites two questions: What is their precise meaning and what are their implications for practice? The question about meaning is an acknowledgement that value statements such as this require considerable elucidation: they are complex, they may be disputed and they may conflict. For example, in relation to equity, it should be clear how much people differ about the acceptability of differences in income and living conditions within and between countries. There were, for example, opportunities to reflect on such issues during a meeting of our research network held at a large new football stadium. The lifestyles and salaries of footballers provide an index of accepted levels of aspiration. Once such aspirations for incredible riches and status become part of the identities of those in relative poverty, they help to police the current structured inequality on which they depend. Ideas of equality of opportunity, which do not also encourage the flattening of the pyramidal structure of opportunities, similarly act to obscure inequality.

Other 'inclusive values' similarly require elucidation. For example, participation is about being with and collaborating with others. It implies active engagement and an involvement in making decisions. It involves the recognition and valuing of a variety of identities, so that people are accepted for who they are. In valuing community the significance is acknowledged of the social role of education in creating and maintaining communities, and of the potential for communities and educational institutions to mutually sustain each other. The valuing of community may be seen to involve the development of sentiment and responsibility for groups wider than both the family and the nation state: it is about citizenship and global citizenship. Community, as a value, invites attention to the cultivating of feelings of public service. There is an irony within government policy that under the banner of school choice discourages schools from taking responsibility for their surrounding communities, yet is dependent on the public service commitment of teachers to continue to develop education in challenging circumstances.

The idea of sustainability connects inclusion to the most fundamental aim of education: to prepare children and young people for sustainable

ways of life within sustainable communities and environments. At a time when global warming is arguably the most important issue affecting everyone on the planet, inclusion should be concerned with permeating within education an understanding of it and responses to it. Entitlement involves the recognition and conviction that children and young people have rights to a broad education, appropriate support and to attendance at their local school.

However, such elucidation only takes us a certain way. As we have said, we need to know not only what these values mean, but also their implications for practice and how they might be put into effect. Given our previous experiences, we could not pretend that we had no ideas about these issues. Even given the differences between us, we could agree on some of the broad features of inclusion in schools. Inclusion, we believed, referred to:

- The processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the curricula, cultures and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality.
- The presence, participation and achievement of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as ‘having special educational needs’.

Several features of these characterisations of inclusion were of particular importance to us: **inclusion is concerned with all children and young people in schools; it is focused on presence, participation and achievement; inclusion and exclusion are linked together such that inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion; and inclusion is seen as a never-ending process. Thus an inclusive school is one that is on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state.**

Among the drawbacks of such a view is that it identifies education with schooling, whereas we view a school as only one of the sites of education within communities. In this sense, we see the role of schools as supporting the education of communities not to monopolise it.

We also wished to emphasise the significance of the participation of staff, parents/carers and other community members. It seems to us that we will not get very far in supporting the participation and learning of students if we reject their identities and family backgrounds, or if we choose not to encourage the participation of staff in schools in decisions about teaching and learning activities. We also wanted to connect

inclusion/exclusion in education more broadly with including and excluding pressures within society.

Putting these ideas together with the approach to values means that we broadly supported a national approach to education based around comprehensive community pre-school, school and post-school education, and saw educational entitlement as worldwide. We were thus committed to the school for all and the inclusive development of Education for All. We recognised the complexity and contradictions in providing inclusive higher education but were clear that in the competitive divisive system operating within England, there was considerable scope for inclusive change.

We thus started with something specific to say about inclusion. Some may want to see this as our agreed 'definition' of inclusion. However, if so, it is tentative and open. Given our focus on values, rather than on practices and forms of provision, inclusion, we believed, could only be defined as the embodiment of those values *in particular contexts*. By the same token, of course, the broad values we were able to articulate only become fully meaningful as and when they are so embodied.

In some cases a particular set of practices are so integral to our conception of inclusion that they define themselves: for example, the reduction of bullying among children and adults in education, or the building of relationships of collaboration and respect, or the involvement in schools of parents/carers and their surrounding communities. In other respects we felt that we knew a great deal from experience about what practices and provisions were *likely* to embody inclusive values and what those values were *likely* to look like in practice.

However, what is likely to be the case may not be what is actually the case. The contexts of practice – the realities of particular teachers working with particular groups of children in particular schools where particular policy imperatives are at work – are complex and contradictory. Doing the right thing may sometimes involve choices between almost equally undesirable alternatives, and the consequences of actions may be unclear and values may conflict. Action in any particular situation requires relevant knowledge and skills, and we may be more or less knowledgeable and skilful. Yet, if the activities involved in working as a teacher, teaching assistant, school secretary or LEA officer are to promote inclusion, then they must involve knowledge about how inclusive values can be related to action, the skills that need to be acquired as a consequence, and the further knowledge that needs to be pursued.

Summary and conclusions

In this chapter we have set out some of the ways the terms 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' have been used, particularly in English policy texts. We have argued that different groups in different contexts think of inclusion differently and that there is no single, consensual definition. We have also set out our own starting position for thinking about inclusion in this study, which involves a commitment to certain broadly defined values. Inclusion in education may then be seen as a process of putting values into action; it results in the educational practices and provisions, systems and structures which embody those values. Some of these we can specify because they are integral to our conception of inclusion, others we can identify with a reasonable degree of certainty on the basis of what we have learned from experience. However, inclusion can only be fully understood as its underpinning values are played out *in particular contexts*.

The unfolding of this process of contextual embodiment provided the focus of this book. The contexts with which we are primarily concerned are those formed by the schools with which we worked. However, those schools were themselves located within a national policy environment, themselves constrained within national and international economic and social circumstances. We have already indicated some of the tensions and possibilities created by national policies. In Chapter 2, we analyse such implications for inclusive educational development in more detail.