

Chapter 3 (In 'Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination : A case for anti-discrimination legislation', Colin Barnes (1991))

EDUCATION

According to the Fish Report, Educational Opportunities for All (ILEA, 1985), the aims of education for all children and young people include the achievement of responsible personal autonomy and full participation in the communities in which they live. In practice this usually means employment and a relatively autonomous lifestyle. The type of education that the overwhelming majority of young people with impairments receive does not provide them with the skills and opportunities to achieve either.

Institutional discrimination against disabled people is ingrained throughout the present education system. The data show that most of the educational provision for disabled children and students remains basically segregative, is dominated by traditional medically-influenced attitudes, and commands a low priority within the education system as a whole. As a result, rather than equipping disabled children and young people with the appropriate skills and opportunities to live a full and active adult life, it largely conditions them into accepting a much devalued social role and in so doing condemns them to a lifetime of dependence and subordination. In addition, by producing dependence in this way it helps to create the negative stereotypes by which all disabled people are judged, and therefore a firm basis for the justification of institutional discrimination in society at large.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first looks at Government legislation in this area since the 1939-45 war, and considers its implications for education and disabled people. The second examines educational provision for children and students with impairments in special schools, the mainstream sector, and further and higher education.

Legislation and Education

Following the gradual establishment of mass education since the late nineteenth century, a corresponding system of mainly segregated 'special' facilities for pupils and young people with impairments soon emerged. From the 1890s onwards successive government documents presented special provision as a necessary adjunct to mainstream education because of its appropriateness for individuals whose needs were/are considered different from the rest of the community, and because of the need to

remove potentially disruptive or difficult pupils and students from the normal classroom in order to maximize efficiency. Moreover, in the same way that services for disabled people generally had come to be dominated by medical thinking, so too had special education. Similar considerations are applicable to special education in the late twentieth century.

The 1944 Education Act.

Up till the 1944 Education Act, mainstream education, like special education, was not really considered a major area for government intervention. Most schools, both mainstream and special, were run by private or church charities under the supervision of local government boards. The 1939-45 war, however, changed this situation. Recruits to the armed forces were tested for general ability, and the authorities were startled by the results, which showed widespread ignorance. Concern about postwar economic recovery prompted the Government to rethink its education policy.

Hitherto most British children attended 'elementary' school until the age of fourteen. Secondary schools existed but parents had to pay, so children from poorer backgrounds were almost all restricted to the former. Less than 2 per cent of the population went to university. The Education Act of 1944 initiated several major changes, including free secondary education for all, the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen, and a stated commitment to equality of opportunity in education. The idea of equality, however, did not extend to children with impairments.

As a result of the Act, most local education authorities (LEAs) adopted academic selection as a method of deciding secondary school placement. Selection at the age of eleven, the age of transition from primary to secondary school, was supposed to sort out the academically able from the less able. Results from the 'Eleven plus' examination determined whether children went to Grammar Schools or Secondary Modern Schools. A minority who did 'well' were able to attend the former while the remainder had little choice but to go to the latter.

To make sure the new system would work, it was considered essential to weed out as many children as possible who might inconvenience or obstruct its implementation; selection by ability sanctioned selection by disability. Hence, LEAs were instructed to make separate provision for children with an impairment of 'body or mind'. A set of categories for

disabled children was produced. 'Partially sighted' and 'partially deaf' children were to be separated from those termed 'blind' and 'deaf', 'delicate', 'epileptic', 'diabetic' and 'physically handicapped' were the main categories considered educable, whilst 'defective' children became 'educationally sub-normal [ESN]'. Two further categories added to the list for separate provision were 'speech defect' and 'maladjusted' (Tomlinson, 1982).

In view of the cost involved in providing separate facilities for such a variety of impairments, it was suggested that children with less severe 'handicaps' could be educated in mainstream schools, either in segregated facilities or 'normally'. But since such a policy would mean a reduction of pupils in the existing special school system, and conflicted with the desire to remove 'problem' children from the 'ordinary' classroom, it was never fully developed. As the Ministry of Education put it:

Anyone who has known children in any of the categories will agree that the varieties of education offered in ordinary primary and secondary schools do not meet their needs (Ministry of Education, 1946, quoted in Tomlinson, 1982, p. 50).

Children considered uneducable were passed on to the health service and were designated 'severely subnormal'.

Despite the rhetoric of help and individual needs emanating from LEAs and professionals, it was widely acknowledged that some parents, particularly those of children labelled ESN, would need coercing into accepting that their children would be excluded from the mainstream sector. Hence, a certificate signed by a doctor could be used to coerce non-compliant parents. The Handicapped Pupils Form (HPI) had to be completed to secure compulsory attendance at a special school.

The category that expanded most in the immediate post-war period was that of ESN. The number of children in ESN schools doubled between 1947 and 1955 from 12,060 to 22,639, with a further 27,000 awaiting placement. Over two thirds of the children termed 'handicapped' in the 1960s experienced 'mild' educational subnormality (ESNM). It has since been suggested that teachers were using this label to remove children who posed problems in both learning and behavioural terms from mainstream classrooms (Tomlinson, 1982).

Tomlinson (1982) has reported that during the 1960s 'aphasic' children (children who have communication difficulties), 'dyslexic' children

(children who experience problems interpreting the printed character), 'autistic' children (children who have difficulty tuning in to 'normal' human wavelengths), 'psychologically crippled' children (children stressed by modern living conditions) and 'socially handicapped' children (children of the poor) were all recommended for special education.

In 1970 children who hitherto had been viewed as ineducable and designated 'severely subnormal' after 1959 were integrated into the special education system. The Mental Health Act of 1959 had suggested that these children should receive education and training but the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act made this compulsory. The DES report *The Last To Come In* was decidedly positive about the proposed integration of children previously termed ineducable with those who were designated ESN. This created a further distinction, with the former referred to as 'ESN severe' or ESN(S) as opposed to ESN(M) for the latter.

The DES report on special education of April 1973 re-examined the categorisation and education of children with impairments. It was critical of the use of categories of handicap but did little to implement their abolition. A shift of emphasis was evident in DES Circular 2/75, which introduced new forms to replace HPI. An educational approach to assessment was now deemed preferable to a medical one, although medical concerns were still considered important. Special education (SE) forms 1-4 were intended to replace HP forms 2-4. Form SE 1 was completed by a teacher, SE 2 by a medical officer, SE 3 by a psychologist and SE 4 -a summary -by a psychologist or an LEA adviser. The views of parents or children were not considered important enough to warrant documentation.

In 1976 the Labour Government incorporated a section on special education in the 1976 Education Act, which was intended to implement comprehensivisation (the introduction of comprehensive schools supposed to accommodate all children regardless of academic ability) in England and Wales. Section 10 of the Act was included as a substitute for Section 33(ii) of the 1944 Education Act, a clause which was intended to change the legal emphasis of special education treatment in special schools to provision for all categories of disabled children in the mainstream sector. Section 10 stated that children should be educated in special schools only if they could not receive adequate tuition in 'ordinary' schools, or if the cost of that instruction would cause 'unreasonable public expenditure' (Tomlinson, 1982).

Although the shift toward comprehensive education implied an end to segregation for disabled children, there was little evidence during the 1970s that these schools were any better than their predecessors at integrating children who required 'special treatment' (HMSO, 1979). Founded upon egalitarian principles, comprehensive schools were envisaged as catering for all children regardless of conventional wisdom with regard to their education. While the demedicalisation of the labelling of disabled individuals within the educational context must be viewed positively -as Micheline Mason noted wryly, 'my special child' sounds infinitely better than 'my little invalid' (Reiser and Mason⁷ 1990) -it represents little more than a cosmetic exercise. The concept of SEN retains the assumption that people categorised in this way are somehow 'less than human'. The emphasis is still on the inadequacy of the individual: it is s/he who is different; it is s/he who is at fault; and, most importantly, it is s/he who must change.

The Committee did not seriously question the general philosophy and organisation of the education system although by implication it acknowledged that it is incapable of meeting adequately the educational needs of up to a fifth of its users. Their solution to the problem of SEN was a further expansion of professionally dominated support services. Within the present educational context this can only reinforce the perceived difference between pupils and students with SEN and the rest of the school population, as well as the general view that people with impairments are incapable of looking after themselves without professional help.

But perhaps the most glaring indictment of the Warnock Committee's position with regard to SEN and the role of disabled people within the community can be found in its discussion of what it terms 'significant living without work':

The problem of how to accept life without employment and how to prepare for it, faces people with a variety of disabilities, including those who are of the highest intelligence but very severely handicapped. We believe that the secret of significant living without work may lie in handicapped people doing far more to support each other, and also in giving support to people who are lonely and vulnerable (Warnock Report, 1978, p.202).

Although the Committee acknowledged the economic, social and psychological significance of paid employment for individuals within our society (see Chapter 4), it is clear that it had accepted unequivocally the

orthodox view that disabled people would be excluded from the workplace. This has salient implications for the perpetuation of this myth. The most obvious of these is that professionals, themselves in secure employment, will determine when a child is young that s/he is unsuitable for paid work. The child's subsequent education will be organised accordingly. This results in a self-fulfilling prophecy, producing a 'downward spiral in professionals' expectations' about the child's potential for achievement (Kent and Massie, 1981). It is not surprising therefore that during the 1980s there has been a proliferation of life and leisure skills teaching for children and students with SEN throughout the education system.

Two pieces of legislation implemented those elements of the Warnock Report that the Government accepted. The 1980 Education Act provided parents with more information about SEN and about schools, although it was clear where the Government's priorities lay in terms of policies of integration:

In present economic circumstances there is no possibility of funding the massive educational resources ... which would be required to enable every ordinary school to provide an adequate education for children with serious educational differences (DES, 1980, quoted in Tomlinson, 1982, p. 54).

The 1981 Education Act initiated what are now generally seen as major changes in this area.

The 1981 Education Act. The 1981 Education Act became law on 3 April 1983 (Swann, 1989). Under Section 1, SEN are defined in terms of children who have a significantly 'greater' learning difficulty than the majority of children of a similar age, or children with an impairment or impairments preventing them from making 'effective use' of mainstream provision within the local area. Special educational provision in relation to a child over two years means services which are additional to or somehow different from those provided generally for children of the same age in schools maintained by the LEA. For children under two years the Act covers educational provision of any kind.

Under the Act LEAs in England and Wales have a 'duty' to identify, assess and provide full-time free education for all children with SEN from the age of two to the end of compulsory schooling and up to 19 if they remain in school. LEAs must also provide facilities for children with SEN from birth. Local health authorities are compelled to tell LEAs and

parents if they believe a child has, or may have, SEN, once s/he starts school at the age of five. Moreover, following a formal assessment an LEA may issue a child with SEN with a 'statement'. This document describes the child's particular needs and recommends how they should be met. If the child leaves school at sixteen and goes on to college, LEAs are still bound to provide free full-time education, but the 'additional protection' provided by the Act is lost.

The Act underlines the importance of professionals, particularly doctors, educational psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, health visitors, school nurses et al., in the determination of SEN. It formally abolishes the categories of handicap, although it does not rule out their use. 'Diagnostic terms' may be necessary in the 'attainment of support services' (see DES, Circular 22/89, 1989).

Legally, however, parents have more involvement in the assessment of their child's needs. They can demand an assessment if they feel that these are not being met, and the LEA is bound to respond. Parents have access to more information and, theoretically at least, a larger say in the type of education to be provided, and where it should take place. They can contribute written information to the assessment process, and they have rights of appeal if they do not like the provision being proposed. The Act also suggests that the child's feelings should be considered during the examination process.

Although the 1981 Education Act clearly recognizes the discriminatory policies of the past and, like its predecessors, endorses the general principle that children with impairments and learning difficulties should be educated in mainstream schools, it sets conditions for integration which allow LEAs to continue to segregate at will. It states that a child with SEN may be integrated into an 'ordinary' school so long as this is compatible with the child 'receiving the special education' that s/he requires; the 'provision of efficient education for the children with whom s/he will be educated'; and 'the efficient use of resources' (HMSO, 1981).

Children and young people with SEN are still perceived as different from the rest of the school population. Whilst all schools are expected to assess children's abilities and to provide written profiles, reports or statements of their educational needs and progress, LEAs are bound by law to mark pupils with SEN out for special treatment through the assessment and 'statementing' process.

While it may be argued that assessment and statementing in relation to SEN is a form of affirmative action, it can also be used to place children and young people with SEN in separate groups, classes or schools. Although lip-service is paid to the notion of parental and children's rights, education within the mainstream sector for a child with SEN is still not a right in the same way that it is for able-bodied children or children who do not experience learning difficulties. Integration is provisional, and is acceptable only as long as it does not interfere with the smooth running of the mainstream sector. It is a privilege which can be awarded or withdrawn by LEAs at will.

The procedures for assessing SEN required by the 1981 Act are highly discriminatory and complicated, and take time. One study estimated that the full assessment process can last as long as 67 weeks (ILEA, 1985). This can have serious negative implications for a child's education.

The process takes time because more people are expected to provide information, because parents are consulted more and because they are given time to consider their response. Apart from the unnecessary anxiety caused for the entire family by this process, due to the uncertainty of its outcome, it will almost certainly exacerbate any educational difficulties experienced by the child. Local authorities are not compelled to provide additional educational provision until the full assessment process is complete. Assessment can and should provide special equipment and/or additional help for access to the curriculum where appropriate, and any delay in providing that help can seriously damage a child's educational progress. Only recently a twelve-year-old girl missed the whole of her first year of secondary education due to the time taken in appealing against an unsatisfactory reassessment (*Contact*, 1990).

Since comprehensive assessment procedures are not an everyday occurrence within the British education system, parents are at a considerable disadvantage once the process is set in motion, whether they instigate it themselves or whether it is instigated by the LEA. The actual assessment procedure, the language used by professionals and the location of the examinations are generally highly discriminatory, and put the child being examined and her/his family under unnecessary social and psychological pressure. This can only make their difficulties worse (see for example ACE, 1988).

This is especially so for children and families who do not use English as their first language. The Fish Report (ILEA, 1985) noted how little

progress has been made in establishing assessment procedures to identify SEN which take account of cultural and racial differences where English is not the language of the home and which are easily understood by parents. These families experience a double disadvantage in the assessment process and the disproportionately high number of children from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds in special schools (see Tomlinson, 1985; Barton, 1986) may be seen as an indication of the importance of this point.

Cultural and ethnic considerations did, however, prompt the Government to include an amendment in Circular 22/89 (DES, 1989) stating that for children whose 'mother tongue is not English', a lack of competence must not be equated with learning difficulties. It is important to note, however, that this statement does not apply to children with hearing impairments whose 'mother tongue' would be sign language. The culture and language of the deaf community continue to be ignored by the Department of Education and Science (DES).

Given these difficulties, parents should clearly be provided with as much information about assessment and SEN as possible. A succession of government documents, particularly Section 8 of the 1980 Education Act, the accompanying Education School Information Regulations 1981 and DES Circular 1/83, set out just what information LEAs should publish in relation to assessment and SEN. They must provide in an accessible form detailed information on the arrangements and policies for identifying children with SEN and for involving parents, policies which have been designed to promote 'frankness and openness on all sides'. There is, however, a large body of evidence to show that LEAs do not provide parents with the appropriate information (ILEA, 1985; Rogers, 1986, 1986a; Meltzer, Smyth and Robus, 1989).

In response to a growing concern expressed by parents over the lack of data emanating from LEAs in this area, the Centre for Studies on Integration in Education (CSIE) analysed the material put out by 66 out of the 104 LEAs in England and Wales. Thirty-four authorities chose not to submit their publications for analysis. The survey showed that most LEAs omit to mention or explain key aspects of the arrangements and effects of assessment, statementing and appealing. For example, only 6 per cent published data on parents' rights of appeal and 11 per cent failed to mention their duties with regard to integration (Rogers, 1986).

A follow-up study analysed the published guidance which LEAs distributed to headteachers, teaching staff, educational psychologists and

other professionals working in the education service. It showed that this material was equally bereft of relevant information. Only 50 per cent of LEAs, for example, told the staff of their duty to integrate and only 8 per cent gave guidance on how to involve parents in the assessment process (Rogers, 1986a). That there has not been a general outcry among professionals over this situation suggests that their principal loyalties lie with their employers rather than the users of the education service, namely disabled children and their families.

The concept of parents as partners is evidently rhetoric rather than reality. The Government-sponsored disability survey conducted between 1985 and 1988 and published in 1989 showed that only 22 per cent of parents of children with impairments had heard of the assessment and statementing process, and many of these children were being educated in special schools (Meltzer, Smyth and Robus, 1989, p. 51).

The survey found that of the estimated 360,000 children under sixteen with impairments, 60 per cent of whom are males, only 2 per cent lived in residential establishments. This is a lower estimate of the numbers of disabled children in the general population than had been made in previous studies. Thirty-four per cent of disabled children living in private households and 63 per cent living in 'communal establishments' are educated in segregated special provision (see Table 3.1). Moreover, the OPCS survey does not show the numbers of children from ethnic minorities in these schools but it should be remembered that other studies have found that for them the figure is disproportionately high (Barton, 1986; Tomlinson, 1982, 1985).

Disability was classified in terms of severity from 1 to 10. Of disabled children living at home, 63 per cent had not been assessed and 30 per cent had been assessed. Only 14 per cent had a formal statement. It might be argued that only severely impaired children would need statements, yet in the most severe category only 62 per cent had been assessed and 35 per cent had a written statement. More alarming still, 58 per cent of the children who were reported to have been assessed had no formal written statement, and 14 per cent of those who had not been assessed were receiving special educational provision in special schools (Meltzer, Smyth and Robus, 1989, p. 52). Since the 1981 Act makes it illegal to provide special education without a formal statement it is evident that the law is being ignored by many LEAs.

Table 3.1. Where Disabled Children are Education

Type of Education	Disabled children living in private households %	Disabled children living in communal establishments %
Special school	24	45
Remedial unit of secondary school	5	4
Remedial unit of primary school	4	3
Other special provision	1	0
School/class attached to residential home (local authority, voluntary or hospital)	0	17
Ordinary schools	66	27
Not known	0	4
Total	100	100

Source: Adapted from Table 6.12, p.57 and Table 12.7, p. 109, in Meltzer, Smyth and Robus, 1989

Swann has noted that it has been hard to discern anything that could be termed a national integration policy since 1981. No clear steps have been taken by the DES to reduce the numbers of pupils going to special schools. They have not issued guidance to LEAs on how they should interpret the integration clauses of the 1981 Act. This point was taken up by the House of Commons Select Committee Report on the implementation of the 1981 Act. The DES also came under criticism from the same source for failing to monitor the consequences of the Act. Moreover, although the Committee called both for more effective monitoring and guidance from central Government there has been no response (Swann, 1989).

Table 3.2. Numbers of Children in Special Schools in relation to School

Population as a Whole

	No. of children in school*	No. of children in special schools +	%
1977	9,278,268	131,151	1.41
1978	9,915,672	132,384	1.44
1979	9,094,150	131,688	1.45
1980	8,933,033	129,724	1.45
1981	8,720,123	128,125	1.47
1982	8,501,527	126,487	1.49
1983	8,276,185	124,811	1.51
1984	8,096,233	120,097	1.48
1985	7,955,879	116,273	1.46
1986	7,832,067	113,554	1.45
1987	7,721,209	100,865	1.41
1988	7,610,240	105,070	1.38
1989	7,553,484	102,064	1.35

* Includes full- and part-time pupils in nursery, primary, secondary and independent schools.

+ Includes full- and part-time pupils in maintained independent schools.

Source: Adapted from Table A30.89, pp. 175-6, DES, 1990.

Although Table 3.2 suggests that segregation declined during the 1980s it is important to note that in 1989 it stood at only 0.06 per cent below that of 1977, the year when the Warnock Committee was finalising its report which endorsed the need for integration. It should also be noted that these figures are misleading. Local education authorities vary greatly in their levels of segregation. While many LEAs have reduced their level of segregation, others have increased it. Recent evidence from the Centre for Studies on Integrated Education (CSIE) shows that since 1981 fifteen English LEAs have increased the proportion of children they send to segregated special schools, and three of them, Doncaster, Rotherham and St Helen's, did so by more than 25 per cent (Swann, 1991).

Also, the age structure of pupils in segregated schools is cumulative. More children are directed into special schools as they grow older (Meltzer, Smyth and Robus, 1989). As Swann points out, a more accurate picture of segregated schooling could be seen by looking at the numbers of children transferred each year from main-stream to segregated provision. This is referred to as the inflow rate. It has been shown that there was a fall in the inflow rate in 1983, but it increased in the following two years (Swann, 1988). Later figures for the annual rate of inflow into special schools for each LEA are not yet available (Swann, 1989).

Another important factor which needs to be borne in mind in relation to the rhetoric of integration is that there has been a considerable reduction in the child population during the 1970s and 1980s. This is clearly reflected in the numbers of children attending school. Disabled children are marginal members of school communities. When mainstream school places are in short supply, segregation is the order of the day. When registers are empty, schools are less reluctant to exclude pupils with SEN.

Since the 1981 Act it has often been argued that progress on integration is slow because of the cost involved. According to the latest estimates (the Education Statistics Estimates 1988-9 published by the Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy quoted in CSIE, 1989), LEAs in England and Wales spend more than £820 million a year on special education. A vast amount of this money is spent on special education rather than integration. The main problem is not simply a lack of resources but a lack of commitment to transfer resources from segregated provision to the main-stream sector. It is not a lack of funds which is the key to integration but unwillingness to change (Brighouse, 1989). The directive for change must come from Government. It is unlikely, however, that integration will be helped by Government reforms carried out in the late 1980s.

The 1988 Education Reform Act and its Implications. A threat to the development of the integration of disabled children into mainstream schools is contained in the Education Reform Act of 1988. Briefly, this legislation allows schools to opt out of LEA control and become self-governing. It also introduced the national curriculum and encourages competition among schools through open enrolment (Blaine, 1989).

Up to September 1989 schools in the state sector were able largely to devise their own syllabuses, define their own attainment targets for individual children, set their own tests and choose which external

examinations to prepare for. The new Act enables the Government to prescribe compulsory courses of study and to dictate examination arrangements and attainment targets in all state schools, except special schools in hospitals. Why these schools are excluded is not clear. In addition, the new curriculum can be 'modified' for children with SEN. Indeed, pupils may be excluded from all or part of the new system if they are members of defined group or pupils with a particular kind of special need; pupils with statements; or children whose special needs are likely to be temporary (Blaine, 1989).

It has been noted by several sources (see for example ACE, 1989; Blaine, 1989; Darlington, 1990; Swann, 1988; Simpson, 1990) that the mainstream sector's inevitable preoccupation with meeting the new requirements will make provision for disabled children an even lower priority. In order for mainstream schools to concentrate on the national curriculum it is probable that children with a 'modified' curriculum will increasingly be placed in a separate unit or school. Disabled children will be identified by their inability to cope with a curriculum designed for the majority, namely the non-disabled majority.

Given the increased pressure on mainstream schools to achieve specified attainment targets, schools which are unable to meet these targets will be labelled accordingly. Competition between schools will intensify, and teachers keen to maintain their own and their schools' reputation may see full assessment and statementing as a means to exempt children who are unlikely to do well. Moreover, if special schools are able to offer a 'modified' version of the national curriculum, they might well appear more attractive to parents of children who have been categorised with SEN, particularly if it is evident that their needs are not going to be met elsewhere. The 1988 Act could squeeze disabled children out of the mainstream sector altogether.

Discrimination in Practice

Special Schools. Whether or not disabled children should be educated in segregated schools remains a contentious issue. Some would claim that these schools are a form of positive action as they are better placed to give disabled children the intensive tuition they need, and therefore 'a better start in life' (Simpson, 1990). There is relatively little evidence to support this view. Segregated or special schools are a fundamental part of the discriminatory process, not simply because they create and perpetuate artificial barriers between disabled children and their able-bodied peers, but also because they reinforce traditional individualistic medical

perceptions of disability, and generally fail to provide their pupils with either an adequate education or the skills necessary for adulthood.

At the time of writing there are 1,414 special schools in England and Wales. At the time of the Warnock Report there were 1,591. This represents a fall of only 177, and contrasts markedly with the mainstream sector where the numbers of schools have declined to a far greater degree over the same period, with 2,962 having been closed (see Table 3.3). In the broadest sense special schools can be defined as schools, which cater specifically for children with SEN. However, definitions are problematic since special schools come in a variety of different forms.

In general special schools tend to be smaller than their mainstream equivalents. Scrutiny of a succession of recent reports by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) which have looked at a collection of special schools shows that their average size is around 50 pupils, although a substantial number are smaller. Most appear to take pupils ranging widely in age and ability. Many accommodate children of from two to nineteen years. There are more boys than girls in special schools. Some specialize in education for children with a particular Impairment while others cater for a variety of needs. Some are day schools, some take both day pupils and boarders, and others are solely residential. In general they have a larger catchment area than most mainstream schools (DES, 1986, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). It is not uncommon for a special school to have a catchment area of 100 square miles or more.

Many pupils who go to special schools every day experience long traveling times, sometimes of up to two hours each way (DES, 1989c). This has obvious negative implications with regard to a child's ability to learn either in the classroom when they arrive at school, or when they return home for homework. Moreover, attending a school well outside the local community does not help disabled children make friends with peers who live near their home. This problem is far worse for children who are boarders. The negative effects of uprooting children from their family, peers and the local community are increasingly well documented (Oliver, 1983; ILEA, 1985; Reiser and Mason, 1990).

Table 3.3. Numbers of Special Schools in relation to Mainstream Schools

	No. of schools in mainstream sector*	No. of special schools
1978	29,059	1,591

1979	28,960	1,599
1980	28,869	1,597
1981	28,602	1,593
1982	28,195	1,571
1983	27,858	1,562
1984	27,362	1,548
1985	26,990	1,529
1986	26,682	1,493
1987	26,489	1,470
1988	26,305	1,443
1989	26,097	1,414

* Includes maintained nursery, primary, secondary and independent schools. Source: Adapted from Table A30.89, pp. 175-6, DES, 1990.

The recent OPCS disability surveys show that 12 per cent of disabled children who live at home and 44 per cent of those who permanently reside in residential homes and who attend special schools are boarders (Meltzer, Smyth and Robus, 1989). Many LEAs continue to 'export' children with SEN to maintained independent residential special schools out of their area, usually on the grounds that local schools cannot meet their needs. In 1987 one LEA sent just over 0.5 per cent of its total school population to private sector special schools (Swann, 1989).

This practice cannot be justified on the grounds that the accommodation and resources in special schools are any better than those in the mainstream sector, because this is clearly not so. As will be evident later, access, which does not just mean physical access but also sensory and communications access, is a major problem in all schools.

In each of the HMI reports mentioned, accommodation and resources were considered at best 'satisfactory' and at worst 'down- right dangerous'. For example, when describing the buildings used for educating pupils with 'emotional' and 'behavioural' difficulties the HMI inspectors included the following phrases: 'of bleak exterior', 'shabby and unkempt', 'barren and uninviting', 'in serious disrepair', 'an air of sad neglect', 'drab and dingy', 'run-down' and 'poorly heated' (DES, 1989a, p. 3).

In a report titled *Educating Physically Disabled Pupils* another team of inspectors noted:

Difficulties include inadequate storage space, particularly for wheelchairs and other large equipment; inappropriate safe provision for the charging of batteries for electric wheelchairs; too small hygiene and toileting provision that limits wheelchair access; inappropriate furniture for changing children in privacy; poor disposal facilities for soiled material; and inappropriate and inaccessible facilities. (DES, 1989b, p. 11).

In terms of resources the picture is similarly bleak. Although a minority of special schools are well resourced, many are under-financed and heavily reliant on charity for funding. In many instances private sponsorship is responsible for appropriate furniture, wheelchairs, school visits, the school minibus, and essential teaching equipment, particularly communications devices, information technology and computers (DES, 1989b). For a variety of reasons, not least the frequent underfunding of special provision by LEAs, teachers and parents will intentionally seek to raise money in this way. Open days, sports days and sponsored activities of one kind or another are a regular feature of the special school calendar. The pupils are inevitably involved in these events. Hence they are repeatedly reminded of their dependence on others, their low social status, and the need to perform and conform. In this way they are taught, albeit unintentionally, to adopt the passive dependent posture of the stereotype disabled person.

The lack of resources has an obvious effect on the type of curriculum which can be taught in special schools. Although the importance of core subjects such as science and maths for pupils with SEN was continually re-emphasised by the DES in the late 1980s, there is a general lack of teaching facilities in these areas in many of these establishments. For example, a recent HMI report, *The Effectiveness of Small Special Schools*, pointed out how specialist science facilities were rare. 'Satisfactory' resources were noted in only four of the thirty-six schools studied. The report concluded that the absence of facilities was a 'serious barrier to pupils' access to the subject' (DES, 1989c, p. 14).

It is frequently stated that staff in special schools are better equipped to educate pupils with SEN. There is little evidence to support this view. Although in recent years there has been something of an increase in teachers with advanced qualifications in special schools, the majority of teaching staff are qualified 'only by long experience' (DES, 1989b, p. 9). The lack of curricula expertise among teachers is a key issue in special education. Each of the reports quoted has commented on the general lack of subject-specific knowledge in core areas. Particular examples include;

science, mathematics and craft, design and technology (DES, 1986, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). In addition, the provision of relevant in-service education and training (INSET) has not been extensive. It is plain that most LEAs do not have formal policies to meet the staffing needs of special schools.

A similar situation is apparent with non-teaching assistants (NTA). The provision of NT As in special schools varies. A recent study of thirty-five special schools for physically disabled children found ratios ranging from 4.4: 1 to 16: 1 (DES, 1989b, p.9). Most NTAs have National Nursery Examining Board (NNEB) qualifications with only additional informal training in schools. Again there is no general policy in this area.

It has long been noted by disabled people who have been through the special education system that medical considerations take precedence in special schools (see Barnes, 1990; BCODEP, 1986; Oliver, 1983, 1985, 1990). This has recently been confirmed in official documents. One study pointed out that doctors often hold clinics in special schools and that there is a growing tendency to introduce elements of 'conductive education' (a controversial method of developing individual physical abilities in accordance with the traditional medical view of disability, see Oliver, 1989) into the curriculum in schools for physically impaired children. It is still common for disabled pupils to be removed from classes regularly for physiotherapy, speech or other therapies (DES, 1986, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). The learning time lost because of such practices can be considerable.

Given these considerations it is not surprising that academically the learning experience in special schools compares unfavourably with that in the mainstream sector. Indeed the quality of teaching and learning in special schools varies considerably, according to official sources. One survey of thirty-six small special schools considered standards to be generally 'satisfactory' when compared with larger special schools (DES, 1989c). Other studies which have looked at a range of special schools have been less complimentary when comparing standards to those in the mainstream sector. For example, a study of seventy-six segregated units for children with 'emotional/behavioural difficulties' stated:

Although the majority of the schools claimed to be implementing a mainstream curriculum and to have as a major aim the reintegration of pupils into ordinary schools, it was unusual to see a conscious attempt being made to reflect in the

special school the work which a pupil of similar age and ability would be under- taking in the local school (DES, 1989a, p. 10).

It is significant to point out here that the DES publish annually information showing the type of courses studied by pupils in all secondary schools in the mainstream sector, along with the results of examinations taken (see for example DES, 1990). No comparable information is available for special schools. Although nationally recognised examinations and assessments such as the GCSE and A level are open to the same type of criticism as all assessments (see above), they are a major feature of all British schools. While the purpose of these examinations is to provide a 'fair' appraisal of an individual's ability and skills in a particular subject area, the assessment procedures are generally geared to the needs of the able-bodied pupil. For example, examination papers are usually printed and illegible to individuals who experience visual or reading difficulties. People with impairments therefore are at a considerable disadvantage from the outset.

If disabled candidates wish to take these exams they must arrange with the examining body for special arrangements to be made. This is a long-drawn-out and complicated process which demands a great deal of time and effort, often from the disabled candidate. It is an added and unnecessary burden which many disabled people have to face when taking examinations. It is a burden that able-bodied candidates never have to experience.

Briefly, in conjunction with teachers a disabled student must find out which examination body to contact - there are twenty-eight different examining boards in England and Wales (Simmons, 1990) - and what to apply for. She must then make sure that the special arrangements being sought are appropriate to her this needs. For example, candidates who are unable to write manually sometimes use a modified typewriter, extra time can be arranged if students tire easily etc. Special arrangements need to be applied for well in advance and supporting evidence, usually in the form of a doctor's letter, has to be obtained and provided. These arrangements also have to be applied for every time an individual sits an examination, regardless of whether the student's impairment is permanent or not (for a fuller discussion of this procedure see Simmons,1990).

The Mainstream Sector. Integration is not simply a question of being placed in the same groups or institutions as others. It is a process which requires continued and planned interaction, particularly in mainstream schools. It is evident, however, that the policies and resources needed to

facilitate this process are not being provided. Few LEAs have a comprehensive policy statement on integrating children with SEN into the mainstream sector. Consequently, in terms of accommodation, organisation, staffing, attitudes, and the classroom experience, barriers remain.

With regard to accommodation, the suitability of buildings depends largely upon when the school was built. In 1972 legislation was passed to ensure that all new schools should be accessible to disabled people (Reiser and Mason, 1990). Unfortunately, however, building new schools has been a low priority ever since. Since 1977 the numbers of schools in the mainstream sector has fallen dramatically (see Table 3.3).

A series of recent Government documents concerned with provision for SEN in mainstream schools has consistently drawn attention to the unsuitability of the design of school buildings for children with impairments. For example, an HMI report on services for primary-aged pupils with SEN in forty-three mainstream schools in eleven LEAs, pointed out that while many disabled children were not 'seriously disadvantaged' by inaccessible buildings, some were. Most classrooms had insufficient space to accommodate pupils who needed personal aids and equipment, as well as support from NT As. In most classrooms the quality of acoustics was judged to be 'poor' and in some schools 'suitably adapted toilets and changing facilities for non-ambulant and incontinent pupils had not been provided' (DES, 1989d, p.7). What was meant by 'seriously disadvantaged' was not discussed.

A report which looked at integration in secondary provision stated that in the majority of schools where individuals with physical impairments were placed, few adaptations had been made. In most cases access to practical subjects such as science: for pupils who experienced mobility problems was limited. The inspectors noted how dangerous the situation was in one instance 'where a disabled pupil had to be carried up and down three flights of stairs between lessons (DES, 1989b, p. II). In many cases this situation prevented independent study in important subject areas and seriously restricted the choice of options in years 4 and 5 - the years when most pupils select which external examinations they will take.

Health and safety regulations are often presented as a reason for not admitting disabled pupils to mainstream schools. The most commonly voiced concerns are about the means of escape in the case of fire. This is both discriminatory and unnecessary.

The British Standards Institute (BSI) issued a set of guidelines in 1988 (BSI, 1988, part 8) which recommends appropriate policies for this particular eventuality. For example, one strategy advocated by this document suggests that buildings should have areas on each floor which remain resistant to fire for a period of half an hour so that disabled people can be taken out of the building by trained emergency service staff. Unfortunately these policies are not mandatory. LEAs do not have to implement them, and frequently choose not to on economic grounds. They are free therefore to discriminate at will. Only recently a young wheelchair user who had passed the eleven plus examination and was ranked in terms of marks among the top 25 per cent in his area, was refused entry to all the local grammar schools on the grounds that none of them was adapted for wheelchairs (Collins, 1988).

Frequently in discussions about the difficulties encountered in integrating pupils with SEN into mainstream schools, attention focuses upon the need for peripatetic advisory and support services as an interim solution (ILEA, 1985; Reiser and Mason, 1990; Warnock Report, 1978). A DES survey published in 1989 which looked in detail at these services in England and Wales found that there was a wide variation in what was currently available. In some LEAs provision was judged to be good, in others it was said to be completely inadequate. Indeed policies which direct the work of support services are explicit in only a minority of LEAs. Few appear to have the facilities, resources and clerical back-up appropriate for this work (DES, 1989e).

It is evident that where once support services were mainly concerned with peripatetic teaching and assisting individuals in the classroom, the bulk of the work is now concerned with advising teachers and NTAs through short INSET courses (DES, 1989e). This is necessary because there is widespread ignorance and indeed hostility about integration and SEN among staff within the main-stream sector.

There is a real danger that such a policy might initiate segregation (Fulcher, 1989), but in order to facilitate integration the Warnock Report (1978) suggested that there was a need for all teachers at every level to undergo training in SEN, either in teacher training colleges for those who are new to the profession or via INSET courses for those already qualified. In many instances this has not occurred. Several studies have focused on the lack of training among teachers with regard to SEN, their general ignorance about impairments, and their hostility toward disability in the classroom (Center and Ward 1987, 1989; Clunies Ross, 1984; Danks, 1989).

In general, the teaching profession's attitudes toward integration are positive, as long as the appropriate back-up services are provided, and as long as it does not mean extra work for them.

However, they are less amenable to the idea of including children with intellectual impairments in mainstream schools than they are to children with physical limitations. And they are only willing to teach children with specific physical impairments. They are tolerant toward integrating children with 'mild mobility difficulties' but intolerant of children with impairments which require non-teachign management and/or assistance in the classroom. Examples include blindness, severe physical mobility problems, and incontinence (see for example Centre and Ward 1987, 1989; Clunies Ross, 1984; Danks, 1989).

Discriminatory attitudes among teaching staff in the mainstream sector have also been confirmed by recent HMI reports. For example, the survey of provision for primary-aged pupils mentioned above (DES, 1989d) noted that pupils with SEN were not wholly accepted by teachers in a number of mainstream schools. The attitudes of some staff members were said to be 'patronising', while others were reluctant to work with disabled pupils. Where negative staff attitudes were present the inspectors noted how they were quickly picked up by non-impaired pupils. This had an adverse influence on their behaviour toward their disabled peers. Other studies have noted similar findings.

It is also common for some staff to be overprotective. This was mentioned in each of the studies discussed. The survey of provision for children with physical impairments, for example, said that although many schools acknowledge the need for independence they regularly fail to promote the emotional attitudes in students and staff which would support its development (DES, 1989b, p.8).

Reiser and Mason (1990) pointed out how the widespread tendency for only a minority of staff in mainstream schools to have training in SEN helps to perpetuate these problems. 'Ordinary' teachers often resent being called upon to teach children whom they feel they are not qualified for being paid to teach. Conversely staff with responsibility for SEN are frequently reluctant to give up their privileges and their status.

Teachers who specialise in SEN are rarely subject to the same external pressures as their counterparts in either curriculum planning or content, or with regard to parents' expectations concerning their children's potential academic achievements. In addition, able-bodied teachers who work with

disabled children are often held in high esteem by their peers, because teaching SEN is generally perceived as particularly tedious, intellectually unrewarding and often unpleasant.

The separation of responsibilities among staff within mainstream schools is often reflected in the actual learning process. It is common for pupils with SEN to be removed from their designated class to be given individual tuition or to join a small group of pupils with supposedly similar needs. This frequently happens in mainstream schools which incorporate a segregated special unit or department. In such schools children can be registered in a mainstream class but spend as little as 3 per cent of their time with their able-bodied contemporaries (Swann, 1988).

Frequently the content of lessons taught in 'withdrawal' sessions in special units does not relate to the curriculum in the mainstream sector. The HMI report concerned with provision for primary-aged pupils stated that in several schools pupils with a variety of impairments were taught in special classes solely by the teacher responsible for SEN. These classes were small and covered the entire primary age range. This made it difficult to ensure that each pupil had access to a broad and balanced curriculum. In addition, the teacher was unable to help children with SEN elsewhere in the schools (DES, 1989d). It has also been shown that pupils with a first language other than English are particularly disadvantaged in this type of teaching environment (DES, 1988).

There is also evidence that pupils with SEN are placed in classes with younger children. For example, one fifth-year boy described as having 'severe learning difficulties' was placed in a third-year infant group. Although he was due to transfer to secondary school the following academic year, his experience of junior school would have been limited to one class. The Inspectors concluded that these practices needed careful monitoring (DES, 1989d).

It is also common for children with impairments in mainstream schools to be regularly removed from the classroom to be treated by therapists and doctors. If the local authority provides the appropriate funding these services can be provided within the school by peripatetic staff. If they are not, then children have to travel to clinics or hospitals. Either way valuable learning time is greatly reduced (see DES, 1988, 1989b, 1989d; NAHA, 1988).

The problems associated with integrating children with impairments in mainstream schools are exacerbated by the failure of the majority of LEAs and governing bodies to adopt policies which deal with discrimination against disabled people. The race and gender relations laws introduced in the 1970s apply to pupils, students, teachers and others who work in the education system. All schools acknowledge these laws and act accordingly. No such policy exists with regard to disabled people, either nationally or in schools. Few LEAs actively pursue policies to combat discrimination against disabled people in schools. Reiser and Mason (1990) noted that the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) adopted this policy in principle in 1983, but it was another four years before it produced a leaflet outlining the strategies needed to support it.

The fact that discriminatory attitudes permeate the education system can be partly explained with reference to some of the teaching materials and books used in schools. Children's literature is replete with negative images of people with impairments. Well-known examples include Blind Pew, the disabled person as sinister and evil, in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and in *Heidi*, the disabled person as pitiful or sad. It is widely acknowledged by educationalists that children's literature can be a powerful influence on shaping beliefs and attitudes, and that if books are chosen with care they can refute stereotypes and construct positive images of disadvantaged groups. One authority on this subject stated:

There is enough evidence ... to justify a teaching intervention which tackles the problem directly, by including a planned element in the curriculum specifically designed to encourage positive attitudes and actions toward peers with special needs, just as there is a case for a curriculum to foster racial tolerance and gender issues (Quicke, 1985 quoted in Reiser and Mason, 1990, p. 107).

There has been a sizeable body of work done to counteract the stereotype representations of women and ethnic minorities in books and other teaching materials used in British schools. But apart from a few notable exceptions little has been achieved on disability. Moreover, further progress seems unlikely unless it is sanctioned by Government, since 70 per cent of the curriculum is now controlled by the DES due to the 1988 ERA reforms.

Negative stereotypes are also evident in some of the newly-produced teaching aids designed to raise disability awareness in mainstream schools. One of the best publicised examples of this is the resource pack

titled *Understanding Disability* produced by the Understanding Disability Trust. The information provided by this organisation adheres rigidly to the traditional individualistic medical view of disability (see Chapter 2). It is divisive since it assumes that its audience, both teachers and pupils, will be able-bodied. It presents impairment as the primary cause of disability and ignores social factors such as prejudice, the built environment, and gender and cultural differences between disabled individuals and groups. In short, the pack foments and perpetuates the ignorance and discrimination which it is designed to undermine.

It is often argued that LEAs could combat discrimination by employing more disabled teachers. Disabled role-models in positions of authority within mainstream schools are necessary to combat discrimination not only in education but also in society as a whole. Indeed, the Warnock Report (1978) recommended that disabled entrants should be encouraged to join teacher training schemes and that the medical criteria necessary to become a teacher should be relaxed. However, the Government has yet to implement this recommendation. In the 1989 teacher training regulations the DES still has the power to declare disabled teachers medically unfit to teach (Reiser and Mason, 1990). According to a recent report by the National Union of Teachers, this is one of the most difficult barriers facing disabled people wishing to enter the teaching profession. Other major barriers include inaccessible teacher training colleges and discriminatory attitudes on the part of non-disabled teachers. At present less than one in 100 teachers is a disabled person, and if teaching were barrier-free the figure could be comparable with the number of disabled people in the population as a whole, namely one in ten (NUT, 1991).

The extent of institutional discrimination within the mainstream sector adds weight to those who would argue for the maintenance and development of segregated provision. For example, the general antipathy toward non-oral communication within British schools poses a particular and serious problem for the deaf community, a community which has a history of able-bodied people attempting to wipe out their language and culture through education, the consequences of which have proved educationally, psychologically and socially disastrous for many deaf people, particularly in their formative years. For deaf people, therefore, integration can represent a return to the oppression of the past (BDA, 1984).

The difficulties and animosity frequently experienced by disabled people within the mainstream sector also fuel the fears of parents of children who are 'safely' settled into special schools. For them the rhetoric of

integration could represent nothing more than a politically convenient ploy to reduce public expenditure on an already severely disadvantaged section of the community, which by tradition is 'unable to take care of itself. Without a firm commitment to eradicate discrimination in all its forms within the mainstream sector from those who are responsible for state education, namely the Government and LEAs, these fears might well be justified.

In addition, it is apparent that whether disabled children attend sheltered or mainstream schools they are less likely to attain the same academic qualifications as their able-bodied peers (see for example Walker, 1982). This is particularly important considering the value placed upon recognised educational success in employment. The serious implications for disabled young people without qualifications are clear, and this situation is particularly alarming when considered alongside the poor quality of careers preparation they receive before leaving school.

In a recent review of research into disabled young adults' preparation for work, which covered studies of provision in both special and mainstream schools, Parker concluded:

Adequate school leavers' programmes for those with special needs still seem to be the exception rather than the rule. The opinions of both young people and their parents indicate a considerable gap in preparation for life beyond school. Young people with disabilities, especially when they are physical, are less likely to be placed in work experience schemes than other pupils. (Parker, 1984, p. 71).

There has been no subsequent research published to dispute this view. It is not surprising then that an increasing number of disabled young people continue their education after the age of sixteen.

Further Education. As the statutory school-leaving date approaches, young people with impairments are confronted with a combination of three alternatives, apart from unemployment: open or sheltered employment (the former refers to jobs which are open to all, the latter to work in sheltered or protected workshops where the overwhelming majority of employees are disabled people - see Chapter 4); some form of further or higher education; or placement in a day centre, adult training centre (A TC), or residential home or hospital which frequently incorporates an element of further education (FE) or training.

Finding paid work is the preferred option for all young people; an influential DES survey (1983) of the views of young people found that employment was seen as the principal definition of adulthood and that getting a job was a goal all were striving for. However, successive studies have shown that it is an option frequently denied to disabled school-leavers (see for example Brimblecombe et al., 1985; Hirst, 1984, 1987; Kuh et al., 1988; Walker, 1982). Further education is therefore often presented as an appropriate alternative.

Unfortunately much of what passes for FE for disabled young people is simply a continuation of what is available at the primary and secondary levels, and consequently similar criticisms apply. Most of it is segregative, accommodating only those with SEN. There is a general tendency for courses in this area to concentrate on life and leisure skills rather than academic subjects or employment training. And the majority of mainstream colleges and universities are inaccessible to students with impairments, and many are unable or unwilling to provide the necessary support services to make them accessible.

Although tertiary provision for students with SEN varies according to region, it generally comes in a variety of different forms. There are, for example, school/college link courses, day centre link courses, outreach courses, transition courses, Youth Training programmes (YT), special courses and some provision in the mainstream sector. Funding for FE can come from a number of sources, including DES, the Department of Employment-Training Agency (TA), etc. or voluntary organisations and charities such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and the Spastics Society. Attendance may be full-time, part-time or residential.

The recent OPCS disability survey estimated that around 78,120 or 3 per cent of disabled people under retirement age were either in FE or in adult training centres (ATCs) (Martin, White and Meltzer, 1989). Being situated in an ATC does not necessarily mean that a person is being educated or trained (see below). The DES collects statistics on FE and higher education (HE), but it does not include data on students with impairments.

However, a national survey of state-sponsored FE and HE colleges conducted by Skill (the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) suggests that the numbers of people with SEN in post-school education is 43,540. This represents an increase of almost five times since the Warnock Committee reported in 1978 (Stowell, 1987). This stands in

marked contrast to the numbers of students in FE generally, where the figure has only risen marginally. In 1978 there were 1,590,779 students in post-school provision while in 1987 there were 1,672,294, an increase of only 81,515 or 4.8 per cent. It is important to note, however, that according to the same source only 3,419 or 7.8 per cent of students termed SEN were being educated in the mainstream sector (see Table 3.4).

Many disabled young people are introduced to the idea of continuing their education after sixteen well before they leave school. Pupils with a statement are subjected to another 'full' assessment by professionals at the age of fourteen (Glendinning, 1989), and the local college of FE as well as the local Social Services Department is informed of their 'special' needs. Moreover, since it is generally agreed by professionals and careers officers that pupils with SEN, particularly those who have only experienced segregated education, are unable to benefit 'immediately' from mainstream courses (Stowell, 1987) these young people are usually directed toward more of the same.

Some pupils are, however, encouraged to stay on at school. While this has obvious advantages if students are attending a mainstream school and preparing for examinations, there are few, if any, if they are situated in a special school, particularly where it is the only school they have ever been to, and where the school accommodates children from two to nineteen. It does not help them gain the experience necessary for adulthood, but simply serves to reinforce the commonly

Table 3.4 Numbers of Students with Special Educational Needs in Further Education

Type of Course	Under 19 years of age	Over 19 years of age	Total
School/college link	8,030	386	8,416
Adult/centre link	638	3,204	3,842
Other link	177	76	253
YTS special	3,486	105	3,588
Transition	2,549	591	3,140
Other special	1,981	5,533	7,514
Outreach courses	-	13,405	13,405
Mainstream	1,721	1,698	3,419
Total (estimates)	18,579	24,998	43,540

Note: The survey did not ask the age of outreach students but it was assumed that the vast majority were over 19 years old. These estimates do not take account of the 3,700 disabled students in colleges supported by the voluntary sector, nor those in universities.

Source: Adapted from Tables 96 and 97, pp. 95-6, Stowell, 1987

held belief that people with impairments are immature for their years, that they never grow up, and that they should be treated as 'eternal children'.

In some areas pupils with SEN are encouraged to join school/ college link courses where pupils stay at school but attend a local college for one or two days a week. Many of these courses start when pupils are in the fourth or fifth year. They usually involve further assessments by college staff in order to decide which courses would be the most appropriate. It is significant that large colleges which operate link courses provide a wide variety of courses for SEN, often as part of a package in connection with YTS, outreach, transition, and other special courses. It is estimated that one in four pupils in special schools in the relevant age-range are attending one of these school/college courses. Colleges which provide these facilities tend to specialise in 'low-level' work. Colleges and polytechnics which offer over 25 per cent Advanced Further Education (AFE) courses tend not to operate link courses (Stowell, 1987).

In the absence of link courses, pupils in special education are frequently introduced to the idea of going to a day centre or an adult training centre (ATC). The vast majority of these establishments, however, are highly segregative. Most only cater for people with impairments, the vast majority of whom are elderly. In addition, the activities provided usually revolve around 'leisure' and 'craft'-based skills like basket weaving, or boring repetitive work such as packing screws or rubber bands. Most day placements and services are organised around notions of 'care' rather than user participation and control. They are paternalistic and attendance tends to perpetuate dependence rather than encourage self-reliance (see Barnes, 1990; Kent et al., 1984).

Although day placements are generally unpopular among young disabled people, they are often presented as the only alternative to doing nothing. It is often pointed out, for example, that the intense competition for places may mean that a vacancy might not be available later, perhaps when the potential user has completed FE. As an added 'attraction' many day centres and ATCs now run FE classes in conjunction with local colleges.

These can be referred to as adult centre link or outreach courses. The former are courses where the student is registered in a day unit but attends a college for a specified period during the week, and with the latter FE teachers hold classes within the centre. Again the colleges which tend to run these courses are those which are the main providers of services for SEN. And the curriculum and course content is generally the same as on other special courses; they specialise in 'social training' and 'education' programmes including 'general life skills', adult literacy, leisure pursuits -art, pottery, dressmaking -and specialist disability skills such as lip-reading and braille (Stowell, 1987).

Youth Training (YT) programmes -referred to as Youth Training Schemes (YTS) until May 1990 (DE, 1990) -are said to offer opportunities for training, vocational education and work experience for 'all' young people, but these opportunities are somewhat limited for disabled school-leavers. Their avowed aim is to help young people acquire and develop specific job skills leading to a qualification recognised by potential employers. They are run by the TA and organised locally by local colleges of FE, LEAs, voluntary organisations and private employers, hence provision is subject to much regional variation. Although all young people aged sixteen or seventeen are eligible for places on YT courses, this does not apply to young people with impairments, who can be denied places on the grounds that they are unlikely to find employment.

Moreover, while able-bodied sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds have two years and one year on YT schemes respectively, disabled young people considered fit for work are allowed to join up to the age of twenty-one. They can also stay on the course for the full two years, 'because of their impairment' (Glendinning, 1989). They may also receive up to six months extra tuition, which can include a period of initial training before the full YT programme begins (Cooper, 1989).

Although these extra facilities are presented as positive or affirmative action, they re-emphasise difference and encourage negative attitudes, because they are available only to disabled young people, not only in the minds of able-bodied tutors and students, but most importantly in those of potential employers. Without the appropriate legislative support to ensure open employment for disabled people, these and similar policies simply endorse the traditional view that they are an employment liability rather than an asset. Indeed, although the Skill survey only collected data on college-based YTS courses, it showed that a mere 278 students with SEN were on main-stream courses (Stowell, 1987).

Since it has not been considered possible or 'desirable' to train students with impairments on mainstream YTS programmes, 'special' YTS schemes have been created. However, the colleges operating these schemes are by and large the same ones that are providing other forms of SEN provision. Special YTS courses therefore form part of a package of other special courses. The large majority of trainees on these courses, 77 per cent, were on college-based courses with little or no work experience other than in college workshops (Stowell, 1987). Such practices are unlikely to provide these young people with the appropriate experience to find work in open employment.

There are a variety of 'special' courses in FE, some part-time, some full-time and others residential. Part-time courses are those on which attendance is less than 21 hours a week. They are popular among students with SEN and their families because they allow the students to attend college without jeopardising their state benefits. If students attend college full-time, i.e. for over 21 hours, then they forfeit their right to certain state welfare payments such as income support. Since many students and their families are wholly dependent upon these payments for their livelihood, this policy acts as a powerful incentive for young people not to take up full-time education, although it might be in their best interest to do so.

Courses specifically for students with SEN come under a variety of headings, for example 'Foundation Course', 'Bridging Course', 'Foundation Workshop', 'Preparation for Work'. Despite this apparent diversity, however, their content is usually the same as that mentioned above, although in most colleges 'computing skills' has recently been added to the list. Although many of these are described as transition courses and claim to prepare students for open employment or mainstream FE, there is no substantial evidence to show that they achieve these goals. After completing these courses many students find themselves in sheltered employment, day centres or adult training centres. Part of the reason for this situation lies in the fact that, on the whole, people with SEN are not welcome within mainstream FE. Students with SEN are often directed into special courses in residential colleges because they are not provided in local colleges.

Despite the recommendations of the Warnock Committee (1978) that all colleges of FE and HE should have and should publish a policy on the admission of students with SEN, fewer than one in five have a formal policy. Those that have tend to be the major providers for SEN (Stowell, 1987). As a result, support - whether it be human, financial or in the form

of equipment - tends to be uneven and provided on an ad hoc basis. On the whole, colleges do not feel it is their responsibility to provide this support. It has recently been shown that most establishments believe that extra provision should come from government resources or a combination of such funding and the student's own disability allowances (Smith, 1990).

The recent Skill survey reported that less than 25 per cent of the colleges sampled could claim that they were supporting visually impaired students on mainstream courses, less than a third provided assistance to hearing-impaired students, only 21 per cent supported students with learning difficulties, and fewer than one in seven provided help for students with behavioural or emotional difficulties. Whilst a quarter said that they supported students with physical impairments, this support was limited. The same number said that they had only 'part' of their college buildings adapted for students with physical impairments. Less than a third were able to offer physical access in all their teaching blocks, almost half of which were deemed inaccessible. And more than one in five stated that they might have to reject a student 'with a physical handicap' because of poor access or inadequate support (Stowell, 1987). A more recent survey of polytechnics and universities in the whole of Britain drew similar conclusions. Indeed, in these establishments disabled students only constituted 0.3 per cent of the entire student population (Smith, 1990).

Several colleges and universities are clearly opposed to the idea of admitting disabled people, and regularly confront intending students with various objections of a dubious nature. Disabled people are refused admission on the grounds that they are a fire risk, or they are told that attendance is possible only if they agree to be accompanied at all times by a responsible able-bodied adult such as a parent or a personal assistant. It is not uncommon for establishments to discriminate openly on the grounds that they do not provide facilities for disabled people. Only recently a well-established Scottish university refused entry to a potential social science student because she was a wheelchair user; it acknowledged that she had the appropriate entry qualifications, but was unwilling to make facilities accessible for her wheelchair (Macgee, 1990).

Since many colleges and universities do not provide the appropriate support for people with impairments on mainstream courses, disabled students intending to take up this option have to provide that support themselves. Educational support of whatever form is generally expensive, and this alone is enough to deter many disabled people from going to

college. However, those on AFE courses are entitled to some financial help through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), and two new allowances introduced in March 1990 specifically for this purpose (see Cooper, 1990). Since a full academic year in which the new benefits were available to disabled students had not elapsed by the time of writing, it is impossible to say whether they have proved adequate. However, the DSA has hitherto proved 'woefully inadequate'.

In common with other student allowances, the DSA is paid by LEAs under guide-lines drawn up by the DES. These leave much to the discretion of individual LEAs, which means that claiming is often a difficult and long-drawn-out process with no guarantee of support at the end of it. Students and their families have difficulties in obtaining the grant because of the necessity to provide evidence of financial need and impairment before even the minimum payment is made. As with all mandatory student awards the size of the grant is dependent upon the size of the family income, and is therefore not available to students whose parents or partner are relatively well off, when they are expected to meet the cost of support (Patton, 1990). Also, because the DSA is only available to people on advanced courses, the vast majority of disabled students do not get financial help for educational support unless they look to the voluntary sector.

In British society to seek help from charities carries with it a considerable stigma. In addition, when applying for assistance in this way disabled people are usually confronted with similar problems to those described above. Eligibility has to be proved, provision is not a foregone conclusion, and getting it usually takes time. Given these considerations, many disabled people choose not to look to the voluntary sector for support. Also, providing disabled individuals with funding for support from whatever source, although vital, does not prevent institutionalised discrimination within FE, or eradicate the ignorance surrounding disability among those who provide it.

There is little understanding of the problems faced by students with SEN among teaching staff in colleges of FE and HE. Indeed, they are less likely to have experience of working with people with impairments than their colleagues in the primary and secondary sectors. Teachers in tertiary education, whatever their level, are not required to have a formal teaching qualification, and many enter the profession straight from industry, commerce or university. Nor is teaching special needs an essential component of teacher training courses geared toward FE. In addition,

specialising in SEN at this level is traditionally regarded as a low status occupation.

This is clearly reflected in the Burnham Regulations on teachers' pay, which until 1987 were used to set the levels at which teachers in FE were paid. Those who concentrated on special needs were paid at Grade V, the lowest grade on the scale. This is in marked contrast to teachers who teach special needs in schools, who are generally paid an additional allowance for this type of work.

There is also a general absence of non-teaching staff with experience of SEN in mainstream further education. Just over a third of the colleges in the Skill survey reported employing non teaching staff expert in this area. Many of these were medical staff or clerical workers (Stowell, 1987).

In view of this situation there is a growing tendency for colleges to run in-house development courses on SEN, or to send staff on short external courses which deal with this issue. The prime providers of these courses are the DES, HMI and Skill. There is also a City and Guilds course titled 'The Teaching of The Handicapped in FE' (731-4), which some staff are encouraged to take. In the main, however, each of these schemes adheres to the traditional individualistic medical model of disability discussed earlier, and hence is unlikely to change the prejudices and perceptions of those who attend them.

In the final analysis, while it is often said that post school education enhances social and work skills and improves the probability of employment, this is not generally so for young people with impairments. There is no evidence of any substance to show that the kind of FE that the vast majority of disabled young people receive does anything other than prepare them for a life of under-employment and/or unemployment, and a disproportionate - and unnecessary -dependence on others.

Conclusion

From the outset the mainstream education system was not constructed for disabled people with 'special educational needs'. Indeed, after over a century of largely state-sponsored education, they are still not legally entitled to the same education as their non- disabled peers.

Although education in its present form is socially divisive and highly discriminatory for all pupils and students, it is especially so for those with impairments. Historically they have been marked out for a particular form

of 'special' educational provision which in general is both socially and educationally inferior. Clearly, traditional attitudes toward the education of disabled children and young people have hardly been challenged by recent events. Despite much rhetoric to the contrary put forward by those responsible for providing education, the data show that the impetus toward integration has been only slight. Moreover, what little progress has been made is now under serious threat of reversal due to the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The evidence shows that the environmental, attitudinal and educational barriers which prevent disabled pupils' and students' successful integration into mainstream provision remain largely intact, hence segregated 'special' education continues to thrive at every level and is likely to do so in the future. This is despite the fact that it is one of the main channels for disseminating able-bodied/minded perceptions of the world and ensuring that disabled school leavers are socially immature and isolated. This isolation results in passive acceptance of social discrimination, lack of skills in facing the tasks of adulthood and ignorance about the main social issues of our time. All this reinforces the 'eternal children' myth and ensures at the same time that disabled school leavers lack the skills for overcoming the myth (BCODP, 1986, p. 6).

By producing socially and educationally disabled individuals, the 'special' education system perpetuates and legitimates discriminatory practices in all other areas of social life, particularly employment. Therefore, if institutional discrimination against disabled people throughout British society is to be eliminated, this system must be eliminated also.