

Alternative Provision for Students with SEBD in Australia and England

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Abstract

Non-mainstream forms of provision for school students presenting with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) are sometimes dismissed as being inferior to mainstream provision and are condemned as exclusionary. This paper reports on a study of non-mainstream provision for students with SEBD with the emphasis being placed on the perceptions of staff working in such settings in England and Australia. The findings indicate that participants in this study believed themselves to be engaged in work that, in placing social emotional engagement at the heart of curriculum, provided opportunities to students with SEBD that were often unavailable in mainstream settings. It is argued that theories and policies of Inclusive Education must move beyond mere curriculum 'adaptation' if they are to succeed for students encountering serious problems adjusting to school. Policy makers and 'mainstream' schools are encouraged to learn from 'alternative' forms of provision and work more closely with this sector.

Key words: *alternative provision; Australia and England; disengaged students; Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.*

Introduction

This paper is rooted in a critique of the concept of inclusive education. In this section we provide an account of the theoretical underpinnings of the study we describe later in the paper.

The study grew out of a concern that in the current climate of Inclusive Education there is a tendency in some quarters towards the uncritical acceptance of certain extreme and often ill-founded assumptions about what constitutes appropriate educational provision for students with Special Educational Needs. For example,

Shevlin et al. (2008, p. 143), who, with reference to UK OFSTED reports, found that: “despite certain progress (towards inclusion) certain seemingly intractable difficulties remain as barriers to the realization of the inclusion strategy.”

These writers point out that students with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) are the most difficult to accommodate in mainstream schools because of the impact of such students on the wider community of students. More generally Barton (2005, p. 5) states, with reference to current UK context:

“Advocates of inclusion are very aware of the contradictory and competing policy context in which inclusion is located. This has led to the lack of political will on the part of government to unreservedly support inclusion.”

Curcic (2009) adds to this bleak picture in a review of inclusive practice in 18 countries, stating that:

“[...] what is declared in legislation is not necessarily adequately implemented in practice [...], or evenly within the borders of one country [...]. Researchers do not uniformly agree on what, in fact, constitutes inclusive practices.” (Curcic, 2009, p. 517)

Whilst it is easy to cite the central principle of inclusive education as stressing the importance of social justice and equity in relation to access to education (e.g. UNESCO, 1994), difficulties emerge when attempts are made to transpose these principles into a practical educational philosophy and an education system. Furthermore, the empirical evidence base for inclusive education is seriously lacking, as Lyndsay (2007, p. 2) has noted on the basis of a review of research into the effectiveness of inclusive education:

“The evidence from this review [of research into the effectiveness of inclusive education] does not provide a clear endorsement for the positive effects of inclusion. There is a lack of evidence from appropriate studies and, where evidence does exist, the balance was only marginally positive.”

Added to this is research carried out in 20 English schools (10 first, middle and primary; 9 secondary and 2 special) committed to an inclusive education agenda, carried out by MacBeath et al. (2006). They found a disastrous confection of ‘good intentions’ (81), inadequate staff training and resources, competing agendas which, they argue, contribute to a rising tide of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which, in turn, create additional demands that school teaching and support staff are ill-equipped to meet. The result is an unsatisfactory educational experience for staff and pupils in general. However, the remarkable claim that well intentioned efforts to promote inclusive education lead to an increase in social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has to be scrutinized. This is because it suggests that the ill-defined notion of inclusive education may, in some respects, be responsible for more harm than good.

This problematic situation is often accompanied by a tendency to dismiss non-mainstream forms of provision as being representative of a form of ‘segregation’ (Booth & Ainscow, 1997). This assumption carries with it beliefs about the innate

inferiority of non-mainstream provision along with a commitment to the idea that all young people must benefit from access to a 'mainstream' education. 'Mainstream' schools are equated with the 'mainstream' of society, and Inclusive Education is equated with 'Social Inclusion'.

This is in spite of serious problems with the vagueness of the notion of 'inclusion' and its assumed opposite: 'exclusion'. Weinberg and Rauno-Borbala (1993, p. 12) have noted:

"the impossibility of having a single criterion with which to define exclusion. The numerous surveys and reports on exclusion all reveal the profound helplessness of the experts ..."

Weinberg and Rauno-Borbala (1993, p.12)

It is worth noting that we are all, to some degree, 'excluded' from social participation in situations in which others are 'included'. People may and do differ, to a significant extent, in their preferences regarding the situations in which they wish to be included and those from which they would prefer to be excluded. 'Exclusive' is often used as a term to indicate high status, as in relation to the conferment of academic awards, the higher levels of which progress through a series of 'degrees' which enable access to academic societies and certain occupations. 'Self-actualization', however, as construed by Abraham Maslow (1970) is defined partly in terms of the transcendence of the need for approval by others (such as those who are empowered to confer academic degrees) and the assertion of a personal set of values which may or may not meet with approval from others. In this sense, Self-actualization is the ultimate expression of autonomy. This also links with Butler's (1997) theory of identity formation. He sees the search for identity as emerging largely from a rejection of potential identities, rather than the search for an ideal identity. This is to say that what we are may be defined most clearly by what we are not. Identity, in this sense, is, for many of us, the search for some kind of exclusivity, albeit within the context of a social group.

Problems with 'Special Educational Needs'

Another problematic feature of some extremes of the Inclusive Education agenda is the tendency to reject insights from psychological and medical perspectives because of their potential to create marginalizing 'labels' that promote individual pathology over institutional responsibility (Slee, 2013; Booth & Ainscow, 1997). Teachers in schools, it is argued, will be more effective if their knowledge of their students remains uncontaminated by information about students' 'disabilities', because such information is likely to lead to certain students being viewed primarily in terms of their disabilities. And yet, paradoxically, it is a central (and highly laudable) tenet of Inclusive Education that each student should be treated as an individual. This is because (and again, this is a highly defensible position) social-emotional development and academic learning are best understood as requiring social interactions in which the individual's learning tasks are carefully scaffolded on the learner's existing understandings and learner

characteristics. The paradox lies in the apparent dismissal of information that may help the teacher to understand why some students may have a tendency to respond in ways that are atypical in relation to their peers.

This point has a further and even more disturbing implication. Whilst there are certain forms of impairments, such as some forms of physical and sensory disability that may give rise to a natural sense of sympathy and desire to make accommodations, there are others which are more likely to be met with negative responses and an impulse to reject. This can apply to students with certain kinds of hearing loss, whose failure to comprehend might be construed as lack of interest or calculated rudeness. It can also apply to students with communication difficulties, such as Autistic Spectrum Disorders, whose neurologically based lack of social competence might be interpreted as wilful non-compliance or, again, rudeness. A basic knowledge of these conditions can contribute a great deal to the teacher's understanding of the individual.

This point is made no more obvious than in the case of Social-Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). Many students who are deemed 'too difficult to handle' (usually because of perceived Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)) continue to be placed in non-mainstream settings. This is because students in this category are often expelled or 'excluded' from schools for disciplinary reasons. This often means that they are deemed to have deliberately engaged in disruptive activities. This is in spite of the fact that SEBD are most often associated with social and cognitive impairments (Hayden, 1997).

Two unintended consequences flow from these observations: (1) what works for students with SEBD is too often restricted to what works for *most* students with SEN in mainstream settings, and (2) the work that goes on in non-mainstream settings with students who present with SEBD is often neglected by researchers and policy makers, sometimes based on the groundless, assumption that 'mainstream' schools, with certain modifications, are the appropriate location for all students.

These problems are compounded further by the strong relationship between academic achievement and EBD (Nicholson, 2014). As Nicholson points out, it is often difficult to determine whether education failure precedes SEBD or whether the educational failure follows from existing SEBD. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that fear of failure often exacerbates SEBD (e.g. Coleman & Vaughn, 2000; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). This means that an overemphasis on academic outcomes in the absence of appropriate social-emotional support in schools is likely to promote SEBD.

Key Research Questions

The current study set out to answer the following questions:

1. what provision is made for school students with mental health problems in UK/Australia, out of mainstream school classrooms?
2. what methods are employed in these settings to help students deal with social, emotional and or behavioural problems?

3. what specific educational arrangements are made in these settings?

4. how are therapeutic and educational outcomes assessed?

Methodology and Methods

There were two main methodological challenges posed in this resource-limited study:

The first was how to identify the range of alternative provision. The second was to identify the kinds of data that would be most pertinent to our research questions.

1. Identifying the Range of Alternative Provision

Previous work carried out by one of the current authors (Cooper, 2001) on this topic in England alerted the research team to the challenges involved in identifying available forms of such provision. This is because of a lack of standardisation in nomenclature relating to SEBD as well as the involvement of non-statutory agencies in providing facilities outside of state funded, mainstream education. This problem was addressed by the decision to adopt a case study approach (Stake, 1995). In this study the primary case was defined as an educational jurisdiction. In Australia this was a geographical region within a state education system, and in the UK it was defined as a Local Authority. The procedure was then to examine official documentation with a view to (a) identifying forms of provision, and (b) key personnel who would be approached for further information about alternative provision in their jurisdiction and beyond. We then followed up this initial data trawl with approaches to individuals responsible for the running of the various forms of provision. We then adopted a 'snowball' sampling strategy (Robson, 2011) whereby all informants were asked to recommend other potential facilities and informants that we would then approach. The researchers also included a number of acknowledged academic experts on SEBD in their interview sample, in order to obtain a broad academic perspective on the issues at stake. These experts were identified on the basis of having long standing research and scholarly achievement in the area of SEBD. These individuals were able to guide the researchers to facilities and organizations outside the case study areas that the researchers were able to follow up.

2. Identifying the Most Appropriate Kinds of Data

The main purpose of this study was to identify alternative forms of provision for students who are not attending mainstream school due to SEBD and related problems, and to explore the rationales and value of these provisions. It was important that, as researchers, we did not make prior assumptions about how the value of these facilities would be assessed. This is a particularly important point in the context of concerns about the probable effects of an overemphasis on academic achievement in exacerbating SEBD (see above). With this in mind it was decided that an essentially ethnographic interview approach (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) should be adopted,

whereby participants would be asked to speak in their own terms about the nature of their facilities, their purpose and achievements with minimal prompting from the researchers.

The authors gathered data using the following main methods:

- Site visits, during which the authors toured facilities.
- Informant style interviews (Powney & Watts, 1987) with workers in facilities and other professionals which explored the institution's mission, purposes, methods and effectiveness.

A form of grounded analysis developed by Cooper and McIntyre (1996) was the main strategy for data analysis adopted. This method involves repeated systematic trawls through interview transcripts and the gradual development of themes relating to research questions. The initial trawls involve the development of hypotheses about common and divergent perceptions which are then subject to rigorous testing against detailed examination of data.

The study took place between February and May 2011 in Australia, and between the end of May and June 2011 in England.

The rest of the paper is devoted to an account of the research findings and a brief consideration of possible policy and practice implications. The main purpose of this short paper is to highlight the main points of consensus that emerge from the analyses of transcripts. Quotations are, therefore, for the most part selected because they are representative of the consensus. It is important to stress that these findings emerge from case studies. They are not being presented as representative of national comprehensive 'pictures' of views on the nature and value of alternative provision for students with SEBD. Rather, these findings present 'snap shots' of the kinds of thinking that motivates a particular set of individuals who work in these settings.

Participants

A total of 58 professionals were interviewed during the course of the study. These included:

'front line' professionals, including teachers, instructors and counsellors (N=31)

- 17 in Australia
- 14 in England,

as well as academic and public service stakeholders (n=27)

- 9 in Australia
- 18 in England.

The Settings

Both the main Australian and English settings combined urban industrialized and rural settings representing a good mix of demographics including areas of high prosperity and both rural and urban poverty. Both main settings were ethnically diverse. Included in the final sample is a small number of settings that were outside

the main settings that were included on the basis of recommendations of participants on the basis that they were considered to be atypical, innovative and or particularly effective forms of provision.

A total of 25 institutions were identified and investigated, 16 in Australia and 9 in the UK.

Range of Provision

- On site units with mainstream integration/inclusion (e.g. nurture groups) (n=4)
- On site unit without integration (e.g. Teenage Mothers' Unit)
- Off-site/outreach behavioural support services and multi-disciplinary projects (n= 4)
- Vocational Training School (Australia only)
- Day special schools/Alternative Schools (Edmund Rice Foundation, Australia) (n=8)
- Residential schools (n= 2)
- Residential Unit for homeless juveniles
- Outreach/Drop In ('Headspace' national counselling service) (Australia Only) (n=4)

Results and Discussion

Key Findings 1: The Varieties of Provision

The authors encountered a wide variety of non-mainstream provision for students who were generally described by staff as 'not fitting in' to mainstream schools. The settings varied considerably in terms of size and formality. At one extreme was a highly structured, purpose built boarding school in rural England, and run by a charitable foundation. The school catered for 40 students (aged between 5 and 12) who were described as having severe emotional difficulties and was staffed by teachers, mental health workers and residential staff. The school's purpose was described very much in terms of providing a therapeutic environment for students within which formal education was provided. At the other end of the scale was a small scale day provision run by two former mainstream school teachers from a church hall in a suburban area of a small town in Australia. This self-styled 'alternative school' catered for students of secondary school age who had been expelled from mainstream schools. There were approximately 28 students (girls) on roll at the time of the study. Student places were funded by the state Education Department, and the stated aim of the provision was to provide a setting in which students could develop improved social skills. The main vehicle for this was a curriculum which revolved around the interests of a pool of 20 volunteers. These interests included such activities as photography, horse riding, art and dance. The two teachers usually worked with two volunteers with student groups no larger than 15 so as to facilitate interaction.

We came across two examples of provisions, both in Australia, which operated without permanent premises. One involved a peripatetic teacher who used a minibus

adapted as a classroom to tour the district in order to locate and work with young people who were out of school on various learning tasks. A second provision was made by officers from the local police force who met with out of school students and engaged them in outdoor pursuits, such as mountaineering and skateboarding.

A further category of provision which we found in Australia was formed by off-site drop-in centres for young people that offered counselling for social-emotional problems. These were part of the national 'Headspace' initiative which now has branches throughout Australia.

Most other provision took the form of relatively formal educationally focused activities that were carried out in recognizable classrooms (and workshops, in the case of the vocational school), some of which were attached to mainstream schools, whilst others existed as stand-alone facilities in the form of entire schools with multiple classrooms and as many as 300 students, or small, one or two class units. The variety was greater in Australia than in England, where the provisions studied were generally state-funded educational facilities staffed by trained teachers and regulated by the government inspection system (OFSTED). There were two non-state funded institutions studied in England. One has already been mentioned (above). The other was a private residential school which espoused a 'progressive' ethos in which students participated in a form of 'self-governance' and where freedom of choice and self-responsibility were seen as being of paramount importance. Both of these schools were subject to oversight by OFSTED. There was less clarity about the regulatory framework for some of the smaller and individualistic provisions that we found in Australia. It was evident, however, that these were all known to the Education authorities and often supported financially on a per capita basis by the state. Those that were not supported in this way tended to be run by charitable foundations, some with the support of church authorities.

The level of resourcing varied considerably between different provisions, particularly in Australia, where some of the smaller institutions depended on short term grants from the state for their continuance. On the other hand, we also saw two extremely well resourced provisions, both of which funded by charitable foundations, one being the residential school in England, already referred to, and the other being the vocational school in Australia which had extensive technical facilities.

Key Findings 2: Perceptions of Students' Needs

When asked about the characteristics of students attending their facilities, it was common for staff to refer to their students as being unable to cope with mainstream schools or too problematic to be maintained in mainstream schools.

"They are kids who have disengaged from the mainstream school. Either school has identified that they are not attending regularly, or they're not coping with the social setting or for whatever reason it is not working for them. Or we get parents and kids turning up saying 'I'm not coping with school'; 'I'm not going'." "But I want

to do my schooling.' So they are kids, often kids with fairly complex needs which are underpinning the difficulties they are having with attending school. [...] Sometimes they'll not be allowed to attend school [i.e. are suspended] [...] often they have family issues that are impacting on them."

(Social Worker in a Flexi School, Australia)

Non-compliant, anti-social and occasionally violent behaviours were described as features of the presenting characteristics of students. It was common for staff to link these difficulties to school failure coupled with serious social-emotional problems (often involving mental health problems and difficult family circumstances), and to see these as reflecting underlying emotional difficulties.

"... about 90% of our students would be from one parent homes. A fair percentage of those would be offenders or would have had a run in at some time with the law. So they don't understand boundaries; they don't respect boundaries. They don't understand how to be socially involved with their community. They're not responsible for their own lives because they've not been taught that through the parenting they've had."

(Head Teacher in an Alternative school, Australia)

Practitioners refer repeatedly to problems in the structures and expectations of mainstream schools as exacerbating influences in relation to students' social-emotional problems which are sometimes characterized in terms of inflexibility and impersonal relations between staff and students. These circumstances are often seen as the catalyst for non-compliance and acting out behaviours by emotionally fragile students which the staff tend to meet with inappropriately punitive as opposed to palliative or therapeutic responses. Having said this, staff offering these views often stress their unwillingness to blame staff in mainstream schools for their lack of attention to the individual needs of challenging students, seeing such impersonal and inflexible regimes of many mainstream schools as natural consequences of the ways in which they are structured and their orientations towards certain kinds of academic outcomes. Without exception all of the 'frontline' practitioners we interviewed in both countries saw their key role as being to forge caring and supportive relationships with students (see below).

For many, the 'non-mainstream' settings in which they worked along with the opportunities that these provided for engaging with young people as individuals were crucial to the work that they were doing with the young people. Some practitioners, particularly those in Australia, saw their ability to engage with students as being aided by their freedom from the constraints of the formal curriculum because of the opportunities it created to allow students to develop and follow their own interests. Having said this, many of the provisions placed the formal curriculum close to the centre of what they did with the students, but always within the context of caring and supportive relationships which emphasized social-emotional competence, emotional

warmth and acceptance. As one senior teacher put it: 'If you are going to work in a school like this you've got to be more than a teacher. You've got to be a carer and a support person.' This should not be misinterpreted as indicating a neglect of academics. One example was given of a teacher discovering that a student with a long history of non-compliance and oppositionality had an underlying but hitherto unrecognized learning problem that transpired to be dyslexia. The student, it was claimed, only felt able to reveal his difficulties once a relationship of mutual trust with a teacher in an alternative school had been established.

As has been seen, there is a strong emphasis placed by interviewees on students' psychological needs, and particularly the need for nurturing relationships that generate a sense of emotional safety and trust. These insights are strongly redolent of some of the key tenets of Attachment Theory (Trevarthen, 2004; Bowlby, 1969) and Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs. Just how fundamental the needs being expressed by students with SEBD sometimes are is reflected in the attention given by some informants to the issue of food. One teacher in England, who was in charge of an assessment and reintegration unit for primary school students who had been or were at risk of being permanently excluded from mainstream schools, expressed the importance of food succinctly:

"We have found that we can't actually address any other needs until they [the students] are fed and watered. And they know and trust that regular meals are coming their way. We have had 'squirrelers' [...] they take food home. They want to take food home at the weekend especially [...] because they know they're not going to get anything [at home]. [...] That's why we do the toast; that's why we do the fruit [...] and we make sure that they have a very good cooked lunch. And if they want to take anything home they can."

It follows that several interviewees (in both Australia and England) referred to the fact that their work extended to direct intervention with the families of their students. This was most often described in terms of giving families advice and support in relation to child care and how to support their children at school.

Key Findings 3: Intervention and Student Progression

As has already been indicated, intervention approaches were varied but tended to emphasise the primacy of nurturing relationships between adults and students. Though it was repeatedly stressed that it was important to have an awareness of the ways in which such an approach is consistent with and supportive of the facilitation of students' active positive engagement with formal curriculum based learning. One teacher illustrated this in the context of explaining how she had come to explain her role as teacher in charge of 'Nurture Unit' for students to mainstream colleagues in an English comprehensive school where she worked:

[on introducing the concept of 'a nurturing approach' and a nurture group to a secondary school] "...most staff assumed that the special needs department did things to do with literacy and numeracy and that was it. So I did quite an

intensive training session with them, looking at who these children were; why it was important to have a group like this. Because teachers realize that if you have a child who has a reading age below their chronological age then they couldn't cope in a classroom. But, teachers just saw naughty [...] bad children. And they didn't recognize that some of our kids [...] have a social and emotional age that is below their chronological age. And that's why they were playing up in classrooms, and swearing and kicking off or whatever and acting out."

(‘Nurture Co-Ordinator’ in Secondary School, England)

This teacher spoke about her concerns about how her work with students might be misconstrued as trivial and undemanding, with its emphasis on the developing of social skills through game playing and the taking of a formal group meal during the course of the school day. In order to overcome this potential problem she explained to colleagues the rationale behind the nurturing approach and its importance for the creation of the foundational social skills that are essential for learning in classrooms and the development of positive social relationships. Perhaps most important was the way in which she was able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach in enabling previously unmanageable students to engage appropriately in mainstream classrooms:

“because this is our third year; they’ve seen the children develop; they’ve seen the children improve; they’ve seen that they don’t have so much difficulty in the classroom with children; they see that children are growing up; are maturing; are able to talk more in class; are able to sit next to another child in class without wanting to poke their eye out.”

What this teacher describes as the ‘nurture’ approach (based on the ‘Nurture Group’ model developed by Marjory Boxall and theorized by Bennathan and Boxall, 1994; 2002) reflects very strongly common features of the approaches applied in all of the settings we studied. This is echoed in the words of a head teacher in Australia who described the role performed by his school in the following terms:

“... we live in an increasingly disconnected society, and because of that a lot of the students that are coming here, are not only coming here seeking education, but are coming here seeking support, seeking structure, seeking boundaries which they’re not getting in their family lives.”

This emphasis on students’ unmet needs for emotional security and support is echoed repeatedly throughout the interviews, and is often given as the justification for mentoring, counselling and guidance practices that are at the heart of the work described.

In terms of the measurement of concrete outcomes for students there was a range of practices described. The most formal types of assessment included clinical and education measures as well as follow up data on students who had left some of the settings. The presentation of raw data in the current report could be misleading in the absence of detailed contextual, individual and comparative data. Staff could often point to successes in terms of such student outcomes as: improved educational engagement; gaining

of skills and credentials; returning to mainstream education; gaining college places and employment; improved relations with families, and improved social-emotional functioning. It was also not uncommon for interviewees to talk about the difficulties in producing a standardized template of success, sometimes pointing out, for example, that what might be seen as a success for one student might be quite inappropriate for another. Thus the often cited intention of non-mainstream forms of education to 'reintegrate' students into mainstream schooling, whilst being seen as an important aim by some participants, was not seen as a priority by others. More often, positive progress was seen in incremental terms and very much in the context of the young person's individual needs and circumstances. A student who progressed from serious emotional distress and suicidal behaviours to a point where she was showing signs of an improved sense of self, a positive view of life and improved relations with family members might never be able to return to a mainstream school, but this would still be seen as a success story.

It is also important to point out, however, that some facilities working with younger children entered into contracts with mainstream schools that were intended to avoid permanent exclusion and enable reintegration:

"[...] permanent exclusion doesn't do much for the child; it doesn't do much for the family. And it actually achieves very, very little, in our collective opinion. So what we try to do is to get in there and say to the school: 'we will take the child, and the deal is that you will not permanently exclude [...]"

Unfortunately, a very common observation made by many of our interviewees was that the numbers of young people who could benefit from the services that they had to offer often far exceed their working capacity. A phrase that was repeated frequently referred to large numbers of young people who 'fall through the cracks.' These would include those who simply disappear from the radar of social work and educational services and cannot be traced. Then there were those for whom the particular form of provision on offer was unsuitable. All forms of provision, even those deemed a 'last resort' sometimes encountered students who were considered unmanageable in their particular settings. Students were sometimes excluded from specialist provision without being referred to other provision. Sometimes students were described as having reached a point where, in spite of making good progress in a facility, it came time for them to leave because of their age, and that in spite of efforts by staff the successful transition into another suitable setting was not achieved.

There is also the issue of compatibility. Each of the institutions that were studied presented individual qualities reflecting sometimes subtle, sometimes highly distinctive characteristics in terms of ethos and emphasis. The principal of one school, for example, talked at length about the importance of students' learning self-respect and a sense of responsibility through participation in a self-regulating community of peers. She was very clear to point out that over many decades this approach had been successful in nurturing socially sensitive and confident young people, many of whom had been unsuccessful, unhappy and rebellious in former schools where they had reacted badly to the imposition of rigid discipline and the requirement to be passive

and docile. She also freely admitted, however, that some students had been through her school who seemed unable to adjust to the communal values of the school. Another informant, who was joint head of a small alternative school, described a situation in which interpersonal dynamics had on one occasion led to a situation in which some students were endangered. After various efforts to improve the situation, a decision was finally made to exclude one of the students from the school for the safety of others.

It comes as no surprise that it is sometimes extremely difficult to find a suitable placement for students presenting with SEBD, and that the instability and complexity that often accompanies SEBD can sometimes exceed the resources available to provide suitable support. This highlights the need, expressed by many participants in this study, for more resources to be devoted to the support of this vulnerable group of young people. It also draws attention to the importance of coordination between different forms of provision. In England we encountered some good examples of services for students with SEBD being incorporated into a Local Authority continuum of provision whereby students' needs were matched with provision so as to facilitate appropriate placements and swift responses to changing needs.

Key Findings 4: Staff Qualities

One of the striking things about the 'front line staff' we interviewed was the warmth toward and commitment to the young people with whom they worked. When asked to provide examples of successful and less successful cases they were, without exception, able to provide clear and detailed accounts of individuals with whom they had worked. Even when the story did not reflect positively on themselves, they were able to communicate a warm and non-blaming account of the youngsters as persons.

"... he [a student] tried to elbow me out of the way of the door, because I had to keep him for five minutes for detention. And he really gave me like a shoulder charge – like he was on the soccer pitch. And that really was the turning point, because he did that, and I didn't back down. I said you have to stay for these five minutes. He overturned a few chairs; then he calmed down. [...] I think he thought that I was going to go ballistic. And, I don't know, be hateful or be angry. And when I wasn't I think that he was able to recognize that I saw the difference between what he did and him as a person. He's now very different. He no longer creates mayhem. He joins in. He's nice."

(Teacher in a nurture unit in a mainstream school, England)

This concern and support for young vulnerable people was often rooted in their earlier experience of working with students in more mainstream settings where they detected unmet needs:

"I am a biology teacher who has worked in the state system and private... I noticed that in education mainstream that there were students who were struggling in the mainstream and needed an alternative programme somewhere else that they could fit in and do what they needed to do in their own way. So from there I decided to

leave my job in a private Christian setting and start what we do now [...] which is predominantly for girls at this point.”

(Teacher in a flexi-school, Australia)

This same teacher illuminates the issue of personal qualities when describing the characteristics of the volunteers who she chooses to work with in her setting, whose personal qualities she values more highly than professional experience or qualifications:

“... some of them are ex teachers but not all of them. The majority would be people with just a need to care for people; who want to have an influence into young people’s lives. And they’ve had experiences in the past that make them feel that they can assist, or they have a particular area that they are very good at. We have one lady who comes in once a week. She does photography for three hours. [...] She’s doing a course in social welfare; she’s doing this as, more or less, as work experience. [...] She’s not a teacher at all. Never been a teacher. [...] what we are trying to do is to create a family environment.”

Perhaps the single most important and pervasive quality that interviewees talked about and demonstrated was a commitment to showing emotional warmth and unconditional positive regard towards young people. This was often expressed in proactive terms with interviewees often emphasizing the need to express this regard, sometimes in the face of resistance from young people. Staff also often placed an emphasis on the need to build a sense of positive self-esteem and competence in young people through the facilitation of a sense of personal efficacy as a basis for emotional stability, social competence and a sense of educational/occupational direction.

Some Other Findings

There were some differences detected between the provisions visited in England and Australia. These include:

- In Australia we found more evidence of informal and less tightly regulated provision than in England where interventions tended to be based on theorized approaches.
- In England trained educational staff were present in all provisions visited, this was not always the case in Australia.
- There was much greater use of non-statutory providers in Australia than in England where provision was almost always provided by Local Authorities.
- Non-statutory provision in England tended to be highly specialised in educational and or therapeutic terms.
- In Australia there was, in general, a stronger engagement between education and with mental health services than was observed in England.
- In England there was a greater tendency to perceive MH and engagement problems in primarily educational terms.

- In Australia there was a commitment to using distance learning techniques to support the academic aspects of intervention for students in some non-mainstream school settings.
- In Australia there was more evidence of the use of vocational education to support students of school age with SEB problems.
- In England there was a greater emphasis found on encouraging students to re-engage with mainstream schools.

The Exclusion-Inclusion Continuum

The perception of some staff interviewed, particularly in Australia, was that the most difficult to place students were more likely to achieve positive social engagement the further removed they were from the inflexible forms of educational and disciplinary control dominant in mainstream schools.

Conclusions: Possible Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

Theories and policies of Inclusive Education must move beyond mere curriculum 'adaptation' if they are to succeed for students encountering serious problems adjusting to school. Policy makers and 'mainstream' schools can learn from 'alternative' forms of provision which place social emotional engagement at the heart of curriculum. This is likely to involve expanding notions of 'curriculum' to give much higher status to social-emotional learning in relation to academics than is currently the case. More importantly, we can all learn from the values, attitudes and practices of individuals who have *chosen* to work with disadvantaged students and who are successful in their work. Central to their impetus and approaches is recognition of the importance of attachment to schooling through the building of supportive relationships between staff and students and within the student population.

Finally, researchers need to focus more on alternative provision and work with practitioners in developing models of co-operation and collaboration between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' provision.

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Alternativni oblici skrbi za učenike sa socijalnim, emocionalnim i teškoćama u ponašanju u Australiji i Engleskoj

Sažetak

Manje uobičajeni oblici skrbi za učenike koji imaju socijalne i emocionalne teškoće i poremećaje u ponašanju (PUP) ponekad se odbacuju kao manje vrijedni od uobičajenih i nazivaju se posebnima. U ovom se istraživanju pokušalo istražiti manje uobičajene načine brige za PUP, usmjeravajući se na percepciju osoblja koje radi u takvom okruženju u Engleskoj i Australiji. Rezultati ukazuju na to da sudionici istraživanja vjeruju da su angažirani u poslu koji, stavljajući društveno-emocionalni angažman u središte kurikula, otvara mogućnosti učenicima s PUP-om, koji su često izostavljeni iz uobičajenih pristupa. Raspravlja se o tome da se teorija i politika inkluzivnog obrazovanja moraju izdići iznad puke 'adaptacije' kurikula ako se želi postići uspjeh učenika koji se suočavaju s ozbiljnim problemima prilagodbe školi. Donosiocje odluka i 'većinske' škole potiče se na to da uče od 'alternativnih' oblika skrbi i tješnje surađuju s tim područjem.

Ključne riječi: alternativna skrb; Australija i Engleska; isključeni učenici; socijalne, emocionalne i poteškoće ponašanja