

Guest Editorial

This edition of *Support for Learning* came about through an incidental comment by one of the Journal's reviewers two years ago. The reviewer commented that my submission was one of the few that offered insights into a specialist curriculum area with respect to SEND learners, a topic that was not widely covered by academic or professional journals. I knew this to be true in STEM subjects but, upon further investigation, discovered that this relative absence extended to the entire curriculum.

There appears to have been a long hiatus in publications addressing inclusive pedagogy in specific subjects areas. Carpenter, Ashdown and Bovair's, *Enabling Access*, first published in 1996 as teachers in England grappled with embedding the National Curriculum for increasingly diverse pupils, has never gone out of print. However, successors have been rare and there remain notable gaps, including non-National Curriculum subjects and practice in the other three of the four nations of the UK. One possible cause of this absence is the widespread presentation of the topic of inclusion in Teacher Education courses as a generic analysis of definitions, principles and policy drivers. Whilst these provide essential context for inclusive teaching, this approach fails to recognise the fundamental role of curriculum areas as an organising principle of school and teaching life.

Subjects are integral to school organisation. They are the 'units of delivery' and resourcing of educational experience at secondary school level, whilst at primary they serve to enable auditing of what is taught so that principles of balance and breadth can be demonstrated. More than that, curriculum specialisation is one of the facets from which many teachers construct their professional identity. It is from the starting point of good subject teaching that inclusive teaching can develop, as illustrated by Lio Moscardini's account of an expert teacher of mathematics making nuanced judgements about the best strategies to use with 'Lara'. The two articles on science for learners with autism spectrum needs (ASN), by Magdalena Apanasionok and myself, look respectively at Early Years and secondary teachers, and highlight the need for further development of teachers' confidence in subjects that are judged to be high status and inherently difficult. Both papers show the importance of professional development in subject teaching being undertaken in the context of the teaching; this further challenges the value of the frequently deployed more generic approaches to inclusive education.

This edition also highlights variations in views on inclusion, both general and subject-specific, across the four nations of the UK. This is illustrated by two papers from Scotland, Sue Ellis on literacy and Lio Moscardini, Katie Hunter and Alastair Wilson writing about music education. Both papers focus on how the barriers to subject engagement arising from poverty may be overcome. Differences in the impact of national policy upon subject teaching is also explored in the position paper on Modern Foreign Languages teaching in Scotland, by Maggie MacAskill and myself.

Although inclusive teaching differs between subjects and between countries, common themes are evident and encouraging. Lisa Stephenson and Tom Dobson exemplify the notion that good teaching benefits all learners, irrespective of their characteristics. Their paper articulates the importance of promoting learner agency, in their study through the use of drama, in the promotion of effective teaching, an understanding that permeates all the articles in this edition. The other common factor of these diverse contributions is the reminder that each one provides that curricular exclusion lies beyond the control of the individual pupil and, equally, that successful inclusion requires teachers to create a 'fit' between learners and their learning environment.

The question of *how* to make teaching in different subjects accessible to diverse pupils, wherever they are, is fundamental to the attainment of equitable education system. Each of these articles

considers how this might be achieved, and establishes this as an important focus for future study; they are thus a step towards this goal. Those who choose to focus on curriculum as the agent of inclusion are in a minority amongst practitioners and academics. However, preparation of this special edition has revealed that it is a sizeable and active minority.

For the opportunity to edit this special edition and showcase the work of the contributor, I must extend my gratitude to Professor Philip Garner. He has shared his extensive editorial experience generously throughout the preparation of this edition, for which I thank him.

Dr Jane Essex

Guest Editor

Reference

Carpenter, B., Ashdown, R. and Bovair, K. (2016), *Enabling Access*. London: David Fulton/Routledge