

*TEACHER TRAINING
AND SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS*

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AND NEVILLE JONES*

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FOREWORD

This volume has been planned to appear at a decisive moment in British education, and to make a significant contribution to developments which await governmental backing. That was the original intention behind the writing seminar in June 1984 at Halifax House, Oxford, which was held to shape the present publication. We therefore wish to acknowledge our debt of gratitude in two directions. First, to those who participated at the Halifax House seminar, as discussants to each of the drafts now published as chapters in a coherent book, or who have been correspondents. They are mentioned in an appendix, and together with the actual writers represent a broad spectrum of positive thinking on this important topic. It was our concern to bring together the thinking of leading exponents of alternative strategies, from this country and others in the EEC; from ordinary and special schools and further education; from support services, local authorities and higher education. The chapters are written on behalf of all who were involved in a memorable exercise. Secondly, we record our gratitude to the European Communities, for a financial contribution to the Halifax House seminar and for the support and encouragement of the Bureau for Action in Favour of Disabled People, in the European Commission. Both the Seminar and its outcome in this book are a sequel to the European Forum on Integration, established in Otzenhausen, Germany, in May 1983 (Dahmen). There is nothing insular about the task of preparing ourselves as a teaching profession with others to respond to the needs of all children.

John Sayer
Neville Jones

CONTENTS

Foreword	
Introduction Training for Diversity: the Context for Change	1
John Sayer	

Part One : Responding to Needs in New Contexts

1. Training and progress in special education	9
Tony Booth	
2. Attitudes to disability: a training objective	25
Neville Jones	
3. Patterns of delivery and training implications	37
Denis Mongon	
4. A whole-school response to all needs	55
John Sayer	

Part Two : A New Look at Training Needs

5. Training for teamwork	63
Patricia Potts	
6. Special educational needs and initial training	77
David Thomas and Colin Smith	
7. Post-experience training	87
Klaus Wedell	
8. Post-school special educational needs and teacher-training	103
Nanette Whitbread	
9. A French perspective on special needs	109
Dominique Paty	

Part Three : Strategies for Training Provision

10.	Initial teacher education and the role of support agencies John Quicke	117
11.	Support strategies for INSET focused on schools Michael Jones	129
12.	National initiatives: the Scottish experience Marion Blythman	137
13.	The challenge of micro-technology Tim Southgate	161
14.	In-service training at the Open University Tony Booth	171
15.	The Silent Agenda of Special Education Neville Jones	183

INTRODUCTION Training for Diversity: the Context for Change

John Sayer

Within two years, there have been promptings from ACSET, the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers, towards three major shifts of teacher-training policy, which could together make sense at last of developing whole-school and whole-community approaches to meeting special educational needs. First ACSET's checklist of requirements for initial teacher-education has already been adopted, and that includes preparing all teachers to contribute to the whole range of pupils' needs (ACSET, August 1983). Second, ACSET has recommended that more specific training to respond to special needs should be offered only to teachers already familiar with the full range of pupils (ACSET, June 1984). Third, a national system for planning, funding and securing in-service education and training (INSET) has been powerfully recommended, to make it possible to translate the identified needs of schools and localities into training budgets and provision (ACSET, August 1984).

The three belong together; and together they offer for the first time a prospect of support, training and development for what is now a national policy to educate all children as far as possible in the ordinary school and in its full range of activities.

So the criteria recommended by ACSET for the use of the new accreditation council (CATE) draw away from the common practices of initial training for a single route in special

education, and towards co-operative modes of teaching in a complex community, with special educational needs as just one of the elements. Courses of initial education will now have to take account of the diversity and full range of pupils and their backgrounds, and of the flexibility of response required for each individual in a group. They will touch on child development and the different ways children learn; on assessment and expectation, learning difficulties and potential; on identification of special educational needs and the use of available resource and support; on group work and language exchange; on staff collaboration; on the inter-relationship of school and society, school and home, school and adult world; and on the classroom and its relationship with broader educational purposes.

Far from being a pipedream, all this is now in the pipeline. It is all accepted by government as a requirement; initial training courses will not be approved and accredited unless they can demonstrate that these elements are dealt with effectively. Teachers coming into the service by the 1990s will all have this as a common training background. However, this reform in isolation would leave untouched the great majority of teachers already in service, three-quarters of whom will be teaching our children's children in the next millenium. It also presents a challenge of maintaining and extending these elements of professional practice throughout a teaching career in rapidly changing circumstances. That is why ACSET's initiatives on in-service development are critically important, and why we must have approaches to training related to special educational needs seen very clearly as being in a context of the whole school and the whole range of local resources.

If this broad strategy is adopted, there is a prospect of all teachers and other professional workers seeing themselves as contributors to responses to special needs among others. The minorities who would previously have been segregated either by their specific professions or by the segregation of their client groups will adapt to being an additional resource not only to pupils with special needs but perhaps even more to their teachers, working alongside them to extend access to normal school programmes, and to extend what has been thought normal so that it becomes more accessible to all pupils. Not much of that is likely to happen until those with specialised resource skills have also had a trained background of experience in the mainstream; and this of course is the starting point of the new ACSET recommendations.

There are plenty of difficulties in this approach. For one thing, it is much more difficult to identify staffing needs. In a segregated model, guidelines were easy to draw up and easy to check. The DES Circular 4/73 recommended one specialist

teacher per group of six younger children with hearing impairment, or eight such older children; there were much the same ratios for the blind and partially sighted, the autistic, those with speech and language impairment. For moderate learning difficulties, the ratio was to be one to eleven, for severe cases, one to nine; for the physically handicapped and epileptic, one to eight or ten, down to one to four and five for the most severe cases; and for the maladjusted, one to seven through to one per three or four psychotic cases. The two main ingredients were specialist skills and staff contact time. In special schools and units other than those for children with hearing or visual impairment only a small minority of teachers still have had specialist training at all; most are specialists only in the sense that they give most of their time to teaching children with these special needs.

Circular 4/73 is out of date, and ACSET has called for urgent attention to criteria for staffing in the new variety of settings. We know very little indeed about the staffing levels required to meet all needs in an ordinary school setting (Sayer, 1982). Until we know better, we have to assume that equivalent levels should apply whatever may be the local model of provision. However, one marked difference is that this additional resource for specialised work will have to be trained, and indeed trained for a whole-school and community education model, as one of the likely future contexts, in fact the one to which we are now committed in policy and law. Far from diminishing the emphasis on specialist training at present required for work only with hearing and visual needs, ACSET's recent recommendations add significantly to the training requirement, across the whole range of needs. A teacher with no more than general training and commitment may cope in a specialised unit; but to be a resource in an open team, greater emphasis on specialised skills will be looked for by colleagues.

This poses another question, which is taken up in several chapters of this book. Do we want in any one school or group of schools a distinct body of specific professionals whose sole activity is to be a specialist resource to others or to children with special needs, and who therefore lose much of their initial training as 'ordinary' teachers? It is a dilemma facing others already: professional tutors, school counsellors, deputy heads, or advisers. In order to keep abreast of general practice and be seen to do so, teachers who have developed specialist skills as a resource to others may well need to maintain their work as 'ordinary' teachers too. If they do so for only a third of their programme, that means offering specialist training to half as many teachers again, and it also demands more of school organisations and management.

It is most urgent, therefore, that training needs of different kinds should be identified and quantified: for specialist teachers to help meet specific needs; for teachers trained as a resource for general learning difficulties; for subject specialists, particularly in secondary schools, to help their departments adapt and extend learning materials and teaching styles; for resource group leaders within and across schools and colleges; and for heads, advisers and officers as part of management training.

That is why the proposals relating to training and special educational needs depend on ACSET's model for INSET as a whole. There has to be a coherent scheme for England and Wales which ensures that identified needs are met by training opportunities. At present there is a general acceptance of the notions associated with school-focused in-service education, in which working groups and individuals seek to identify training needs and priorities to improve their effectiveness in each situation, and seek support from local authorities and training institutions beyond the school to help develop a range of INSET activities. The booklet *Making Inset Work* (DES, 1978), distributed some years ago from the DES to all schools, sets out a catechism for the purpose; but this bears no relationship yet to the funding mechanisms for INSET, either from central or local government. The move to INSET for all specific forms of training to meet special educational needs therefore requires a radical reform of the whole INSET machinery, of the kind now proposed.

Certainly in this respect, the Audit Commission's recent comments on local government financing are right. Something like a three year cycle of management is required for schools to identify needs and draw up proposals to be agreed and provision planned in the most appropriate contexts; for funding to be allocated and courses laid on; and for evaluation which in turn will modify the next cycle of decisions. INSET should not depend on annual hiccups of 104 different authority budgets. A national policy to allocate something like five per cent of teachers' salary budgets to this purpose, and to set up area professional committees as brokers across LEAs and training institutions, would seem to be essential if opportunities wherever they happen to be employed are to become comparable, and the needs of children wherever they happen to be in school are to be met.

So the shift towards INSET for training related to specialised responses to special educational needs is in line with shifts in the training and development patterns for the teaching profession as a whole. Funds previously mandated for a higher proportion of initial training must be transferred, and new money added to put policy into practice. Instead of

mandatory qualifications only for sight and hearing, there should be a required level of provision for trained specialists right through the service. Finally, from the area professional committees we should be looking for a model of professional co-operation to reflect the wholeness of the education service to the public.

The Topic and Title

The title of this volume implies nothing more than acceptance that 'training' and 'special educational needs' are part of contemporary language. There are overtones, which are rightly identified in subsequent chapters, but they are not the overtones of this publication. Briefly, *training* may be narrowly conceived in behaviourist terms, with a sense of the teacher as a passive recipient being modified by systematic treatment, or being dragged along by the power of some other force than the teacher's own. In other contexts, it may be used in a restricted sense to contrast with general education, as a course undergone to acquire vocational skills and drills. On the other hand, training is a generic term to cover the whole field of selection, induction, development including self-development, appraisal including self-appraisal, and career promotion. It can therefore be even wider than teacher education. Current usage is loose and inconsistent; and courses of training are a part of the wider sense of professional development anyway. Most writers in this volume, we believe, would tend towards the wider rather than the narrower connotations.

So too, our acceptance of 'special educational needs' is no more than acceptance of current means of communication. None of us is likely to describe children as 'special needs children'; we are all determined to respond to and reduce needs to a minimum; some of us would wish to move away from both the term and the focus as a next stage towards seeing all needs met by appropriate resource and response; and the very notion of 'needs' as a basis for educational planning and response may be questioned even while we use the language of the day. Even among contributors, there are a wide range of perceptions underlying the use of our title.

A Forum of Positive Thinking

It was precisely the wish to bring together the widest possible range of positive responses to ACSET's proposals for teacher-training related to special educational needs which prompted the Halifax House seminar and this volume. We were all too aware of the pressure of special pleading, much of it resistant to the change and impervious to the public will to bring together the separate sections and interest-groups of an

education service, which had been suffered by the working party set up by ACSET in September 1983. We wanted to explore the differences of opinion and interpretation among those who want new concepts and policies to be translated into practice, and to expose the real issues and challenges to be faced in responding to the ACSET proposals. To do so, we have felt it necessary to draw on all parts of the education service and on related professions, and to take soundings from those who are not caught in the immediate context of England and Wales. What this volume offers, therefore, is a response not from any one consultative body or interest, but we believe from a significant sample of thinking practitioners right across the service and across frontiers. We are trying to move the debate on from Warnock and the 1981 Act, on from the ACSET discussions, to the stage of implementing proposals, of marrying concept and practice.

This is presented in three parts. In the first, some of the major issues of changing contexts are highlighted and confronted. Tony Booth invites us to consider directions, philosophy and progress towards a comprehensive education service and away from current contradictions. Neville Jones explores the fundamental shift of attitudes to handicap or disability which has to be shared if the rhetoric of conceptual change is to be enacted. Dennis Mongon takes us through the variety of patterns of service delivery for which training must prepare, whilst I concentrate on the transformation of the 'mainstream' rather than the 'ordinary' school of yesterday.

The second part of the book opens with a penetrating challenge by Patricia Potts, exposing what may be meant by teamwork before considering the role of training for it. David Thomas and Colin Smith remind us that the general contribution of initial training cannot be left to generalities, and show training institutions, like schools, exploring the combined offerings of subject specialists and tutors who have specialised in special education. Klaus Wedell moves us through the range of service requirements to be developed through post-experience training, and sets out the nature of INSET provision required for each aspect, distinguishing clearly between roles and relating training to organisation and management. Nanette Whitbread reminds us of the extension of mainstream provision required for the post-sixteen age-group, and of the training needs of a partly untrained further education staff. The section concludes with a view from across the Channel, a reminder from Dominique Paty that we may be trapped in the language of special education, and a look at interpretations abroad.

Finally, we consider strategies for training and the priorities for training agencies and services. John Quicke

sets out the new contributions to be made by support services, in a chapter which may be read as a response to Patricia Potts. Michael Jones develops further the whole-school approach, dwelling on the training role of the school and coming down firmly on the side of curriculum development as the key to an integrated approach. Marion Blythmans's case-study from Scotland both records the impressive reform which has already been carried out there, and sets out the questions raised for later developments south of the border. Tim Southgate has an important chapter on the training contribution of micro-technology, which together with Tony Booth's exposition of training through distance learning serves to complete the range of available training resources required to bring about a major reform in our own generation. Neville Jones concludes with what we have learnt from each other in the Halifax House seminar, and with pointers for the future.

This volume is written for all who are involved in teacher-education, whether in training institutions, schools or local authorities, and for those working in special education whose skills can become a resource to the whole service. It contains chapters and case-studies which will be valuable for training courses, particularly of more advanced study. It offers answers to the simple question: once the ACSET recommendations on teacher-training and special educational needs become accepted policy, what do we do?

Chapter One

IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND PROGRESS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Tony Booth

In this chapter I will argue that before in-service training can make a contribution to progress in special education we have to be clear about what constitutes progress. Since progress can only be defined in terms of moral and political goals any particular initiatives have to be examined for their underlying philosophy and practical consequences so that a choice can be made between them. What kinds of schools do they support or tend to produce? I will look at the way the moral and political choices in education are obscured by the needs of educators to claim neutrality. I will then examine the 'new' approach to special education which has followed the Warnock report and 1981 Education Act and is characterised by such slogans as 'Every teacher a teacher of special needs', 'A whole school approach', 'An expanded notion of special needs'. I will suggest that it contains contradictory elements, with their own history which require analysis before they should be adopted. The approach may owe more to a selective philosophy than one compatible with the long-term development of the comprehensive school. Finally I will indicate a conception of special education which is compatible with the enhancement of a 'comprehensive' non-selective education in primary and secondary schools.

Progress and Politics in Education

Even if we make the assumption that progressive change within schools can be facilitated through in-service training, the simple provision of *more* training cannot of itself lead to progress. For progress is change in accordance with our moral and political values. In a society in which people differ markedly about the way of life, including the style and content of schooling they desire, there can be no consensus about the nature of progress nor about the means to foster it. Special educators cannot be pictured as a single community of benevolent gardeners tending a common plot of

special education, each contributing to compatible corners of scented beauty. One should consider the possibility instead, that some might like to cultivate sunflowers while others specialise in bind weed though the identities of each of these group would depend on one's perspective. In gardening, weeds are plants which you don't want to see on your patch.

The notion that change can and should be achieved through consensus remains attractive. It implies that disagreement within education can be resolved despite major political differences and may appear to offer a way out of an interminable need to push one's own case against opposing forces. However I would suggest that such a notion only obscures the nature of educational change and can be counterproductive. While some of us wait for consensus to be reached others will be fashioning education for their own ends. Further, the emergence of an apparent consensus within a professional group, which suppresses differences in basic philosophy, may work against the interests of the population it is meant to serve. For consensus may be achieved on the basis of a shared professional interest. It can be argued that the advancement of professional power is at the expense of the power of the client group.

If we wish to make progress in education, we need to have a vision of the way we would like education to be developed as well as an understanding of the implications for changes in current practice that this entails. The value on any intervention in education can be assessed, in part, by the extent to which it contributes to desired moral and political ends. Now I am putting this forward as purely an option for the 'ideologues'. I am suggesting that it is a necessary condition for intelligent action in education. In her philosophical role Mary Warnock has argued:

...understanding things imaginatively is itself a deep source of pleasure and satisfaction. But it is also the only possible way to intelligent action. In order to see how things can or should be changed, it is necessary first to know what they are, even how they came to be as they are...

Imagination, then, is what enables one both to understand how things are, and to raise the question Need they remain like this? and How could they be different?

(Warnock, 1978, pp.8-9)

But this imaginative mental overview of practice and

possibility cannot make our actions intelligent by itself. We have to make the 'right' choices and to do that we have to assess possibilities against the standard of principles.

But surely even if a view of education as politics can be sustained for mainstream education, it is strangely out of place within special education? In special education there is a widespread belief that the provision of appropriate education can depend on the neutral identification of educational needs discovered by assessment of individual pupils. A debate about the functions of special schools within a selective and stratifying system of education can be avoided for example, by arguing pupils should be placed in accordance with their individual needs; that it is quality rather than place of education which is the important issue (Brennan, 1982). By focusing on the needs of the child it is thought that we may discover that he or she needs a particular placement. Such an argument relies on a mistaken analogy with basic bodily requirements and presumes that the connection between educational need and its satisfaction is as unproblematic as the connection between hunger and food. Yet it should be clear that the content and organisation of schooling for all pupils raise similar questions. What should they learn? How should they learn?

The idea that debates such as those about selection and comprehensive education and about racist and sexist curricula do not apply within special education is itself a form of segregation which has overtones of ineducability. Yet a consideration of the educational consequences of the sex, class or colour of pupils is of particular relevance to special education. All categories of special school have a majority of boys and the preponderance in maladjusted schools is overwhelming (DES Statistics, 1982). The disproportionate number of black pupils in disruptive units or recommended for ESM(M) provision remains a cause of argument and conflict (Tomlinson, 1981). Virtually all pupils sent to schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or day maladjusted provisions are working class (Tomlinson, 1982). Recently a further issue has resurfaced to my consciousness with relative numbers of men and women taking courses about 'special needs'. In the first three years of the Open University course 'Special Needs in Education', 78 per cent of students were women. Some people might go further than proposing that these issues should be on the agenda of special education by suggesting that they are the agenda; that the significance of special education lies in the way pupils (and possibly teachers) are categorised, stratified and differentially valued.

The fact that advocacy of a particular change in

education is also the advancement of moral and political ends can appear to be terribly inconvenient in our education system. Education is meant to be steered by politically neutral experts, DES officials, HMI and teachers. Of course such an assumption involves an interesting view of processes within the structure of the Department of Education and Science. At exactly what point in such a structure is political influence filtered out of the system? After all, the political party in power would see its role of education as the introduction of political bias into the system and this might be most clearly detected by overt efforts to remove contrary views. The involvement of the DES hierarchy at the level of HMI in the political control of what should be taught in schools is suggested for example in a statement by Pauline Perry, Chief HMI, about an in-service training course in peace studies: 'we never intervene in actual topics - although I think we might have done in this case' (Guardian, 28th July 1984). The independence that HMI do have has been challenged by recent attempts to question their right to examine the effects of government spending cuts in education (TES, October 5th 1984). The moves to greater central political control of the curriculum has been widely discussed elsewhere (see for example Lawton, 1980, 1984). Actions do not have to carry a party label to be political. All actions which sustain a particular way of life are political and they do not cease to be simply because the life they support has majority approval or is really questioned.

But because political neutrality is often assumed in the job description of educators they have become adept at concealing their reasons for advocating or disparaging certain changes. At times this sets them off on false though self-perpetuating trails to find non-political answers to political questions. For example, the question 'what is a good school?', although beloved by researchers, actually lies outside the province of research. Thousands of working days have been devoted to the attempt to find the school ethos which produces successful law-abiding citizens with different researchers arguing for 'tight ships' or 'happy families' (Rutter, et.al, 1979; Reynolds, et.al, 1981). Yet our preferred ethos for schools is not 'caused' by a relationship with so-called outcome measures. On the contrary the outcomes we expect as well as the means we employ to achieve them depend on the way we wish to run our schools.

Research is introduced, then, as the neutral middle-person in supporting change. We await the results of research before we say that 'research has shown that....' so it must be desirable. We also like to lean on laws; 'We should do it because it's in the 1981 Act'. Yet we know that educational law rarely contains precise prescriptions and