POLITICS, MARKETISATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Introduction

The theme of this paper is one of the most important and urgent issues facing all societies concerned with the education of their future citizens. The pursuit of 'Education for All' will entail engaging with questions of injustice, social justice, equity and participatory democracy. It is thus part of a human-rights approach to education and living, one in which the barriers to the empowerment of *all* pupils must be removed.

It is essential, therefore, that we do not underestimate the serious, complex and contentious nature of the issues involved in the pursuit of inclusive policies and practice. The process will be challenging and disturbing necessitating fundamental changes to the social and economic conditions and relations of a given society. This will include, changes to the values informing the prioritisation and distribution of resources, how society views difference, how schools are organised, how teachers view their work, the styles of their teaching and the nature of the curriculum.

This paper will briefly contextualise the analysis within a socio-political framework, explore the essential aspects of a social model of disability, discuss the question of inclusive education and the marketisation of education and, finally, offer some concluding comments. Prominence will be given to the voices of disabled people and I will discuss the developments within my own society which (hopefully) will act as a stimulus and source of ideas and questions.

In both the formulation and presentation of this paper I am reminded of the salutary and insightful statement of Apple (1986) in his discussion of critical analysis. He maintains that:

> The critical power of any social analysis does not arise from some alleged disinterestedness. This is often illusory in many ways in the first place. Rather it stems from the ability of such an investigation to help us pass judgement upon social realities that seem unjust (p. 180).

For him such insights are shaped by his political actions in various arenas in education in the United States. This is similarly so for me in my own country. Furthermore, the ideas, issues, surrounding the question of education and disability are not to be viewed as natural or immutable. They are complex and contestable social constructions. As such, they need to be struggled over. This is vitally important in a social context in which people's understandings, access to knowledge and opportunities are unevenly distributed. Thus, the question of whose

interpretation or vision is being seen as significant, with what consequences and why, must be critically engaged with.

Finally, in taking this stance it must not be interpreted as a desire to get back or recapture some golden age of the past. This would be romantic and counter-productive. Rather, the concern is to resist complacency and to recognise the degree of struggle still to be engaged with if rhetoric is to be translated into reality in substantive terms in the lives of *all* citizens, including disabled people. Romantic visions and idealistic rhetoric have too often resulted in human suffering, disappointment and disillusionment.

The Politics of Education For All

All governments are concerned with controlling human service provision. This includes the issue of funding and the extent to which investment in particular institutions results in the sorts of economic and cultural reforms that are viewed as worthwhile.

Government priorities, decisions and the values informing them are all part of the public manifestation of the intentions and vision they hold with regard to the form of society they wish to see develop and continue. Thus, the allocation of human and material resources are fundamentally political decisions. Their significance is much more crucial in a social context in which there are both limited resources and extensive inequalities arising from the existing economic and structural relations. Questions of politics, power and control are central in this situation. The nature of discrimination and its impact on the lives of different groups must be carefully explored and exposed. This will be particularly important where a 'blaming the victim' mentality represents the official discourse used to explain these conditions and experiences (Ryan 1976).

The notion of 'politics' has different meanings and it is often viewed as being synonymous with party politics. However, there is a broader conception in which the question of how power is socially structured and used becomes significant (Hindees 1971). From this perspective it can be understood in relation to individuals or groups seeking to attain some particular ends they desire through the use of various strategies. These can include, persuasion, bribery, intimidation and physical violence. The motivation for such actions can be informed by various ideals and/or material, personal gain (Lukes 1979).

To indentify an issue as political is to raise questions about it and, for example, to be interested in who gets what, how, when, where, why and with what consequences? Educational policies and practices are inherently *political*. They involve choices, prioritisations and the allocation of resources. These decisions may be ill-conceived, contradictory and entail unintended consequences.

An adequate analysis of the complex issues involved will necessarily entail an engagement with the question of power. From the perspective adopted in this paper, *power* involves particular sets of relationships which are characterised by compliance, dependency and inequality. All of these are applicable to the position of disabled people and need to be examined in relation to specific historical and social contexts.

Educational issues are complex and contentious and often involve passionately held beliefs and values. These entail making connections between schools and the wider society of which they are a part. This involves the capacity to range from the micro contexts of

biographical and school life to the wider social and economic conditions and relations in which the former are embedded. One of the leading analysts of school change and improvement Fullan (1993) has advocated that if schools and teachers are to make a difference then:

> Making a difference, must be explicitly recast in broader social and moral terms. It must be seen that one cannot make a difference at the interpersonal level unless the problem and solution are enlarged to encompass the conditions that surround teaching......and the skills and actions that would be needed to make a difference. Without this attitude and broader dimension the best of thachers will end up as moral martyrs. In brief, care must be linked to a broader, social, public purpose.........(p 11).

Any serious consideration of 'Education For All' must therefore engage with questions of politics and power and encapsulate socio-economic conditions and relations.

Within the context of so called 'special education' this is very under-developed and there are several reasons as to why this is so. First, special education has been dominated by a from of reductionism which gives a privileged status to individualistic explanations. Within-the-child factors are emphasised, encouraging 'special needs' to be viewed as a personal trouble and not a public issue (Mills 1970). In particular medical and psychological ideas have powerfully informed policy and practice. This has had the effect of de-politicising the issues involved. Secondly, given the restrictive nature of this approach, attempts to introduce complex questions, for example, of power, politics, class, gender and race into the analysis, can be seen as unnecessary and unhelpful. This will be particularly so, where the 'special' quality of such provision is justified on the grounds that all children are treated equally. Lastly, the strong traditional belief that professionals involved in special education provision are caring, patient and loving, and that politics should be kept separate from education make it difficult to raise such questions.

What constitutes an acceptable discourse is the subject of intense struggles in that participants often adhere to competing objectives and operate from within unequal power relations. Multiple discourses exist and are often in tension with one another and as Ball (1994) argues:

> Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority (p. 21).

Within the context of special education too often particular perspectives supporting the position of more powerful groups are depicted, and through time perceived to be, both natural and universal (Eagleton 1991). These forms of taken-for-grantedness need to be carefully analysed and those tendencies within society which would close down critique, discussion and dialogue must be resisted.

The Politics of Disability

Disability is a significant means of social differentiation in modern societies. The level of esteem, social standing of disabled people is derived from their position in relation to the wider social conditions and relations of a given society. Particular institutions have a very crucial

influence on social status. This includes the level and nature of employment, education and economic well being (Equality Studies Centre 1994).

Status is influenced by the cultural images which, for example, the media portray about particular groups, the legal rights and protection afforded them and the quality and duration of educational experiences. How a society excludes particular groups or individuals involves the process of categorisation, in which the inabilities, unacceptable and inferior aspects of a person's make-up are legitimated. Through the act of the 'individualised gaze' problems are located within the individual resulting in a view of them as 'Other' or negatively different.

To be a disabled person means to be discriminated against (Finkelstein 1994). It involves social isolation and restriction. This is because of an essentially inaccessible socio-economic and physical world. Listen to these accounts of disabled people:

> In a sense it is startlingly simple. We live in a world which depends for its smooth functioning on marginalising all those for whom its living, working and leisure space was not designed. But we are not just marginalised, we are oppressed, and the oppression and abuse have one central identical effect - to make the victims blame themselves and feel that they are bad (Cross 1994, p. 164).
>   or again
> It is clear that most of us have found that other people's reactions are a very important part of the experience of disability. It's almost as if our disability grants unwritten permission for people to pry or stare of offer solutions when none were asked for. It's a form of stress that is very seldom recognised. Each intrusion proves yet again that we are seen as different and separate and no longer part of the general stream of life (Morris 1989, p. 78).

The conditions and factors which affect the status of disabled people have changed over time. They have been viewed as a menace needing incarceration, a burden needing to be sterilised and even exterminated as well as individuals in need of protection in order that their 'eternal childhood' can be kept in tact.

What is central to a social model of disability is a clear recognition as Barnes (1991) maintains that:

> The abolition of institutional discrimination against disabled people is not a marginal activity; it strikes at the heart of social organisations within both the public and private sectors. It would not be possible to confront this problem without becoming involved in political debate and taking up positions on a wide range of issues (p. 233).

Part of the concern must be with establishing a public confirmation that discrimination against disabled people is not acceptable. This will require legislation which prioritises civil rights and focuses upon the disabling barriers within society. This will necessitate political action (Barnes & Oliver 1995).

Disabled people are increasingly involved in the establishment and maintenance of a positive self identity. This involves an unwillingness to acquiesce to a subordinate role or stigmatised identity. It is about having self respect and self confidence and solidarity with other disabled people and non-disabled allies. This is a difficult but fundamental activity (Crescendo 1993).

Part of this activity entails challenging the stereotypes and dependency models legitimated

through the activities of various charities and national fund raising organisations acting on behalf of disabled people. In a critique of such activities as Telethon, Brown & Smith (1992) maintain that:

> The new imagery conjured up by such events has replaced the horrors of the institution. The spectacles of members of the public organising trivial games, and silly pursuits as an answer to people in pain, poverty or distress disguises the real source of that distress in the policies which have taken from these groups a proper share of resources and testifies to the depth of their marginalisation. It encapsulates indignity in a form of light entertainment, a twentieth-century Nero's Circus (p. 158).

A crucial feature of the oppression of disabled people has been the extent to which their voice has been excluded. Overcoming disabling barriers will include listening to the voice of disabled people and their organisations, especially as they struggle for choice, rights and participation. Jenny Morris (1992) has captured the concerns of disabled people in a booklet concerned with the issue of rights. The voice is unmistakably clear:

> Our vision is of a society which recognises our rights and our value as equal citizens rather than merely treating us as the recipient of other people's good will (p. 10).

Disability is thus a human rights issue and it is crucial that we understand the principals involed and use our knowledge to challenge discrimination and injustice. Starkey (1991) reinforces this by advocating that:

> It is the essence of human rights that differences, physical or cultural, should have no bearing on a person's entitlement to freedom, equality and dignity (p. 27)

This clearly involves clarifying our value-systems, what we feel is important and to be developed within our society as well as what needs challenging. A commitment to human rights is based on the belief that the world is changeable and that we need to find effective ways of struggling to get things changed (Richardson 1991).

In a book entitled Meeting Disability: A European Response, Daunt (1991) "explores the intersection between the political integration of Europe and the social integration of disabled people". He contends that:

> ...everything we do in relation to disability should be founded on two complimentary principles.........
> 1. The principle that all measures should be founded on the explicit recognition of the rights of disabled people.
> 2. The principle that all people are to be regarded as of equal value in the society and to the society (p. 184).

The extent to which we acknowledge the value of such principles and seek to implement them in our practice will be contingent upon the degree to which we recognise the profound seriousness of the oppression of disabled people.

This must be the context within which the question of inclusive education needs to be explored. It is crucial given the general unwillingness of national governments "to think in terms of a national comprehensive plan to meet the needs of disabled people" (Daunt 1991, p.

174) as well as the difficulties a market approach to educational policy, planning and practice are beginning to generate with regard to issues of social justice, equity and entitlement.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is part of a human right approach to social relations and conditions. The intentions and values involved relate to a vision of the whole society of which education is a part. Issues of social justice, equity and choice are central to the demands for inclusive education. Disabilist assumptions and practices need to be identified and challenged in order to promote positive views of others. This is vividly illustrated by Lyseight-Jones (1991) in an example given of the role of the primary school teacher in changing the views of pupils with regard to disabled people. The disabling scenario is outlined in the following way:

> Disabled people are not in my school - disabled people are taught separately from me and live separately from me - disabled people are different from me, are less than me - disabled people are not whole people, and therefore other people have to speak for them - disability is not part of a vision of the 'normal' world - disabled people should not reproduce in case the disability is reproduced - the progeny would be a burden on the working people of the society - it is right to compulsory sterilise mentally or physically disabled people and to condemn all sexual relations of disabled people (p. 81).

What is it about the prevailing social relations and conditions of our society which enable such views to be legitimated and maintained? What changes will be required for the amelioration of such disabling mentalities and the institutional discriminations that they support?

Inclusive education is concerned with the well being of *all* pupils and schools should be welcoming institutions. Special education entails a discourse of exclusion and this is seen as a particularly offensive aspect of such provision. This is clearly demonstrated in the concerns of a group of non-disabled parents in Sheffield over the education of their disabled children. In the introduction to a forthcoming book of the stories of their children, the editors (parents) maintain:

> For us the concept of segregation is completely unjustifiable - it is morally offensive - it contradicts any notion of civil liberties and human rights. Whoever it is done to, wherever it appears, the discrimination is damaging for our children, for our families and for our communities. We do not want our children to be sent to segregated schools or any other form of segregated provision. We do not want our children and our families to be damaged in this way. Our communities should not be impoverished by the loss of our children (Murray & Penman 1995).

From this perspective the goal is not to leave anyone out of school. Inclusive experience is about learning to live with one another. This raises the question of what are schools for? They must not be about assimilation in which a process of accommodation leaves the school remaining essentially unchanged (Wolfe 1994).

The sentiments expressed by these parents are clearly reinforced in the growing body of

literature by disabled people, reflecting on the question of special segregated provision. Two examples will suffice. Jane Campbell (1990) illustrates the degree of her opposition to segregated provision:

> I am a whole hearted supporter and campaigner for the total integration of disabled children into mainstream schools and have been since the grand age of seven......I hated the school bus because it took me away from my local friends, who were beginning to wonder why I didn't go to school with them. It also heightened my differences...... (p. 168).

Other disabled researchers, whilst not having been pupils in special schools are also critical of them. In a discussion of non-disabled people's reaction to disability, Morris (1990) contends that:

> This is one of the most important lessons I have learnt. People's expectations of us are formed by their previous experience of disabled people. If disabled people are segregated, are treated as alien, as different in a fundamental way, then we will never be accepted as full members of society. This is the strongest argument against special schools and against separate provision (p. 59).

From these accounts it is possible to identify a series of benefits which inclusive education would provide. It would enable attendance at a local school which would foster friendships with local children and thereby help to remove ignorance and stereotypes. It would enable the pupils to experience the benefits of a broad curriculum, access to more teachers and greater opportunities to develop higher self esteem and confidence including risk-taking (Freeman & Gray 1989). Through this means an alternative to the expert dependency ethos of special schooling would be developed.

It is essential that the demand for inclusive education does not result in a critique of special schooling which becomes an end in itself. We are not advocating that these develop-ments are merely in terms of the existing conditions and relations in mainstream school. They too will need to change and there are certain features that are unacceptable, including the plant, organisation, ethos, pedagogy and curriculum. It will demand the transfer of resources, careful planning and continual monitoring. We are not advocating a dumping practice into existing provision.

Inclusive education needs to be part of a whole-school equal opportunities policy. If we are to resist complacency and recognise the degree of struggle still to be engaged with, and if official rhetoric is to be translated into reality in substantive terms in the lives of *all* pupils, then the question of inclusive education needs to be an integral part of a well thought through, adequately resourced and carefully monitored equal opportunities policy. By being an integral part of an equal opportunities approach it will provide a basis for the identification of those features of the existing society including, policy and practices within specific institutions and contexts, that are offensive, unacceptable and thus must be challenged and changed.

The development of whole-school policies are a necessity for the realisation of inclusive policy and practice. These should not be the creation of a single individual which the rest of the staff are then expected to support. Rather they should involve discussions between all staff in which commonalties and differences can be identified. It is a learning process for all those involved and this should include all support staff. It entails discussion and debate between staff,

learning to listen to each other and to respect one another.

The transition from segregated special schools to inclusive provision and practice will demand careful planning and sensitive implementation. In the current context some parents prefer their children to attend a special day or residential school. From the perspective adopted in this paper such choices should not be viewed as a defence for the continuation of special schools, but rather, as Dessent (1987) has forcefully argued:

> Special schools do not have a right to exist. *They exist because of the limitations of ordinary schools in providing for the full range of abilities and disabilities amongst children.* It is not primarily a question of the quality or adequacy of what is offered in a special school. Even a superbly well organised special school offering the highest quality curriculum and educational input to its children has no right to exist if that same education can be provided in a mainstream school (p. 97) (My emphasis).

The Marketisation of Education

The demand for 'Education For All' needs to be set within the wider context of the attempts by successive Conservative governments to restructure the welfare state. This has involved extensive critiques of existing policy and practice as well as the introduction of alternative ideas and provision supported by extensive legislation. The impact of such interventions has been far-reaching, leaving no aspect of educational activities untouched.

It is essential that we appreciate the extent to which the system of educational provision and the values underpinning it, have been the subject of a most radical transformation. This powerful programme of change has been directed at the governance, content and outcomes of schooling, post-school and higher educational provision.

The ideological force behind such developments has become known as the 'New-Right'. This as Gamble (1994) importantly notes:

> ... developed into a political movement that united diverse ideological strands, created a discourse about strategy, organised interested coalitions, formulated policy programmes and ultimately helped elect governments that were pledged to a distinctive New-Right agenda (pp. 36–37).

In any overview of the essential features of the New-Right, it is important to recognise both the neo-conservative and neo-liberal elements within its makeup and refrain from giving it a coherence it does not possess. At the same time, we need to acknowledge particular themes which they were united over including, "an emphasis upon authority, tradition. stability, order, the family and morality". (Atkinson & Savage, 1994, p. 7).

Central to the New-Right agenda is a belief in the limits of democracy, the restructuring of social and political authority, reversing trends towards collectivism, breaking the resistance of all forms of oppositional interests, and securing a belief in the creativity of the market in terms of its effective mechanism for driving through change. The fundamental features of the new economic policy became those of efficiency and modernisation and as Gamble (1994) also notes, the market was depicted as the "best way of allocating resources, providing incentives and stimulating growth" (p. 42). Questions of cost-effectiveness and efficiency are important

but need to be set within the broader concerns of the New-Right in providing a new vision of the free society. In this process notions of 'citizenship', 'freedom' and 'equality' are invested with new meaning and informed by market assumptions. Supporting these development is a discourse which takes the high moral ground over the question of the 'good society', 'back to basics' and the 'enemies within' (Atkinson & Savage, 1994).

Underpinning the changes in the field of education is a belief that market forces are more efficient at allocating scarce resources, they are more responsive to the needs of individuals, and will inevitably lead to enhancement of standards and more public accountability on the part of the educationalists involved. In this new world markets are viewed as more democratic than democracy itself (Henig, 1994).

Change is a complex contradictory and powerful aspect of institutional life in modern societies. Thus, how educational policy is created, maintained and changed is an important issue for serious examination. The role of government, legislation and undemocratically appointed quangos, legitimated by the development of a populist ideology or discourse, are significant factors which need to be understood relationally.

A new form of language has been introduced by which we both think about and evaluate education - it is the language of business. Thus, 'quality', 'accountability', 'cost-efficiency', 'effectiveness', 'performance-indicators', 'development plans', 'mission statements', 'targets', and 'appraisal' are key concepts in this discourse. Pupils are now viewed as 'units of resource'.

Through the diversity of provision and a strong emphasis on competitiveness schools are encouraged to increasingly be concerned with presentation management skills and the necessity of selling themselves or suffering the consequences. Opting-out into Grant-maintained status, being successful in the published league tables of examination results and low truancy rates, are all incentives to increase their status and economic position. Aggressive promotion drives through, for example, the introduction of new brochures and school uniforms created through the appointment or service of public relations and design personnel, are now a feature of increasing numbers of schools.

Within a market driven system of provision there will be winners and losers. The market is not a neutral mechanism in that it involves socialising individuals into a *new value system* and Gewirtz et.al. (1993) maintains that:

...... the market rewards shrewdness rather than principles and encourages commercial rather than educational decision-making (p. 252).

The differential effects of these changes on different groups of teachers is worthy of careful study. Mac An Ghaill (1992) maintains that we are witnessing the creation of a new layer of entrepreneurial teachers for whom these developments are a means of acquiring new skills of budgeting, marketing, monitoring and managing.

One of the fundamental features of the marketisation of education has been the intensification of competitiveness. This is the driving force behind government designs to restructuring the welfare state. In a recent White Paper entitled 'Competitiveness Helping Business to Win', we are reminded that:

Our living standards and quality of life are not entitlements; they depend ultimately on the ability of firms throughout the economy to create jobs, improve productivity and to win business in home and overseas market. Success has to be earned through

improved competitiveness (120, p. 8)

By breaking the alleged strangle-hold of LEA influence on educational planning and decision making and introducing the appealing notion of 'parental choice' a structure has been created for schools to compete. This is encouraged by the belief that "greater choice available to parents will pressurise schools into raising standards......". (Bottery 1992, pp. 81–82).

The emphasis on competitiveness supports the celebration of individualism and the development of a self interested set of values and an increasingly hierarchically organised system of provision. In this context the question of access to particular schools raises the issue of selection and the existing 'cultural-capital' of pupils entering particular schools (Walford, 1992). One analyst has called this "the rise of parentocracy" (Brown 1992). We already have indications that these policies and their implementation are leading to a more socially and divisive system of education (Ball, et.al., 1993).

In research conducted at the Centre for Educational Studies, at Kings College, undertaken between 1991–94 the focus has been upon a set of specific educational networks-3 clusters of secondary schools (15 schools in all). The research included monitoring the market behaviour of schools, conducting interviews with parents in each cluster and collecting from LEAs the overall patterns of parental choice. Ball et. at. (1994) maintain that the principle of self-interest powerfully drives the market system and that existing patterns of inequalities expressed in the cultural capital of parents "contribute to significantly different patterns of participation and opportunity" (p. 21). These include, opportunities for transport, flexibility for moving house, coaching for school placement and child-care support. This empirically confirms the analysis of Strain (1995) who argues that:

> By combining open enrolment with a determined policy of rationalisation of school places within an individualistic and anti-communitarian culture, less fortunate families (in terms of the adopted criteria of pupil selection) are *required to be unsuccessful in their expression of choice, and their children forced to attend schools other than their chosen one in order to fill up places in less favoured schools (p. 18).*

Thus he concludes:

> ......disadvantaged children are not protected by the new framework of competition and by the search for 'value for money'...... (p. 18).

In a recent paper concerned with exploring the approaches taken by LEAs to the funding and organisation of provision for special educational needs under LMS, the authors (Vincent, et.al., 1994) maintain that LEAs are finding it less possible to resist the influx of a more-market-created culture. This is viewed as fragmenting and atomising educational provision. Legislative restrictions, the fragile financial climate, reduction in the amounts of reserves LEAs are permitted to hold, have combined to decrease their ability to meet their general tasks and special needs functions in particular. They conclude that a market oriented discourse:

> ...encourages an emphasis on individualism which is antithetical to the concept of a planned and pervasive approach to provision for 'vulnerable children' (p. 275).

Dee and Corbett (1994) concerned with 'Individual Rights in Further Education' explore the issue of student empowerment within the context of an increasingly market-led culture of

provision. They are critical of management's adherence to "a profit-making, cost-cutting harsh market" (p. 324) one in which the:

> ......climate of the competitive and outcome-related market ...casts a shadow over a truly inclusive further education sector. Inclusion within the market context may well mean the acceptance of easier and more promising learners and the rejection of those learners who cost too much for too little return (p. 323).

In terms of the pursuit of 'Education for All' the impact of market-led decision making on educational provision and practice raises serious concerns about the establishment of national policies supported by the political will of governments. Indeed, in a paper by Bines (1995), she contends, that the marketisation of education is now resulting in the influx of a strong from of managerialism. Above all this will involve, "the transportation of public sector professionals into managers of the new decentralised management systems "as well as changes to the relationship between managers and those they manage and between managers and service users". Managers within schools increasingly face the dilemma that "giving too high a profile to SEN work may not match with concerns to promote a market image based on a high level of pupil achievement".

Some key questions can be identified as emerging from the analysis provided in this paper. They include:

- What view of 'difference' is enshrined within a market discourse?
- To what extent is the marketisation of education leading to an increase in special segregated educational provision?
- To what extent does the populace discourse of 'parental choice' mask existing stubborn inequalities?
- How far will the marketisation of education reduce collaboration between schools?
- Whose interests are being served by these developments?

Clearly there is no room for complacency. An effective commitment to the pursuit of 'education for all' or 'inclusive education', necessitates identifying and challenging oppressive barriers in their varied forms. In this instance, this includes challenging an uncritical acceptance that a marketisation approach to educational planning and practice will inevitably lead to a better experience for *all* participants.

Conclusion

'Education for all' as expressed in what Kemmis (1994) calls, 'the socially-just school' involves a serious commitment to the task of identifying, challenging and contributing to the removal of *injustices*. Part of this practice entails a self-critical analysis of the role schools play in the production and reproduction of injustices. Coupled with this is the wider concern of clarifying the role of schools in combatting institutional discrimination in relation to the position of disabled people in society.

The view of justice underpinning this approach is not only interested in issues of distribution of access and opportunities, but also in identifying the sources of injustice in the social processes, practices, structures and institutions of society (Young 1990). According to

Kemmis (1994) in relation to schools, the practices of the curriculum, of educational administration, of initial and continuing education and of educational research and evaluation, need to be given special emphasis and careful examination. This is Kemmis (1994) contends:

> ...because they are all points at which domination and oppression ...... *enter* the process, practices and structures of schooling and thus produce and reproduce injustices (p. 12), (my emphasis).

The ultimate issue from this perspective is the extent to which we can intervene through education against injustice. The realisation of a truly inclusive, socially-just society, will necessitate the development and maintenance of a view of difference which is not oppressive and negative. We need to dream, to have a vision of a better society which inspires and motivates, but one which arises from an understanding of the injustices of the society we currently live in.

In relation to the importance of inclusive education the UNESCO World Confernce on Special Needs Education, help in Salamanca, Spain in June 1994 issued a strong policy statement, which included the following beliefs:

- Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
- Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.
- Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combatting discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

The struggle to implement such principles will be a difficult and disturbing process. Challenging and removing institutional discriminations and injustices in terms of the social relations and practices involved, requires addressing issues of power, politics, priorities, and the redistribution of adequate resources.

Opportunities and encouragement to debate, discuss, raise questions and explore issues are essential elements in an emancipatory process, which will hopefully lead to action beyond laudable rhetoric. This will also entail listening to the voice of oppressed groups, in this instance, those of disabled people.

The history of disabled people reminds us that difference has been a divisive and oppressive barrier between people. The issue of 'education for all' testifies to the conviction that this is not natural or proper and need not inevitably be the case.

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